A THIRD WAY

Muslim Arguments for Secular Nationalism in Mid-Twentieth Century North India



Amar Sohal
Merton College
University of Oxford

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History
History Faculty, University of Oxford
Trinity Term 2019

Word Count: 101,427

Short Abstract

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From the late colonial period, three eminent Indian Muslim nationalists—Abul Kalam Azad, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan—conceived of a third way to nationalism which had till now been ignored by historians. Drawing confidence from the nationwide strength of the Muslim community and/or presence of their overwhelmingly Muslim regional homelands, these thinker-politicians abjured the separatism of Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Muslim League and embraced an Indian national movement for the establishment of a secular republic. However, since they wished to avoid being reduced to a subordinate role within the Indian nation from the subject position of minority, they insisted on imagining it in terms of socio-cultural parity between Hindu and Muslim. This separated them from their colleagues Jawaharlal Nehru and M.K. Gandhi who had little need to concern themselves with this question. Nevertheless, by refusing to make religion a determinant of nationality while still retaining it within the public space, this thought must be understood as part of India's broader secular nationalist tradition.

This endeavour—to establish an unequivocally *Indian* nationalism marked by Hindu-Muslim *equality*—did not preclude substantial differences between Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan. How they imagined the Indian nation was informed by their contrasting ethnolinguistic inheritances and whether their respective Muslim constituencies—Hindustani, Kashmiri, and Pashtun—occupied the position of a regional majority or minority. But these figures understood that their principle of Indian equality had meaning for other groups, too; they were not parochial thinkers. Therefore, what this thesis uncovers is a new set of perspectives on major South Asian debates about: majority and minority; national history and culture; secularism; and subidentities and their political representation. And by placing these in dialogue with alternative secular and communal nationalisms, it contributes to a wider discussion about the meaning of political concepts in India and Pakistan.

Long Abstract

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Since the 1980s, historians of Indian Muslims have been engaged in a protracted debate about the complex idea of a Muslim nation formulated by Mohammad Ali Jinnah and his Muslim League from around 1937. Jinnah was reacting as much to the collapse of the League of Nations regime and its language of minority rights as he was to the Indian National Congress' increasingly strident refusal to dilute its conception of a secular state with the principal of communal representation. Entitled to equal constitutional treatment, Jinnah claimed that two nations inhabited one subcontinent: Hindu India and Muslim India. But if his consequent Pakistan Movement represented one path taken by Muslim minoritarian anxieties about secular democracy in mid-twentieth century India, this thesis explores a neglected alternative. I argue that the Indian nationalism of Abul Kalam Azad, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan did not signal a departure from this longstanding concern. Rather, these thinker-politicians looked to Indian nationalism to both generate a non-religious shared identity and retain multiple subidentities within it and, thereby, produce a solution to the problem of minoritisation.

With provinces of their own, a substantial population, and the strongest communitarian consciousness in the country, Azad argued that the Indian Muslim community possessed the strength to avoid the label of minority in an Indian democracy. It ought to trust its ability to hold its own at an Indian centre; not least because the provinces were to be awarded a sizeable share of postcolonial power. The threat of secular democracy collapsing into Hindu majoritarianism appeared so real to Jinnah that he abandoned Indian nationalism and, instead, founded a religious alternative. But for Azad it was precisely because political secularism posed no such threat that he relied on it and established religion in another way outside the domain of representation. Hinduism and Islam were such formidable social facts that they did not necessitate a political status. Essentially backgrounding the local in a claim to represent the 'Indian nation', Azad confronted the question of Muslim minorityhood in

this direct way. The same, however, was not quite true for Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan. Though they engaged sincerely with the question of Muslim minoritisation at the centre, that Hindu domination by democratic means had little meaning for their Muslim-majority homelands in India's mountainous northwest was crucial to their ultimate dismissal of it. While important, there was more to this imagination than simply the establishment of a federal constitution in a single state. By anchoring Muslim religio-cultural expression within regional Kashmiri and Pashtun identities, they were able to transcend communal division at the national level. If Abdullah imagined Kashmiri Muslims inheriting a localised religious community as they demanded social and political rights from a chauvinistic Hindu government in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, Ghaffar Khan grounded his nonviolent freedom movement as much in the tenets of Islam as Pashtunwali—the customary ethical code of the Pashtuns. Territorialising Islam in Kashmir and the North-West Frontier and, thus, settling the vexing question of Indian Muslim political self-statement prior to any discussion about Indianness, this grander space is largely cleared of religious competition and more easily made the site for a national association with other Indians of various religious persuasions. By effectively refusing to secularise their Kashmiri and Pashtun collectives, Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan were—somewhat counterintuitively—able to champion a secular nationalism for all of India. Posing no threat to Indian nationalism, these Muslim subnationalisms can be deeply held and yet remain firmly within its ambit because they exist at the regional level and do not make claims to absolute sovereignty. It is significant that these ideas emerged among prominent leaders in overwhelmingly Muslim regions like the Kashmir Valley and the Frontier and not in the Punjab or Bengal; the latter are often written about as the most significant Muslim regions of colonial India when they are better understood as pluralities with only bare Muslim majorities. In the Punjab and Bengal, Muslim politicians frequently feared the possibility of sizeable (and often socio-economically advanced) Hindu and Sikh minorities threatening the statutory majorities granted to their community by the colonial state. This is not to say that the dominance of Muslim separatism was inevitable or that Indian nationalist or other nonaligned alternatives were unavailable—or even unpopular—in these places. Nevertheless, there is a logic to richer Indian nationalist ideas emerging among Muslims in regions where the prospect of their marginalisation was more remote. So, like Azad, Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan also found another place to

establish religion beyond the shared Indian national space though they reached this end in a different way. And by exploring the nationalist ideas of Muslim politicians from both majority and minority regions concurrently, this thesis reinforces that the problem of Indian religious politics was not existential but structural. For most political thinkers in colonial India, religious politics was shaped by one's status—not as a Hindu or Muslim per se—but as a majority or minority in an institutionally communal polity. Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan may have all insisted on a shared India but whether they occupied the position of a regional majority or minority was critical to how they imagined it.

These figures—like many in the nationalist movement—held that, in politics, Indians should be treated as autonomous individuals capable of constructing alliances defined by their socio-economic interests. Much like their great friend and colleague Jawaharlal Nehru, they were all socialists. Therefore, what separated them from Nehru in the mid-twentieth century was not the unequivocally secular conception of democratic politics that they shared with him. Rather, it was the way in which they imagined the Indian national community that made them intellectually distinctive. Sanjay Seth has shown that since he believed that Indian history was dominated by the ancient continuity of Hinduism, Nehru was circumspect in his use of the past as he imagined the future. This did not mean that Nehru denied that this history was a key component in the making of nationality. On the contrary, he took comfort from two of his most significant historical interpretations: that Indian Muslims largely descended from converted Hindus and thus had much in common with the majority community; and that an ancient proclivity for toleration had allowed Indians to house diversity within unity. Still, because he deemed it to be insufficiently shared by Hindus and Muslims, Nehru chose not to give greatest weight to this cultural history as he sought to found Indian secularism. Instead, he reserved that privilege for two contemporary objectives: a socialist politics of interest and a liberal-democratic law that upheld the fundamental rights of all Indians. In these spheres, there was apparently no threat of the Hindu appearing more Indian than the Muslim. But Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan were unwilling to stop at this and wanted to concurrently establish an idea of secular nationalism at the level of human interaction. In chapters one and two, I illustrate that Azad performed this task by resorting to a national history which for him, unlike Nehru, was sufficiently shared by both communities oriented as it was around a

profane culture. Meanwhile, that Nehru privileged Indian identity over regional subidentities to such a great extent separated him especially from Abdullah but also Ghaffar Khan. Though they shared a Kashmiri heritage, the emphasis he placed on central authority brought Nehru into conflict with Abdullah who—as I show in chapter three—imagined a historical Indian unity which aggregated the religio-cultural autonomies of Hindu and Muslim regional groups. Faisal Devji has shown that M.K. Gandhi also conceived of secularism in social rather than legal terms. An ethic designed to govern everyday relations, secularism for the Mahatma amounted to a vernacular idea of tolerance, and even love, for the religious other. More like Gandhi than Azad or Abdullah, in chapter four I argue that Ghaffar Khan focused more on the present than the past and made the secular Indian nation the site for an ethical interaction. But rather than religious tolerance, he was interested in establishing a pact of honour and obligation between two principal and equal groups: Muslim Pashtuns and Hindu Hindustanis. Inheriting a Hindustani scepticism of the unruly Pashtun, Nehru—more than Gandhi—struggled to consistently think about a relationship with the Frontier in these terms.

This does not mean that Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan discounted—or were unwilling to think innovatively about—constitutional ways of accommodating Indian diversity. However, because they were all interested in locating their secular nations *principally* in the realm of socio-cultural interaction, they shared something with Gandhi that Nehru did not. But what separated these Indian Muslim nationalists from both Nehru and Gandhi—and bound the three of them together more than anything else—was the factor of parity between Hindu and Muslim. Refusing their own minoritisation as Muslims, they elevated their respective Muslim groups (whether Indian, Kashmiri, or Pashtun) to positions from which they could be equalised with the Hindu majority. Whether they focused principally on retelling history, pursuing interregional aggregation, or founding ethical political relationships, collectively these men established a mode of thinking about Indian nationality that made the Muslim as crucial as the Hindu. This linked Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan back to the anxieties of minoritisation that they shared with Jinnah. Their own notions of parity were, at least in part, designed to counter his legal 'two-nation' theory. In fact, parity as an idea has often been associated—not with socio-cultural arguments—but with a long history of constitutional demands made by Muslim separatism. Nevertheless, our three figures

cannot be accused of ventriloquizing it. Their ideas often had intellectual histories of their own or at least predated Jinnah's demand for 'Pakistan'. Even still, though they deemed claims to Muslim nationality false and inflated political representation unwarranted, these three opponents of Jinnah—by consistently refusing Muslim minorityhood in favour of Indian equality—nevertheless shared a language, however limited, with him.

Though I pay great attention to the nuances of the different nationalisms posited by Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan, my broader argument is that by claiming—from the subject position of Muslim minority—an unequivocally *Indian* nationalism which refused to accept anything less than the *equal* treatment of Hindus and Muslims, they collectively forged a third position separate from the two dominant options available to Indian Muslims in the late colonial period. Apparently unsatisfied with a Nehruvian nation that was insufficiently shared, they each proceeded to script their own. Meanwhile, they opposed Jinnah because he forwent any Muslim claim to a shared Indian nationality and bewilderingly hankered after a superfluous solution to an overblown problem. Though they, too, acknowledged—at times explicitly and at others more implicitly—the anxieties of Muslim minoritisation, Jinnah had taken these too far. The realities of Indian Muslim life—and the prospect of a secular, socialist, and federal independent state—meant that this community scarcely necessitated a supposedly empowering religious nationality. In sum, by challenging Nehru and admonishing Jinnah, these nationalist Indian Muslim thinkers carved out a third way; an intellectual realm that could withstand the significant distinctions between them.

What emerges from these ideas is an intricate conception of the secular: a shared Indian public space consisting of both religious and non-religious elements. In so far as religious belief and practice has no role in determining the shared Indian nation it is a 'secular' idea. But that does not preclude religion from existing within an Indian public space. Unlike in the West, in multireligious India advocates of secularism have largely refused to make the constitutional distinction between (the private) church and (the public) state. Various religions continue to occupy the public space while the state is tasked with keeping what the political theorist Rajeev Bhargava calls a 'principled distance' from them. And secular Indian nationalism has not been concerned simply with the legal issue of regulating the place of religion in Indian life but also the

development of a culture of impartiality and tolerance to be shared as much by citizens as their political representatives. It is as part of this broad tradition that I understand the ideas of Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan. This is especially because—like Gandhi—they resorted to the domain of socio-cultural interaction to found secularism and refused to entirely separate theology from it. So far removed were these Indian Muslim nationalists from the European idea of secularism that they even made comparative theology a part of their public conversation about Indian life. I illustrate that just as they jealously guarded the frontiers of Islam to preserve its autonomy, they opened it up to a dialogue with Hinduism.

Rarely concerned about giving these figures any intellectual integrity of their own, the grand narrative of the Indian nationalist movement has tended to view them as subordinates to Nehru and Gandhi. Consequently, they have been almost written out of the rich mid-twentieth century debate about an Indian future to which they were independent contributors. That they were the losers of history perhaps explains this historiographical oversight. Be that as it may, I have chosen to focus on these three figures not only because they provide ample material to illustrate that an unrecognised mode of disputing Indian Muslim minoritisation existed in the mid-twentieth century. I also emphasise that within the realm of mid-twentieth century Indian nationalism, these three thinker-politicians (and, by association, some of their colleagues and acolytes) were by far its most important Muslim political actors. Therefore, rather than any recourse to some peripheral history, this thesis is a contribution to our wider appreciation of nationalism in South Asia and secular Indian nationalism in particular. For while Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan wished to claim that their own Muslim groups were integral to any conception of modern Indian nationhood, they were not parochial thinkers. Beyond protecting Muslim significance and interest, they frequently understood that their principle of Indian equality would have meaning for groups other than their own. So, by recentring (rather than decentring) the historiography around secular Indian nationalism, what I uncover is a new set of perspectives on major South Asian debates about: majority and minority; a national past and culture; secularism; and regional and religious identities and their political representation. And by placing these perspectives in dialogue, not only with Gandhian and Nehruvian alternatives, but also significant opposing ideas like Hindu and Muslim religious nationalism, this work

contributes to a wider discussion about the meaning of political concepts in modern India and Pakistan.

Since Azad, Abdullah, Ghaffar Khan, and their associates were not political theorists per se but actors, my extensive body of published and archival sources overlaps with those of traditional political historians. The speeches and statements used by empiricists to build a case in favour of one narrative of history over another, can also be understood by intellectual historians as articulations of thought. Until recently, the empirical approach to writing about Indian nationalists had escaped serious challenge. Focusing on a set of understudied Indian Muslim nationalists, this thesis is a contribution to that ongoing historiographical shift.

Acknowledgements

My first debt of gratitude is to my supervisor, Faisal Devji, without whose dedicated tutelage and unending encouragement this work would not have been possible. On arriving at Balliol College for a year-long master's programme at the end of 2013, Faisal inspired my move away from the largely traditional, empirical historical methods that I had been schooled in till then and towards intellectual history and political thought; he was incredibly patient and supportive as I began a transition that renewed my passion for the subject. More recently, he has read and commented extensively on my draft chapters multiple times; pushed me to take my ideas further than I thought they could go; and been just as enthusiastic about this DPhil project at the end of four years as he was when I began it in 2015. In fact, Faisal's unwavering belief in this project has almost always outstripped my own—he seemed convinced of its coherence and significance long before I finally set aside my own reservations about it. But, above all, I am grateful to him for teaching me what I take to be his most valuable lesson: that there is more to history than simply the past. A cricketing analogy I have occasionally shared with friends and family best describes how Faisal insists on his students combining the fundamentals of good historical enquiry with the bold, ambitious creativity necessary to excavate ideas. Being under his wing is equivalent to the good fortune of those young batsmen currently learning the ropes from Rahul Dravid. The essentials of batsmanship are nonnegotiable; you must start by knowing where your off-stump is and be merciless when bowlers stray onto the pads. But there is plenty of scope for the audacious. You can find your own answer to cutting fast bowlers to the point fence without really going fully back and across; or, if you are feeling especially brave, punching the off-spinner—off the back foot, against the spin, and on the rise—forward of point to the cover boundary even off good length deliveries. Faisal is aware of my obsession with cricket and seems to be unimpressed by it; this, however, is the best tribute I can pay to him for everything he has taught me.

My next note of thanks is to my supportive friends—Vanya Bhargav, Smriti Sawkar, Priya Atwal, and Ria Kapoor—who travelled their own DPhil journeys alongside my own, offered insightful feedback on my draft chapters, and told me I was better than I actually am. I am especially grateful to Vanya for reining me in whenever my writing became elliptical or abandoned the balance between ideas and context; and for being an excellent peer with whom to discuss our respective readings of understudied nationalisms at the Lamb & Flag and Wine Café (not to be confused with Wine Company, Gurgaon). That these conversations took place in the backdrop of increasingly grave political situations in both India and Pakistan and the global lurch towards right-wing populism, made them all the more meaningful. I would also like to thank Stephen Gucciardi for preparing a set of Persian transliterations for me and for initiating the most excellent discussions about politics and language whenever he returned to Oxford.

I am also appreciative of the feedback I received from Rosalind O'Hanlon and Yasmin Khan who kindly agreed to examine both my Transfer of Status and Confirmation of Status; and at conferences and workshops from various academics and students but especially Ruth Harris, Chris Moffat, Gautham Shiralagi, and Sophie-Jung Kim. I would like to thank both Chris and Salma Siddiqui for sharing their book manuscripts with me prior to publication so that I could reference their excellent work. To Farzana Shaikh, Mukulika Banerjee, Francis Robinson, Steven Gunn, Hatice Yıldız,

and John Watts, I owe thanks for showing interest in my work and offering me important advice and suggestions. To Salman Khurshid and Najma Heptulla for taking out significant portions of time to share their views about—and memories of—Zakir Husain and Abul Kalam Azad with me. And to Javed Akhtar and Shabana Azmi for spending a very useful day discussing the lives of their fathers, Jan Nisar Akhtar and Kaifi Azmi, and the wider Progressive Writers' Movement; and also for bringing *Hindostan Hamara*—an anthology of Urdu poems—to my attention. I am also grateful to the archivists at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) in Delhi for assisting me on my research trips; and another fellow Oxford South Asianist, Sharinee Jagtiani, for bringing back some NMML papers I was unable to collect.

Since this thesis is not just a four-year project but the culmination of many years in education, it would be remiss of me not to appreciate those who were integral to my earlier development. For this, I would like to thank Imre Bangha and Arthur Dudney who taught me as an Oxford master's student but also some of my teachers during my time at University College London and Rickmansworth School: Julian Hoppit, Jason Peacey, Eleanor Newbigin, Amrita Shodhan, Marelle Rice, Jennifer Davison, Tim Griffiths, and Edward MacLeod. I am also grateful to Stephanie Solywoda at Stanford House, Oxford for encouraging me to take up multiple opportunities to build my own teaching career over the last four years.

This project was made possible by the generous funding I received both from the Clarendon Fund and Merton College. I am grateful to my friends at Merton for more than compensating for the solitude that comes with doctoral research. I am especially thankful to Joe Liotta, Louis Halewood, Pascal Croak, and the great pretender from over the road at University College, Todd Carter, for sharing thought-provoking conversations about philosophy, politics, history, and history writing and for adopting my favourite Warm Whisky as their own. I also owe thanks to Vice-President Louis, Treasurer Christian Willmes, and, above all, President Lily McElwee for setting the tone and making the MCR a fun place to be during my time as a humble social secretary in 2017-18; and to Adil Hossain for punctuating long conversations about India's past and present with Urdu *sher*s and for helping me bring the *sherwani* to Merton. My friends at home in London provided much-needed respite from study and I am especially grateful to two of them. Shamik Savjani never needed an excuse to take a break from work, while frequent trips to the badminton court with Zain Janmohamed during my last phase of writing was most welcome even if he took these games far too seriously. I also thank both Shamik and Zain for constantly enquiring about my progress over the last four years.

I am thankful to my extended family for their affection and encouragement of which four people require special mention. My *nani*, Sulakshana Joshi, took good care of me each time I visited Delhi for work (and rest). I am also grateful to her and my *nana*, Onkar Nath Joshi, for accompanying me on many of the excursions that I made in the hope of discovering the country and for sharing both the conversations that these prompted and their thoughtful views about the rich tapestry of Indian life. My *nana* also deciphered a bunch of hand-written Urdu letters sent to and from Azad that I brought back to his Gurgaon residence after a day at the NMML. But, even more important for my work, has been his deep engagement with the Urdu language which was a source of great inspiration for me during my most impressionable years. His numerous memories from the mid-twentieth century—from the young 'pandit' and 'maulvi' who learned

Hindi and Urdu in a Lahore classroom to the stray dog who was free at Partition—also triggered or reinforced my own questions about the past. I would like to thank my two *mama*s: Ashwini Gulati for taking an interest in my arguments as I was constructing them, keeping track of my progress, and making trips to visit me in Oxford; and Rajeev Gulati without whose support navigating the highs and lows of doctoral study might have been too difficult; and to both of them for having encouraged my interest in politics and discussing with me issues past and present from a young age.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my immediate family for which no words can ever do full justice. Especially towards the end, a summer holiday that was meant to be spent in their company was sacrificed for the good of this thesis. This project began at a time when my brother, Kushal, had begun to embark on his own journey of intellectual enquiry. I thank him for sharing my commitment to ideas, commenting intelligently on every chapter I wrote, and constantly reminding me of the academic duty to engage with the wider world. I am grateful to my sister, Aneeska, for her care and laughter whenever we converged at home for summer and winter holidays and for providing me with some smart editing suggestions as I came closer to submission. To my father, Satinder, I am grateful for his unflinching encouragement along the doctoral road after he brought some of my early research to life on screen in 2015-16; to my mother, Neena, for often prompting me to think more deeply about my writing; and to both of my parents for having always encouraged my siblings and I to think beyond the narrow confines of our own home and grapple critically with the problems of the world. To these two teachers, I dedicate this thesis.

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Abbreviations

AISPC	All-India States Peoples' Conference
CD	Cabinet Delegation
CWMG	*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*
HH	*Hindostan Hamara*
HMCA	*Hindu-Muslim Cultural Accord*
IH	*The Indian Heritage*
IWF	*India Wins Freedom*
JKCAD	*Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly Debate*
KCHD	*Kashmir: Constitutional History and Documents*
KT	*Kashmir on Trial*
MOI	*The Muslims of India*
MSBK	*Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*
NK	*New Kashmir*
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Archives
PZHS	*President Zakir Husain's Speeches*
SMA	*Speeches of Maulana Azad, 1947-1958*
SWJN	*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*
SWSI	*Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*
TOI	*The Times of India*
TP	*The Transfer of Power*
WSSSAK	*Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*

Introduction

Writing in 1942, a twenty-five-year-old Pashtun and Indian nationalist explained how a tour of Muslim West Asia and North Africa in 1926 had led his great mentor away from pan-Islamism and towards territorial nationalism. Reflecting on what Abdul Ghaffar Khan had learned a decade and a half earlier, Mohammad Yunus noted that the future of Indian Muslims lay in constructing a shared political community with their Hindu compatriots. The increasing predominance of the nation-state demanded it:

> He returned from his tour with a much broader vision and a desire to utilize his experiences for the betterment of his people. He had seen for himself Musalmans caught up in a wave of nationalism. He had noticed how the Pan-Islamic idea was being replaced by an aggressive form of nationalism all over the Muslim world. The Khilafat regime had been abolished in Turkey, where a powerful Republic had sprung up under Ataturk. Iran and Arabia had come under the strong hands of nationalist leaders like Reza Shah and Ibn Saud, each marching ahead independently of the other. He had seen the growth, under Zaghlul Pasha, of a purely Egyptian party, which was far from being communal and embraced all communities in its fold. All these observations produced their effects on this man, who was soon to become the living symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity in this unfortunate land of Hindustan. These reactions left their impress on him, and in spite of so much confused thinking in the country over the communal problem, Ghaffar Khan stands firm as a rock and feels that, sooner or later, his policy will prove to be the best for the Muslims of India.[1]

At the close of the First World War in 1919, Indian Muslim activists called on their influential British rulers to preserve the authority of the Ottoman sultan as the caliph of Sunni Islam even as his empire began to collapse around him. The Khilafat Movement, as it came to be known, soon received the support of the Indian National Congress and its leader M.K. Gandhi who twinned it with his Non-Cooperation Movement for Indian self-government. The Mahatma believed that Hindu assistance for an exclusively Muslim cause might finally establish disinterested communal relations in India.[2] By nationalising the Khilafat Movement in this way, Gandhi brought a group of Muslim leaders from north India into greater prominence: M.A. Ansari, Abul Kalam Azad, and the Ali brothers—Mohammad and Shaukat. No longer were liberal lawyer-politicians—who believed that the best way to finally achieve self-rule was to continue petitioning the British Raj for incremental constitutional concessions—the only voices of nationalist Indian Muslim opinion. And these Khilafatists were significantly different from constitutionalists like Mohammad Ali Jinnah, or before him Badruddin Tyabji, not

[1] M. Yunus, *Frontier Speaks*, (Lahore, 1947 [1942]), p.112.
[2] F. Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, (London, 2012), pp.67-92.

simply because they took part in mass protests and wrote in a confrontational, anticolonial tone. Unwilling to bring religious belief into politics, Tyabji and Jinnah had restricted themselves to the secular question of representative Indian national government and the inclusion of the Muslim minority within it.[3] The Khilafat leaders, meanwhile, provided Islamic justifications for their own inclusion within an Indian nation and tempered it with ideas of a global Muslim community. Since Muhammad had struck a pact with the Jews and polytheists of Medina to found his polity in the seventh century, so, too, could Indian Muslims establish a self-governing India with its other religio-social groupings. This was to be a country that privileged the distinction and autonomy of religious communities over any significant interaction between them. But once the Caliphate was abolished in 1924, these Muslim thinkers were forced to reconsider their ideas. In fact, the ideological shift that Yunus attributes to Ghaffar Khan, who had been a local Khilafat leader in his own North-West Frontier Province, describes the similar intellectual journey of other figures, too. While the Ali brothers severed their links with Gandhi and remained in Jinnah's increasingly separatist All-India Muslim League, Ansari and Azad continued to play important roles in Congress.

But it is Azad, not Ansari, who I am interested in. For contrary to the assumption popularised by historians like Mushirul Hasan that Ansari and Azad were cut from the same cloth,[4] Azad underwent an ideological transformation that Ansari did not endure. An *alim,* or Islamic scholar, educated privately at home in Calcutta, Azad came from a family of Delhi theologians and first rose to fame as a fiery pan-Islamist and anticolonial journalist in 1912. From the late colonial period, he, like Ghaffar Khan, not only backgrounded any pan-Islamic concerns,[5] but sufficiently separated himself from the

[3] For B. Tyabji, see 'Presidential Address', Madras, December 1887, in A.M. Zaidi (ed.), *Congress Presidential Addresses*, Vol.1, (5 vols, Delhi, 1985), pp.41-50. For M.A. Jinnah, see 'Presidential Address', Lucknow, 30 December 1916, in S.S. Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents, 1906-47*, Vol.1, (2 vols, Karachi, 1969-70), pp.370-7.

[4] M. Hasan, 'Introduction', in Hasan (ed.), *Islam and Indian Nationalism: Reflections on Abul Kalam Azad*, (Delhi, 2001), pp.6-7.

[5] At the end of his career, Azad reiterated what he had, by now, long taken to be the limitations of pan-Islamism in the epilogue of his memoir: 'It is one of the greatest frauds on the people to suggest that religious affinity can unite areas which are geographically, economically, linguistically and culturally different. It is true that Islam sought to establish a society which transcends racial, linguistic, economic and political frontiers. History has however proved that after the first few decades or at the most after the first century, Islam was not able to unite all the Muslim countries on the basis of Islam alone.' A.K. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, (Delhi, 1988 [1959]), p.248.

old idea of distinct and distant communities inhabiting one territory.[6] I want to demonstrate that both leaders—as well as the popular Kashmiri nationalist Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah—came to argue that Indians made for an interactive national community which, outside the realm of religious practice, frequently traversed the boundary between Hindu and Muslim. What these thinkers proposed—albeit in very different ways as we shall see—was a shared, as opposed to composite, nationality.

If this thought signalled a break from earlier ideas, it nevertheless remained focused on a familiar problem. From the beginning of the twentieth century, the British embarked on a gradual process of democratisation in India. The significance of the religious community to Indian representative politics proceeded from the established colonial view that it was the unrivalled category of Indian identification as opposed to one of many. So while demography is always a fundamental feature of democracy, in colonial India the importance of religion and numbers of adherents was amplified by the ideology of the Raj.[7] Concerned that incremental democratisation would eventually herald Hindu domination in India, Muslim elites started to demand separate political representation for their religious community to offset its minority status. In 1909, the state responded by raising the religious community—above the intrinsic individualism of democratic theory—to the level of an exclusive political constituency. This meant granting separate electorates to Muslims; a provision that was later extended to Sikhs in the Punjab. The problem of Muslim minoritisation in India, therefore, was a fundamentally structural one. In the period under review here, Jinnah produced his own rendition of this legal demand when he elevated the Indian Muslim minority to the status of a nation from around 1937. Jinnah was reacting as much to the collapse of the League of Nations regime and its language of minority rights as he was to Congress' ever more strident refusal to dilute its conception of a secular state with the principal of communal representation. Entitled to equal constitutional treatment, the Qaid-e-Azam, or Great Leader, as he was famously christened by Gandhi, claimed that two nations

[6] As late as 1931, Ghaffar Khan was referring to the covenant of Medina in his speeches on the Frontier (see A.G. Khan, 'Founding of Khudai Khidmatgar', 10 November 1931, Dab, in P.S. Ramu (ed.), *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan: Khudai Khidmatgar and National Movement*, (Delhi, 1992), p.54). His wider interests, however, meant that this consideration, though still intellectually valid and politically useful, was nevertheless surpassed by others as he constructed the Indian nation.

[7] For more on the category of religion in colonial India see S. Kaviraj, 'The Imaginary Institution of India', in P. Chatterjee and G. Pandey (eds), *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Vol.7, (10 vols, Delhi, 1993).

were inhabiting one subcontinent: Hindu India and Muslim India.[8] But if the Pakistan Movement represented one path taken by Muslim minoritarian anxieties about secular democracy in mid-twentieth century India, in this thesis I wish to explore another. Indeed, the Indian nationalism of Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan did not signal some kind of departure from this longstanding Muslim concern. Instead of reducing Indian plurality to homogeneity so as to simply construct a new majority, these figures looked to Indian nationalism to both generate a non-religious shared identity and retain multiple subidentities within it and, thereby, produce a solution to the problem of minoritisation.

Recentring Indian Nationalism

Azad was of the view that their intrinsic communitarian strength meant that Muslims were only a nominal minority in India. In his presidential address to the Ramgarh session of Congress in 1940, the Maulana noted that nothing was 'further removed from the truth than to say that Indian Muslims occupy the position of a political minority'. Despite India's 'population ratio', this 'vast concourse' of Muslim humanity was in the majority in five of the country's twelve provinces and was the largest concentration of Muslims anywhere in the world. Unlike India's 'other communities' riven by 'social and racial divisions', its ninety-five million Muslims were connected by an egalitarian 'Islamic brotherhood';[9] this amounted to a rejection not only of caste hierarchy among Muslims but also interdenominational conflict.[10] With provinces of their own, a substantial population, and the strongest communitarian consciousness in the country, Muslims had the requisite quantity *and* qualities to avoid the label of minority in an Indian democracy. Put simply, the Muslim community possessed such strength that it ought to trust its ability to hold its own at an Indian centre; not least because the provinces were to be awarded a sizeable share of postcolonial power.[11] The threat of

[8] Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea*, (London, 2013), pp.102-6.
[9] Azad, 'Presidential Address', Ramgarh, 2 March 1940, in P.N. Chopra (ed.), *Maulana Azad: Selected Speeches and Statements 1940-7*, (Delhi, 1990), pp.16-7.
[10] Members of India's Sunni majority, Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan all embraced an ecumenical Islam and seemingly paid little attention to Sunni-Shia relations.
[11] Mine here is a revised version of an argument made by Aamir Mufti. By ignoring the Maulana's call for decentralisation and focusing on ideas of strength and trust alone, Mufti overplays his argument that this politics occupied nothing more than a thoroughly abstract realm. Azad's federal constitution was a tangible concession to his coreligionists which makes his 'creed' appear far less 'unprovable' than Mufti suggests. I establish this revision at greater length in A. Sohal, 'Ideas of Parity: Muslims, Sikhs and the 1946 Cabinet Mission Plan', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies,* 40/4 (2017). For Mufti, see

secular democracy collapsing into Hindu majoritarianism appears so real to Jinnah that he must abandon Indian nationalism and, instead, establish a religious alternative. But for Azad it is precisely because political secularism poses no such threat that he can rely on it and establish religion in another way outside the domain of representation. Hinduism and Islam are such formidable social facts that they do not necessitate a political status. Such a status would have no effect on their both remaining integral to Indian life.

Despite his connections to Calcutta and Delhi, Azad did not identify strongly with any particular city or province but with 'India' or 'Hindustan'—which referred either to the vast northern plains or the country as a whole. Essentially backgrounding the local in a claim to represent the 'nation', he was forced to confront the question of Muslim minorityhood in this direct way. The same, however, was not quite true for Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan. Though they engaged sincerely with the question of Muslim minoritisation at the centre, that Hindu domination by democratic means had little meaning in their Muslim-majority homelands in the mountainous northwest of the country was crucial to their ultimate dismissal of it. As a bewildered Ghaffar Khan noted on the eve of the Partition of India in 1947, 'the idea that we could be dominated by outsiders is beyond my comprehension'.[12] And while important, there was more to this imagination than simply the establishment of a federal constitution in a single state. I want to stress that by anchoring Muslim religio-cultural expression within regional Kashmiri and Pashtun identities, they were able to transcend communal division at the national level. If Abdullah imagined Kashmiri Muslims inheriting a localised religious community as they demanded social and political rights from a chauvinistic Hindu government in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, Ghaffar Khan grounded his nonviolent freedom movement as much in the tenets of Islam as Pashtunwali—the customary ethical code of the Pashtuns. Effectively territorialising Islam and, thereby, settling the vexing question of Indian Muslim political self-statement prior (or separate) to any discussion about Indianness, this grander space is largely cleared of religious competition. Consequently, it is more easily made the site for an unshackled

Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture, (Princeton, 2007), p.165.

[12] Khan in *The Times of India*, 9 June 1947, quoted in Y. Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, (London, 2007), p.92.

association with other Indians of various religious persuasions.[13] Both Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan expressed the idea that their regions housed their own ethnolinguistic nationality which was nevertheless bound with others in a greater heterogenous Indian nation. And it was by refusing to secularise their Kashmiri and Pashtun nations that they were, somewhat counterintuitively, able to champion a secular nationalism for all of India. Indeed, rather than posing a threat to Indian nationalism, these Muslim (sub)nationalisms can be deeply held and yet remain firmly within its ambit because they exist at the regional level and do not make claims to absolute sovereignty. It is significant that these ideas emerged among prominent leaders in overwhelmingly Muslim regions like the Kashmir Valley and the Frontier and not in the Punjab or Bengal; the latter are often written about by historians as the most significant Muslim regions of colonial India when they are better understood as pluralities with only bare Muslim majorities.[14] In the Punjab and Bengal, Muslim politicians frequently feared the possibility of sizeable (and often socio-economically advanced) Hindu and Sikh minorities threatening the statutory majorities granted to their community by the colonial state. This is not to say that the dominance of Muslim separatism was inevitable or that Indian nationalist or other nonaligned alternatives were unavailable—or even unpopular—in these places.[15] Nevertheless, there is a logic to richer Indian nationalist ideas emerging among Muslims in regions where the prospect of their marginalisation was more remote. So Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan, like Azad, also find another place to establish religion beyond the shared Indian national space though they reach this end in a different way. In fact, by exploring the nationalist ideas of Muslim politicians from both majority and minority regions, this thesis reinforces that the problem of Indian religious politics was not existential but structural. For most political thinkers in colonial India, religious politics was shaped by one's status—not as a Hindu or Muslim

[13] We will find that though he diverged from our three nationalist figures in significant respects, the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal also wished to territorialise Islam in the northwest for a renewed association with India's Hindu majority and, thus, appears as an important interlocutor in this thesis. Interestingly, the idea of territorialising a minority religion to appropriate an idea of India was not restricted to Muslims. The Akali Sikhs, by calling for a redistribution of the Punjab into two provinces that would conveniently award their small and scattered community a kingmaker status, sought something similar. For this, see Sohal, 'Ideas of Parity', pp.714-7.

[14] In 1941, Muslims made for ninety-three percent of inhabitants in the Kashmir Valley; seventy-seven percent in Jammu and Kashmir as a whole; and ninety-two percent in the Frontier. Only fifty-seven percent of Punjabis and fifty-five percent of Bengalis were Muslim. *Census of India, 1941*, Vol.1, (24 vols, Delhi, 1941), pp.98-9.

[15] For alternatives in the Punjab and Bengal see, I. Talbot, *Khizr Tiwana: the Punjab Unionist Party and the Partition of India*, (Oxford, 1996); and S. Ghosh, *Different Nationalisms: Bengal, 1905-1947*, (Delhi, 2017).

per se—but as a majority or minority in an institutionally communal polity. Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan may have all insisted on a shared India but whether they occupied the position of a regional majority or minority was critical to how these Muslim figures imagined it.

Uninterested in making the nation a religious category having secured the fate of Indian Islam elsewhere, our three principal figures—like many in the nationalist movement—held that, in politics, Indians should be treated as autonomous individuals capable of constructing cross-communal alliances defined by their socio-economic interests. Much like their great friend and thinker-politician Jawaharlal Nehru, these three Indian Muslim nationalists were all socialists. Therefore, what separated them from Nehru in the mid-twentieth century was not the unequivocally secular conception of democratic politics that they shared with him. Rather, it was the way in which they imagined the Indian national community that made them intellectually distinctive. Sanjay Seth has shown that since he believed that Indian history was dominated by the ancient continuity of Hinduism, Nehru was circumspect in his use of the past as he imagined the future. This did not mean that Nehru denied that this history was a key component in the making of nationality. On the contrary, he took comfort from two of his most significant historical interpretations: that Indian Muslims largely descended from converted Hindus and thus had much in common with the majority community; and that an ancient proclivity for toleration had allowed Indians to house diversity within unity. Still, because he deemed it to be insufficiently shared by Hindus and Muslims, Nehru chose not to give greatest weight to this cultural history as he sought to found Indian secularism.[16] Instead, he reserved that privilege for two contemporary objectives: a socialist politics of interest and a liberal-democratic law that upheld the fundamental rights of all Indians. In these spheres, there was apparently no threat of the Hindu appearing more Indian than the Muslim.[17] But Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan were unwilling to stop at this and wanted to concurrently establish an idea of secular nationalism at the level of human interaction. Azad performed this task by resorting to a national history which for him, unlike Nehru, was sufficiently shared by

[16] S. Seth, 'Nationalism, National Identity and "History": Nehru's Search for India', *Thesis Eleven*, 32 (1992).
[17] See J. Nehru, 'The Congress and the Muslims', 10 January 1937, in S. Gopal et al. (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol.8, (74 vols, Delhi, 1984-), pp.119-22.

both communities oriented as it was around a profane culture. Often used by Muslim separatism to advance its constitutional claims, the Maulana also relied on the purported historical importance of Indian Muslims but to make a socio-cultural and nationalist argument.[18] Meanwhile, that Nehru privileged Indian identity over regional subidentities to such a great extent separated him especially from Abdullah but also Ghaffar Khan. Though they shared a Kashmiri heritage, the emphasis he placed on central authority brought Nehru into conflict with Abdullah who imagined a historical Indian unity which aggregated the religio-cultural autonomies of Hindu and Muslim regional groups. Faisal Devji has shown that Gandhi also conceived of secularism in social rather than legal terms. Designed to govern everyday relations, secularism for the Mahatma amounted to a vernacular idea of tolerance, and even love, for the religious other. Gandhi hoped that by freeing religious relations from the mediation of a colonial state that had inevitably encouraged communal competition and violence, Hindus and Muslims would cease to be political interests and emerge, instead, as disinterested friends committed to an ethical ideal.[19] More like Gandhi than Azad or Abdullah, Ghaffar Khan focused more on the present than the past and made the secular Indian nation the site for an ethical interaction. But rather than a vernacular idea of religious tolerance, he was interested in establishing a pact of honour and obligation between two principal and equal groups: Muslim Pashtuns and Hindu Hindustanis. Inheriting a Hindustani scepticism of the unruly Pashtun, we will find that Nehru—more than Gandhi—struggled to consistently think about a relationship with the Frontier in these terms.

This does not mean that Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan discounted—or were unwilling to think innovatively about—constitutional ways of accommodating Indian diversity. However, because they were all interested in locating their secular nations *principally* in the realm of socio-cultural interaction, they shared something with Gandhi that Nehru did not. But what separates these Indian Muslim nationalists from both Nehru and Gandhi—and binds the three of them together more than anything else—is the factor of parity between Hindu and Muslim that animates each of their

[18] For the separatist relationship with Indian history, see F. Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860-1947*, (Cambridge, 1989).
[19] Devji, 'The Secular Eye', in Z. Jumabhoy and B.H. Tan (eds), *The Progressive Revolution: Modern Art for a New India*, (New York, 2018), p.58.

national ideas. Refusing their own minoritisation as Muslims, they elevated their respective Muslim groups (whether Indian, Kashmiri, or Pashtun) to positions from which they could be equalised with the Hindu majority. Whether they focused principally on retelling history, pursuing interregional aggregation, or founding ethical political relationships, collectively these men established a mode of thinking about Indian nationality that made the Muslim as crucial as the Hindu. This, of course, linked Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan back to the anxieties of minoritisation that they shared with Jinnah. Their own notions of parity were, at least in part, designed to counter his legal claim that Hindus and Muslims belonged to different but equal nations. In fact, parity as an idea has often been associated—not with socio-cultural arguments—but with a long history of constitutional demands made by Muslim separatism. Nevertheless, our three figures cannot be accused of ventriloquizing it. Their ideas often had intellectual histories of their own or at least predated Jinnah's adoption of the 'two-nation' theory. Even still, though they deemed claims to Muslim nationality false and inflated political representation unwarranted, these three opponents of the Qaid—by consistently refusing Muslim minorityhood in favour of Indian equality—nevertheless shared a language, however limited, with him.

What emerges from these ideas is an intricate conception of the secular. In so far as religious belief and practice has no role in determining the shared Indian nation it is a 'secular' idea. But that does not preclude religion from existing within an Indian public space. In European history and thought, secularism has customarily named the constitutional separation between church and state. Making the public domain the exclusive preserve of profane activity, religion is privatised. In India, however, advocates of secularism have largely refused to draw this stark distinction. Multiple religions continue to occupy the public space while the state is tasked with keeping what the political theorist Rajeev Bhargava calls a 'principled distance' from them. A flexible and contextual idea that renders the public/private distinction meaningless, it commands that 'the state intervenes or refrains from interfering [in religious affairs], depending on which of the two better promotes religious liberty and equality of citizenship.' Formulated in opposition to a sectarian or communal principle of governance that favours one religious community over the other, the decisions made by the secular Indian state to intervene or not must 'be guided by non-sectarian

principles consistent with a set of values constitutive of a life of equal dignity for all.'[20] Therefore, secular Indian nationalism has not been concerned simply with the legal issue of regulating the place of religion in Indian life but the development of a culture of impartiality and tolerance; a culture to be shared as much by individual Indians in their interactions with each other as their political representatives. And it is as part of this broad tradition that we should understand the ideas that I wish to explore in this thesis. This is especially because Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan—like Gandhi—resorted to the domain of socio-cultural interaction to found secularism and refused to entirely separate theology from it. So far removed were these Indian Muslim nationalists from the European idea of separation that they even made comparative theology a part of their public conversation about Indian life. Just as they jealously guarded the frontiers of Islam to preserve its autonomy, they opened it up to a dialogue with Hinduism. The secular for these figures, therefore, was a shared Indian public space consisting of both religious and non-religious elements.

Crucial to the secular nationalism that Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan propagated, then, were two factors: religious demography and socio-cultural contact between Indians. It was because their Muslim groups were Indian minorities that they were so interested in using the realm of human interaction—and not merely a law which guaranteed the plurality of churches—to further offset that status. The nuances of the nationalisms posited by these figures will appear more distinct later. For our present purposes, though, I want to emphasise that by claiming, from the subject position of Muslim minority, an unequivocally *Indian* nationalism which refused to accept anything less than the *equal* treatment of Hindus and Muslims, they collectively forged a third position separate from the two dominant options available to Indian Muslims in the late colonial period. Apparently unsatisfied with a Nehruvian nation that was insufficiently shared, they each proceeded to script their own. Meanwhile, they opposed Jinnah because he forwent any Muslim claim to a shared Indian nationality and bewilderingly hankered after a superfluous solution to an overblown problem. Though they, too, acknowledged—at times explicitly and at others more implicitly—the anxieties of Muslim minoritisation, Jinnah had taken these too far. The realities of Indian Muslim life—and the prospect of a secular, socialist, and federal independent

[20] R. Bhargava, 'What is Secularism For?', in Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics*, (Delhi, 1998), p.515.

state—meant that this community scarcely necessitated a supposedly empowering religious nationality. In sum, by challenging Nehru and admonishing Jinnah, these nationalist Indian Muslim thinkers carved out a third way; an intellectual realm that could withstand the significant distinctions between them.

I want to be clear that by distinguishing Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan from their more celebrated colleagues Nehru and Gandhi, this work does not somehow amount to a reassertion of the reductionist view put forward by Ayesha Jalal and Shabnum Tejani that Congress—led principally by these two men—was a fundamentally Hindu organisation whose claim to secularism was deceitful.[21] Instead, I wish to contend that though it included some Hindu nationalists and its secular leaders did not always escape descents into Hindu majoritarianism, the nationalist movement was intellectually diverse and retained multiple authentic secularities within it. And though not without its own internal distinctions, the thought of Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan—which they formulated in the late colonial period and retained until the end of their careers long after independence and Partition in 1947—represented one of these secularities.

Rarely concerned about giving these figures any intellectual integrity of their own, the grand narrative of the Indian nationalist movement has tended to view them as loyal followers who refused to desert Nehru and Gandhi as communal tension mounted during the final years of the Raj. Viewed largely as subordinates, they have been almost written out of the rich mid-twentieth century debate about an Indian future to which they were keen and independent contributors. Of the three, Azad has received some focused historiographical attention, but this has reduced him to either a tragic pariah out of sync with contemporary majoritarian nationalism or the subject of mindless hagiographies. That he, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan were ultimately the losers of history perhaps explains this historiographical oversight. Besides, political and intellectual historians of Indian Muslims have been engaged in a protracted debate about the more successful Jinnah and his complex idea of a Muslim nation or

[21] A. Jalal, 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia', in S. Bose and Jalal (eds), *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India*, (Delhi, 1999); S. Tejani, *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History, 1890-1950*, (Bloomington, 2008).

'Pakistan'.[22] Be that as it may, I have chosen to focus on these three figures not only because they provide ample material to illustrate that an unrecognised mode of disputing Indian Muslim minoritisation existed in the mid-twentieth century; they were also important political actors in their own right. Boasting of considerable public support, Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan were the foremost nationalist leaders of their respective regions in this period. Yet to be treated as thinkers of Indian nationalism, scholars have seemingly mistaken their regional location for an interest in local activism alone. From 1940 to 1946, Azad was president of Congress and his stature in the party was surpassed only by Nehru and Gandhi. He was not a conventional mass leader and—crucially in a communalised political system—lacked the support of his enfranchised coreligionists. Nevertheless, he enjoyed a constitutional importance in Congress significant enough to shift its official policy, however briefly prior to Partition, away from centralism and towards federalism.[23] And while the Gujarati leader Vallabhbhai Patel upstaged him just before independence, Azad emerged as the only Muslim in Prime Minister Nehru's cabinet with a significant voice. Therefore, within the realm of mid-twentieth century Indian nationalism, these three figures (and, by association, some of their colleagues and acolytes) were by far the most important Muslim thinker-politicians. If others were not insignificant, they lacked the inclination and/or capacity to stake out distinct political positions from which they could hope to shape the future of India. Therefore, I wish to stress that rather than any recourse to some peripheral history, my study is a contribution to our wider appreciation of nationalism in South Asia and secular Indian nationalism in particular. For while Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan wished to claim that their own Muslim groups were integral to any conception of modern Indian nationhood, they were not parochial thinkers. Beyond protecting Muslim significance and interest, they frequently understood that their principle of Indian equality would have meaning for groups other than their own. So, what I attempt to uncover in this thesis is a new set of perspectives on major South Asian debates about: majority and minority; a national past and culture; secularism; and regional and religious identities and their political representation. My endeavour is not to decentre but rather recentre the historiography around secular Indian

[22] The most important works being: Devji, *Muslim Zion*; Shaikh, *Community and Consensus*; and Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, (New York, 1985).
[23] Sohal, 'Ideas of Parity', pp.717-22.

nationalism as an idea. And by placing these perspectives in dialogue, not only with Gandhian and Nehruvian alternatives, but also significant opposing ideas like Hindu and Muslim religious nationalism, this work seeks to contribute to a wider discussion about the meaning of political concepts in modern India and Pakistan.

Culture and Religion

Stressing the importance of cultural production to the creation of Indianness, Azad argued that contemporary Indian nationhood was not, as Nehru suggested, an ancient inheritance, but the mutual achievement of Hindus and Muslims in the medieval and early modern periods. A member of the *ashraf* (gentry) whose Central Asian ancestors arrived in north India during that phase of history, for Azad the nation was forged only once this final caravan of settlers reached Hindustan. The views of the Maulana often chimed with those of three other Muslim Congressmen. There was the Bihari politician Syed Mahmud who shared a fractious friendship with him,[24] and the Hyderabad-born educationist Zakir Husain who came from a Pashtun family from Qaimganj in present-day Uttar Pradesh and became the third president of the Indian Republic in 1967 for two years until his death. Like Azad, both Mahmud and Husain were principally Urdu speakers; an urban language associated mainly with the towns and cities of northern India. The third, and intellectually most significant of the Maulana's associates, was the prolific Bengali and English writer-politician Humayun Kabir who, at various times during this period, acted as Azad's trusted secretary. Also well-versed in Urdu, Kabir famously rendered Azad's memoir in English after the Maulana narrated his thoughts in Urdu.[25] Indicated most clearly by Azad during his address at Ramgarh in 1940, these figures developed the idea of cultural parity in their writings and speeches thereafter.

[24] In 1937, Azad unsuccessfully backed Mahmud's candidature for the post of prime minister after Congress won the Bihar provincial elections. But relations soured after an apologetic Mahmud was granted clemency by the British in 1944 having been imprisoned for his role in the Quit India Movement two years earlier. Still, two days after the death of their friend and fellow Congressman Rafi Ahmad Kidwai in October 1954, an emotional Mahmud told Azad that he now remained the only friend with whom he could 'share the impressions of my heart' (Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Archives, A.K. Azad Papers, 190/4/146: Mahmud to Azad, 26 October 1954). And four years after Azad's death in 1958, Mahmud wrote a glowing 'Foreword' to the English translation of Azad's widely read Urdu commentary on the Quran (*Tarjuman Al-Quran*, Vol.1, S.A. Latif (trans.), (3 vols, Hyderabad, 1962), pp.ix-xi).

[25] Declaring his intellectual independence from the older Azad in his 'Preface', Kabir credits his mentor with encouraging a frank exchange of views between them. See *IWF*, pp.xi-xiv. For a while, Kabir was also associated with the Muslim-dominated but inclusive Krishak Praja Party (or Farmer People's Party) in Bengal. But as its leader, Fazlul Huq, flirted with the League, Kabir moved increasingly away from him and towards Congress.

Irreducible to Hindu or Muslim, all elements of secular life in India—whether literature, art, or dress—made for the shared inheritance of contemporary Indians. Since neither Hindus nor Muslims could claim to possess a profane culture without the presence of the other, these were mutually dependent communities unable to give full expression to their Indian identities alone. By defining nationality as a state of mutual reliance, Azad and the Congress Muslims mark it with irrevocable parity between Hindu and Muslim. Therefore, the positions Azad developed from the late colonial period were not, as Aijaz Ahmad has claimed, 'indistinguishable' from those taken by Nehru. If 'secular democracy' and 'progressive economy' brought these friends together,[26] their historicised national imaginations significantly separated them.

I am not the first to recognise that the Maulana's 'utter rejection of the political separatism of the Muslim League must not be confused with submission to the dominant nationalist resolutions of the question of national identity.'[27] In by far the most illuminating study on his later career, Aamir Mufti has already established that Azad's national idea, 'which does not seek to suppress the distinctness of cultural and religious affiliations in India even as it opens them up to a mutual articulation', differs significantly with 'the Nehruvian resolution, in which, despite all the talk of unity in diversity, culture cannot but appear in the end as a single space marked by its Indic origins.'[28] But since he is so determined to cast Azad as a defeated pariah unable to fit into the all too neat categories of modern Indian politics, Mufti produces a tale of tragedy which, while undoubtedly persuasive, overlooks the nuances of the Maulana's historical imagination as he tackled the problems of his time. In other words, choosing to focus almost entirely on the ambivalent relationship Azad had with Nehruvian nationalism rather than study the Maulana on his own terms, Mufti is unable to present, in full, the Azadian idea. Of course, this idea cannot possibly be stripped from its context in which Nehruvianism undoubtedly dominates. Overstating it, however, can obscure some of its details. That Mufti inadvertently isolates Azad with no reference to other Congress Muslims may also explain why he fails to elevate his later ideas to a mode of nationalist thought. In fact, Mufti's lamenting tone is somewhat out of place with the

[26] A. Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia*, (London, 2000), p.65.
[27] Mufti, *Enlightenment*, p.139.
[28] Ibid, p.161.

body of work produced by these figures. Over the middle decades of the twentieth century, they were conscious of both the ascendancy Jinnah enjoyed among Muslims in the Hindu-majority provinces and their inability to shape Congress and its independent Indian state as much as they had perhaps wished. Still, they did not bewail their defeats and remained interested in theorising positive visions for the future. Thus, much like their two principal Muslim nationalist contemporaries—Jinnah and the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal—these Congress Muslims broke with the preceding and dominant form of Indian Muslim thought. After the British quashed the 1857 Rebellion, many north Indian Muslim writers—rather than positing a constructive politics—glorified the past and mourned their present.[29] By altering our gaze away from tragedy and lament, and towards constructive thinking, in chapter one I endeavour to take Mufti's premise of an alternative history for India in new directions. Exploring the contours of their historicism, I show that Azad and the Congress Muslims produced conceptions of universal cultural interaction and truth; debated the place of sectarian enmity in a harmonious nationalism; and made a distinction between inheritance and history. They also distinguished between what was shared by Hindus and Muslims (profane culture) and what was not (religion). In chapter two, I illustrate how ideas of religious autonomy, the accommodation of plurality, and even a theological truce between Hinduism and Islam were similarly historicised.

It is important to note that whenever these figures celebrated or acknowledged regional difference, they ultimately subordinated it to an argument about Indian parity. For the rest of the time, they almost took Hindustan to be the Indian nation and its culture to be its nationality. Often contrary to the more enthusiastic regionalisms of Abdullah or Ghaffar Khan, even a Bengali litterateur like Kabir hurriedly maps his understanding of the Indian whole onto the cultural history of his province. Local Bengali interaction is simply a manifestation of the greater Indian project of cooperation. And yet, it is interesting to note that Kabir was still more conscious of his own biases than his intellectual peers. For instance, if the urban bent of this culturalist argument was scarcely acknowledged by Azad, Mahmud, and Husain, Kabir was willing to admit this shortcoming.[30] In fact, since their idea of India was so rooted in the urban

[29] M. Pernau, 'Nostalgia: Tears of blood for a lost world', *South Asia Graduate Research Journal*, 23 (2015).
[30] H. Kabir, *The Indian Heritage*, (Bombay, 1955 [1946]), p.79.

milieus that they inhabited, much of it was shared by Urdu writers—both Hindus and Muslims—who lived in these spaces but operated beyond the realm of conventional politics. Most of them were part of the anticolonial and leftist Progressive Writers Movement. They were, on the whole, irreligious communist intellectuals and spent much of their time writing about human inequality and a future of social justice. Consequently, they have been studied as such.[31] Focusing on the short-story writer Saadat Hasan Manto and poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Mufti provides a rare account of their encounter with Indian nationalism but finally joins them to his narrative of minoritised pariahs unable to resist the tide of majoritarianism.[32] Instead, I want to demonstrate that these Progressives not only produced a contemporary literature in which the Muslim was made as crucial as the Hindu but—in the case of some Urdu poets—often vividly replicated the Azadian notion of an inherited secular nationalism. Indeed, profane culture is one such category that can accommodate more than one type of person; in this case, both the practicing Muslim politician and the irreligious poet.

These convergences mean that rather than pairing Azad and the Congress Muslims with the nationalist *ulama* (Islamic scholars) led by Husain Ahmad Madani of Deoband as is the predominant tendency of Indian historiography, it is the Progressive writers of Urdu with whom they have more in common. Congress Muslims and nationalist *ulama* have often been uncritically bundled into a single 'Nationalist Muslim' camp simply because they both made for groups of Muslims who opposed the League.[33] Their amalgamation within this blanket category, however, obscures their very different intellectual positions. Holding to the composite nationalism that Azad forwent after Turkish nationalists abolished the Caliphate, for Madani the Quran and hadith were the sole basis for Muslim life in India. Consequently, he had no interest in the argument that a shared profane culture established over centuries of cooperation between Hindus and Muslims had scripted a secular nationality. As modern India sought to replace colonial with national rule, Madani was concerned only with the second part of Azad's new equation: the preservation of Islamic law and Muslim religious practices and, in turn, his own authority as their guardian. Since Congress

[31] For a comprehensive study of the Progressive Writers of Urdu, see R. Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change: A Literary History of the Progressive Writers' Movement in Urdu*, (Delhi, 2014).
[32] Mufti, *Enlightenment*, pp.177-243.
[33] For a recent example, see the essays in A.U. Qasmi and M.E. Robb (eds), *Muslims Against the Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan*, (New York, 2017).

nationalism pledged to guarantee this autonomy, the nationalist *ulama* undoubtedly belong within the Indian secular and certainly pose no threat to it. But because they aspire to be nothing more than legal agents of a sovereign God regulating Indian Muslim life, they lack the intellectual breadth or, more exactly, the political freedom to shape it in any meaningful way. As such, and most significantly for my purposes, by imagining its future from the position of religious particularism alone, Madani condemns his community of Muslims to a truly minoritised status within the Indian nation; the very status that Azad seeks to avoid. Needless to say, then, I have not made Madani a principal figure of this thesis for that would amount to charting not an alternative mode of secular and interactive nationalist thought, but a hollow story of the unhelpfully labelled 'Nationalist Muslims'. Instead, Madani and his separatist rival among the Indian Islamists, Abul Ala Maududi, are occasionally brought into this work as interlocuters for Azad and the Congress Muslims.

If the current scholarship has not adequately demarcated the intellectual boundary between Azad and Madani, the general shift in Azad's thought is well established. Ian Henderson Douglas tells us that after the failure of the Khilafat Movement, Azad abandoned the idea that 'the Quran could provide direct answers to all political problems' and now sought a 'personal political life governed by the general teaching of the Quran'. Sovereignty no longer resided in God, rather responsibility rested with Muslims 'to put Islam into practice in right living'.[34] Islam was now the consultative guide of creative Muslim politicians as opposed to their authoritative commander. Thus, if the later Azad was interested in foregrounding other, principally secular bodies of knowledge which culminated in the formation of a richer nationalist theory either side of 1947, he could still occasionally draw on theology to critique the Pakistan demand. Leaning on the universalism of his faith, Azad claimed in April 1946 that to divide India into *pak* (pure) and *napak* (impure) territories was 'a repudiation of the very spirit of Islam. Islam recognises no such division and the Prophet says, "God has made the whole world a mosque for me."'[35] A year later after Partition, he could castigate the Muslims of Delhi in his oft-quoted *khutba* (Friday sermon) at Jama Masjid

[34] I.H. Douglas, 'Abul Kalam Azad and Pakistan: A Post-Bangladesh Reconsideration of an Indian Muslim's Opposition to Partition', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 40/4 (1972), p.465.
[35] Azad, 'On League urge for Partition', 15 April 1946, in R. Kumar (ed.), *Selected Works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, Vol.11, (11 vols, Delhi, 1991-2), p.132.

for straying from the *sirat al-mustaqim*, or the straight path of Islam leading to the hereafter. By reposing faith in a divisive minoritarian politics instead of its own ability to assume a dignified position in an independent country of free human beings, this now weakened minority had created false idols out of Jinnah and his associates who had treacherously deserted them having torn India's social fabric asunder.[36] Therefore, it is important not to overstate the secularisation of Azad's thought. Ahmad does just that when he suggests that, from 1940, his ideas were 'radically opposed not only' to his earlier pan-Islamism but also his unfinished *tafsir* (quranic commentary) *Tarjuman al-Quran* published in two volumes from 1931. I want to contend that no such clash existed. What was important about *Tarjuman* was a search not for what Ahmad calls 'a religious form of legitimation' for Indian unity,[37] but a theistic ecumenism that could incorporate Hinduism from within an intrinsically universal Islam. And while there is an obvious compatibility between a shared nation oriented around the profane and a theistic ecumenism, we will see that either side of independence these ideas were not necessarily reliant on each other. Still, rather than 'abandon' the ecumenism of *Tarjuman* to appropriate the secular,[38] such was the breadth of the latter that Azad held to both concurrently prior to his death in 1958. This revision, I would like to emphasise, is not a reiteration of Douglas' view that the Maulana's supposed contradictions can be explained by his 'compartmentalised thinking'. Claiming that 'pragmatic concerns of the moment were far more significant to him than the constructing of any consistent philosophical scheme',[39] Douglas unnecessarily reduces Azad's political and religious philosophy—which continually shifted and evolved before crystallising in the mid-twentieth century—to a thing of tactics.

Thinking of India

On returning to the Kashmir Valley from Aligarh Muslim University in 1930, Abdullah became one of many educated Muslims denied government employment by the Dogra dynasty of Jammu and Kashmir. Mridu Rai has shown that under the aegis of British paramountcy, these rulers derived their legitimacy to govern from their Hindu faith and

[36] Azad, 'Speech Delivered by Maulana Azad at Jama Masjid', Delhi, 23 October 1947, in Ibid, Vol.3, pp.81-5. The best analysis of this speech remains Mufti, *Enlightenment*, pp.165-72.
[37] Ahmad, *Lineages*, p.65.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Douglas, 'Abul Kalam Azad and Pakistan', p.463.

status as Rajputs—a diverse group of clans which, according to colonial knowledge, made for one of many Indian martial races. This was an unequivocally Hindu state that had disenfranchised the Muslim majority from its political and economic resources.[40] Abdullah worked for a while as a school teacher but soon found himself at the front of a popular Muslim movement. Petitioning Maharaja Hari Singh for more equal treatment, it drew large support from labourers and peasants against (frequently Hindu) capitalist and feudal interests. Locating his early politics in an Islamic idiom of social equality well understood by the religious masses, Chitralekha Zutshi argues that Abdullah betrayed this Kashmiri Muslim constituency once he came under the influence of Nehru and Congress from the mid-1930s. Adopting 'the national/communal dichotomy' of his friend, Zutshi implies that Abdullah fell between two stools: he was neither willing to accommodate explicitly Hindu and Muslim religious identities within a Kashmiri national community; nor able to provide it with a fully secular language forever collapsing it into a Muslim majoritarianism when he feared losing the support of his coreligionists. As Indian independence approached, his All-Jammu and Kashmir National Conference may still have been the most popular political party in the Valley, but its hegemony was over. Unwilling to nuance her reading of the Nehruvian Congress, Zutshi follows Jalal to argue that it was a fundamentally Hindu majoritarian party. By subordinating his increasingly muddled movement to an organisation whose claim to secularism was as deceitful as his own, Zutshi notes that Abdullah alienated many of his Kashmiri Muslim supporters and played a damning role in sealing their miserable postcolonial fate.[41] It is true that during his long career Abdullah struggled to bridge multiple identitarian gaps in and beyond the princely state between: the people of Kashmir and Jammu; Hindus and Muslims; and Kashmiris and other Indians. That said, at the level of discourse he made frequent attempts to do so while still retaining space for particularity. Setting aside the existing historiographical preoccupation with popular Kashmiri politics that has reduced him to a flawed manipulator, in chapter three I want to show that Abdullah also thought deeply about Indian interconnections and, consequently, produced a rich political theory even if it only occasionally translated into concrete policy, let alone tangible success. Shifting our focus in this way

[40] M. Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir*, (London, 2004), pp.2-4.
[41] C. Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir*, (London, 2004), pp.210-322.

will allow us to interpret his attempts to connect Indian and Kashmiri national identities in the late colonial period, not simply as betrayals of his people who could find 'no easy correlation between the two',[42] but as visions of a shared future. I will show that since Abdullah was determined to protect the distinction of his ethnolinguistic Kashmiri nation, he had to be satisfied with filling his grander Indian nation with far less cultural content than Azad or Nehru. Still, Abdullah insisted on using history and geography to both distinguish Kashmiris and paradoxically tie them back to an Indian family of equally autonomous ethnolinguistic nationalities. Contrary to Zutshi's allusions, then, Abdullah did not simply hitch himself to some given version of Congress nationalism but, instead, imagined the Indian nation for himself. Some meaningful intellectual convergences rather than any ideological dependency named his equation with the Congress leadership.

Towards the end of the chapter I show that Abdullah added an ideological dimension to his otherwise cultural argument for Kashmiri autonomy in India. He claimed that Kashmiris, along with the other regional groups subjected to the conditions and legacies of dynastic Dogra rule, had established a civic nation committed to social democracy. It differed, he claimed, with anything found beyond Jammu and Kashmir. Consequently, Abdullah made clear especially before but also after Indian independence, that decentralisation was the only way to give as much constitutional shape as possible to these three national ideas: ethnolinguistic and predominantly Muslim Kashmir; civic or ideological Jammu and Kashmir; and the 'organic' Indian whole. Abdullah never systematically theorised these three nations into a coherent model. Rather, this logic is the product of his many statements when they are read as articulations—not of unprovable phenomena like tactical ambiguity or secret motivations—but of principle. And while his civic nation often collapsed into a Kashmiri and/or Muslim majoritarianism, by noting these distinctions and obfuscations in clear terms, I provide clarity to a scholarship that has been unable to make sense of this complex imagination. Instead, it has remained saturated with vague and unsubstantiated declarations made by the likes of Andrew Whitehead that Kashmiri 'ethnic nationalism', as it evolved under Abdullah, came to 'adopt' a 'leftist inflection'; or that his Kashmiri nationalism 'although nominally embracing all of the princely state,

[42] Ibid, p.274.

was always more about the Kashmiri-speaking heartlands.'[43] Unwilling to draw the complex contours of this imagination with precision, scholars ironically repeat Abdullah's dissonance rather than explain the breadth of his imagination and the contradictions within it. And yet statements like this also insinuate that empirical historians have known, almost intuitively, that this nationalist thought was far more complex than they have been prepared to illustrate.

Unlike Jammu and Kashmir which retained an unrepresentative political character throughout the colonial period, the North-West Frontier, like most directly governed provinces in British India, was awarded a semblance of self-government under the 1935 India Act. While the Tribal Areas remained under the charge of the central government in Delhi, those Pashtuns inhabiting the Settled Districts and fortunate enough to qualify for a restricted franchise chose to elect Congress ministries in 1937 and then again in 1945-6 headed by Abdul Jabbar Khan—the London-trained medical doctor and elder brother of Ghaffar Khan who was better known as Khan Sahib. But if this was a welcome equalisation with the rest of India for the Frontier, it also represented a rare break from exceptional British repression. Previous democratic reforms had not been extended to it and, as Mukulika Banerjee notes, if colonial rule in India had been brutal, in the 'heavily militarised', 'oppressively policed', and substantially taxed Frontier it was especially so. For this, the British believed, was the only way to turn a historically porous borderland inhabited by supposedly volatile Pashtuns into a secure and governable province.[44] It was in this climate that, in 1929, Ghaffar Khan founded the Khudai Khidmatgars, or Servants of God, which formally merged with Congress two years later. Already an established social activist dedicated to improving education and terminating the practice of blood feuds among Pashtuns, British obstructionism had, as Ahmad puts it, 'made a nationalist out of him.'[45]

Scholars have established that Ghaffar Khan, rather than simply following the dictates of his great ideological ally Gandhi, autonomously theorised an anticolonial nonviolence for his followers. In her anthropological work on the Khudai Khidmatgars,

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[43] A. Whitehead, 'The Rise and Fall of New Kashmir', in Zutshi (ed.), *Kashmir: History, Politics, Representation* (Cambridge, 2018), pp.71, 74.
[44] M. Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition and Memory in the North West Frontier*, (Delhi, 2000), p.45.
[45] Ahmad, 'Frontier Gandhi: Reflections on Muslim Nationalism in India', *Social Scientist*, 33/1-2 (2005), p.31.

Banerjee illustrates how Ghaffar Khan routed his politics through a reading of Islam that prioritised concepts of forgiveness, patience, and restraint. She also shows how, prizing the ideas of honour and freedom in Pashtunwali, he persuasively juxtaposed the apparent cowardice of his colonised people.[46] More recently, Safoora Arbab has added that by declaring nonviolence and friendship to be intrinsic Pashtun values, Ghaffar Khan distanced his people from a dominant strand of European political thought that provoked violence between enemies. In so doing, he sought to epistemologically and ontologically decolonise them.[47] But it is the general historiographical silence surrounding Ghaffar Khan's intellectual relationship with the Indian nation that I wish to challenge. The empirical works of Erland Jansson, Stephen Rittenberg, and Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah bicker over another set of issues: the extent of Congress and League popularity on the Frontier by 1947 and whether its people wanted to join the Indian Union or Pakistan or remain independent.[48] More intriguingly, noting that his 'memory' is 'inseparable from his ancestral village of Utmanzai', Ahmad separates Ghaffar Khan from Nehru, Jinnah, Gandhi, and Azad who he describes as 'national leaders' that 'came to represent "India"' and whose 'local moorings kept receding in the public imagination.'[49] It is common assumptions like these, though not entirely divorced from fact, that have so truly relegated Ghaffar Khan to the local. Perhaps because his political vocabulary was so grounded in the inherited ethical language of Pashtunwali and, therefore, distinct from the other great thinker-politicians of his time, historians have uncritically ignored that Ghaffar Khan imagined not simply a Pashtun, but also an Indian and even international, future. For however stereotypically nativistic his political statements may appear, in chapter four I contend that they were often intended to have universal meaning. For Ghaffar Khan, the Indian nation was to be sustained by a reciprocal politics of honour and obligation practiced by Khudai Khidmatgars and other Congressmen. Though reflective of Pashtunwali, Ghaffar Khan refused to restrict it to the ethnos believing it was comprehensible to all and, therefore, universalizable. This

[46] Banerjee, *Pathan Unarmed*, pp.145-66.
[47] S. Arbab, 'Nonviolence, Pukhtunwali and Decolonisation: Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar Politics of Friendship', in *Muslims Against the Muslim League*.
[48] E. Jansson, *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan*, (Uppsala, 1981); S. Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province*, (Durham, 1988); S.W.A. Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Province, 1937-1947*, (Karachi, 1999).
[49] Ahmad, 'Frontier Gandhi', p.23.

imagination was principally concerned with commitments to self-rule, nonviolence, socialism, religious freedom, and ethnolinguistic autonomy. But since they inhabited a peripheral and contested geographical location, I also explore how Ghaffar Khan and his younger lieutenant Yunus—who migrated to Delhi at Partition and became a distinguished diplomat in independent India—drew on a complex history to have Pashtuns accepted as Indians by their compatriots.

Approach and Sources

Written thematically, the chapters of this thesis are divided by geography. It will already be clear that our three principal Muslim thinker-politicians professed different regional identities which crucially informed how they imagined the national whole. Though they all sought to secure Islam and an Indian national equalisation with Hindus, these political allies reached this end entirely independently of each other. Therefore, while I bring their ideas into dialogue with each other I do not seek to present an exhaustive account of their many interactions on regional tours, at party conferences, or during cross-party training camps. Instead, I draw attention to these interactions and their views about each other only if they help to elicit intellectual convergence or divergence.

Shruti Kapila has noted that since Indian nationalist thought 'was primarily the domain of political practitioners' who were interested in 'changing the world rather than interpreting it', the task of the intellectual historian is 'to reconstruct these "politicians" as thinkers and their words as concepts that were central to the making of political thought'.[50] Over the mid-twentieth century, the subjects of my study found themselves engaged in battles for political freedom on the streets, at negotiating tables, or even from jail; some graduated to official positions within the apparatus of the new nation-state. Consequently, the purpose of their writings and utterances was not to methodically theorise a nationalism for Indians. Even when they were penning a rare treatise as Azad, Kabir, Mahmud, and Yunus did during this period, they were irrevocably connected to the political contexts in which they were operating. This fact has two important implications. Firstly, it means that my priority is to tease out what is underlying in my sources. As Beverley Southgate claims, intellectual historians have to

[50] S. Kapila, 'Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political', in D.M. McMahon and S. Moyn (eds), *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, (Oxford, 2015), pp.261-2.

be 'concerned with the examination not simply of thoughts which have been expressed, but also with those attitudes and presuppositions which we all have, but which are so much a part of us that they may never be consciously formulated.' The point of questioning the 'actual foundations' of human thought 'is to enhance our own self-awareness—our awareness of how and why we think (and therefore act and react) as we do.' To attain this understanding of the mind, Southgate concludes, is to understand 'what it means to be human.'[51] Secondly, we must note that Indian political ideas, by default, cannot be fully appreciated outside of their contexts. It follows, therefore, that the great debate about contextualisation in European intellectual historiography,[52] whose subjects are frequently systematic theorists operating beyond the political, barely applies to the study of Indian political thought where context is simply unavoidable. That said, I have consciously avoided an unnecessary elaboration of *personal* and *political* context in this work so that I can more easily fulfil my principal task: to unearth a remarkably consistent set of ideas in all their complexity and place their Indian Muslim authors in the ideological debates—both explicit and implicit—of the period. In this way, by carefully considering the positions of their interlocutors—especially Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, and Iqbal—I have emphasised, over and above other forms, the *intellectual* context in which these ideas were constructed.

Since Azad, Abdullah, Ghaffar Khan, and their associates were not political theorists per se but actors, my sources overlap with those of traditional political historians. The same speeches and statements that are used by empiricists to build a case in favour of one narrative of history over another, can also be understood in a quite different way: as articulation of thought. Until recently, the empirical approach to writing about Indian nationalists had escaped serious challenge. Kapila notes that it was precisely because they were such 'effective' politicians 'that obfuscated their role as political thinkers'.[53] And so, I hope my work on these understudied Indian Muslim nationalists acts as a contribution to that much-needed historiographical shift. A shift away from an approach inspired and sustained by the Cambridge School of Indian history which hopes to belatedly uncover—somewhat like a lawyer in a courtroom—

[51] B. Southgate, 'Intellectual History/History of Ideas', in S. Berger et al. (eds), *Writing History: Theory and Practice*, (London, 2010 [2003]), pp.273-4.
[52] See Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol.1, (3 vols, Cambridge, 2002); and for a response, P. Gordon, 'Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas', in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*.
[53] Kapila, 'Indian Political', p.262.

the unprovable motives and intentions of bygone politicians who apparently sought nothing more than to better their own interests and those of their constituents.

My archive includes a wide range of speeches, treatises, interviews, and memoirs of Indian Muslim nationalists published in multiple volumes. I also draw on their press statements and articles found in newspapers such as *The Times of India* and *The Tribune*, as well as their contributions to debates in multiple legislative and constituent assemblies across India and Pakistan. More occasionally, I cite private correspondence found both in published volumes and the archive of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in Delhi where I also located an important National Conference pamphlet and an oral history interview with Ghaffar Khan. Most of these sources are in English. Where already translated from Urdu, I have consulted the originals if they are traceable and noted the use and meaning of particular words or phrases if I have deemed that important to my analysis. All the Urdu and Persian poetry I cite written mostly by Iqbal or the Progressives is derived from multiple anthologies, and all translations are my own unless stated in the footnotes. When I briefly cite Hindi and Urdu film dialogue at the end of chapter one, I provide my own translations there, too. And finally, rather than rely solely on secondary material to locate Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan in their intellectual context, I have also drawn on the published speeches and writings of their interlocuters.

1

Secularism as Culture

In his presidential address to the Ramgarh session of Congress on 2 March 1940, Azad argued that the origins of Indian nationhood were to be found in medieval history. The modern nation was premised on the 'fusion' that took place once the culture of the arriving Central Asian Muslims was 'joined' together 'in a *sangam*', or confluence, with existing Hindu traditions. Likening this accomplishment of Hindus and Muslims to the customary image of the Ganges and the Yamuna attaining union in Allahabad, neither of these cultural strands are privileged over the other. Rather, their fusion produces an independent third:

> Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievements. Our languages, our poetry, our literature, our culture, our art, our dress, our manners and customs, the innumerable happenings of our daily life, everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour. There is, indeed, no aspect of our life which escaped this stamp. Our languages were different, but we grew to use a common language; our manners and customs were dissimilar, but they acted and reacted on each other [*sic*] and thus produced a new synthesis.[1]

Profane life in India was now rooted in the shared socio-cultural universe that had evolved out of a medieval and early modern interaction. Though one may be able to identify the original influences of two distinct prehistories to this 'new synthesis', these contributions had been so effectively tied to each other that it was no longer possible to separate them without destroying the integrity of modern culture in India altogether. Since they now shared one incarnation and were, therefore, reliant on each other to give expression to whatever contemporary reality they possessed, the significance of one had become identical to that of the other.

This idea of cultural parity between Hindu and Muslim had an intellectual history. While championing separate political representation for Muslims, the nineteenth-century loyalist Syed Ahmad Khan concurrently left the door open to some variant of Indian nationality by drawing on a shared culture constructed jointly by

[1] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.21.

Hindus and Muslims.[2] A fact, incidentally, that was not lost on Azad.[3] Similarly, in 1915, the lawyer-politician from Bihar, Mazharul Huq, told the Bombay session of the Muslim League that the arrival of Muslims to India had created a 'new civilisation which was the outcome of the combined efforts of all the peoples of India and the product of the two greatest civilisations in the history of the world.'[4] Nevertheless, these were essentially sporadic claims. Perhaps because they were principally concerned with achieving minority protection for Muslims, figures like Syed Ahmad and Mazharul Huq never evolved a consistent argument about this shared nationality. After all, the task of Muslim communitarianism was to, ultimately, separate Muslim from Hindu even if it retained notions of what was shared between them. It was left to another set of thinkers, then, to provide this argument with depth and vigour. Indeed, it cannot be coincidental that Azad, Kabir, Mahmud, and Husain simultaneously rejected the idea of separate political representation for Muslims. That they, like Nehru, believed that political interests were shaped by secular socio-economic concerns, undoubtedly lends itself more easily to an argument about a shared civilizational heritage. In fact, we should read this culturalist argument as a nuanced rendering of the wider Congress lurch towards a unitary Indian nationalism famously signalled by the publication of the 1928 Nehru Report.[5] Part of this larger shift in the national movement, it would be incorrect to see the Azadian argument simply as a reaction to Jinnah and the League. And yet, that it crystallised at this historical moment—when Jinnah's amplification of Muslim nationalism threatened to destroy ideas of cultural unity—suggests that these two contextual factors ought to be taken together.

After failing to reach a power-sharing arrangement in the aftermath of the 1937 elections, the distance between Congress and the League was now greater than ever before. By the time Azad addressed the Ramgarh session, Jinnah had already established his 'two-nation' theory and set the terms for a new debate about the national category in India. So, the Maulana's highly historicised argument for a single

[2] S.A. Khan, 'On Hindu-Muslim Relations', Patna, 27 January 1883, in S. Mohammad (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, (Bombay, 1972), pp.159-60.
[3] Azad, 'Aligarh and Indian Nationalism', Aligarh, 20 February 1949, in *Speeches of Maulana Azad, 1947-1958*, (Delhi, 1989), p.77.
[4] M. Huq, 'Presidential Address', Bombay, 30 December 1915, *Foundations*, Vol.1, p.332.
[5] Drafted by Jawaharlal's father, Motilal Nehru, it overturned Congress' previous commitments to separate electorates and legislative weighting for Muslims. This was an indication that the party would now ignore specifically communal interests and pursue its goal of secular self-government unilaterally.

nationality for all Indians is given added meaning by the context in which he was now operating. An address that dealt as much with Anglo-Indian as Hindu-Muslim relations, his opening remarks tell us just how acutely aware he was of the palpable crossroads at which these two relationships stood:

> Today our caravan is passing a very critical stage. The essential difficulty of such a critical period lies in its conflicting possibilities. It is very probable that a correct step may bring us very near our goal; and on the other hand, a false step may land us in fresh troubles and difficulties.[6]

That Azad begins with this allusion to the contemporary political context and competing visions of the future only to then return to medieval and early modern history illustrates just how intermeshed these three elements (past, present, and future) were in this thought. To borrow from the German intellectual historian Reinhart Koselleck, while the Indian past—or 'space of experience'—is understood, preserved, and made relevant to the present, the anticipated Indian future—or 'horizon of expectations'—is a similarly present construction but one of hopes (of continued unity) and fears (of separation). And while experience (or the past) and expectation (or the future) exist as two separate realms, they are not isolated from each other. Expectations 'can be deduced from' experiences (whether attained first or second-hand), while new experiences can change our reading of old ones.[7] This helps us to understand why the idea of a modern nationality rooted in cultural parity between Hindus and Muslims evolved into a rich and layered form of Indian nationalist thinking when it did. In the 1940s, the clash between the experience of a historical unity and the expectation of a polarised postcolonial future was now so real that one was forced to make a serious effort at retrieving the former to avert the latter. This mode of thought, incidentally, remained largely unchanged by Partition. Despite the novel changes that 1947 brought to Indian demography, the overriding political question for Congress Muslim intellectuals within the Indian Union remained unchanged: was it possible to imagine a shared and secular nationality at a time when separate and religious alternatives were available? Therefore, while I cite speeches and writings mainly written shortly before and after Partition to make my argument, it is nonetheless possible to draw, for

[6] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.4.
[7] R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, K. Tribe (trans.), (New York, 2004 [1979]), pp.255-75.

instance, on a series of addresses made by Husain as President of the Republic between 1967 and 1969.

Substantiating this conception of Indian culture, the writings of Kabir and Mahmud locate parity in the art, architecture, and music of medieval and early modern north India. Contending that the art of the arriving Central Asian Muslims neither wiped out an ancient Indian tradition nor came to be overpowered by it, they suggest that interaction forced both styles to undergo reinvention and produce a shared art form. According to Kabir, while ancient Indian art sought to express as much of human life as possible, Central Asian art was informed by an obsessive individualism. Fusion created a significant break with these originals but this change was 'neither arbitrary nor abrupt'. If the new art form lost the ambitious range of subject and emotion to the civility and austerity of the royal court, it retained an old Hindu panache for sculpture while simultaneously opening it up to Central Asian conceptions of 'symmetry, proportion and spacing'.[8] With neither being able to dominate the other, it is impossible to reduce the new style to the creative genius of one community or another. As Mahmud put it in his 1949 tract on the *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Accord*:

> The ancient Hindu styles were developed along new lines by the Mughal emperors who brought artists from Central Asia and Persia to work in co-operation with Indian artists. Both Hindu and Muslim artists practised the new style and it is impossible to say by looking at a particular picture whether the artist was a Hindu or a Muslim.[9]

We are told that this new art form was imposed on the architecture of that period, too. Kabir notes that while the 'severity of Muslim architecture is mellowed' by its synthesis with the exuberance of Hindu art, this exuberance is in turn 'curtailed'. The emphasis of the former 'on harmony and form is blended' with the 'splendour and decoration' of the latter. Neither is reduced to the other, rather 'Hindu and Muslim elements coalesce to form a new type of architecture.'[10] If this process of give and take was true of art and architecture, Mahmud noted that it was true of music, too:

> There are many regional differences or differences between one school and another, but there are no differences between "Hindu music" and "Muslim music". The Musalmans learnt the art of the Hindus and introduced new instruments, new forms and compositions, but the Hindus learnt these with eagerness, and it is impossible today

[8] Kabir, *IH*, p.99.
[9] S. Mahmud, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Accord*, (Bombay, 1949), p.38.
[10] Kabir, *IH*, p.96.

> to differentiate between them. In the arts of song and dance the fusion of the two cultures became perfect.[11]

Just as Azad had suggested at Ramgarh, then, once Indians entered the realm of profane culture, they transcended their communal identities to produce a supra-community marked by shared sets of knowledge and practices.

What these Muslim intellectuals achieve is a conception of secularism as national culture. By locating nationhood in the profane and refusing to enter the domain of religious practice, they prevent the category of religion from naming shared Indianness in any significant way. Whenever religion is reinserted into this idea of cultural unity, it is through recognising a mutual knowledge of various parables, myths, and beliefs rather than any common faith. It is because these Congress Muslims insist on Hinduism and Islam functioning autonomously beyond this shared cultural realm which allows them to conjure an unequivocally secular language when imagining the nation. Or, put differently, we will increasingly find that since religious autonomy is nonnegotiable, it is the presence of the other that ensures the secularity of national culture. This idea of India, then, cannot be reduced to syncretism in a way that so much of Indian nationalist discourse might be. For instance, in *The Discovery of India* Nehru cites the lives of medieval saints such as Nanak and Kabir to celebrate the fusing of religious traditions as a marker of Indian unity.[12] In the following chapter, I will argue that any appropriation of religious figures by these Hindustani Muslims was oriented around a separate project only tangentially linked to the idea of a single nationality: the creation of a theological truce between Hinduism and Islam which concurrently upheld the distinct integrities of these two religions. Thus, what was truly shared and, therefore, made for a single nationality was not religious or syncretic—but entirely profane—material.

If Gandhi imagined an ethical relationship between Hindus and Muslims marked by mutual tolerance and love and, therefore, also thought of secularism in socio-cultural terms,[13] his conception stops some way short of this. For while these Congress Muslims also discussed the possibility for tolerance, what really concerned them was something else: how did one replace the almost unquestioned primacy of communal categories in

[11] Mahmud, *HMCA*, pp.38-9.
[12] Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, (Delhi, 2004 [1946]), pp.258-63.
[13] Devji, 'Secular Eye', p.58.

colonial India with a national equilibrium between what was different (religion) and what was shared (culture). In other words, relations between Hindus and Muslims did not have to be named by their religious identities or groupings *alone*. Rather, in the quotidian context of manners, customs, art, language, and literature their Indianness would be sufficient. This idea has interesting parallels with Hindu nationalism. Of course, Hindu nationalists refused to think of secularism as national culture; they did, however, seek to define the nation in cultural terms. Andrew Sartori has shown that for the nineteenth-century Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the Hindu nation was marked by a culture which 'reached deep into the practice of everyday life'. Commanding devotion to those who are superior and from whose superiority one derives benefits, Bankim held that Hindu culture produced a national principle. Whether it be the devotion of believers to God, of a wife to her husband, of children to their parents, of subjects to their rulers, or of lower castes to upper castes, this all contributed to an idea of culture that made Hindus a nation.[14] Unshackled by the desire to mark a dividing line between what was shared and profane and what was separate and religious, this conception of national culture is more fluid than the idea posited by Azad and his associates. Nonetheless, since these ostensible enemies shared an emphasis on culture when imagining their nations, I will frequently bring these national ideas into dialogue with each other to further tease out their respective contours.

Framing the secular nation in this way had two significant consequences for Azad as he sought to break the deadlock with the League during his tenure as Congress president. Elsewhere, I have argued that Azad was so committed to his historicised shared nation that he had no choice but to adopt a conciliatory attitude to the League if he was to save it from a destructive partition.[15] Suffering from what Chris Moffat has described in another context as the 'malady of historicism', it might be said that the political creativity of the Maulana and thinkers like him was regulated by the self-imposed limits of inheritance. To borrow from Moffat, they were more 'distracted, deterred and cajoled' by what had been produced by the Indians 'who came before' them than their contemporaries.[16] Having searched long and hard for a single state

[14] A. Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital*, (Chicago, 2008), p.122.
[15] Sohal, 'Ideas of Parity'.
[16] Moffat, *India's Revolutionary Inheritance: Politics and the Promise of Bhagat Singh*, (Cambridge, 2019), p.247.

solution, Azad is forced to note in his memoir that 1947 'was a tragedy' impossible to countenance;[17] this was 'the end of a dream'.[18] It has become a cliché, especially of Indian nationalist historiography, to praise Azad for resisting and standing above the bitterly communal atmosphere of the 1940s. He was, this reading would like us to believe, truly *azad* (free).[19] And yet, while there is some truth to this claim, its casual astonishment inadvertently does Azad a disservice. Rather, far from *azad*, the Maulana was sufficiently imprisoned by his conception of the shared nation that the question of his being blown away by the winds of communal majoritarian nationalism scarcely arose. Put differently, he was free from any trace of communalism precisely because he was so committed to history. Though it is unknown when he wrote these lines, perhaps Azad was hauntingly aware of his situation:

> *meri taswir ke ye naqsh zara ghaur se dekh*
> *is men ek daur ki tarikh nazar ayegi*
>
> Examine the tracings of my picture intently
> And you will see the etchings of a bygone era[20]

However, Azad's national theory produced a second consequence for his politics which leads me to stress the need to qualify, or not overplay, the contention that his choices were determined by something shared. Because unlike those commentators of today who continue to produce their own variations of this culturalist argument, the Azad of the late colonial period seems to have understood well that politics is possible only if opposition or difference exists. In a colonial polity that had elevated Hindus and Muslims to exclusive political constituencies, an unaided narrative of shared history and culture threatened to entirely depoliticise communal relations and, thereby, offer no solution at all to their deterioration.[21] But having retained the non-national realm of religious faith and practice exclusively for the Muslim community, Azad had already established some notion of significant social difference. If he held that in an India devoid of a conniving foreign power political organisation would inevitably come to be based

[17] Azad, *IWF*, p.214.
[18] Ibid, p.208.
[19] See Hasan, 'Introduction', p.5; and Ahmad, *Lineages*, p.102.
[20] Azad quoted in S.S. Hameed (ed.), *India's Maulana: Abul Kalam Azad*, Vol.2, (4 vols, Delhi, 1990), p.285. My translation slightly modifies Hameed's.
[21] See S. Naqvi, *Being the Other: The Muslim in India*, (Delhi, 2016) for a contemporary example of how an account of shared history inadvertently depoliticises Hindu-Muslim relations when religious difference is made to matter in politics. Naqvi produces not a political solution to the problem of Muslim marginalisation by ascendant Hindu nationalism but simply a lamenting tale of betrayal.

on class, Azad, unlike Nehru, refused to consequently render all communal affiliations immediately meaningless. Congress could not aspire to govern Indian society by unilaterally stating which modes of organisation had political meaning and which did not. And so, apart from what was shared, what was different also informed his willingness to engage with the League and its Pakistan demand. In a private letter to Gandhi in August 1945, Azad even suggested granting Jinnah legislative and executive parity at the centre 'till such time as communal suspicion disappears and parties are formed on economic and political lines'.[22] The successful establishment of a secular polity, then, would fundamentally depend on convincing India's social units of its worth. Integral to an Indian nation marked by both unity and separation, they had the right to voice their insecurities, however delusional these might be. Despite his own notion of an inherently strong Muslim community, Azad recognised that only once its apprehensions were pacified could Indian politics move in a truly secular direction. It was this logic which led Azad to suggest that Congress and the League form coalition governments in the aftermath of both the 1937 and 1945-6 provincial elections.[23] It also allowed him to call on Indian Muslims to script their own future at Ramgarh just as he was promoting his shared nation. While others could suggest alternatives, ultimately, Muslims had to 'judge for themselves what safeguards are necessary for the protection of their rights and interests'.[24] Similarly, when Azad tendered a federal constitution in 1946 claiming that it included 'whatever merit the Pakistan scheme contains while all its defects and drawbacks are avoided',[25] he did so in this spirit. His proposal—which strictly limited Delhi to the portfolios of defence, foreign affairs, and communications—was simply another suggestion. For as Azad admitted, it came from a Muslim who found little favour within his own community.[26] It is true that the Maulana's search for a genuine consensus was designed to prevent national destruction. Nevertheless, this must not obscure another fact: that his understanding of Indian society made a Muslim politics—however limited and reluctant—possible. Thus, though his actions leading up to Partition were defensive and reactive, this appreciation of both shared and separate domains meant that Azad remained relevant to a debate dominated by the institutional

[22] E. Jenkins to G. Abell, 25 August 1945, in N. Mansergh et al. (eds), *The Transfer of Power 1942-7: Constitutional Relations between Britain and India*, Vol.6, (12 vols, London, 1970–82), p.156.
[23] Azad, *IWF*, pp.136, 170-2.
[24] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.14.
[25] Azad, *IWF*, p.152.
[26] Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Azad, 3 April 1946, *TP*, Vol.7, p.111.

category of community. It was also this which surely led Mahmud to somewhat ironically castigate Azad for not doing enough to placate the League at the 1945 Simla Conference.[27] Similarly, in November 1946, Husain decided not to apportion blame but rebuke both parties for failing to reach a settlement as communal violence began to spread across the country. Addressing the silver jubilee celebrations at Jamia Millia Islamia as its vice-chancellor, Husain 't[ook] advantage of' the 'highly precious presence' of Azad, Nehru, and Jinnah to note: 'For God's sake, unite to introspect and act to extinguish this fire. It is no time to inquire who has ignited this fire or how did the fire set ablaze. The fire is on, put it down.'[28] I will return to the Congress Muslim conception of the religious community in the next chapter. For now, though, let me emphasise that while cultural and political secularism were ideals that these figures valued, they did not take them to be one and the same thing.

Ideas of Parity

If conceptions of secularism separate Azad from Nehru but also Gandhi, then the histories that undergird his 'new India' only further this sense of intellectual difference. The Nehruvian and Gandhian nations, though intentioned to be inclusive, are nonetheless marked by historical narratives of Hindu continuity. Seth has argued that while Gandhi 'located what was distinctly Indian in Hinduism', Nehru actively sought to avoid reducing nationality to the religion of the majority. Laying emphasis on geography rather than religion, Nehru insisted on referring to the civilizational legacy of India as 'Hindi' as opposed to 'Hindu'. However, though this was a way to incorporate not only both Buddhism and Jainism but also Islam, it is evident that Nehru believed that the essence of Indianness was ancient and had already been well-established by the time Muslims arrived in north India. Seth notes that despite his search for a secular historical language, Nehru was of the view that 'India's historical continuity clearly *did* have something to do with Hinduism'.[29] Mufti supports this claim; he shows that Nehru ultimately took the arrival of Islam and Persian culture to be unnecessary interruptions that were nevertheless assimilated by a pre-existing and absorbent Aryan culture.[30]

[27] Azad, *IWF*, p.136.
[28] Z. Husain, 'Need for Communal Harmony', 17 November 1946, M.L. Manchanda (trans.), reprinted in *The Pioneer*, 22 February 2015.
[29] Seth, 'Nationalism', p.47.
[30] Mufti, 'Secularism and Minority: Elements of a Critique', *Social Text*, 45/Winter (1995), p.88.

Nehru's qualified agreement with the British Indologist Vincent Smith in *Discovery* helps to illustrate this. Smith had argued that the arriving Muslims 'universally yielded to the wonderful assimilative power of Hinduism, and rapidly became Hinduised'. Disputing his use of the terms 'Hinduism' and 'Hinduised', Nehru contended that they were invalid 'unless they are used in the widest sense of Indian culture' and not for Hindu religion alone.[31] But that his disagreement with Smith is restricted to mere labelling is itself instructive for Nehru proceeds to advocate the very same narrative of Muslim absorption by Aryan India. Indeed, the only substantial difference is that 'Hinduised' is replaced with 'Indianised'. Therefore, unlike in the 'new India' imagined by his friends, for Nehru the arriving Muslims do not partake in the creation of an original nationality; the main thrust of the Indianness they come to profess has already been formed. As Nehru put it, their arrival 'was met successfully by a new synthesis and a process of absorption.' And while 'new blooms of culture arose out of it, the background and essential basis, however, remain[ed] much the same'.[32]

Though Gandhi refused to deal with history in any detail and sought to fashion an Indian nation largely from present-day circumstances,[33] his *Hind Swaraj* published in 1909 provides a similarly assimilationist reading of the Indian past. In one of many conversations between reader and editor, Gandhi denies that 'the introduction of Mahomedanism' had 'unmade the nation'. Since India was blessed with 'a faculty for assimilation', new ideas and peoples had been able to 'merge in it.'[34] Just as Nehru made use of the history of Indian Muslim conversion, Gandhi rhetorically asks:

> Should we not remember that many Hindus and Mahomedans own the same ancestors, and the same blood runs through their veins? Do people become enemies because they change their religion?[35]

The national question appears here as a simple dichotomy: either India is an ancient nation with a rich Aryan past or it does not exist at all as a historical one. Of course, Gandhi opts for the former but does so worryingly aware that it is possible to make an argument for the latter. We have seen that for Azad, Kabir, and Mahmud neither of these options are tenable. Both contradict historical fact. Indian nationality was not a story of

[31] Nehru, *Discovery*, p.69.
[32] Ibid, p.72.
[33] Devji, *Impossible Indian*, pp.64-5.
[34] M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge, 2010 [1909]), p.50.
[35] Ibid, p.51.

uncomplicated continuity from ancient times, nor did the Muslim arrival render any conception of it void. Though their idea of India retains the traditions of the pre-Islamic past, it does so by forcing them into an interaction with new cultural forms. They no longer occupy a position of dominance, and so, in this way, the old India is 'unmade' by the Muslim advent. But the end of one national story is the beginning of another. The settling Muslim shares his own culture, borrows something from the existing Hindu civilisation and, thereby, contributes to the creation of 'new India'; a nation in which previously exclusive realities—Hindu and Muslim—are soon unrecognisable.[36]

In the Maulana's *sharif* narrative, told from the perspective of the arriving Muslim, conversion is tellingly left out. And though Kabir and Mahmud referenced conversion in other contexts, they, unlike Nehru and Gandhi, refused to turn it into a principal explanation for a single nationality. That the vast majority of Muslims were Hindu converts to Islam had little to do with the national question. Rather than being premised on an ancient bloodline, this was a new nation springing from a medieval migration and the consequent conjoining of two cultural traditions; it was a non-linear idea. Interestingly, this emphasis on migration was not reserved for Muslims alone. These intellectuals stressed that India had always been a land of immigrants. If the contemporary culture of the Indian nation was characterised by its balance between Hindu and Muslim influences, this was not, in fact, where the story of parity began. The arriving Muslims had not earned the right to equality with the established Hindus through this process alone. Rather, since it mimicked the analogous migration of the ancient Aryans from Central Asia, it was their very arrival which laid the foundation for Indian parity. Equalising these narratives of migration, Kabir notes that both sets of invaders were stimulated by similar economic and political currents to become Indians:

> When the Afghans began to pour down into India, it was because of the pressure from Central Asia which dislocated the population on the Indian borders. Aryans had come to India for identical reasons and had been followed by innumerable hordes of invaders throughout the earlier period. The Afghan and the Turk invasions are repetitions of the old story.[37]

To grasp the full significance of this claim, it is necessary to appreciate the intellectual context in which it was made. By the time Kabir penned *Our Heritage*, the

[36] A version of this paragraph appears in Sohal, 'Ideas of Parity', pp.711-12.
[37] Kabir, *IH*, p.76.

first edition of his historicised argument for Indian nationality published in 1946, Hindu nationalism had established its own historical narrative: though the Aryans, too, may have been invaders, they had nonetheless developed a sophisticated culture of their own before Muslims descended on the subcontinent. Therefore, the latter could only be viewed as unwanted, foreign aggressors threatening to upset an already stable society. This made the Aryans the rightful claimants to the land, while the recently arrived Muslims—aliens to this developed way of life—were mere pretenders.[38] But in the Azadian response to this thesis, exclusivity is replaced with hospitality. Rather than encountering a fixed Hindu society with which integration was impossible, Muslims found that India still had the capacity and proclivity to house new elements. As Azad put it at Ramgarh:

> It was India's historic destiny that many human races and cultures and religions should flow to her, finding a home in her hospitable soil, and that many a caravan should find rest here. Even before the dawn of history these caravans trekked into India and wave after wave of new-comers followed. This vast and fertile land gave welcome to all and took them to her bosom. One of the last of these caravans, following the footsteps of its predecessors, was that of the followers of Islam. This came here and settled here for good. This led to a meeting of the culture-current of two different races. Like the Ganga and Jumna, they followed for a while through separate courses, but nature's immutable law brought them together and joined them in a 'sangam'. This fusion was a notable event in history. Since then, destiny, in her own hidden way, began to fashion a new India in place of the old.[39]

We are told that the hospitality experienced by the arriving Muslims was nothing new. Deepening the claim of identical migration, Azad notes that India had welcomed 'wave after wave of new-comers'. But it is the fleeting nature of this hospitality that is particularly striking about this passage. In the case of the Muslims who arrived 'eleven centuries ago', this was a brief moment before a new national fusion took place. The period of hospitality—a mere premise for what follows—is quickly surpassed by a more important concern: the creation of India as we know it. It is unsurprising that Azad drops the language of hospitality for the remainder of his historical narrative. Hospitality, after all, requiring a host and a guest, scarcely provides a language of equality. Cognizant of what this equation might mean for communal relations, Azad almost pre-empts this problem by making the 'soil' or 'land', and not the existing Indians, the host of these new arrivals. Though the relationship he conjures between

[38] V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, (Bombay, 1923), pp.42-4.
[39] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.20.

Indians and India is perceptibly maternal, Azad stops short of naming this female India—which had taken 'to her bosom' the countless 'caravan[s]' that had 'flow[ed] to her'—as the mother-nation. Again, long before 1940, the Hindu right had come to appropriate if not monopolise this (often polytheistic) image.[40] Determined to present an inclusive vision of Congress nationalism and conscious of the League caricaturing him as the puppet Maulana in the hands of a Hindu party, it is plausible that Azad's choice was deliberate. Be that as it may, what is significant for our purposes here is the effect of maternal India embracing these various migrants with equal and unconditional acceptance. All are made adopted children and are, therefore, equals in the eyes of their now shared mother. And yet, this skilful manoeuvre does not mean that Azad can retain the language of hospitality that he started with. Even if all migrant groups—from the ancient Aryans to the final caravan of Muslims—were to be equally and perpetually hosted by India, Azad would be left with the problem of impermanency. Since imagining all Indians as guests in their own country was unworkable for an argument about national belonging, the Maulana ultimately shifts to a language of 'settle[ment]'.

That said, the sense of unconditionality with which Azad imagines hospitality remains significant for two reasons. Unconditionality names not only the Indian offering of a new home to Muslims, but the almost fearless inclination of both existing and arriving Indians to be changed by this experience, too. In short, this unconditionality—provided to migrants on arrival—outlives hospitality itself. Once the language of settlement has been adopted, unconditionality remains as Hindus and Muslims—aided by the unscripted, 'hidden' methods of 'destiny'—engage in the organic process of creating 'new India'. In his great ode to India titled *Watan* (Homeland), the Progressive Urdu poet Josh Malihabadi references this shift simply in one line. Evoking the arrival of his Muslim Pashtun ancestors to the Gangetic plain, Josh reminds the homeland that 'our' ornate 'caps' (*kulahen*) achieved their famed, jaunty 'crooked' angle (*kaj huin*) only once they reached the Indian 'assembly' (*mahfil*).[41] In contrast to the mother figure which Azad alluded to, here Josh turns India into the beloved producing a reciprocal embrace between wider society and its arriving Muslim lovers. Most significant for our purposes is the Muslim act of bringing secular culture

[40] For how Hindu nationalism imagined the nation as mother see Sartori, *Bengal*, p.124.
[41] Josh Malihabadi, 'watan', in S. Hasan (ed.), *Azadi Ki Nazmen*, (Lucknow, 1940), p.52.

(symbolised by their *kulahen*) to India only for it to evolve, transform and, thereby, reach its potential (marked by the ultimate *kaj* of their *kulahen*) by way of exposure to, or interaction in, this new *mahfil* of the beloved. This customary image of the *kajkulahi*—an often heretical and erotic figure who evokes wealth and confidence in equal measure by wearing his hat acock—is what makes Josh's image truly profane. Though he employs a different set of tropes to do so, Josh, much like Azad, celebrates Muslim belonging and achievement in India by retaining something of the old only to have it assume fresh significance in 'new India'.

Unlike the beloved, the mother figure does not exist as a traditional figure in Urdu and Persian poetry whose discourse around love is romantic rather than familial. But if Josh remained true to this tradition in *Watan*, it is interesting that Azad's almost esoteric idea, of a hospitable Indian mother who loves her adopted children equally, did find a contemporary poetic reflection. In fact, the arguments of Azad and Kabir explored above are perhaps best summarised in the following quatrain penned by Firaq Gorakhpuri—a highly acclaimed twentieth-century Progressive poet of Urdu born into an upper caste Hindu family from the eastern part of present-day Uttar Pradesh:

> *har firqa-o-har millat-o-har mazhab-o-har din*
> *sab ne ja-e-panah pai hai yahin*
> *aulad men mamta chhalakati hai teri*
> *duniya ki madar-e-watan hai ye zamin*
>
> Every community, every nation, every religion, and every faith,
> All have found a place of refuge here,
> Your motherly affection spills out from your children,
> This land is the mother-country of the world.[42]

Beginning with migration and hospitality before hurriedly moving to settlement and belonging all while maintaining an equality between communities, Firaq uncannily mimics much of Azad's narrative at Ramgarh. There is the arrival of the many diverse peoples to have found 'a place of refuge' in India; their adopted status as 'children' being embraced by the 'motherly affection' of the Indian mother; and, finally, the universal ownership of her as the 'mother-country'. The nation that these intellectuals imagine, then, is an unconventional one. Neither the New World model with its emphasis on civic and ideological bonds, nor the ties of blood and soil common to nineteenth-century

[42] Firaq Gorakhpuri, 'ay madar-e-hind', in J.N. Akhtar (ed.), *Hindostan Hamara*, Vol.1, (2 vols, Mumbai, 2014 [1973]), pp.56-7.

European nationalism, fully encapsulate it. In so far as India was a land of settlers, it shared the characteristics of the nations found in the New World. But while the content of its modern nationality may have contained originally foreign elements, an entirely readymade culture is never transported to it from distant lands. Nor do new peoples seek to overpower the communities and ways of life they find on arrival. Instead, Indian cultural forms almost always sprout from the interactions between old and new that occur on its own soil. And, therefore, these nationalist thinkers come to chart an unorthodox way of imagining the national community: laying emphasis on an unremitting migration, it nevertheless locates the emergence of its cultural content largely within its own geography. It was in this spirit that Firaq wrote this more famous couplet:

> *sar-zamin-e-hind par aqwam-e-alam ke 'firaq'*
> *qafile baste gaye hindustan banta gaya*
>
> In the land of Hind the nations of the world rested their caravans,
> And, in this way, Hindustan was made.[43]

Stressing its gradual development, the nation is made contingent on this continual arrival and settlement. Without this slow evolution, Hindustan, the Persian name for the subcontinent with all its cultural significance, merely remains the empty, topographical 'land of Hind'. Modern Indian nationality is established only once all its peoples reach this country. It was their collective presence which made for Hindustan.

Though Azad and Kabir put special emphasis on cultural production constructed within India, they retained space for the cultural sources new Indians brought with them from beyond its borders. If a foreign people could become Indians once they accepted India as their homeland, so could their culture acquire Indianness in turn. Whether such cultural material was profane (and, therefore, potentially shared and national) or religious (and, therefore, separate and communal), for these Indian Muslim nationalists its origins were insignificant to their final classification as 'Indian'. Citing the ambiguous origins of the Vedas, Kabir notes:

> It is not certain if the Aryans brought the Vedas with them or composed the Vedic hymns after their arrival in India. In any case, for the vast majority of the Indian people, the

[43] Firaq, 'zer-o-baum se saz-e-khilqat ke jahan banta gaya', in K.C. Nanda (ed.), *Firaq Gorakhpuri: Selected Poetry*, (Delhi, 2000), p.46.

> Vedas became the repository of religious faith. In fact, belief in God and the Vedas and in the transmigration of the soul are almost the only articles of faith for a Hindu. The Aryan influence is also seen in the occupational division of society into four major castes and in the fourfold division of the life of the individual. The new Aryan society which developed in India between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C. is to this day the basis of the life of the Hindus who constitute the vast majority of the Indian people.[44]

That the Vedas can so easily be made 'the repository of religious faith' for the 'vast majority of the Indian people' despite their potentially foreign origins is significant. Whether the Vedas were written in India or not is unimportant. Rather, that they had been accepted by a people that had become Indians meant the Vedas, too, were Indian. It is this logic that allows Kabir to accept the *achkan* and *pajama* as Indian though this now popular dress was, he tells us, very probably brought to the subcontinent from Central Asia during the rule of Kanishka in the first century.[45] Of course, what is significant about these foreign appropriations is that they provide the theoretical foundations for Indian Muslim nationalists to accept all things Muslim as Indian. This principle not only allowed Muslim contributions to the process of cultural synthesis to be nationalised and owned by other Indians, but made their religion a legitimate element of Indian life, too. For instance, if the Vedas could be accepted as Indian regardless of their uncertain origins, so could the Quran. As Azad put it:

> Islam has now as great a claim on the soil of India as Hinduism. If Hinduism has been the religion of the people here for several thousands of years, Islam also has been their religion for a thousand years. Just as a Hindu can say with pride that he is an Indian and follows Hinduism, so also we can say with equal pride that we are Indians and follow Islam.[46]

By dismissing origin as a marker of Indianness, Azad and Kabir are able to overcome separatist arguments emanating from within both communities that sought to disqualify Muslims from an Indian national community on the basis of their perceived foreignness. V.D. Savarkar, and Hindu nationalists like him, contended that Muslims could never be Indians in any real sense; since Islam and its holy sites had been established beyond India's frontiers, Muslims held extra-territorial affiliations that brought their national loyalty into disrepute.[47] By suggesting that elements of the Hindu tradition may have had their origins in Central Asia, Kabir threatens to destabilise this

[44] Kabir, *IH*, p.4.
[45] Ibid, p.9.
[46] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.20.
[47] Savarkar, *Hindutva*, pp.113-5.

logic. It is not merely that Hindus potentially fail this paranoid test of nationalism, too, but by deeming origin unimportant Kabir is able to chart an entirely separate way of imagining what it meant to be Indian and to possess an Indian culture. Hindus, like Muslims, are essentially being asked to pay little heed to the tales of origin. That they, as current inhabitants of India, possessed cultural material that had significant meaning to their collective lives was enough for both them and it to be classified as Indian.

In this way, Azad and Kabir go further than Nehru who also sought to dismiss origin as a prerequisite for Indianness. While the arriving Muslims could become Indians, Nehru nevertheless stops short of granting them (cultural) equality with the established Hindus. We have already seen how, for Nehru, Indianness was not something which Hindus and Muslims created anew from the medieval period onwards; this was an existing and dominant identity that the ruling minority had to appropriate from the ruled majority. And so, while celebrating the efforts of Afghan and Mughal rulers to integrate themselves into wider Indian society, he implies that their 'Indianiz[ation]' was something to be 'accepted' or 'considered' as true by more established groups such as the Rajputs.[48] In fact, Nehru suggests that this process of Indianization was further enhanced by their marrying Hindu women. Though such marriages were not necessary for Indian integration, ruling Muslim dynasties nevertheless 'became far more Indian' as a consequence of them:

> He [Akbar] married a Rajput princess, and his son and successor, Jehangir, was thus a half Mughal and half Rajput Hindu. Jehangir's son, Shah Jehan, was also the son of a Rajput mother. Thus racially this Turko-Mongol dynasty became far more Indian than Turk or Mongol.[49]

Though inclusive in its orientation, then, Nehru's national community—shaped by Old World notions of race and blood—inadvertently makes some Indians more Indian than others.

Kabir reaffirms the idea that arriving peoples integrated effortlessly into a pre-modern society by providing an unusual narrative of Indian invasions. Ostensibly

[48] Nehru, *Discovery*, p.259.
[49] Ibid, p.279.

contradicting his assertion above that India had witnessed the entry of 'innumerable hordes of invaders', Kabir wrote that:

> India combines difficulty of access from outside with vastness of the tracts available for habitation and culture within. Together, they made India more immune from foreign attack or interference than has been the case with most of the other countries whose civilisations flourished in ancient times. We often talk of the many invasions of India. Compared to the vicissitudes suffered by Iran, Mesopotamia, Syria or Egypt, she has enjoyed calm and tranquillity, and developed her civilisation unhampered by interference from outside.[50]

This is a significant statement not for its counterintuitive denial of India's abundant military history which he elsewhere affirms, but because it points to Kabir's unconventional understanding of what invasion in India entailed. Indian invasions, as understood by Kabir and his peers, were not defined by their destruction. For, as we have already seen, foreign victors and vanquished inhabitants do not dwell on the cleavages of battle but quickly transcend them to evolve a common society. Such is the extent of this logic that Kabir can, on the one hand, state that Indian life had been influenced and cultivated by those who had migrated to India, and on the other conclude that it had developed 'unhampered by interference from outside.' Since new peoples instantly relinquish their foreign homelands on arrival, they are immediately made Indian. Thus, pre-modern India cannot be reduced to a history of conventional invasions summarised by a negative language of 'foreign attack and interference'. Any initial conflict is quickly set aside in favour of evolving a common Indian identity. As strange as Kabir's pronouncements may appear, he simply fails to see the arrival of new groups as 'hampering' Indian development. Rather, Indian invasions, whether Aryan or Muslim, were not like those experienced in other countries. These arriving groups did not 'interfere' with what they found in the country; rather, they sought to work productively with it. As Kabir noted elsewhere:

> In ancient India the higher civilisation of the pre-Aryans suffered military defeat at the hands of the invading Aryan hordes, but in time transformed Aryan mentality itself by enriching the cultural life of the conquerors. …in the conflict on the plane of power politics, the Muslims won but on the plane of intellectual and spiritual endeavour, the victory was mutual and can be more properly described as intimate and far-reaching co-operation.[51]

[50] Kabir, *IH*, pp.48-9.
[51] Ibid, p.81.

If Kabir separated India from an international history of invasions, Mahmud sought to tie his country to it; this is interesting not least because they reached similar conclusions about an Indian distinction. Instead of reading invasions as simply 'vicissitudes suffered' by nations, Mahmud argued that they were an organic and unexplainable historical phenomenon. It is by locating 'the Muslim conquest of India' in its global context that Mahmud seeks to initially normalise it:

> Now it is utterly futile to consider whether any conquest is justified. For whatever the historical explanations of domination of one people by another may be, the fact remains that there is scarcely any people of any time or any country on earth which has not been subjected to invasion in the course of its history. Conquests like floods, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions are enigmatic and impossible adequately to explain. But it is possible to compare the methods and results of conquests and weigh them in the scales provided by world history. If we do so we shall find that the Muslim conquest of India does not suffer in comparison with conquests elsewhere.[52]

It is almost certain that Mahmud was responding, at least in part, to Hindu nationalism and its demonization of the Muslim on account of this history. What Mahmud seeks instead is an acknowledgement that conquests were integral to pre-modern political reality everywhere; to defend invasions or question their legitimacy was to forgo an appreciation of what history really was. However, if Mahmud was unable to countenance a discussion on whether conquests were 'justified' or not, there was nevertheless room for 'comparison'. If one had to accept the historical preponderance of invasions as natural, one could still pass moral judgements on them. And so, towards the end of this passage, Mahmud begins to reconnect himself to the ideas of Kabir; the Indian past—though a constituent element of a global narrative—ultimately retains its distinction. Undoubtedly referring to the medieval and early modern cultural history that he and his peers expounded, Mahmud finally declares that on this score of 'methods and results' the 'Muslim conquest of India' happened to fare rather well.

Telling the Truth

Mahmud's assertion that we ought to respect the historical context in which conquests occurred is indicative of a wider claim made by these nationalists. As part of their argument for an Indian nationality, they regularly claimed a certain deference for the

[52] Mahmud, *HMCA*, p.9.

truths of human life. In *Our Heritage*, Kabir offers a conception of culture whose logical endpoint is the fundamental inevitability of Indian unity:

> The unity of Indian culture has been based on a real universality. Differences and divergences have never been alien to it. On the contrary, it has dominated and unified all manifestations of outward difference. Unity and universality must belong to any culture that is true and vital. In a sense, unity and universality must belong to culture as such. Culture is a concept which cannot be simply or unitarily defined. There is no single character or mark which can be regarded as the essence or differentia of culture. It is always a complex of many strands of varying importance and vitality.[53]

This idea of unity and universality in culture has two significant stages: recognition of the universal and the synthesis of differences. In the following chapter, we will explore how, in the realm of religion, accommodation was the sole principal for Indian coexistence; unity and universality do not extend beyond this first stage for Kabir and thinkers like him. In the realm of secular culture, however, this was not the case. Not constrained by the restrictions of religious belief, here Indians had come to 'dominate' the many manifestations of culture to produce unity. What Kabir offers next—albeit more by way of implication than lucid argument—is more intricate. Cultures emerge as 'true and vital' because they had brought multiple influences into mutual contact and, thereby, proved to be dynamic entities always open to the possibility of subsequent change. This is what Kabir seems to mean by 'real universality'. Culture was universal not simply because all peoples possessed a variety of it. Rather, that these varieties could influence each other was what gave culture a boundless potential and, thus, made it truly universal. Indians epitomised this natural law for Kabir; they, unlike many other peoples of the world, sought to embrace rather than resist it. Since they had willed the interaction between two great cultural traditions, nothing could prevent their synthesis. As late as December 1967, Husain reproduced this idea of inevitable national unity by way of an analogy. Addressing the Punjabi University in Patiala, the President of India compared his country to the ever-growing home in a child's imagination. He explained that as a child matures and 'his consciousness expands', the home, too, expands from 'the mother's warm and bounteous lap' to the parental abode and, then, to 'the entire street or hamlet or town'. Finally, 'as he graduates to higher reaches of awareness and knowledge':

[53] Kabir, *IH*, p.44.

> …man begins to see it as a precinct, that comprehends a variety of walls and thresholds, that embodies diverse ideals and dreams. This mansion reflects a composite culture. Religious fables and parables, art and literature, history and chronicle—all these and a great deal more—then become its paraphernalia and its embellishment. In short, very soon, the courtyard of the multi-dimensional edifice begins to grow and envelop the entire country, and the natives of the land begin to appear as inmates of one's house. The country's political ideals based on truth and justice, as also its priceless cultural treasures and traditions, its moments of greatness and gladness become an integral part of this superstructure. What started as a mother's lap has finally expanded to include not only the topography around, but also the vast panorama of national life. How wide indeed is the circumference of one's home![54]

Just as Kabir alludes to cultures possessing an intrinsic inclination for fusion, for Husain the home steadily encompasses everything in its midst. With very little effort required from the inhabitants of this home, Indian nationality is made as natural as moving from childhood to adulthood. The incredibly smooth nature of the process is striking for it suggests that Husain sees no significant obstacles in its way. Like Kabir, his insinuation, of course, is that Indians had generally worked with, rather than against, the tide of these natural laws of unity.

Still, ostensibly, this analogy seems to whitewash a chequered Indian past and present. I would like to suggest, however, that it instead be read as part of a broader Congress Muslim attempt to prevent their own acknowledgement of communal enmity from offsetting what they took to be an equally evident Indian amity. In fact, as we shall see over the following pages, not only did this thought recognise the presence of both amity and enmity in India but held that they were jointly responsible for the construction of its nationality. Therefore, it was significant that Husain made this argument to a largely Sikh student audience prior to laying the foundation stone for a new Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan dedicated to comparative religion and interfaith dialogue. Rajmohan Gandhi tells us that Husain was emotional as he sat down to write this speech some days before his visit. He 'remembered the long, sad tale of Sikh-Muslim violence'; the conflicts between the gurus and the Mughals flashed before him as did the violence of Partition. But he also remembered 'how a Sikh officer had saved his life in 1947. Tears fell on his draft.'[55] Introducing the President to his students, Vice-Chancellor Kirpal Singh Narang added further historical meaning to this moment by

[54] Husain, 'Guru Gobind Singh', Patiala, 27 December 1967, in *President Zakir Husain's Speeches*, (Delhi, 1973), pp.169-70.
[55] R. Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim Mind*, (Delhi: 1988 [1986]), p.309.

evoking the memory of Mian Mir. Husain, Narang said, was now replicating the great Punjabi Muslim saint who is popularly believed to have laid the foundation stone of the Harmandir Sahib—or Golden Temple—at Amritsar on land, incidentally, that the third Mughal emperor Akbar had gifted to the daughter of Guru Amar Das. In this context, Husain's decision to speak of his idea of the home—to favour amity despite being aware of enmity—should be read not merely as an act of contemporary statesmanship but as a defiant declaration that Indians had opted for cultural unity despite their slippage into conflict. Episodes of grief and violence could not take away from the simultaneous reality of India's 'priceless cultural treasures and traditions, its moments of greatness and gladness'; both were historical and contemporary realities.

Towards the end of his Ramgarh address, Azad takes the ideas of Kabir and Husain a stage further. The Maulana reveals that he is disturbed by a tendency, found not only in the Muslim League but also in the extreme right of his own party, to deny historical facts. The Hindu nationalist desire to revive the 'life of a thousand years ago' and the 'two-nation' theory of Muslim separatists were opposing sides of the same coin. By meddling with the organic processes of history, they both sought to avenge it for creating 'new India'.[56] In a moment of unusual detachment, Azad exclaims:

> The thousand years of our joint life has moulded us into a common nationality. This cannot be done artistically. Nature does her fashioning through her hidden processes in the course of centuries. The fact has now been moulded and destiny has set her seal upon it. Whether we like it or not, we have now become an Indian nation, united and indivisible. We must accept the logic of fact and history and engage ourselves in the fashioning of our future destiny.[57]

History cannot be retooled to satisfy present-day fancies. History has happened and, so, its products, of which shared Indian nationhood was undoubtedly one, command respect. While he made a host of arguments about why Indians ought to consolidate their single nationality as it came to be increasingly challenged by communal alternatives, Azad supersedes all his other claims here by suggesting that, ultimately, the question of nationality was a self-evident truth. Consequently, he essentially voices the implication of both Kabir and Husain's claims above: to disenfranchise the other community from their imagined nations as Hindu and Muslim nationalists had was to not only be ignorant of the shared culture produced by their predecessors in their

[56] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.21.
[57] Ibid.

shared home, but to misunderstand 'culture' and 'home' as historical concepts. Since history had verified that culture was inherently universal, any notion of discrete, watertight communities inhabiting the same Indian home was nothing but a product of false consciousness. As Kabir put it:

> It is because the co-operative effort of Hindus and Muslims in the creation of Indian culture has not been properly estimated that Muslim and Hindu look at one another with suspicion, hatred and contempt.[58]

Communalists did not have to approve of the idea of a single nationality. Rather, once they fully comprehended the forces of history they would be compelled to accept it. 'Whether' contemporary Indians 'like it or not', the question of nationality had been settled by the generations before them. Therefore, what is fascinating about the Maulana's claim at Ramgarh is that just as the communalist is being forced to abandon religious nationalism, Azad simultaneously forces himself to momentarily leave aside the romantic image of the delicately fused new nation to argue that it was, to some extent, a cold fact of life. And yet, however much Azad and Kabir suggest that nationality was true and self-evident, this did not mean that Indians had no *choice* in the matter. Implicit in the passages quoted above is the notion that though Indians 'must accept the logic of history', they nevertheless had to actively *choose* to do so. In other words, it was possible—as increasingly popular communal nationalists had shown—to reject this correct interpretation of history and replace it with something false. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida has argued that since inheritance involves not merely *receiving* something from history but being *responsible* to it, one always *chooses* to inherit; inheritance is never a *given*.[59] It is an acknowledgement of this two-pronged definition of inheritance as optional and being a market of competitive interpretations which forces Azad and Kabir to enter this debate in the first place. They essentially believed that their task was to make sure that Indians *chose to inherit correctly*.

Like Husain, Azad also insinuates that the national relationship need not always have been characterised by amity and cooperation; enmity and conflict could also be a part of this story. For what mattered was that Indians had coexisted in the same society for so long that their realities had become intertwined to the point that they could never

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[58] Kabir, *IH*, p.80.
[59] J. Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International,* P. Kamuf (trans.), (London, 2006 [1994]), p.67.

fully detach themselves from each other. The task ahead of Indians, then, was to allay the conflictual—and foster the amicable—aspects of this nationality. In a memorable exposition on the creation of 'the Muslim story-teller' in pre-colonial Bengal, Kabir takes the idea of enmity in Indian nationality further than Azad. Crediting the 'story-tellers and wandering minstrels' of the ancient period with the diffusion of Hindu religious culture and 'the pervasiveness of philosophy' in Indian society, Kabir recounts how Muslims fashioned a parallel religio-cultural institution of their own in medieval Bengal. In the hope of rivalling the established Hindu minstrels, the practitioners of *punthi sahitya* (a literary form that combined Bengali with either Arabic or Persian) sought to fuse religion and myth in the hope winning over the Bengali masses. But these Muslims were 'at a comparative disadvantage'. For while their Hindu counterparts could draw on 'the unlimited resources of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranic legends to delight, amuse and educate the people', 'myth and legend is negligible in pristine Islam.' Mere 'didactic tales' had no chance of rivalling Hindu methods for 'liv[ing] on the solid bread of religious instructions and moral homilies is dreary.' Recognising 'the need of meeting Hinduism on its own ground', the Muslim story-teller had to similarly mix morality with 'adventures', 'escapades and intrigues, treachery and devotion'. While the history of Islam 'did not supply him with a mythology, there was nothing to prevent his inventing one.' Copying 'their Hindu rivals' to 'compete on equal terms', Muslim minstrels turned to Amir Hanifa, 'a legendary brother of Hassan and Hussain', to counteract the 'lifelong devotion' of Ram and Lakshman. 'Ali became a sort of mythical hero who combined in his person' the strength of Bhim and the skill of Arjun, while '[e]ven the exploits of Hanuman'—the devotee of Ram 'immortalised in the popular imagination by the mighty leap with which he cleared the seas and went on to set Lanka on fire'—do not 'go unchallenged'. Muslim minstrels invented Amir Ummiya who refuses to 'lag behind' and is a similarly 'unorthodox fighter' who 'leaps through the air from shore to shore'.[60] So, by imitating the proclivity of his Hindu rival for myth and legend, the Muslim storyteller had inadvertently turned a Hindu method for the dissemination of religious knowledge into a mutual Indian one shared and understood by both communities. Rivalry and conflict had created commonality. Unlike the more harmonious creation of a new profane culture marked

[60] Kabir, *IH*, pp.105-7.

by perfect equilibrium, here the Muslim replicates the Hindu to establish equality. The apparent sobriety of Islam is made an advantage elsewhere; we have already seen it prevail over the art and architecture of 'new India'. But here, in the realm of popular religion and proselytization, Islamic sobriety is traded for what Kabir took to be the exuberance and flexibility of Hinduism. However, like the theological argument I explore in the following chapter which insists on maintaining the autonomy of Hinduism just as it is opened to Islam, here, too, Kabir retains a sense of Muslim independence and integrity even as Islam copies these ancient Hindu methods. For every Hindu story or character, the Muslim storyteller furnishes a fitting equivalent to anchor within the Islamic tradition. If Hinduism was Islamized in theological discussions without forgoing Hinduism itself, here the Muslim storyteller essentially Hinduizes Islam to compete with his rival while nevertheless maintaining the distinction between the two religions.

Of course, Hindu nationalism repudiates this idea that communal enmity was a constituent element of a shared Indian nationality. Instead, mimicking a prevalent strand of European thought articulated best of all by the twentieth-century German theorist Carl Schmitt,[61] Savarkar inflexibly defined his nation of permanent friends (Hindus) in opposition to its permanent enemies (Muslims and Christians).[62] Interestingly, Muslim nationalism (or at least its foremost ideologues), which is so often uncritically made into the mirror image of Hindutva, took a different view. In fact, if Azad and Kabir contended that Savarkar's formulation failed to define communal relations and make separate historical nationalities out of Indian religious groups, then Jinnah agreed. Devji has illustrated that in the decade prior to independence, the Qaid-e-Azam largely discarded history when imagining the India of the future. Even narratives of conflict were only used in a 'perfunctory' fashion, for they, just like any story of cooperation, only went to illustrate just how 'intertwined' these communities were. Almost deferring to the premise of the Azadian argument, Jinnah recognised that history, whether positive or negative, was sure to obstruct the execution of his complex objective: a social contract between two constitutionally equal nations designed to foreclose the possibility of majoritarian rule once Indian sovereignty had been

[61] C. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, G. Schwab (trans.), (Chicago: 2007 [1932]).
[62] Savarkar, *Hindutva*, pp.113–5.

achieved. As Devji summarises, history provided little assistance 'in turning these religious categories into legal persons'.[63] Unlike Jinnah, Iqbal famously rejected the conventional western conception of territorial nationalism. Devji argues that by privatising religion and restricting political interest to economics, Iqbal held that the liberal nation-state destroyed the possibility of ethics or idealism in politics. Though he did not restrict this idea to Islam alone, Iqbal believed it was particularly vital to Muslims since their faith sought to replace the division of mankind into confrontational national communities with its own universalism. Added to these concerns was the minority status of Indian Muslims. If imported to India, the homogenising nation-state would subsume the 'public lives' of Muslims within 'a majoritarian culture by default'. The task for Indian Muslims, therefore, was to resist this lurch towards modern nationalism by uniting politically and convincing their Hindu compatriots to join them in adopting both a mode of Indian unity that acknowledged the primacy of communitarian organisation and a politics that was ethical as opposed to material.[64] It is quite easy, then, to understand why this political rejection of modern nationalism did not prevent Iqbal from claiming that nations, defined in the orthodox terms of blood and soil, were otherwise very real things. If Hindus and Muslims had to be stopped from forming a modern political nation, this did not mean that Iqbal denied a common Indianness marked by both positive and negative experiences. In fact, his writings frequently explored the cultural unity of the Indian people. For both Jinnah and Iqbal, that it threatened to thwart the actualisation of their political ideas did not render a shared Indian identity unreal.

Kabir provides a predictable conclusion to the argument that both amity and enmity made for Indian nationhood. Though 'communal jealousy and conflict' had been part of its history, this was not so pervasive as to damage its principally positive character. While 'those who seek to stress and perpetuate differences may find sufficient material to justify their stand-point', the vastness of Indian geography, history, and population meant that, ultimately, this evidence 'pales into insignificance'.[65] However expected this conclusion may be, what is both unusual and significant is the obsession with which these Indian Muslim nationalists sought to

[63] Devji, *Muslim Zion*, pp.97-100.
[64] Devji, 'Secular Islam', *Political Theology*, 19/8 (2018), pp.705-8.
[65] Kabir, *IH*, pp.vii-viii.

attach a certain historicity to it. They seemingly determine that there was no need to settle for private faith in the authenticity of their account when it was an unmistakably truthful representation of fact. Demonstrating a remarkable sense of confidence in their own historical theses, they repeatedly claimed to hold a common interest and temperament with the professional historian even as they conceded their own lack of expertise. Mahmud, for instance, was so convinced that impartial study would prove this narrative correct and, thereby, strengthen communal unity that he claimed the domain of an objective Indian history for it alone:

> Cultural understanding will also be promoted by a right interpretation of the past. Indian history has too long been the sport of imperialist-minded European historians and their slavish Indian imitators. There is urgent need for an independent school of history.[66]

As we have already seen, Mahmud held that the 'right interpretation of the past' involved an acute awareness for historical context. He now condemned the divisive tendency to anachronistically impose communal categories on the political history of medieval India:

> The few outbursts of bigotry during a history of one thousand years are confined to the reigns of a handful of rulers, and even their persecutions had mixed motives and affected only certain classes of people. …The fact of the matter is that personal ties of loyalty were considered more binding in those times than community, religion or love of country. The two words which summed up this loyalty were "namak halal" and "namak haram", "to be true to the salt" or "to be false to the salt". Nothing was regarded as more praiseworthy than the former and nothing as more despicable than the latter.[67]

Whatever the contemporary political objectives at play, this prioritisation of what Mahmud describes as 'personal ties of loyalty' and his relegation of more modern political concepts would draw some sympathy from the medieval historian. Whether successful or not, these intellectuals—convinced that the truth was on their side—sought to establish a sharper reading of the past than the prevalent colonial or communal accounts that surrounded them.

It was in this same spirit that Azad, now minister of education in Nehru's cabinet, addressed historians and archivists at the silver jubilee session of the Indian Historical Records Commission in 1948. The context of this address is significant. The Maulana

[66] Mahmud, *HMCA*, p.83.
[67] Ibid, pp.43-4.

and his associates had long complained that agenda-driven colonial histories had exacerbated communal divisions in India by exaggerating the episodes of enmity and shunning the story of amity. As Kabir bitterly put it two years previously, '[i]n the extant textbooks of Indian history, the record of difference and conflict is kept alive, but the story of fusion and synthesis is either forgotten or ignored.'[68] Now in a position to direct the workings of an unshackled nation-state, Azad set out a blueprint for historical research in independent India. Such was his faith in his own understanding of the past that Azad saw no contradiction in, first, applauding an international effort to provide an authentic history of India and, second, calling for the institutionalisation of his own narrative. Let us begin by examining the first remark. Commending 'the fraternity of historians who preserve our past through their devoted and disinterested work', Azad added:

> I am particularly glad that on this occasion we have among us representatives of other countries. The aim of history is to find out the truth about the past. This is a common human quest and the presence of members of different nations is a testimony that such tasks can be carried out only through the co-operative efforts of men and women regardless of race, religion or nationality.[69]

Admittedly, these words are being spoken to a gathering of professionals who might be alarmed by anything less than a call for objectivity. Still, this ought not to distract us from the essential contention being consistent with the Maulana's wider concern for a history devoid of falsifications. That Azad laid particular significance on the presence of 'representatives of other countries' is instructive. The implication of his statement is that personal identities always carried the threat of falsifying the past. A national history of India written by Indians alone was, therefore, a dangerous prospect. Though Azad does not intend to slight the professionalism of the Indian historian, his foreign counterpart nevertheless appears as a safeguard against any move away from 'the truth'. Historicity could only be secured with 'co-operative efforts'. And yet, the truth was already known to Azad and his peers. Impartiality would inevitably lead to the same conclusions. It was now for the professional historian to verify their sweeping account of the past and furnish it with further detail and credibility:

> Let your labours yield material for writing a full history of India throughout the ages, in which the story of co-operation and common endeavour, the development of

[68] Kabir, *IH*, pp.79-80.
[69] Azad, 'Study of Indian History', Delhi, 28 December 1948, *SMA*, p.53.

> civilisation and culture and the growth of arts, philosophy, religion and humanity will be told in all their wealth. That and not the mere record of wars and conflicts, of dynasties and kings, is the true history of India.[70]

A History of the Present

Despite wanting to establish the historical truth, Azad simultaneously makes it known that his historical interests are fundamentally oriented towards social and cultural development rather than the intricacies of a distant political history. Indeed, what appealed to Azad and his intellectual associates was a history of the people. Gandhi wished for something similar albeit for entirely different reasons; a history of the people would, he suggested, prove the historical success of *satyagraha*. However, because history had always been about documenting 'the doings of kings and emperors', the Mahatma deemed this project unwritable due to the lack of surviving sources. Therefore, the mere continuation of human existence would have to suffice as evidence in favour of his argument; for otherwise, he noted, 'not a man would have been found alive today.'[71] If Gandhi believed the history of *satyagraha* was unwritable, we can see that Azad had no such concerns about writing the history of shared Indian culture. His contention seems to be that while history may have an intrinsic worth for its researchers and aficionados, an account of the past for its own sake has little significance for humankind at large. It is not coincidental that Azad believed the real worth of the Indian past resided in the 'arts, philosophy, religion and humanity' that had emerged from historical processes of social interaction; they named, after all, the contemporary national idea he championed. Husain was perhaps more explicit when he once remarked that 'art and culture' not only 'determine the quality of a civilisation' but 'endure'; the 'surviv[al]' of a 'nation', he added, depended on its 'fine arts'.[72] In short, what interested the Hindustani Muslim nationalists was not *history* per se but, more accurately, *inheritance*. This 'civilisation and culture' was the 'true history of India' not merely because it was an objective fact. Rather, just as crucially, the products of 'co-operation and common endeavour' had survived the eras in which they were initially constructed to speak to the epochs that followed. It was simply impossible for the current generation of Indians to own their national history in anything more than an abstract way if historians remained wedded to bygone 'wars and conflicts' and

[70] Ibid, p.57.
[71] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, pp.87-8.
[72] Husain, 'Unity Through Art', Delhi, 22 February 1968, *PZHS*, p.130.

'dynasties and kings'. A real appreciation of what history had bequeathed for Indians was to be found in the socio-cultural forms that marked so much of their contemporary lives. In other words, calling for a history of the people as opposed to one of royal power, Azad and his associates sought to replace any traditional focus on the state as the subject of history and instead organise a narrative around socio-cultural achievement and, therefore, inheritance. And so, Indian history emerges only as a *cultural* and not *political* continuity. Confronted by the reality of Muslim and British rule, Hindu nationalism shared this principle even if it imagined the past in otherwise contrary ways. Of course, the 'wars and conflicts' Azad wished to dismiss mattered greatly to thinkers like Savarkar. Reduced to encounters between native Hindus and foreign Muslims or Christians, this history provides Hindutva with vital background for the contemporary battle it was (and is, to this day, still) waging. In fact, as Manu Bhagavan has shown, in order to replace the essentially social language of caste and internal division with a political alternative, Hindu nationalism relied, at least in part, on retrieving the rulers of the past and making use of the nominally sovereign princes of their late colonial present. But since it had to acknowledge that Hindu kings had been defeated politically even if they remained culturally victorious, Hindu nationalism was forced to subordinate these tragic heroes to a narrative of valiant cultural preservation against the odds.[73] Put differently, the political misfortune of Hindu rulers meant that Hindu nationalists also drew lines of cultural (rather than political) continuity for their imagined national community. In *The Philosophy of History*, the early nineteenth-century German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel asserted that while Chinese civilisation was defined by a strong state, Indian civilisation—marked by its petrified caste system—was defined entirely by its society.[74] Though they were interested in other social phenomena and did not simply focus on caste like Hegel, it is interesting to note that both sets of thinkers—the Hindustani Muslims of the Congress movement as well as the champions of Hindutva—unhesitatingly mimic his fundamental claim.

This is not to say, however, that Azad and his associates refused to deal with Indian kingship at all. Rather, much like the Hindu nationalists, whenever they did

[73] M. Bhagavan, 'Princely States and the Hindu Imaginary: Exploring the Cartography of Hindu Nationalism in Colonial India', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 67/3 (2008).
[74] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, J. Sibree (trans.), (Ontario, 2001), p.179.

reintroduce them to their historical narrative, these erstwhile rulers were firmly subordinated to their obsession with culture. Yet, they were not a peripheral element and were often made the patrons or conveners of India's shared nationality. If the feudalism and military campaigns of these rulers no longer mattered to Indian life, the likes of Azad and Kabir knew well that it was their courts that had produced the culture they claimed as national. The ways in which these thinkers imagined the development of Indian languages is particularly instructive here. According to Kabir, by the time the Muslims arrived in India, the influence of Jainism and Buddhism was declining and Brahmanism had established a certain hegemony. At the behest of rulers and priests, the 'prestige of Sanskrit' had been restored to the detriment of local languages. But 'after the establishment of the Sultanate', Muslim rulers had 'no particular reason to favour Sanskrit' and 'completely transformed' this process:

> On the one hand, they introduced Persian as the language of the court. On the other, they sought to establish closer contacts with their Hindu subjects, and for this the best medium was obviously the local language. Government patronage for languages like Bengali date back to the fourteenth century. Within two hundred years of the establishment of Muslim rule, the local languages had achieved a new dignity and a new life.[75]

Though these intellectuals utilised the heavy influence of Persian and Arabic on north Indian languages when the situation demanded it, here Kabir is uninterested in measuring the extent of any synthesis. Instead, he emphasises the managerial role of Muslim governments in establishing 'new India'. By doing so, Kabir effectively doubles the indispensability of Muslims to Indian nationality. Their importance went beyond their cultural offerings to the national project; that they were its prime movers was just as vital. Indian vernaculars would never have acquired their contemporary significance had their Muslim benefactors not provided them with 'a new dignity and a new life'. It is also significant that Kabir fails to privilege any particular language here, not least Hindustani—the north Indian lingua franca which remained the conventional example of linguistic synthesis between established and arriving languages. Instead, the role of Muslim monarchs is extended beyond it to encompass a broader array of 'local languages'. In refusing to restrict himself to one language or the other, Kabir ties his argument to the wider secular nationalist embrace of Indian linguistic diversity. The claim was that since the linguistic map of India was a continental one, a single

[75] Kabir, *IH*, pp.24-5.

nationality would only hold if it were predicated on the linguistic autonomy of its various peoples. Of course, the maintenance of linguistic range is, intentionally or otherwise, made an achievement of Muslim rule. But, more significantly, regional examples are not permitted to dominate this story. Instead, this diversity is hurriedly subordinated to an all-encompassing national argument about cross-communal endeavour and Muslim patronage. In the case of Bengali, for instance, which Kabir mentions here but expands upon elsewhere,[76] the initiatives of Pashtun kings are subordinated to these fundamental principles of a decidedly Indian national theory.

This idea of royal initiative was not restricted to language alone, but applied to art, architecture, and music, too. Broadening it to the national culture as a whole, Mahmud asked Indians to replicate the Mughals in the present.[77] Husain reiterated this view when he called on the citizens of the Indian Republic to assume the role of erstwhile kings and themselves become the new patrons of culture in the democratic age. If the princely and feudal class had patronised 'music and fine arts' in precolonial and colonial times, it was now 'the responsibility of an appreciative public' and their institutions to fulfil this national task and keep Indian culture alive.[78] A lineage is established between bygone kings and contemporary citizens not simply for the sake of a static inheritance; the maintenance of nationality also necessitated that the latter act like the former. Almost two years after the rupture of Partition, Azad made a connected claim in his convocation address at Aligarh Muslim University. Pleased that this bastion of Muslim separatism had undergone a 'profound change since then',[79] the Maulana once again drew on history to direct the Indians of the present. Encouraged by colonial knowledge, the view that the two written forms of Hindustani—modern Hindi (a Sanskritised rendering using the Devanagari script) and Urdu (a version replete with Persian lexis using the Perso-Arabic script)—belonged almost exclusively to Hindus and Muslims respectively gained increasing traction over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[80] With Partition threatening to amplify this argument of which he was a great

[76] Kabir, *The Bengali Novel: Rabindranath Tagore Centennial Lectures at the University of Wisconsin*, (Calcutta, 1968), pp.2-3.
[77] Mahmud, *HMCA*, p.77.
[78] Husain, 'Heritage of Music', Delhi, 8 November 1967, *PZHS*, pp.113-4.
[79] Azad, 'Aligarh and Indian Nationalism', p.79.
[80] For this, see C.R. King, *One Language, Two Scripts: the Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India*, (Bombay, 1994).

critic, Azad asked the students of Aligarh to recover the shared literary culture of north India by taking inspiration from Muslim rulers and writers of the past:

> I have already reminded you that Aligarh was the place where modern Urdu literature developed. This is an achievement of which your University can be rightly proud. It is your duty to cherish this heritage and further enrich it. I must, however, remind you that your literary efforts must have a wider field than in the past. You should take an equal interest in Hindi literature. Muslims have been noted for their interests in different languages and literatures. Hindi literature has the same claim on the Muslims as on the Hindus of India. Both the communities have contributed equally to the development of Urdu and Hindi literatures. The new literature in Brij Bhasha[81] which commenced in the Mughal period was the result of the patronage of rulers like Akbar and Jehangir and the contributions of writers of genius like Mohammad Jayesi, Khan Khanan and Abdul Jalil Bilgrami. We find that, up to the end of the 18th century, the number of Muslim poets who wrote in Brij Bhasha is considerable. The time has come when you must revive that old tradition. I desire that this Institution should produce a large number of writers who are equally at home with Hindi and Urdu literatures.[82]

This was more than just a reminder that Hindus and Muslims inhabited the same cultural world at a time of strained communal relations. Azad, like Kabir and Mahmud, was also claiming that north Indian Muslims had historically created the conditions for that process to occur. Indian literary achievements would have been impossible without Muslim direction. So the 'tradition' which Azad asks his Muslim student audience to 'revive' is double-faceted. And if the Indian nation necessitated that Muslims reclaim this ascendant position, the Muslim community—now further minoritised by Partition and its consequent migrations—was also in desperate need of any such elevation. During the late colonial period, Azad had been of the view that Indian Muslims, remaining preoccupied with narrow communal concerns, had forgotten their national worth. Prepared 'to withdraw' to the northern extremities of their own 'patrimony', this was now an introverted community suffering from 'defeatism' and 'cowardice'.[83] Consistently reminding it of its historically wider concerns and interests, Azad sought to refuse such minoritisation and return the Muslims of India to what he believed was their original role.

This reimagining of medieval and early modern monarchs in entirely cultural terms is interesting not least because other intellectual traditions did not use them in

[81] A language or dialect of Hindi associated with the western plains of north India.
[82] Azad, 'Aligarh and Indian Nationalism', p.81.
[83] Azad, 'On League urge for Partition', pp.132-3.

this way. I have already mentioned that while Hindu nationalists similarly culturalised their kings, they also looked to them for political inspiration as they searched for their majoritarian nation-state. Meanwhile, Islamist thinkers like Abul Ala Maududi refused to appropriate Indian Muslim kingship. Deeming it decadent and to have destroyed the integrity of Islam, they looked solely towards theology ignoring the fact that any application of the *shariat* (Islamic law) in India had occurred alongside kingship and *qanun* (civil law). Devji has argued that this essentially prevents Islamist thought from appropriating the political in any real sense. Restricting itself to a social language of outward Islamic comportment, there is no space for sovereignty. In fact, human sovereignty is what these thinkers wish to deny. It is handed over, instead, to God.[84] Thus, how the Congress Muslims used monarchy was quite original. They neither sought to retrieve a politics from history like Hindu nationalists, nor dismiss the royal past as irrelevant to their idea of a modern political community as Islamists did. The wider secular nationalist movement also depoliticises and culturalises figures from the past for similar purposes: the ancient philosopher and royal advisor Chanakya, the third Mauryan emperor Ashoka, and Akbar being some of the most celebrated. The Mauryan insignia has been famously reused by the Indian Republic. But that the Hindustani Muslim narrative connects historical royalty to nuanced ideas of parity between Hindu and Muslim influences, of Muslim leadership, and (as we shall see in the next chapter) theological reconciliation, means that it produces something distinctive and perhaps more intellectually precise than the wider movement to which it belonged.

Fundamentally concerned with the inheritance of contemporary Indians, what Azad and his associates achieve could be described as a presentist understanding of history. My use of this term is unconventional for this is not presentism as it is commonly understood with its anachronistic tendency to interpret the past in terms of modern values. For, as we have already seen, these Indian Muslim thinkers claimed to have a great regard for historical context. Their preference for, and prioritisation of, socio-cultural production was not meant to contradict the claim to an objective history but sit alongside it. This obsession with its afterlife meant that these nationalists never exulted in history. For instance, what is striking about Azad's speech at Ramgarh is his refusal to delve into specifics. We are left to judge for ourselves as to what is meant by

[84] Devji, *Muslim Zion*, pp.228-40.

'[o]ur languages, our poetry, our literature, our culture, our art, our dress, our manners and customs'.[85] The Maulana seemingly concludes that to dwell any longer will be futile. To give explanations would be to iterate what is familiar or, worse, reopen distracting debates. Since these legacies—of language and literature, of manners and customs—were so part of the everyday, Indians knew this story well. Thus, while Azad and his peers believed that it was possible to conjure a communal interpretation of Indian history and were aware that such attempts had gained popularity, they simultaneously imply that it would not take much to shake Indians out of this false consciousness of communal separatism by which they had been only temporarily seduced. Therefore, when Azad enters the debate about historical inheritance at Ramgarh, he only seeks to remind Indians of who they are; to merely provide the necessary jolt to return them to the realities of everyday Indian life. His concern is not to offer unsolicited history lessons to recover a glorious lost age. An account of contemporary possession, it simply wishes to convey that while Indians must focus on achieving a better future, they must go forward with a consciousness of what history has produced for their present. For once Indians remember their national story, they will realise that their future—like their past and present—had to be a shared one. So, it is unsurprising that the passage on the origins of Indian nationality that I have drawn on throughout this chapter, is only one part of an extensive presidential address dealing with more immediate issues: Indian independence, minority rights, and the hypocrisy of a British state fighting for liberty in Europe whilst maintaining imperialism in India.

The methodology Kabir employs in *Our Heritage* provides another example of this presentism. Intent on tracking modes of thought and cultural production from ancient to modern times, Kabir had left out much of the political history associated with his narrative. It was, Kabir tells us, only on request from his readers that he filled this gap in an enlarged third edition rechristened *The Indian Heritage* and published nine years later in 1955. Even then, he did so only partially providing no more than 'a bare skeleton of events in an introductory survey.' Explicitly restating his presentism in the preface to this new edition in words not dissimilar to those used by his mentor at Delhi in 1948, Kabir maintained that this concession did not complicate the simple truth that: '[w]hat matters in Indian history is not the story of the clash and conflict of prince and

[85] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.21.

princeling but the silent and massive flow of the life of the people'.[86] Kabir's brief account of the late eighteenth-century Awadhi administrator and historian Mirza Abu Talib Khan reaffirms his concern for historical inheritance. It was not simply that Kabir was attracted by Abu Talib's study of the shared world of north Indian poetry. Just as significant was his ability to bring historical study—whether it the rise of sea power, the Industrial Revolution, or the layering of governmental sovereignty in Georgian Britain—to bear on his own present and visions of the future.[87] Similarly instructive is an extract from *Ghubar-e-Khatir* (Sallies of Mind)—the great literary endeavour which Azad wrote in the form of epistles to his friend Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani while incarcerated at Ahmednagar Fort during the latter half of the Second World War. Arrested along with his Congress colleagues at the height of the Quit India Movement in 1942, Azad writes of being taken from Bombay to this forgotten town. As his train bursts through the countryside of western India, the history of Ahmednagar comes flooding back to the Maulana. Established as the capital of the Nizam Shahi state in the late fifteenth century, we are provided with a series of facts over the course of a few paragraphs. We learn about the rebuilding and strengthening of its fort during the early sixteenth century that brought it fame as far as Egypt; its bustling medieval town that was said to have rivalled Cairo and Baghdad; and finally the Mughal campaigns which ultimately led to its capture. But just as these fragments of history are brought to our attention, they are hurriedly being set aside:

> The mention of Ahmad Nagar suddenly brought to mind several forgotten footprints of time. The train was moving fast, crossing field after field and bringing different scenes in quick succession; it was difficult to focus on any one. Ahmad Nagar was presenting, page after page, centuries of its history. Before I could focus on a page another came in view….[88]

The literary skill of Azad produces a powerful image: the fast-moving train—a figure of European modernity—running roughshod over the distant history of pre-colonial India. Just as one scene from that previous age comes into view, it is quickly turned into a trivial blur by the realities of the present. While Azad takes the rare liberty of recounting tales of the past that have no obvious connection to his national idea, he is concurrently eager to remind us that he does not wish to dwell on them. For most of the

[86] Kabir, *IH*, p.x.
[87] Kabir, *Mirza Abu Talib Khan*, (Patna, 1961).
[88] Azad, *Sallies of Mind: English Translation of Ghubar-e-Khatir*, D.R. Goyal (trans.), (Delhi, 2003 [1946]), p.39.

epistle in question, and much like the presidential address at Ramgarh where the past he recalls *does matter*, history is not its theme. Rather, the goal of independence remains the dominant motif as nationalist leaders are taken to Ahmednagar. If they aspired to lead the people of this ancient land, Azad and his Congress travellers had to move forward with the consciousness of its history and, yet, never lose sight of their own project. Summarising the journey, Azad tellingly notes:

> Ahmad Nagar certainly was not far and would soon arrive, but the journey will not end there; it would indeed be beginning.[89]

Since this view of history placed such great significance on the legacies bequeathed to the present, it is not surprising that the art inherited by contemporary Indians would be granted a privileged position within the national story. More interesting, however, is the fact that art is made to epitomise such presentism. What appeals to these thinkers is its vividly tangible nature and consequent ability to convey cultural meaning more immediately and economically than other cultural forms. Making the claim that the legacy of art was greater than that of language, music, and philosophy, Kabir noted:

> A nation is immortalized in its art. The political landscape may change from day to day and the shifting scenes leave no permanent impression on the world's mind. Even in philosophy the details often crowd out the outline of the whole till the soul is lost in the intricacies of the intellect. In art, however, it is only the simple and the elemental that remain and stamp themselves upon the racial consciousness. That is why a nation's art reveals its inmost character and fixes it for succeeding ages and generations. Of all the arts, painting is perhaps the most elemental and permanent. Words are counters in man's social intercourse. With change in social forms they also change. Music is elemental, but it is hardly permanent. The feelings it evokes are so fleeting and formless that its appeal seldom goes beyond a vague stirring of the soul. Its lack of definiteness disqualifies it for the full expression of the peculiar racial genius of a people. Painting reaches back to the fundamentals and yet expresses particular racial or temporal physiognomy.[90]

If music was too ephemeral, philosophy too abstract to be comprehended immediately, and language potentially impermanent, art faced none of these impediments. However authentic these other cultural forms were, they cannot capture the human imagination with the efficiency that art could muster. So when in November 1948 Azad opened an

[89] Ibid.
[90] Kabir, *IH*, pp.96-7.

exhibition featuring a thousand artefacts from all over the country in Delhi, it was the speed and economy with which it conveyed the history of India that enthralled him:

> A lesson to refresh our memory about our past has never been more necessary than in the phase through which we are passing today after the achievement of independence…. A nation's art is a visible representation of its history. Annals recorded in writing tell us of the past but cannot make it visible to us. Art, on the contrary, not only tells us of the past but makes it live before our vision. We look at statues and forms, and grasp the history of centuries in minutes.[91]

As at Ramgarh, Azad believes he is speaking to a people conscious of its past. For him, any historical exposition was merely designed to 'refresh' the national 'memory' that may have been transitorily obfuscated. Whether he was referencing the past at Ramgarh as Indian politics stood at a crossroads or here in Delhi so soon after a bloody partition, his task was the same: to retrieve that which may have been temporarily neglected rather than conjure something new or unfamiliar. But since the past as told by its art—unlike its spoken or written accounts—'makes it live before our vision', the brushstroke history of India that Azad attempted to provide at Ramgarh is achieved here with greater ease. The steady development of the Indian story becomes evident in a matter of 'minutes'. After all, what Azad wanted Indians to achieve was not an understanding of the minutiae of their history but simply a renewed appreciation for the rich inheritance it had left them. That endeavour, requiring a thematic and succinct summation of a vast legacy, had now been accomplished by this exhibition. For Azad, it ratified the story of an Indic ancient period followed by shared medieval and early modern ones. Amongst his various descriptions of the religious (both Hindu and Muslim) and profane art on display, it is perhaps not coincidental that '[a] unique set of Ragamala paintings in mixed Rajput-Mughal style of Jahangir's period, in which Jahangir himself appears, [wa]s one of the highlights of the Exhibition.'[92] This, once again, reveals his eye for cultural cooperation and parity but also reinforces the idea that Muslim rulers were the original conveners of this national culture.

We have seen that trust in a public historical intelligence guided the Maulana's approach to a national past; a brief comparison with Nehru's relationship with history helps to further explain the extent of this trust and how it seemingly propelled Azad's

[91] Azad, 'Indian Art through the Ages', Delhi, 6 November 1948, *SMA*, pp.45, 47-8.
[92] Ibid, p.47.

presentism to such great limits. Seth has shown that Nehru, too, sought to understand history for what it was rather than engage in 'an attempt at reversing an earlier historical process.'[93] This agreement between the two leaders can be taken further. Though keen to refrain from the manipulation of facts, Nehru also sought to use them selectively in the present. 'The past', Nehru notes at the beginning of *Discovery*, 'oppresses me or fills me sometimes with its warmth when it touches on the present, and becomes, as it were, an aspect of that living present. If it does not do so, then it is cold, barren, lifeless, uninteresting.'[94] There is, however, a significant tension between their views. Seth explains that one of the reasons why Nehru wished to 'discover' India was because he believed that Indian nationality had a primarily 'unreflexive and unselfconscious presence' among Indians. In other words, since Indians were not adequately aware of their nationality (which, for Nehru, was marked by 'a cultural continuity stretching over thousands of years') it was necessary to cultivate a 'pedagogic voice of a nationalist elite' that could impart lessons of unity to the masses. This, Nehru held, was partly because Indian experience did not translate smoothly into nationalism; it could equally be used to foster attachment to caste groups, religious communities, or smaller geographical units within India and, thereby, hinder nationalism.[95] The elite, then, needed to sift through history and acquire what was useful while cutting back what Nehru once called 'the dead wood of this past'.[96] To Azad, who believed that everyday life in India was significantly marked by a shared culture produced from the medieval period, this would have appeared too pessimistic a view. Indians required gentle reminders or light refreshers, not rigorous schooling. So, for all his desire to establish a presentist history, Nehru's misgivings force him to deal with the past more meticulously than Azad ever did. Since contemporary experience failed to guarantee nationalism, Nehru concerns himself with acquiring all that is good and dismissing all that is bad in history. It is not coincidental, therefore, that while they shared a barrack at Ahmednagar Fort, Nehru and Azad penned very different books. The Maulana would never have felt the urge to write a mammoth national biography

[93] Seth, 'Nationalism', p.38.
[94] Nehru, *Discovery*, p.25.
[95] Seth, 'Nationalism', p.40.
[96] Nehru, *Discovery*, p.567.

like *Discovery*; indeed, it is unsurprising that *Ghubar-e-Khatir* was a far more speculative and philosophical text.

Urdu and the Production of Culture

I would like to end this chapter by briefly illustrating the extent to which this idea of a shared profane culture found a reflection in the literature and film of the period and led to a claim about the distinctly national status of the Urdu language. Scholars have shown that the Urdu literary community of the mid-twentieth century, dominated as it was by the Progressives, imagined a north Indian society that decidedly backgrounded the category of religion. This was, to some extent, a paradox. As Mufti has noted, 'the era of modern Indian history that saw the most decisive bifurcation of national politics along religio-communal lines is perhaps the most secularist period in the history of modern Urdu literature.' It was not simply that this group of writers—by using a single linguistic register which had itself been deployed in efforts to increasingly communalise Indian society—cut across its own communal heterogeneity. But rather that its members—whether situated in the Punjab or the Gangetic plain and whether of Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh origin—made literature 'the staging ground for a vision of national life as secular social landscape'. Ismat Chughtai, Saadat Hasan Manto, Krishan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, and many others collectively imagined national life to be about: 'the onslaughts of modernity' on 'India's ''eternal'' villages'; 'the psycho-sexual tensions and crises of the middle-class home'; and 'the multilayered energy and movement of the modern cities'.[97] Consequently, everyday interaction between Indians is not defined by community. Whether in the rural village or modern city, communal relations sink into the background and become entirely quotidian. Their existence, of course, is not denied, but by making Hindu and Muslim (and Sikh) characters speak in one (Urdu) voice and share the same mental and material dreams and troubles, these authors imagine a society which cannot be understood by the category of religion alone. In other words, by refusing to explicitly mark the religious community and, thereby, silencing it to a significant extent, this literature provides a space for the shared and the secular to come to the fore. By grappling with 'the most significant social forces' of this period while implicitly retaining the claim that their language belonged not just to Muslims but also to Hindus and Sikhs, Mufti tells us that these writers 'demonstrated that Urdu could be

[97] Mufti, *Enlightenment*, pp.180-1.

and was the terrain for truly national social imaginings.'[98] It is true that Partition—or, more accurately, the obsession of the Urdu short-story writer with its resultant violence and displacement—disturbed this equation. When writing about the communal violence of 1947, it was impossible to force religion into the background of these narratives as before. But beyond the almost pitiable desire to appear even-handed and impartial, that this literature is animated by such a sense of shock illustrates just how rooted its writers had been to their shared world. As Alok Bhalla has argued, it was precisely because the Progressives held that the everyday life of Indians was 'so richly interwoven as to have formed a rich archive of customs and practices' that 'there is a single, common note which informs nearly all the stories written about the partition and the horror it unleashed—a note of utter bewilderment.'[99]

In keeping with the arguments of Mufti and Bhalla, Ahmad has contended that such was its own diversity that the Urdu 'writing community' saw itself as 'a microcosm of subcontinental society'; an 'emblem and condensation of the civilization as a whole'. This 'ideological tendency', Ahmad adds, was the almost 'spontaneous' result 'of the fact that Urdu was a language neither of any particular region nor of any identifiable religious group.'[100] The national imagination that Mufti, Bhalla, and Ahmad ascribe to this 'writing community', then, broadly matches the idea of an India reducible neither to Hindu nor Muslim that I have sketched in this chapter. After all, these writers shared their urban milieus with Azad and the Congress Muslims. Though not a Progressive, of course, Azad could rightfully lay claim to this 'writing community' himself and shared the idea that Urdu had a national position. Echoing the logic of this wider intellectual group, the Maulana's most forceful articulation of this view came in a speech to the Constituent Assembly during the fraught debate over a national language for the Indian Republic in September 1949. At the insistence of Gandhi who was supported by Nehru, the Congress of the late colonial period had committed itself to instituting Hindustani as the national language of its independent state. Azad imagined Hindustani to be a language of multiple mutually intelligible registers. It would contain both modern Hindi and Urdu but also various other spoken forms. Crediting the Mahatma for establishing

[98] Ibid, p.181.
[99] A. Bhalla, 'Introduction', in Bhalla (ed.), *Stories about the Partition of India*, Vol.1, (4 vols, Delhi, 2012), p.ix.
[100] Ahmad, *In the Mirror of Urdu: Recompositions of Nation and Community, 1947-65*, (Shimla, 1993), pp.26-7.

an atmosphere within the nationalist movement that allowed Hindi and Urdu speakers to express themselves as they wished, Azad added that in Gandhi's Congress there was even space for 'Bombay-style Hindustani, while a Bengali speaker would speak in Hindustani with his own accent and style. All of them are covered by the wider term of Hindustani. Hindustani has a place for all these styles'.[101] Though Azad argued that Urdu was the only indigenous language which could currently provide a means of interprovincial communication, it was to be granted national status only once it was subsumed within this grander linguistic family of Hindustani. And that was a consistent position for Azad to take. As we saw earlier, he embraced the various forms of the north Indian vernacular and their literary heritage; he told the students of Aligarh after independence that just as Urdu and Braj Bhasha had been historical products of Indian national synthesis, contemporary Hindus and Muslims had to repeat the process for modern Hindi. In fact, part of his argument for Hindustani was about retaining as much of north Indian literature as was possible for the new state. If Indians were to replace English with a national language, it would have to be 'rich and extensive rather than limiting its scope and extent'. Neither Urdu nor Hindi could fulfil such a monumental responsibility single-handedly; Hindustani 'alone' possessed that skill.[102] But since Partition had strengthened the already popular tendency to reduce Hindi and Urdu to communal possessions, advocates of Hindustani like Azad found themselves on the backfoot. Having described Urdu as 'the common heritage of millions of Hindus and Muslims', Azad proceeded to castigate his party colleagues for their volte-face. Unwilling to 'hide [his] own feelings' and 'great disappoint[ment]', he said:

> Of all the arguments employed against 'Hindustani', greatest emphasis has been laid on the point that if 'Hindustani' is accepted, Urdu also will have to be accommodated. But I would like to tell you that by accommodating Urdu, the heavens will not come down. After all Urdu is one of the Indian languages. It was born and brought up in India and it is the mother tongue of millions of Hindus and Muslims of this country. Even today, this is the language which serves the purpose of a medium of expression between different provinces and it is the only means of inter-provincial relations. Why should we allow our minds to be prejudiced to this extent against one of the languages of our country? Why should we allow ourselves to be swept away by the currents of our narrow-mindedness to such a great distance?... Today you will decide that the national language of the Indian Union will be 'Hindi'. You may decide that. There is nothing substantial in the name of 'Hindi'. The real problem is the question of the characteristics of the

[101] Azad, 'Maulana Azad Speaks Out for Hindustani in the Constituent Assembly', Delhi, 14 September 1949, in A.G. Noorani (ed.), *The Muslims of India: A Documentary Record*, (Delhi, 2003), p.295.
[102] Ibid, pp.295-6.

> language. We wanted to keep it in its real form by calling it 'Hindustani'. Your majority did not agree to it. But it is still in the hands of our countrymen not to allow the shape of Hindi to be deformed and instead of making it an artificial language let it remain an easy and intelligible medium of expression. Let us hope that the present atmosphere of narrow-mindedness which is the residue of the past misfortune will not last long and very soon such an environment will be created in which people freeing themselves from all sorts of sentiments would see the problem of language in its real and true perspective.[103]

This passage reiterates so much of the national idea that Azad and his associates had developed over the previous decade. Let us begin with the Maulana's definition of Urdu. Mufti notes that Gandhi somewhat controversially identified 'Urdu as an exclusively Muslim register and style.'[104] What is so apparent here is that Azad refuses to do so. Urdu was not even what the Bombay Khoja lawyer-politician M.C. Chagla described as the great 'Muslim contribution to Indian culture'.[105] For Azad, Urdu is not Muslim; it is neither an exclusive (and, therefore, minoritarian) 'style' for which magnanimous national space needed to be made nor a glorious 'contribution' which members of other communities may have adopted for themselves. Hindus are not the recipients of a Muslim language and literature; rather, they are its fellow architects. The creation of both communities, Urdu emerges in this rendering as a product of the medieval and early modern synthesis with which this chapter began. And so, since it was the 'common heritage' and 'mother tongue' of 'millions of Hindus and Muslims', any defence of the place of Urdu within the national linguistic landscape of India is intended to be entirely secular. For Azad, the task—as it was throughout the mid-twentieth century—was to stake a position on culture that was Indian rather than Muslim.

The extent to which Azad sought to retain the secular in his argument is properly understood by the way he proceeds to criticise his opponents. The communalised context of his statement is important here. There was, of course, the fact that this debate, ever since the nineteenth century, had been shaped by a long tale of religious conflict. But, more immediately, Hindu nationalists within Congress, perhaps emboldened by the recent national appropriation of Urdu by a Muslim Pakistan, now sought to settle this dispute in their favour by finally jettisoning what they took to be the language of the religious (and even foreign) other. Acutely aware of what is

[103] Ibid, pp.298-9.
[104] Mufti, *Enlightenment*, p.182.
[105] M.C. Chagla, *Roses in December: An Autobiography*, (Mumbai, 2014 [1973]), p.84.

transpiring around him, Azad makes it known that he is responding to the uncompromising advocates of Hindi led in the assembly by Purshottam Das Tandon. There is even an attempt to reiterate the indigenousness of Urdu. I argued earlier that Azad and his associates strangely imagined India as a new nation of migrants that was nevertheless oriented around a profane culture rooted in the soil. Therefore, while elsewhere in this address Azad does not deny the fact that some of its ingredients (namely its Persian lexis) originated in foreign lands, what ultimately matters is that Urdu 'was born and brought up in India'. But there is a more significant aspect of this confrontation with the politics of figures like Tandon. A close inspection of the passage reveals that Azad shirks from any direct critique of what were quite obviously the communal intentions of his opponents. By refusing to explicitly name this communalism for what it really was, Azad seemingly seeks to retain, in full, the secular language with which he sought to conduct discussions about national culture. So committed is the Maulana to this that figures like Tandon are criticised not for their communalism but mere 'narrow-mindedness'. They are 'prejudiced' against Urdu but we are left to decide for ourselves as to why that is so. In less delicate contexts, perhaps, Azad was quite willing to critique communalism explicitly. He did so, for instance, at Ramgarh. It is significant that here, however, on the question of Urdu—which could so easily be reduced to a communal Muslim concern especially in the aftermath of Partition and its nationalisation in Pakistan—Azad wishes to free his speech entirely from the trace of religion. Conscious of conceding ground to his opponents at this juncture, Azad must make his argument about a future for the north Indian vernacular without encouraging any slippage into what he believed was a misleading communal discourse. That is to say that a deep desire to retain—or perhaps, more accurately, a fear of forgoing—the fundamentally national quality of Urdu prevents Azad from calling out the Hindu nationalist thesis.

It is interesting that the conclusion Azad reaches here is identical to the one at Ramgarh. The argument for secular national culture is always that a rejection of it was simply a false state of mind. Once communalists finally free 'themselves from all sorts of sentiments' they, too, 'would see the problem of language in its real and true perspective.' One might even concede that the ultimate victory of modern Hindi over Hindustani in the Constituent Assembly was a symbolically greater defeat for the Azadian idea than the division of the country. For if one could regret Partition, one could

also explain it away as the inability to reconcile political ideas and interests. One might contend that it had nothing to do with culture. The same could not be said for the language question. In fact, the Maulana's statement after the announcement of the Mountbatten Plan in 1947 suggests just this. It was how Indians (and Pakistanis) would now proceed to answer the cultural questions posed to them by independence and Partition that really mattered:

> We must not however forget that the nation is one and its cultural life is and will remain one. Politically we had failed and were therefore dividing the country. We should accept our defeat but we should at the same try to ensure that our culture was not divided. If we put a stick in the water, it may appear that the water has been divided but the water remains the same and the moment the stick is removed, even the appearance of division disappears.[106]

An *alim* interested in comparative religion, Azad would have almost certainly known that this allegory belonged to the nineteenth-century Bengali Hindu mystic Ramakrishna who used it to demonstrate the essential unity between man and God.[107] But that he refuses to mention this is significant. For this was not the first time that Azad had both made use of allegory and chosen to hide its Hindu import. I have already speculated about why Azad may have refused to name his female India as mother at Ramgarh. In *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, confronted by an invasion of sparrows in his room at Ahmednagar Fort, Azad turns this unwelcome event into an elaborate reflection of the communal problem. Building on Mufti's reading of this passage, I have noted elsewhere that by casting the sparrows as the Muslim minority and himself as the figurative representative of the Hindu majority, Azad alluded to his being the only Congress leader prepared to make a significant concession to the League.[108] And even if, in his capacity as Congress president, Azad sought to effectively make the requisite constitutional sacrifices on behalf of the majority community to reach a truce with Jinnah, he could not own that role publicly without both rendering his own position untenable and accepting the Qaid's charge that the nationalist Congress was, in fact, a communal organisation. Of course, this esotericism is not original and Azad, steeped in religious as much as secular culture, would have imbibed it from mystical Islamic tradition. As early as 1910 in an essay on the seventeenth-century Sufi mystic Sarmad, twenty-one-year-old Azad demonstrated a clear understanding of the dichotomy between *zahir* (what is

[106] Azad, *IWF*, pp.214-5.
[107] M. Gupta, *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, (New York, 1907), p.55.
[108] Sohal, 'Ideas of Parity', pp.713-4.

manifest) and *batin* (what is hidden) and how the latter might be used to outmanoeuvre the tendency of Sunni orthodoxy to favour outward comportment over inner faith.[109] Needless to say, his use of the esoteric in the late colonial period is representative of another kind of minorityhood: as a Congress Muslim who, in a highly communalised atmosphere, believes that he is unable to fully express his unpopular views without incurring further criticism or misrepresentation.

If the Urdu literature of the mid-twentieth century subscribed to the Maulana's view that north Indian Hindus and Muslims shared a secular cultural world of which their language was a key component, it is interesting that this idea failed to receive traction among the Hindustani filmmakers and scriptwriters of the period. Arguing against the anachronistic tendency to locate the origins of the Muslim social film in 'the secular and hegemonic nationalist project of creating brotherhood on screen', Salma Siddique convincingly charts an alternative trajectory by matching its rise in the 1940s with that of Muslim nationalism. Often associated with the morality of the family, these films emphasised the separate cultural 'particularity' of Indian Muslims through the use of 'language, poetry, clothes and customary practices';[110] themes, of course, that figures like Azad had mobilised for a quite contrary project. Mimicking Muslim League efforts to imagine an ecumenical Muslim *qawm* (nation) for a principally Muslim audience, any conception of 'Hindu-Muslim unity was not directly related to the content of the film, but took the form of spectatorial accommodation and samaritanism'.[111] In other words, since they implicitly called for a mutual acknowledgement of, and respect for, separate Hindu and Muslim cultures, Indian unity was to be fostered simply by watching these films. And this was made possible by the Muslim social refusing to pit Hindu against Muslim; instead, the rival of the pious, principled Muslim was often the corrupted, westernised coreligionist. While there was some scope for a restricted form of unity, then, this was not the focus of these fundamentally inward-looking films. After Partition, the Muslim social of the Bombay film industry moved away from its late colonial fascination with the *qawm* in order to fit into the secular nationalist narrative of the new state. However, even then, it was largely uninterested in charting a culture

[109] Azad, 'Abul Kalam Azad's Sarmad, the Martyr', C.W. Troll (trans.), in C. Shackle (ed.), *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*, (London, 1989).
[110] S. Siddique, 'The Partition Wish: Fazli Brothers and The Muslim Social', (unpublished chapter), p.1.
[111] Ibid, p.8.

that transcended religious boundaries. Offering 'a courteous nostalgia extended to the moribund elite', these films remained associated with minorityism.[112] As Rachel Dwyer has argued, postcolonial Hindi cinema more broadly has been unable to avoid marking the Muslim as separate.[113] Unlike Urdu literature and Azad's 'new India', it has refused to move religious identity to the background when imagining the national community.

I would like to contend, however, that if the social films of mid-twentieth century refused to imagine interaction between Hindus and Muslims in any meaningful way, filmmakers like Mehboob Khan and K. Asif and scriptwriters such as Aghajani Kashmiri, Kamal Amrohi, and Qamar Jalalabadi—all three of whom, incidentally, were Urdu poets from the Punjab or the Gangetic plain—approached their historical films differently. It is interesting to note that sandwiched in between Mehboob's two great Muslim socials *Najma* (1943) and *Elan* (Proclamation; 1947) was his *Humayun* (1945) written by Kashmiri. Celebrating the benevolent and inclusive rule of the first and second Mughal emperors, Babur and Humayun, and their relations with the Rajputs, it was as if the historical allowed Mehboob and Kashmiri to resuscitate a shared story which they seemingly found impossible to achieve in their own communitarian present. While it is difficult to conclude whether Mehboob and Kashmiri (who also scripted *Najma*) saw it as such, read together these films almost turn the past into a refuge if not for the filmmakers then at least for Indian unity itself. In fact, a series of films from this period about the lives and times of the Mughal emperors provide a rare convergence with one element of the nationalist theory developed by Azad and his associates; the idea that both amity and enmity had shaped the Indian story permeates many of them. *Humayun* begins with a fraught confrontation between the fictional Rajput Rajkumari and the conquering Babur, only for the latter to finally win the trust of the former once he promises to respect her political and religious autonomy and treat her as his daughter.[114] In M. Sadiq's *Taj Mahal* (1963) written by Jalalabadi, the Maharana of Mewar Karan Singh reminds Jahangir's general Mahabat Khan that though he took the Mughals to be his countrymen and even family members, these relations were premised on Rajput autonomy.[115] Written by Amrohi, Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (The Great Mughal;

[112] Ibid, p.47.
[113] R. Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*, (Abingdon, 2006), p.126.
[114] *Humayun*, dir. M. Khan, (Film, 1945, DVD), 2:37-4:27.
[115] *Taj Mahal*, dir. M. Sadiq, (Film, 1963, DVD), 1:53:57-1:55:40.

1960) begins with a personified Hindustan as narrator declaring himself to be a battlefield for good and evil. Though 'the ignorant' had shackled him in 'chains' and the 'evil' had 'plundered' his treasures, his 'lovers' had freed him and 'the kind' had 'adorned' him with decorations. This elaborate staging ends with Akbar emerging as one of the greater 'lovers' of India; a status he achieves by transcending the 'wall' of religious difference to teach his countrymen to love each other on the grounds of common humanity.[116] In all three films, the Indianness of the arriving Mughals is ultimately solved by love; love not merely for the adopted land but, more significantly, the religious other. More like Gandhi than Azad, these films, too, bypass the question of a secular culture and, instead, situate their contemporary Indian nationalism not in a history of the profane but *solely* in terms of toleration and autonomy. And they break yet again with Azad by making language not profane elements of a shared culture but possessions of religious communities. By ascribing the registers of Hindi and Urdu to their characters on neatly constructed religious lines, all these films use language to starkly mark difference. While there are countless examples to draw on, some of the most unambiguous are found at moments when characters appropriate the words of their interlocutors but by way of obvious translation. In *Mughal-e-Azam*, for instance, as the royal couple prepare to welcome their returning son and crown prince Salim after years on the battlefield, Jodhabai's '*svagat*' (welcome) quickly turns into Akbar's '*istiqbal*' (welcome).[117] In *Humayun*, meanwhile, Rajkumari's '*vachan*' (promise) becomes Babur's '*vada*' (promise).[118] One might even interpret this as a tool to counterintuitively illustrate unity; though these characters do not share vocabularies, that their languages are apparently intelligible to each other provides both an acceptance of difference and a national intimacy. If that, indeed, was the claim of these nationalist historical films, these Hindustani scriptwriters produce a way of illustrating unity which is all their own. For while Azad and the Progressives make Urdu a site for Indian nationality itself, the likes of Jalalabadi, Amrohi, and Kashmiri concede ground to Gandhi's argument that Urdu was a Muslim rendering of the vernacular. This tendency has continued to characterise the historical film into the twenty-first century; Ashutosh Gowariker's *Jodhaa Akbar* (2008) written by Haider Ali is a notable case.

[116] *Mughal-e-Azam*, dir. K. Asif, (Film, 1960, DVD), 3:35-4.41.
[117] Ibid, 23:40-24:00.
[118] *Humayun*, 3:27-3:33.

It is widely accepted that Hindi cinema has resisted the official lurch towards Sanskritised Hindi and predominantly upheld a more colloquial Hindustani.[119] The Maulana may well have commended it for not having 'allow[ed] the shape of Hindi to be deformed and instead of making it an artificial language let it remain an easy and intelligible medium of expression.' But whenever Hindi cinema has made use of this Sanskritised register, it has frequently juxtaposed it with Urdu and reduced both to communal forms of the vernacular. If Hindustani is shared, Hindi and Urdu are not. For Azad, however, nothing that was profane and created on the plains of north India could be reduced to religion.

[119] Dwyer, *Filming the Gods*, p.104.

2

The Indian Intoxicant

In the fourth epistle of *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, Azad recounts his most recent achievement to Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani. The fusion of tea and cigarettes, he tells his friend, have produced a special pleasure. Typical of the metaphorical quality that marks this collection of letters, the relationship between the following passage and the Maulana's nationalist thought is too stark to be considered coincidental:

> You perhaps do not know that in the matter of tea I have appropriated certain privileges. I have prepared a compound intoxicant by mixing the delicacy and sweetness of tea with the pungent bitterness of tobacco. With the first sip of tea I light the cigarette… This process of synthesising the sip of tea with a pull on the cigarette continues. Just consider the discipline in the beauty of balance that as I empty the last cup of tea the lit cigarette also reaches its last tip. How should I describe the intoxicating pleasure of this combination of two sharp and light ingredients.[1]

Illustrating its qualities but also its boundaries, Azad provides perhaps the most succinct exposition of his idea of synthesis here. He asks his friend to 'consider the discipline in the beauty of balance' as he harmonises the tea and the cigarette to create the desired mixture. Too long a pull on the cigarette, or anything more than a 'sip of tea', threatens to put the whole exercise out of kilter. Since intoxication lies at the point of equilibrium, one element cannot be allowed to overpower the other. I would like to suggest that this allegory alludes to the two strands which together make for the Azadian national idea. The first, which I delineated in the previous chapter, is almost perfectly translated here. We saw how Azad and other intellectuals from urban Urdu-speaking milieus imagined secular India in historical and cultural terms and as a perfectly balanced blend of medieval and early modern Hindu and Muslim influences. Just as Hindus and Muslims could not possibly have created Indian nationality without the other, neither could these sips of tea or pulls of the cigarette have conjured the exhilaration produced by their unification alone. Exhilaration or intoxication exists in a separate third realm independent of its two creators. But though cultural parity was a historical fact, manipulation of a rich and plentiful past could yet fashion a dangerous adulteration of Indian life to derail the national idea. There was, then, much like the

[1] Azad, *Sallies of Mind*, p.27.

Maulana's intoxicant, a certain fragility that marked this idea of secularism as national culture.

The second strand, equally reflected in this allegory, is the subject of this chapter. It is significant that though the tea and the cigarette create an 'intoxicating pleasure' by transcending their separate identities, Azad distinguishes between the 'last cup of tea' and the cigarette's 'last tip' until the very end of the passage. While their realities have been changed forever by an interaction with the other, their individualities have not vanished as result. And similarly, just as synthesis fails to compromise the distinction between the tea and the cigarette, in the Maulana's Indian imagination Hindus and Muslims retain their separate religious identities even while producing a shared socio-cultural (or secular national) one. More simply, though they had become Indians through a process of synthesis, Hindus and Muslims simultaneously remained Hindus and Muslims. In his Urdu speeches, Azad often referred to the religious community, as well as the wider Indian nation, as being a *qawm*.[2] A word that cannot be easily reduced to an English equivalent, its usage alone fails to tell us much about the Maulana's thought except that—in different contexts—the nation and the religious community mattered.

This chapter further evidences the fact that Azad and his coterie of associates were influenced by their interpretations of the Indians who preceded them. Their idea that religious autonomy lay beyond what was shared by Indians might even be understood as a modern remaking of the earlier Indo-Muslim notion that good government involved the ruler standing above the beliefs and practices of his subjects.[3] Similarly, their endeavour to strike a theological truce between Hinduism and Islam found reflections in Mughal history. However, we must equally recognise what the category of religion had come to mean in India by the mid-twentieth century. The experience of European colonialism had fixed this category in ways previously unknown. Watertight bodies of theology were said to belong to large and rigidly defined

[2] See the Urdu originals of Azad's: 'congress address 1940', *India's Maulana*, Vol.4, pp.197-226; and 'delhi ke musalmanon se khitab', in Ibid, pp.231-6. For a commentary on the history of the *qawm* as a concept in South Asia, see Qasmi and Robb, 'Introduction', in *Muslims Against the Muslim League*.
[3] For this older history of Indo-Muslim political thought, see M. Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India, 1200-1800*, (London, 2004).

communities. Far less fluid than it appeared in precolonial times, this modern idea of religion went unquestioned by thinkers like Azad.[4] They were, then, products of their own age. And therefore, while the events and texts of Mughal India provided a set of resources for modern recreation, I want to emphasise that this was not some kind of unbroken inheritance or wholesale replication. If the general task of concurrently (and even paradoxically) traversing and protecting the religious boundary between Hindu and Muslim belonged as much to the seventeenth-century Mughal heir apparent, Dara Shikoh, as it did to Azad, for the latter it was to be performed in a context that would have seemed alien to the former.

Historicising Accommodation

In November 1930, six weeks prior to his death, Mohammad Ali famously told the Round Table Conference in London that he belonged at the intersection of two circles: India and the Muslim world. Representing the Muslim League, he noted that since it was neither desirable nor possible to reduce either his Indian or Muslim identity to the other, both had to coexist.[5] Much like Iqbal, Mohammad Ali, who had by now left Congress, held an Islamic aversion to unitary nationalism. The self-governing Indian state of the future would have to provide mechanisms by which its Muslims could give expression to an Islamic politics which, both men believed, was organic to its ethic. That is to say, the chasm between Muslims and non-Muslims had to be reflected in their political and representational equality. We have already noted that in the late colonial period there was a clear difference in the way the Congress Muslims and their League coreligionists approached India's constitutional question. Nevertheless, on the coexistence of two separate identities—Indian and Muslim—they were in broad agreement. And so, it was in the spirit that Mohammad Ali conjured at London that Azad made a similar claim a decade later at Ramgarh. With the League's increasingly separatist campaign gaining momentum, Azad wished to clarify that he and his party were no assimilationists plotting to eradicate communal particularity:

> I am a Musalman and am proud of that fact. Islam's splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this

[4] For religion as a modern category in a global context, see T. Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, (Chicago, 2005).
[5] M. Ali, 'Freedom or Death!', London, 19 November 1930, in A. Iqbal (ed.), *Selected Works and Speeches of Mahomed Ali*, (Lahore, 1944), pp.457-469.

> inheritance. The teaching and the history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilisation are my wealth and my fortune. It is my duty to protect them. As a Musalman I have a special interest in Islamic religion and culture and I cannot tolerate any interference with them. But in addition to these sentiments, I have others also which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments; it guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am a part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim.[6]

Having participated in the creation of its modern national culture, it was impossible to imagine the Indian nation without the Muslim. Nevertheless, the Muslim retains a concurrent and exclusive right to own, and preserve the autonomy of, an Islamic inheritance. Though these were both organic and complementary realities, Azad warns against 'any interference' with Islam. If Indian nationality was to retain its Muslim element and, thereby, its very character, it would have to respect this autonomy. While Azad would have taken umbrage to any reference to an Islamic polity, he would have endorsed the thrust of the following formulation put forward by Mohammad Ali at London:

> I have a culture, a polity, an outlook on life—a complete synthesis which is Islam. Where God commands I am a Muslim first, a Muslim second, and a Muslim last, and nothing but a Muslim. If you ask me to enter into your Empire or into your Nation by leaving that synthesis, that polity, that culture, that ethics, I will not do it. My first duty is to my Maker, not to H. M. the King, nor to my companion, Dr. Moonje; my first duty is to my maker, and that is the case with Dr. Moonje also. He must be a Hindu first, and I must be a Muslim first, so far as that duty is concerned. But where India is concerned, where India's freedom is concerned, I am an Indian first, an Indian second, an Indian last, and nothing but an Indian.[7]

Just as significant in this passage is Mohammad Ali's equalisation of Hinduism with Islam. If Muslims and their Islam possessed an autonomy from the national idea just as they were integral to it, the same was true for Hindus and their Hinduism. For Mohammad Ali, his two circles—the religious and the national—were 'not concentric'.[8] However, for Hindu nationalists like the Hindu Mahasabha leader B.S. Moonje—who Mohammad Ali revealingly chose to address directly here—they most certainly were. According to Hindu nationalism, it is precisely because Hinduism is not separable from India that Hindus are better Indians than Muslims. Be that as it may, what is important

[6] Azad, 'Presidential Address', pp.19-20.
[7] Ali, 'Freedom or Death!', p.465.
[8] Ibid.

for us here is that though complementary to it, Hindu and Muslim religious identities are both separated from the shared national space. Azad made the same distinction continually at Ramgarh. The most succinct expression of it appears in a passage I cited in the previous chapter:

> Just as a Hindu can say with pride that he is an Indian and follows Hinduism, so also we can say with equal pride that we are Indians and follow Islam.[9]

Here Azad principally wants to show that the adherents of one faith were no less Indian than the other. But, in doing so, he inadvertently also demarcates the separation between these religions and the shared nation. The respective practice of Hinduism and Islam has no bearing on the continuation of a shared Indianness. If the implication for religion was autonomy, the implication for nationalism is undoubtedly secularism. Since the national category 'Indian' includes both Hindus and Muslims and could, therefore, not be defined by (or made analogous to) a single religion, it is made to exist beyond the boundaries of both Hinduism and Islam. In other words, these religions are to be actuated in full unshackled by any outside interference, while nevertheless (or, perhaps, consequently) retaining the shared character of Indian nationalism; the culture of which was profane precisely because it had to belong to both Hindus and Muslims.

Interestingly, it is on this question of religious autonomy that Kabir is forced to depart from the earlier parallel he drew between the medieval Muslim advent and the ancient invasions of multiple Central Asian groups. Writing in 1946, he noted that unlike the 'invaders who had poured into India after the Aryan incursions', Muslims possessed a religion that was too developed for it to be absorbed by Hinduism. This was 'the first time in recorded history' that 'Indian religious and social systems were faced with a system which was equally well-formulated and definite.'[10] Therefore, while synthesis in the profane realm—undergirded by what Kabir had called the universality of culture—was inevitable, the same could not be true for religion. The only solution was for Indians to agree on a principle of religious autonomy. What these statements from Mohammad Ali, Azad, and now Kabir tell us is that their subject position of minority forced these Muslim advocates of Indian nationalism to insist on the secular

[9] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.20.
[10] Kabir, *IH*, pp.75-7.

state. Aside from the cultural rendition of secularism that some of them espoused, they had to also call for separating church from state so as to, in effect, protect the plurality of Indian churches. However obvious a point this may be, I wish to stress it for two reasons. All too often, our global debate about the relationship between Muslims and the secular state appears saturated by an Islamist criticism organised around comportment. In the minoritarian context of India, however, we find something which is not only different but survives today. The recent electoral successes of Hindu nationalism in the Indian Republic has only reinforced a Muslim discourse around its secular constitution. Faced with numerical weakness and an unprecedented assertion of Hindu majoritarianism, figures like the Hyderabad lawyer-politician Asaduddin Owaisi have restated the claim to Indian equality by relying upon secularism of a legal kind.[11] Indeed, in the case of Owaisi—whose constitutional politics of minority might be better compared to that of Jinnah or the mid-twentieth-century Dalit leader B.R. Ambedkar—[12] the cultural element of Azadian secularism seems irrelevant.

According to Kabir, it was the ancient period which had unintentionally laid the methodological foundations for medieval and early modern (cultural) synthesis and (religious) accommodation. Though the Muslim arrival produced an unprecedent churn in Indian life, Indians had been engaging in these broad processes for some time. The picture Kabir paints of ancient India is an intricate one. The social and cultural integration that takes place is undoubtedly assimilationist. The Aryans 'subjugated and absorbed the earlier Indus Valley people' and were similarly able to subsume other existing and arriving communities within the Hindu fold. This was partly because the Aryans, unlike these other peoples, possessed a 'developed culture' and an idea of 'occupational divisions' which 'made it easy to fit them into' their 'social structure'.[13] The ancient synthesis, then, was quite different to the medieval and early modern encounter. Yet despite this 'slow but steady Aryanisation of the land',[14] the 'early Indians' did not seek a single religious doctrine. Encountering multiple tribes all at

[11] Deccan Chronicle, 'We are equals, not tenants in India, Asaduddin Owaisi tells Muslims', (1 June 2019), www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/010619/we-are-equals-not-tenants-in-india-asaduddin-owaisi-tells-muslims.html (19 June 2019).
[12] For a discussion of these comparisons, see R. Bajpai and A. Farooqui, 'Non-extremist Outbidding: Muslim Leadership in Majoritarian India', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 24/3 (2018).
[13] Kabir, *IH*, pp.12-13.
[14] Ibid, p.13.

'different stages of culture' and 'spiritual development', they chose to find commonality in the acknowledgement that 'man's knowledge and understanding of reality' took multiple forms; constantly evolving, it 'is not static but dynamic.' And the inclusivity or breadth of ancient Indian philosophy was further reinforced by its 'recogni[tion]' not simply of religious or spiritual good but also 'the economic and political as well as the hedonistic elements of human character'. Sufficiently 'broad-based' and thus possessing 'tremendous vitality', it was this thought—'the peculiar glory of the Aryan invaders who came to this land'—which made all subsequent attempts at social integration in India possible.[15] What Kabir achieves is quite extraordinary. Providing the prehistory of his nationalist story located squarely in the medieval and early modern period, Kabir essentially refuses to reduce his idea of the shared nation to a mere Muslim necessity. Ideas of Indian accommodation, as well as synthesis, predate Islam. The Hindu religious community is not just an advocate and practitioner of these ideas; since it houses a plethora of often contradictory beliefs—'from the open fetishism of the masses to the rigid and uncompromising monotheism of the Vedantist'—[16]it is intrinsically marked by them. Accommodation and synthesis, therefore, are not concepts foisted on India by its erstwhile Muslim rulers or contemporary Muslim intellectuals, but ones organic to a longer history. And though, as we have already seen, the arriving Muslims sought to negotiate the terms of their own integration, the implication of this narrative is that this was predicated, at least in part, on what proceeded it.

So, for Kabir, just as modern Indian culture would be unrecognisable without the Muslim advent, Hindus and their philosophy are made similarly fundamental to the national project. In fact, by celebrating the achievements of the ancient Aryans, Kabir goes much further than Azad did at Ramgarh when he—almost fanatical in his desire to establish a sense of equivalence between Hindu and Muslim—equivocally located medieval catholicity in the land as opposed to pre-existing Indian groups. And yet, Kabir's recourse to Hindu philosophy still avoids reducing the national idea to the religious majority. For it is the perceived rejection of majoritarianism by Hindu philosophy that Kabir seeks to appropriate. It might be said that by choosing to

[15] Ibid, p.72.
[16] Ibid, p.54.

understand its importance in philosophical as opposed to numerical or demographic terms, Kabir attempts to mobilise Hinduism for a battle with Hindutva. Thus, while it may ostensibly appear that Kabir is moving away from the 'new India' of Azad and towards an idea of ancient continuity, that is not the case. What concerns him is the survival of an ancient methodology rather than ancient cultural forms:

> How complete this process of integration was is proved by the fact that the foundation and framework of culture laid down by this early synthesis has never changed. It has no doubt grown and taken up within its orbit novel ingredients from novel sources. In spite of modifications which must result from such incorporation, all development has been along the lines laid down in the ages of the epics or perhaps still earlier.[17]

Though Kabir does not deny that the presence of an ancient (Hindu) culture in a shared modern (Indian) one, the idea of continuity is reserved for the approach to synthesis and management of accommodation. His focus is drawn to the 'foundation and framework of culture' which has been inherited from ancient times, though it has long since taken into 'its orbit novel ingredients from novel sources.' And, therefore, Kabir is forced to predicate his conception of continuity on one of 're-adjustment' or 'elasticity'. According to Kabir, India had built an ancient civilisation that had never suffered a complete overhaul. Since it was willing to adjust, the old—rather than being demolished in favour of the new—was incorporated within it.[18] This elasticity was on display when the Indic 'current' was confronted by a Persianate one in the medieval period. The arriving Muslims required more than just religious autonomy within Indian society; their worldly sophistication also meant that any socio-cultural synthesis in the profane realm could not be of the old assimilationist variety. The former 'current', with its scope for adjustment, was able to accept the demands of the latter:

> When two powerful currents meet, there is no question of absorption of the one in the other. The two streams join to create a new form. Their separate contributions can hardly be distinguished. The same thing happens when two living organisms unite. A new organism is born which shares the characteristics of the parents, and is yet a unique individual. Interpenetration is complete and no element can remain unchanged in the new synthesis. This is what happened in the evolution of Indian culture in the middle ages. Old values were transmuted. Ancient themes were informed by the new spirit.[19]

So, while he enters a discussion about an Indian continuity to which Azad pays little attention, Kabir's logic nonetheless remains entirely Azadian. Nehru, too, argued that

[17] Ibid, p.73.
[18] Ibid, p.43.
[19] Ibid, pp.109-10.

the philosophical foundation for Muslim integration had been laid in ancient times. But, by coupling this claim with ideas of cultural absorption, Nehru separates himself from Kabir.[20]

Kabir qualifies his argument about a novel Muslim negotiation by simultaneously claiming that the Parsis, who fled from Muslim persecution in Iran in the eighth century, were the first community 'to resist the pull of Hinduism'.[21] This is significant because Parsis—a microscopic minority located chiefly in western India—have repeatedly been made a site for Indian pluralism by secular nationalists. While his own western origins might explain why, it is nevertheless interesting that Gandhi made regular references to them when he spoke about fostering unity between Indian religious groups.[22] As we will see in the final chapter, so, too, did his Pashtun ally Ghaffar Khan. And when, in his memoir, Azad wished to offer an honest assessment of Congress secularism in late colonial times, he refused to draw on examples related to Muslims alone and, instead, foregrounded the misfortunes of the Parsi Congressman and former mayor of Bombay, Khurshed Framji Nariman. Dismissing as 'pure invention' Jinnah's charge that Congress governments had unduly favoured Hindu populations once they came to power in 1937 across eight provinces, Azad nonetheless noted that his party 'did not come out fully successful in its test of nationalism.' At the behest of Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad's 'communal demands', Congress overlooked its most established local leader for the post of prime minister in both Bombay and Bihar because they came from minority communities. If Nariman was left 'heart broken' in Bombay, Mahmud suffered the same fate in Bihar.[23] Somewhat like his commentary on the language question that we encountered in the previous chapter, the effect of equalising Parsi and Muslim allows Azad to elucidate a theoretical argument for secularism which cannot be reduced to his own communal injury. It is perhaps this theoretical utility which makes the Parsi an alluring figure for Indian nationalism in general. Though Parsis were involved in occasional communal riots during the second half of the nineteenth century, unlike Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and even Christians they

[20] Nehru, *Discovery*, p.72.
[21] Kabir, *IH*, p.12.
[22] See, for instance, Gandhi, 'Message to the Nation', Dandi, 9 April 1930, in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.43, (100 vols, Delhi, 1958-84), pp.214-5.
[23] Azad, *IWF*, pp.16-18.

have never been thought to possess a history of communal antagonism with any of these other Indian religious groups. And since they are also a demographically unthreatening community that has little hope of conjuring a minority politics with which to challenge Congress nationalism, it is easy to understand why they might emerge as the exemplar minority for modern India: both sufficiently autonomous from other groups and committed to participation within the whole. Parsis are significant not because they possess any intrinsic importance—or pose an existential problem—to the Indian nation, but because their (undeniably internal) difference serves to make clear the argument for a secular India; something Azad and Kabir seem to have understood well.

If Kabir suggested that the foundations for religious autonomy had been laid prior to the Muslim advent,[24] Mahmud added another element to this equation. Writing in 1949, he contended that much like ancient Indian philosophy, early Muslim governance had developed its own capacity for accommodation before its arrival in India. Not only did this endow some of the earliest Muslims with a similar temperament to Hindus, Mahmud held that they were aware of this resemblance. He notes that Umar, the second caliph of Islam, 'was against attacking India, since he knew that the followers of Islam, as of other religions, were free to practise their faith in that country.'[25] This commitment to pluralism, Mahmud argues, had been the difference between the conquerors of Europe and the Muslim world. While the former indulged in homogenizing national projects at home and sought supremacy in their colonies by subjugating natives, the latter sought partnerships with local populations by accommodating diversity, empowering the downtrodden, and creating shared cultures wherever they went. Once again subordinating historical kings to the social, Mahmud draws our attention to the almost concurrent Muslim conquests of Andalusia and Sindh to make this claim. While the Moors are made to rescue Jews from Christian persecution in Andalusia, Mahmud evidences the edicts of Muhammad bin Qasim to celebrate how

[24] Kabir was not the only mid-twentieth-century Muslim thinker to make this argument. The Progressive Urdu poet from Aurangabad, Sikandar Ali Wajd, provides an elaborate version of it in his celebratory 1944 poem on the caves at *Ajanta*. See *HH*, Vol.1, pp.335-9.
[25] Mahmud, *HMCA*, p.21.

he guaranteed religious autonomy and security to the Hindus of Sindh just as their culture was opened to an Arabian Muslim equivalent in the secular realm.[26]

Though he eventually reaches a similar conclusion, the narrative Kabir advances is significantly different. Unlike Mahmud, initial examples of accommodation under medieval Muslim governments are explained by immediate interest rather than any innate character or ideology. Of the medieval Sultanate period, Kabir noted that the 'logic of events compelled a policy of religious neutrality'. Since its Muslim generals frequently wished to declare their independence from Delhi on capturing different parts of the country, they had no choice but to rely on 'local support' and make 'common cause with the people.' In this pragmatic way, 'the forces of toleration gained in strength'.[27] But Kabir's argument is not that Muslim accommodation had no intrinsic intellectual worth of its own. Instead, his contention is that this developed far later than Mahmud presumes. It was the Mughal dynasty, and especially Akbar, which finally gave it an ethical value. Akbar abolished privileges and disqualifications 'based on religion' and provided 'equal opportunities of service and advancement under the crown to all Indians.' If 'circumstances' had 'forced' a policy of 'toleration' 'on many of his predecessors', Akbar was different:

> Akbar's special distinction lies in his elevation of this practice to a principle of sovereignty. Like some of the greatest Indian emperors of antiquity, he was also full of a spirit of respectful deference to all religions and had in his nature a strong mystic vein. He was, however, essentially a ruler and his was perhaps the first conscious attempt to formulate the conception of a Secular State. He also initiated a liberal social and religious policy which aimed at bringing about a fusion of the diverse elements which constitute the Indian people. In fact, he may in many respects be regarded as the creator of modern India.[28]

Writing about the wider Indian nationalist tendency to talk of Akbar, but also Ashoka, as 'secular' figures from the past, Ashis Nandy has warned against dismissing these apparently anachronistic claims as meaningless. Focusing on its refusal to separate religion and public life, he notes that secular Indian nationalism has taken it upon itself to create space 'for a continuous dialogue among religious traditions and between the religious and the secular.'[29] If the independent state had to distance itself from all

[26] Ibid, pp.12-5, 26.
[27] Kabir, *IH*, pp.18-19.
[28] Ibid, pp.21-2.
[29] A. Nandy, *Time Warps: Silent and Evasive Pasts in Indian Politics and Religion*, (London, 2002), p.80.

religions to appear neutral in a plural society, it also had to guarantee this other forum. This distinction helps us to understand why Kabir teleologically locates the origins of modern Indian secularism in Akbar. This secularism is multifaceted. Kabir alludes to the national culture I explored in the previous chapter towards the end of this passage, but more significant for our purposes here are two other claims which can be connected to Nandy's. The first is the right to religious freedom and an interdependent duty to uphold the consequent plurality it creates. This is what Kabir describes above as 'toleration' elevated to 'a principle of sovereignty'. By transcending the self-interest from which Muslim tolerance initially emerged, Akbar makes the accommodation of religious diversity an ideological anchor of Indian governance. He initiates a 'continuous dialogue', to use Nandy's words, 'between the religious' individual or community 'and the secular' state. Kabir's second claim is a reflection of Nandy's other 'continuous dialogue'—this time 'among religious traditions'. Noting that Akbar displayed a 'respectful deference to all religions' and a 'strong mystic vein', Kabir alludes to the Emperor's own desire to both understand the doctrines of his people and reconcile their theologies. So far, this chapter has dealt with how nationalist Indian Muslim intellectuals imagined the religious autonomy of Hinduism and Islam having previously unreservedly opened these traditions and their adherents to each other in the realm of secular culture. Now, we will discover that the call for religious autonomy did not entirely preclude a dialogue between Hindus and Muslims about Hinduism and Islam.

The Muslim's Hindu

While Kabir only alluded to how Akbar sought to bring Hinduism and Islam to a theological truce, Mahmud made a little more of this history. Mahmud tells us that during his own attempt to fashion a meeting point between the two religions, he drew inspiration from the works of Akbar's courtier Abul Fazl. It is significant that these Indian Muslim nationalists—ever keen historians—were so perceptively aware that the project for reconciliation was an inherited one. Insisting on translating the texts of Hinduism and Islam from Sanskrit and Arabic into vernacular Hindi and Urdu so that they could become intelligible to the contemporary followers of both traditions, Mahmud claimed that it was the Mughals who had first given 'emphatic expression to

this principle'.[30] To explain why such undertakings were necessary, Mahmud quoted directly from the introduction of Abul Fazl's Persian translation of the Mahabharata. The intention, Abul Fazl notes, was:

> "…to enable the two sects with the blessings of the holy truth of His Majesty, the most perfect of his times, to emerge out of the excesses of dissensions and quarrels and seek after truth; and having acquainted themselves of each other's quality and defects, to endeavour to their best to improve themselves."[31]

Just as Azad requested the students of Aligarh to replicate the Muslim rulers and writers of yesteryear in their literary endeavours after Partition, Mahmud follows this citation with a call for a revival of Mughal methods to disseminate the theological reconciliation that he believed was possible between Hinduism and Islam. Since these thinkers tie themselves to their perceived inheritance by way of contemporary practice, the Mughal period emerges as more than just a glorious but distant past. Nor is their project only about propagating a narrative of invented tradition that pictures history in a presentist way; you must also re-enact it. So, while cautiously reaffirming a commitment to the autonomy and integrity of both religions, Mahmud, in the very same breath, argued that if vernacular translations were made easily available:

> …the two groups will ipso facto come nearer to each other. We must promote this understanding. It is not necessary for the Hindus and Muslims to abandon their religion or religious observances, but they ought to acquaint themselves with what is contained in each other's religion.[32]

This conviction that the 'promot[ion]' of 'understanding' will inevitably bring Hindus and Muslims 'nearer to each other' is derived from what these Congress Muslims took to be the intrinsic universalism of Islam. As Farzana Shaikh has suggested, two considerations led Azad to favour 'the idea of solidarity based on human as against strictly religious ties'. It 'offered a solution to the problem of defining the political community in the richly pluralistic context of colonial India, but also helped resolve Azad's personal quest for the common message that underlay the multiplicity of religious creeds.'[33] The Maulana held that over the course of human history, God had provided all the peoples of the world with a divine religion. Though they took different paths, these religions all sought a single truth. Ali Ashraf notes that Azad came to

[30] Mahmud, *HMCA*, p.80.
[31] Ibid, pp.80-1.
[32] Ibid, p.81.
[33] Shaikh, 'Azad and Iqbal: The Quest for the Islamic 'Good'', in *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, p.62.

understand 'God's relationship with his creatures' in terms of universal *rabubiyat* (nourishment), mercy, and justice. God provided both spiritual and material nourishment 'without distinction'. For Azad, 'Muslims and non-Muslims alike are equal beneficiaries.'[34] Therefore, the idea of an *umma al-wahida* (the united community) found in his *Tarjuman al-Quran* published from 1931 was open to all. Since the same truth animated all world religions, Azad believed that it was possible for them to be spiritually united.[35] As President Husain put it to an audience at Delhi some years later:

> …all religions teach the reality of God and obedience to the will of God translating itself in goodwill and peace among men. …Religions can and, therefore, must influence the mind of man positively to achieve the great goal of the one-world community.[36]

In the introduction of this thesis, we noted that following the gradual shift within the wider Congress movement away from an earlier composite conception of the Indian nation to a more unitary idea, Azad reoriented his argument for Indian nationalism away from Islamic injunction and instead developed a secular reasoning. As I have argued thereafter, the Maulana—joined by Kabir, Mahmud, and Husain—contended that India was a nation because that had been the will not of Islam but of human history. However, being Muslims of conviction who were so wedded to the universalism of their faith, these figures also maintained their 'personal quest' for a theological truce between Hinduism and Islam. Though never made the foundation for national unity, these thinkers remained forever tempted by the prospect of Hindus and Muslims achieving a unity in spiritual direction just as they retained their religious autonomies. Since they held that belief and religious morality were such significant aspects of human life, they could never quite abandon the desire to give their Hindu countrymen an equal right to the kingdom of God.[37] We might say that this theological concern—though significantly detached from the national idea—was nevertheless its glorious extension.

The ecumenism of *Tarjuman* signalled a shift away from the Maulana's pan-Islamism which emerged in his journalism from 1912. Even still, it was not entirely new

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[34] A. Ashraf, 'Appraisal of Azad's Religio-Political Trajectory', in Ibid, pp.114-5.
[35] Shaikh, 'Azad and Iqbal', pp.66-7.
[36] Husain, 'Religion and Peace', Delhi, 10 January 1968, *PZHS*, pp.125-6.
[37] Ashraf notes that, ultimately, Azad was unable to convince many of his fellow *ulama* that belief in the prophethood of Muhammad 'was not a necessary condition for achieving salvation.' And since Azad had to publicly yield to this view, Ashraf notes that these 'controversies dried up the springs of inspiration in him' to confront his challengers; this, he adds, might explain why the *Tarjuman* remained incomplete even if the Maulana retained the essential universalism of his original thesis and continued to deploy it for the remainder of his life. For more detail see Ashraf, 'Appraisal', pp.116-7.

and represented a return to an earlier mode of thinking found in his 1910 essay on Sarmad. Celebrating the universalism of this seventeenth-century Sufi mystic and his royal devotee Dara Shikoh, a young Azad dismissed the sobriety and 'blind' exclusivism of their eventual executioner Emperor Aurangzeb, the sixth Mughal. Of Dara Shikoh, he wrote:

> Those few of his writings that have escaped plunder tell us that their author possessed spiritual taste and disposition. A strong proof of this is that in his search of the goal he discarded the distinction between temple and mosque (*dair-o-haram*). Just as he bowed his head in humble respect before Muslim ascetics, so he showed faith in Hindu dervishes. What person of genuine mystical experience would quarrel with this principle? If even in this realm, too, we insist on maintaining the distinction between unbelief and Islam, then what difference will remain between the 'blind' (*a'ma*) and the 'clear-sighted' (*basir*)?[38]

As in *Tarjuman*, the argument for universalism which follows in the remainder of this essay is theologically argued. And therefore, unlike in other strands of Indian nationalism, references to Sufism are never about syncretism. In other words, neither is Sufism reduced to an amalgam of Hinduism and Islam nor are Sarmad and Dara Shikoh made anything less than Muslims. My interest over the next few pages, then, is not to add to the scholarship on Azad's theology but to, instead, further illustrate how figures like him imagined Hinduism in light of their reading of Islam while nevertheless retaining their respective autonomies.

On reading the Maulana's later speeches and writings, we can speculate further as to why a young Azad might have been so enamoured by the ill-fated Mughal prince. Himself a Sufi scholar, Dara Shikoh translated the Upanishads into Persian. Albeit partly for political reasons, the endeavour was nonetheless to claim his homeland as an ancient centre of truth. His contention that the Upanishads essentially prefigured the Quran[39] is significant for our purposes since Azad would come to repeat it during the mid-twentieth century. In 1951, Azad addressed a hall of students and teachers at Visva Bharati University in Shantiniketan on the occasion of its inauguration as a central university of the new independent state. Azad noted that when drafting the bill to ratify this decision, Nehru's cabinet had included the objective of the university coined thirty years previously by its famous founder, the Bengali poet-philosopher Rabindranath

[38] Azad, 'Sarmad', p.121.
[39] S.S. Alvi, *Perspectives on Mughal India: Rulers, Historians, Ulama and Sufis*, (Karachi, 2012), p.16.

Tagore. However, since it made a reference to God, the architects of the secular state opted to leave its concluding phrase out of the act of parliament. Conceding to this logic, Azad nevertheless noted:

> I would, however, like to impress upon you that it is immaterial that this phrase has been left out of the Act. It may find no place in legislation, but it certainly has a place—and perhaps a place of supreme importance—in the life of this University. I will declare with all the emphasis at my command that the objective as defined by Gurudev [Tagore], including the phrase left out in the Act, must remain the objective of your University and of all its teachers and its pupils. The truth is that in these three terms used by Gurudev: *Shantam* [infinite peace], *Shivam* [infinite goodness], *Advaitam* [nondualism], we have a conception of God which rises above all narrow limitations of race, religion or creed. I may also tell you that if the term *Advaitam* is translated into Arabic, it would read as *Wahidahu La Shariq*: the One who has no second, which is the highest affirmation of the monotheistic belief.[40]

It is interesting that Azad equates *advaita* or nondualism with monotheism. After all, nondualism refers simply to the unity between the individual soul and a single universal existence. There is, conventionally, no monotheistic judgement, here; judgment is reserved. At best, then, the Sanskrit term and the Maulana's Arabic equivalent are both negative terms which deny the existence of dichotomies. Azad was not the first to produce these seemingly far-fetched efforts at equivalence. Without wishing to exaggerate the line between them, Dara Shikoh's *Majma al-Bahrain* (The Mingling of the Two Oceans), written three centuries earlier, appears just as forced.[41] But however questionable it might seem, it nevertheless holds that rendering an acceptable Hinduism has been a real ethical project for Indian Muslim thinkers. Therefore, what really matters here is simply that Azad found in Tagore an attractive Upanishadic concept of God which he could appropriate on Islamic terms. In fact, despite Azad being forever concerned with autonomy and integrity, we might describe his translation as a limited form of conversion. In many ways, what Azad sought in the realm of theology was not too different from his secular objectives: parity between Hindu and Muslim. When submitting his argument for an Indian culture marked by parity, Azad had to battle the prevalent majoritarian view of the Indian nation that privileged the Hindu even when it did not discount the Muslim. But here, bound by the unassailability of Islam, the task of elevating Hindus and Hinduism to a position from where they can claim parity with Muslims and Islam, was a stark reversal of that nation-making project.

[40] Azad, 'Tagore and Indian Education', Shantiniketan, 22 September 1951, *SMA*, pp.164-5.
[41] Dara Shikoh, *Majma al-Bahrain*, M.M. Haq (trans.), (Calcutta, 1929 [1655]).

Interestingly, then, in this quest for parity Hindus and Muslims become reversible figures. Whatever the compulsions under which Azad must operate in these separate spheres of profane culture and theology, Hindus and Muslims ultimately become reflections of each other in both. The (reversible) roles they play as enablers of unity emerge as far more important than any notion of their deep particularity.

I want to briefly note here that the compatibility of Hinduism with Islamic monotheism also interested the other two figures central to this thesis—Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan. Later, we will see that they, too, conjured principally secular as opposed to theological arguments for modern Indian nationalism. Nevertheless, like Azad, their Islamic universalism led them to similarly embrace Indic religions. Suggesting that all religions taught universal love and not hatred,[42] Ghaffar Khan frequently claimed in his speeches that the Allah of Muslims and the 'Parmatma' of Hindus and Sikhs was one and the same 'Khuda' or God.[43] He went a step further when on reading the Bhagavad Gita he told Gandhi that Hindus, too, were *ahl-e-kitab*, or people of the Book. Since God had sent messengers to all lands, books mentioned in the Quran did not make for an exhaustive list.[44] Hindus, then, could be as true to the word of God as Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Abdullah's path towards this end was less smooth. Presented with a unique case of Muslim discrimination by a Hindu ruler in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, during the initial phase of his political career from 1931 Abdullah was not averse to employing an aggressive sectarian rhetoric to consolidate his Muslim constituency. With its subjects already divided sharply along religious lines by the state, on one occasion Abdullah dubbed the favoured Hindu minority of Kashmiri Pandits as 'Satan's brood' who 'knows nothing of the truth.' The Muslims, meanwhile, were 'the slaves of Hazrat Mohammad Sahib' displaying an Islamic 'steadfastness' in the face of persecution.[45] This rhetoric, however, was often in conflict with another emerging project: the creation of a secular regional community in search of a socialist fix to its material ills. And as Abdullah and his party prioritised this idea and forged a closer association with Congress during the mid-1930s, the language of exclusionary Islam

[42] Khan, 'Awakened Women, A Challenge to Slavery', 29 October 1934, Bombay, *MSBK*, p.222.
[43] See Khan, 'Patience—Most Powerful Weapon', 12 November 1931, Nawanshehr, Ibid, p.63; and 'Congress, not a Communal Body', 27 October 1934, Bombay, Ibid, p.211.
[44] Gandhi, *Ghaffar Khan: Nonviolent Badshah of the Pakhtuns*, (Delhi, 2004), p.104.
[45] S.M. Abdullah in Zutshi, *Languages*, p.234.

was increasingly replaced with a universal alternative. By 1939, Abdullah was claiming that Islam could be used not to heighten but transcend religious differences.[46] But it was towards the end of his career that he consistently made claims synonymous with those of Azad and Ghaffar Khan. Portraying the Hindu nationalist Balraj Madhok as a misguided politician whose actions had proved 'very harmful' for the resolution of the Kashmir problem, Abdullah declared in 1968 that he would:

> …pray to God to show him the right path…. May God show him the path followed by the Buddha, Lord Krishna, and the other saints of India for the guidance of the Indian people.[47]

Associating his Muslim God with the teachings of Buddha and Krishna, Abdullah not only envelops these Indic figures within an Islamic universalism. He also separates (or even seizes) them from a divisive Hindu nationalist so that they can be used for his conversion to a more inclusive project.

In *Tarjuman*, Azad provides a detailed commentary on the Upanishadic concept of God. This, Azad essentially claimed, was the closest Hinduism came to Islamic *tawhid* (absolute monotheism) and, therefore, the truth. But while Hindu philosophy had attained this height, the practice of Hinduism fell some way short. Leaning on the works of the Hindu philosopher and his contemporary Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the Maulana laments this failing. 'Great as is this concept of God,' Azad wrote, 'we find that in practice it was not possible to disassociate it with [*sic*] the concept of polytheistic multiplicity.' Azad tells us that in order to minimise conflict, Hindu elites tolerated the polytheistic habits of the masses despite knowing their falsity. Rather than consolidate and disseminate their most advanced philosophical achievements, they were more concerned with the establishment of social unity. Moreover, while he 'knows that communion with Reality is infinitely higher than image worship', the Vedantist 'never sets his face against' idolatry for he takes it to be 'the first stage in the journey to God'. And though even the masses eventually realised that 'when the gnostic completes his journey to Reality, all other beings vanish including the entire order of demi-gods', Hindus were so committed to 'the practical sense of compromise' that they 'tacitly'

[46] Ibid, p.255.
[47] Abdullah, 'Interview for the Supplementary Issue of *Shabistan Urdu Digest*', 1968, in N.A. Khan (ed.), *Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's Reflections on Kashmir*, (Basingstoke, 2018), p.144.

allowed the worship of multiple gods 'to continue.' What emerged was 'a sort of monotheistic polytheism'. It met 'the demands both of the unitary urge and the polytheistic.'[48] Continuing his thesis, Azad writes:

> The spirit of tolerance which has characterised Indian History, no doubt, deserves a meed of praise. But life is an expression of action and inter-action, and unless we draw a limit or line for every type of activity, canons of knowledge and morality will get disturbed, and we shall cease to possess any definite sense of moral values. Tolerance is a good thing, but strength of belief and opinion, and integrity of thought are also factors of life which we cannot discard. A line of demarcation for the expression of each quality in us needs to be drawn. For, moral injunctions cannot otherwise be put into effect. Once these lines are disturbed or weakened, the edifice of morality begins to totter…. Here are two situations. You cannot deal with them in the same way. One situation is this. We are face to face with a belief. We have a firm and a definite opinion about it. The question arises: what should be our line of action in respect of it? Shall we waver or remain firm in our attitude? The other situation is this. Others, even like us, have reached certain definite conclusions about one and the same thing, but adopt a different line of action. What should be our attitude towards them? Have they or have they not the right to go their own way? Tolerance is to acknowledge the right of another to hold his own views and follow his own way. Even when his way is clearly the wrong way, you cannot deny him the right to pursue it. But if tolerance is given the latitude to water down your own beliefs and affect your decisions, then, it ceases to be tolerance.[49]

This relationship between tolerance and morality is premised on an idea of a Hindu collective. We have already seen that for Kabir an ancient proclivity for tolerance was partly responsible for creating the figure of the Indian Muslim and the tenor of Indian nationality that he and the Maulana championed. And while Azad occasionally alluded to this, too, here he wishes to establish that tolerance was not always a good thing. Since the religious community was tasked with defining the boundary between morality and immorality, too much tolerance within it threatened to render that task impossible and crush its integrity. Morality, therefore, is not the domain of the individual alone. Moral standards, like all other aspects of human life, involved a process of 'action and inter-action'. The implication is that the individual cannot stay aloof from society and, therefore, remain entirely untainted by the depravity around him. Excessive tolerance threatened to corrupt the collective and, in turn, the individual. This is made all the more unfathomable by the fact that these dissenters—who are 'like us'—are conscious of the 'same' understanding but have still opted for 'a different line of action'. And because it threatened to bring the achievements and progression of Hinduism into disrepute, toleration of common idolatry by a Vedantist could not be reduced to a

[48] Azad, *Tarjuman*, Vol.1, pp.111-3, 139.
[49] Ibid, pp.139-40.

respectful disagreement. Since a collective Hindu society existed, 'canons of knowledge and morality' needed to be protected and certain 'injunctions' and 'values' had to be 'put into effect'. The 'integrity' of Hinduism could not be sacrificed on the altar of social peace. Therefore, it is significant that in his brief address at Visva Bharati University, the almost desperate Maulana conjured 'all the emphasis at my command' as he implored his predominately Bengali Hindu audience to retain the entirety of Tagore's objective. For Azad, Hinduism had to be more like Islam which, while accepting of the plurality of religions, could not tolerate its own dilution. The 'line of demarcation' which Azad wishes the Vedantist to draw has a similar objective to Iqbal's excommunication of the Ahmadis from Islam. Both are set up to protect the morality of the religious community. Since they denied the finality of the Prophet of Islam and awarded a similar status to their nineteenth-century Punjabi founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the proselytizing Ahmadis threatened to take away the human freedom that Iqbal believed finality guaranteed. Once Muhammad had terminated prophecy, Iqbal held that man had assumed the role of an independent actor ready to script his own destiny. If Ahmadis could have their way, Muslims would be denied the Islam they had been promised.[50] Similarly, for Azad, Hinduism was threatening to repudiate the truths of its religion by tolerating idolatry. The Hindus, like Iqbal, knew the realities of their own faith. But unlike him, they had largely failed to act on their knowledge and chosen to preserve social unity over theological integrity.

If Azad sought to bring Hinduism closer to Islam by calling on the former to shed a polytheism that did not actually belong to it, it is interesting that Iqbal felt that the monotheistic Muslim could 'find grounds of sympathy and appreciation' even in Hindu polytheism. Devji has noted that Iqbal, like Gandhi, 'believed that faith alone could recognise itself in others'. Having famously rejected a modern nationalism for India, Iqbal concluded that religiosity (whether monotheistic or not) was, in fact, the basis for understanding between Hindus and Muslims.[51] Of course, the Maulana's project was entirely different; an advocate of a modern nation, he lays a secular foundation for a future relationship between Hindus and Muslims. Consequently, when he deals with

[50] Devji, *Muslim Zion*, pp.155-6.
[51] Devji, 'Illiberal Islam', in S. Dube (ed.), *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization*, (Delhi, 2009), pp.246-7.

their theologies, Azad is not attempting to initiate this relationship; that has already been achieved. And by creating space for religious autonomy Azad has implicitly agreed to tolerate practices he is unable to condone just as Iqbal does. But, here, the Maulana's concerns move beyond Iqbal's: why only tolerate when one can foster meaningful agreement.

Apart from his contemporaries Tagore and Radhakrishnan, Azad also drew on the philosophy of the eighth-century theologian Adi Shankara to posit an acceptable Hinduism. This was not the first time an eminent twentieth-century Indian Muslim had returned to Shankara. In the Urdu preface to his 1915 Persian publication *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self), Iqbal celebrated the philosophy of action championed by Krishna and the eleventh-century theologian Ramanuja. This strand of thought, he noted, had guaranteed 'free will' for its followers. Shankara, meanwhile, much to Iqbal's displeasure, was uninterested in this question. Producing 'logical enchantments' instead, Shankara 'veiled' the emphasis Krishna had placed on action. Consequently, Hindus 'were left deprived of the fruit of his renewal.'[52] Azad, of course, was interested not in human freedom but monotheistic belief. Avoiding the perils of negation and anthropomorphism, Azad held that the Islamic conception of God charted a perfect middle path. It prevented any comparison with God while simultaneously making the idea intelligible to the human mind by assigning positive attributes to him. According to Azad, Shankara had come to a similar understanding:

> Among the commentators of *Vedanta Sutras*, Sankara was the most insistent on upholding the Upanishad standpoint of negation of attributes. Still, even he had to accept the concept of *Saguna Brahman* or personified Brahman. He no doubt calls this stage of gnosis as *Apram* or lower concept of God; but he at the same time admits the need for such a concept, since this is the highest which the mind of man can conceive of.[53]

Similarly, when Husain offered a tribute to the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Dalit reformer Narayana Guru in Kerala in 1967, his Shankarite *advaita* interested Husain as much as his rejection of casteism. Saluting his 'creed' of '"One caste,

[52] M. Iqbal, *Asrar-e-Khudi*, (Delhi, 1993 [1915]), pp.3-5. Translation by M. Khan and H. Mughal, 'Preface to "Secrets of the Self"', www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/iqbal/asrarpreface.html (21 June 2019).
[53] Azad, *Tarjuman Al-Quran*, Vol.1, p.134.

One religion and One God"', Husain proceeded to compare the Guru with 'the great Sankara, another illustrious son of Kerala'.[54]

If Azad and Husain essentially made Shankara their ideal Hindu, Kabir went a step further. Proposing that an almost certain encounter with early Islam had an impact on Shankara's thought, Kabir suggested that it was not coincidental that his ideas emerged when they did. This hypothesis is useful to Kabir for two reasons: it not only permits him to strengthen Azad's claim that Hinduism, in its purest and greatest form, was akin to Islam; it also allows him to make the argument that the arrival of Islam to India regenerated Hinduism. Kabir notes that since the beginning of recorded history, northern India had been the site of philosophical innovation. Suddenly, during the eighth century, religious thought found a new centre in the South. Holding that political and social change alone could not account for this, Kabir suggests that 'the advent of Islam in the south about the middle of seventh century' and its acceptance by some local kings may provide at least part of the explanation.[55] Kabir tells us that Shankara's first task had been to resolve the tensions between Hinduism and Buddhism. He did so by first rejecting a key idea from each: the common pantheistic Hindu concept that divinity was manifest in all reality; and the apparently nihilistic Buddhist notion that experience was an illusion. Instead, Shankara married two other principles. He accepted the Buddhist notion of an inner reality, but turned this into Brahman. But if this fusion between Hinduism and Buddhism had set up his monotheistic position, Shankara's 'passionate insistence upon the unity of Brahman' gave him 'a source of affinity with Islam'.[56] Proceeding with his hypothesis, Kabir adds:

> Perhaps each single item in Sankara's philosophy, though with differences in emphasis, may be derived from old Upanishadic sources but the temper and shape of the synthesis achieved suggest the operation of some novel element. Is it fanciful to find in Sankara's fervour and zeal traces of the influence of the revolutionary zeal of Islam?[57]
>
> His extreme monism, his repudiation of all semblance of duality, his attempt to establish this monism on the authority of revealed scriptures, his tendency to regard his own activity as mere restoration of the original purity of the revealed truth are all elements which remind one strongly of the tenets of Islam. When one connects this similarity in outlook with the appearance of Islam as a living force in his birthplace just before his

[54] Husain, 'Narayana Guru', Varkalai, 19 December 1967, *PZHS*, p.168.
[55] Kabir, *IH*, pp.83-4.
[56] Ibid, pp.86-7.
[57] Ibid, p.85.

> birth, the inference that he was influenced by the new faith cannot be rejected summarily.[58]

While Kabir brings Shankara into dialogue with the tenets of Islam, he is sure to retain the autonomy of Hinduism. If the arrival of Islam awoke him to his task, the content of Shankara's thought was in keeping with the Upanishads. Azad and Kabir frequently noted that by the time Islam arrived in India, existing religious thought and social systems were lacking their original vitality. But these are neither discarded in favour of something novel nor entirely reimagined as a result of this interaction. Rather, in its own vigour and values, Islam is made to remind a fatigued Hinduism of its own past. It is this which allows these intellectuals to retain the integrity of both religious traditions, just as they promote a dialogue (albeit rooted in the unassailability of Islamic *tawhid*) between them. Even Mahmud—whose commentary on Shankara lacks the nuances of Kabir's and falls, intentionally or otherwise, into an argument about the 'absorption' of 'new acquisitions' from Islam—seeks to retain the integrity of Hinduism. Hinduism may have been changed by its contact with Islam, but it nevertheless remains independent.[59] Though the history of proselytization is never denied, Islam does not enter India solely to compete with Hinduism for numerical domination. These thinkers are keen to stress that a productive dialogue took place not just in the profane but in the theological realm, too. If Hinduism had fallen substantially short of the destiny it had promised, its dialogue with Islam in India had the potential to deliver it. For figures like Azad and Kabir, their religion emerges less as the fierce competitor of Hinduism and more as its loyal friend holding up the proverbial mirror to encourage a return to its original character. The arrival of Islam is made crucial not only to Indian nationality but the revival of Hinduism, too. Earlier we saw how Azad and Kabir put a stop to the process of unimpeded synthesis as they moved out of the profane and into the religious. The idea that these two realms operated under a different set of laws is further underlined by this desire to revive Hinduism. Since theology is about the word of God and not human history, Azad could declare at Ramgarh that: 'I am one of those who believe that revival may be a necessity in a religion but in social matters it is a denial of progress.'[60]

[58] Ibid, p.88.
[59] Mahmud, *HMCA*, pp.28-9.
[60] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.21.

Beyond this theological attempt at making the *other* tradition appropriate for their *own*, these commentaries by Indian Muslim nationalists have a significant second effect. They provide a way for these figures to enter a conversation about the one subject that had, so far, been left out of their narrative of a shared Indian world. If what is profane names their shared national culture and what is Islamic makes for their communitarian 'wealth' or 'fortune', only that which is unequivocally religious and Hindu (or non-Muslim) remains. If these forays into Hindu theology and religious history allow figures like Azad to participate in a more comprehensive conversation about Indian culture, then their irreligious counterparts sought to do the same but by secularising religion for the national project. In the previous chapter, we saw how Progressive Urdu poets often imagined a national history and culture in terms identical to the Congress Muslims. However, since religion as belief and practice was almost always an irrelevant concern for these poets, the intricate division that figures like Azad sought to establish between the profane and the religious often had little meaning for them. But we will also find that these attempts to give sacred chronicles a national meaning for all Indians did not render the original religious traditions from which they were drawn unrecognisable. In fact, they had the effect of retaining (not their exclusivity but) their integrity.

In 1964, the filmmaker Chetan Anand produced *Haqeeqat* (Reality) based on the recently concluded Sino-Indian War. The final verse of its now iconic patriotic song penned by Kaifi Azmi is dominated by references to Hindu mythology:

> *khench do apne khun se zamin par lakir*
> *is taraf ane paye na ravan koi*
> *tod do hath agar hath uthne lagen*
> *chhune paye na sita ka daman koi*
> *ram bhi tum tumhin lakshman sathiyo*
> *ab tumhare hawale watan sathiyo*
>
> Draw a line on the ground with your blood,
> May no Ravan be able to traverse it;
> Break those hands that rise to threaten us,
> May no one be able to touch Sita's garment;
> You are Ram, and you are Lakshman too,
> O compatriots, to you we now entrust the homeland.[61]

[61] Kaifi Azmi, 'ab tumhare hawale watan sathiyo', in A.M. Mir and R. Mir, *Anthems of Resistance*: *A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry*, (Delhi, 2006), pp.68-9. My translation slightly modifies Mir and Mir's.

In their sympathetic study of Progressive Urdu poetry, Ali Husain Mir and Raza Mir ask whether poets like Kaifi penned verses such as these after Partition because 'the burden of the minority and the urge to prove their fidelity to an India that was growing suspicious of its Muslim citizens weighed heavily on them.'[62] But if Kaifi resorted to Hindu myth simply to appease a resentful (Hindu) majority and commit the (Muslim) minority to the nation, we are forced to reduce either this poem to protective opportunism or his understanding of the cultural content of Indian nationalism to communal majoritarianism. Rather than taking these lines to be defensive apologia, I would suggest that this was a positive attempt to make Hindu mythology the rightful possession of all Indians. As Ananya Jahanara Kabir has argued, there has been a 'perennial fascination' among 'emblematic' Indian Muslims with the clash between Islamic iconoclasm and Hindu iconography, especially in the postcolonial period. Their 'iconophilia', she argues, 'draws its frisson from public knowledge of the artist's subject position that, if interpreted narrowly, should make him abjure, not embrace, the image.' It is for this reason that 'ostentatious iconophilia' becomes the radical 'person-making' gesture for the creative 'post-Partition Indian Muslim'; it becomes their 'modus operandi' since it allows them 'to lay claim to an Indic heritage that those who opted for Pakistan are seen as having rejected.' But that is not all. This, in turn, has the effect of shifting the role of the reactionary iconoclast away from the Muslim and onto the Hindu nationalist 'who will smash those icons created by whom he decrees an iconophiliac manqué—someone whose interventions into epic realms' dangerously disrupts his idea of the nation.[63] So appropriations of Hindu myth and icon by figures like Kaifi cannot merely be interpreted as convenient or pragmatic manoeuvres. Rather, this was an affirmative claim to an inclusive national community; an India marked as much by shared religio-cultural epistemologies as different belief systems. Moreover, this Muslim secularisation of Hinduism, while shaped significantly by its context, was not an entirely modern phenomenon. If the search for a theological truce had a prehistory in the early modern Muslim court, so, too, did this other endeavour. After all, in Mughal and successor courts, Hinduism and the Hindu had often been made the site of fantasy or even the classical. Alison Busch has written about how the later Mughals patronised

[62] Mir and Mir, *Anthems of Resistance*, p.68.
[63] A.J. Kabir, 'Secret Histories of Indian Modernism: M.F. Husain as Indian Muslim Artist', in S. Ramaswamy (ed.), *Barefoot Across the Nation: Maqbool Fida Husain and the Idea of India*, (New York, 2011), p.108.

a Hindi literature which embraced Hindu mythology.[64] In nineteenth century Awadh, its last nawab Wajid Ali Shah not only encouraged *kathak*—a dance form to which the tales of Krishna are integral—but also commissioned the Urdu poet Agha Hasan Amanat to write a musical set in the celestial court of the deity, Indra, the king of heaven, whose role was famously essayed by the Nawab himself.[65] This early modern tendency to anoint the Hindu as classical is interesting not least because this is a classical which, unlike in Europe, had not passed and was very much alive in the present. And while some ostensible similarities might be found with colonial orientalism, it is different in crucial ways; the same power dynamic is not at play and its precolonial propagators (and its modern inheritors) claim it as an integrative culture owned by both rulers and subjects. That aside, what matters most to us here is that these, like the Progressive cultural production of more recent times, were essentially aesthetic involvements in which belief and ritual is either displaced or made unimportant. Of course, for Kaifi, unlike Wajid Ali Shah, the political project is something else: belonging to (as opposed to legitimising rule over) a plural country with a Hindu majority and an ancient mythology.

Apart from this more general appropriation of Hindu mythology, what is so remarkable about Kaifi's song is how successfully it secularises the Ramayana for nationalism. By planting it on the modern battlefield, the Hindu tradition is made to occupy a chiefly secular space where fighting soldiers can only ever be marked by their nationality. There is no religiosity being expressed in these lines. Rather, this ever so familiar story is being used to conjure a metaphorical rallying cry. Sharing in this knowledge, Indian soldiers—regardless of their religious identity—are Ram and Lakshman, just as India is momentarily turned into an innocent Sita to complete the allegory. The wider comment is that whether they are Hindu or Muslim, or religious or irreligious, all Indians share an epistemology which must inevitably contain the multiple religious histories and myths that have found a place in their society. Despite their religious persuasions (or lack of them) these things are intimately known to Indians by virtue of being exactly that: Indian.

[64] A. Busch, *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India*, (Oxford, 2011).
[65] A. Taj, *The Court of Indar and the Rebirth of North Indian Drama*, (Delhi, 2007).

If national unity is harnessed through this shared familiarity, the effect of Kaifi's much later poem *Dusra Banwas* (Second Exile) is similar. The only differences are that, here, both 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' themes are nationalised and the opposition to Hindu nationalism is more obvious for it is written as a response to the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in 1992 by *karsevak*s (volunteers). Much like how Abdullah separated the Buddha and Krishna from Madhok, Kaifi not only captures Ram from the *karsevak*s to turn him into a votary of inclusive nationalism but makes Ram reciprocate the gesture when he lays personal claim to Babur's ruined sixteenth-century mosque.[66] In *Husain Aur Inqilab* (Husain and Revolution) written prior to independence, Josh Malihabadi achieved much the same when he drew on the martyrdom of the third imam of Shia Islam to conjure a spirit of patriotic sacrifice among colonised Indians. By accepting martyrdom at the hands of the tyrannous Caliph Yazid in the seventh century and thus providing an example of righteous sacrifice for mankind, Husain had turned a position of 'powerlessness' into 'a thing like power'. Made into a universal guide for all who are oppressed and dare to dream of freedom, Husain is not 'only the beloved of the Muslims' but belongs as much to other communities and even people like Josh—the 'sceptics'.[67] Much like how Kaifi retained the fundamentals of the Ramayana and nevertheless opened it to secularisation, Josh did the same with the familiar tale of the Battle of Karbala. Accommodating religious autonomy and searching for a theological truce, therefore, were not the only ways nationalists from the Urdu-speaking world of north India imagined a dialogue between Indians about religion. By secularising religion, Kaifi and Josh show that it is possible to appropriate Ram and Husain as icons for a national commitment to various moral positions; whether that be courage during wartime, reasserting unity at a moment of intercommunal crisis, or embracing sacrifice in the hope of attaining Indian freedom.

Shared and Secular

Thus far, I have contended that from the late colonial period a coherent idea of a shared nation emerged among a section of predominately Urdu-speaking and Muslim

[66] Kaifi, 'dusra banwas', www.rekhta.org/nazms/duusraa-ban-baas-kaifi-azmi-nazms (1 June 2018).
[67] Josh, 'husain aur inqilab', www.rekhta.org/marsiya/husain-aur-inqilaab-josh-malihabadi-marsiya?lang=ur (1 June 2018). My translation modifies J. Ingold and T. Luge, 'Husain and Revolution', www.sas.upenn.edu/~tluge/workshop/Josh%20-%20Husain%20aur%20Inqilab%20-%20transl.pdf (23 June 2019).

intellectuals in urban India. While irreligious Progressive poets had no reason to draw a line between the profane and the sacred, the Congress Muslims coherently separated a synthesised and secular national culture from the right of individual communities to religious autonomy even as they brought their theologies into dialogue with each other. While the previous chapter illustrated how some of the nuances of this theory separated figures like Azad from Nehru and Gandhi, I want to now emphasise that it separated them from some of their coreligionists within the Indian nationalist movement, too. Comparisons with two other ways of imagining the Indian nation further highlight the originality that the Azadian position achieved during the 1940s: the contemporaneous thought of the leader of the nationalist *ulama* Husain Ahmed Madani and the earlier arguments made by M.A. Ansari in the late 1920s.

Barbara Metcalf has shown that Madani's *muttahida qawmiyat* (composite nationalism) envisaged a national union of religious groups that were 'relatively encapsulated' not merely by separate religious laws, but their distinct cultures, approaches to education, and perhaps even languages.[68] Since he gave the communal identity of Indians such unequivocal social primacy, Indian *qawmiyat* (nationalism) was made contingent on the creation of a contemporary contract negotiated between its apparently organic and socio-culturally autonomous *millat*s (religious communities).[69] Indian unity is not an already established fact scripted by the long narrative of cultural history but is to be created in the present once the communal rights of all Indians have been guaranteed. Therefore, however right or wrong he may have been, his belief that the Congress movement promised to adequately uphold a plural (and heavily divided) Indian society is what finally allows Madani to recommend it to his followers. As he put it in 1938:

> While maintaining peace and tranquillity, they [religious communities] should propagate their ideology, follow their culture, promote [their] civilisation and protect their personal law. Neither should a minority interfere in the personal affairs of other minorities or the majority, nor should the majority strive to assimilate the minority into

[68] B. Metcalf, 'Observant Muslims, Secular Indians: The Political Vision of Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, 1938-57', in D. Chakrabarty et al. (eds.), *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition*, (Delhi, 2007), p.109.

[69] For a more detailed discussion on how Madani deployed these terms see Metcalf, 'Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani and the Jami'at 'Ulama-i-Hind: Against Pakistan, against the Muslim League', in *Muslims Against the Muslim League*.

> itself. This is what the Indian National Congress has been striving to achieve ever since its inception.[70]

While Azad imagined a realm of secular culture at which Muslims are to meet Hindus as Indian equals and, thereby, offset their minority status within the Indian nation, Madani provides no such forum. Consequently, he forces Muslims to forever occupy an exclusive and minoritised space which most of their countrymen are prohibited from entering. Madani imagined a united and even secular India but not a *shared* one. Hindus and Muslims enjoy no positive cultural relationship and are, instead, merely tasked with respecting their mutual right to separation within their common country.

This contrast with Azad is underlined further by how very differently Madani used history to imagine the place of Muslims in India. Wishing to combat the Hindu nationalist view that extraterritorial holy lands automatically disenfranchised Muslims from the Indian nation, Metcalf tells us that Madani made a series of eccentric counterclaims. In an essay written in 1941, Madani contended that as 'Adam had arrived from paradise on earth precisely at Sri Lanka's 'Adam's Peak'', 'larger India' was 'the site of the first revelation' and the first recipient of the eternal 'light of Muhammad'. India is made not just the second most sacred 'Muslim holy place' after the homeland of the Prophet but is given decidedly Islamic origins in a certain attempt to strike at the roots of the Hindu nationalist argument. Madani took this idea of India as an Islamic geography further. He argued that belief in reincarnation suggested that the Hindu majority had accepted the likely impermanence of its Indian nationality; this, however, could never be the case for his coreligionists. Laid to rest in his grave 'where messages are received and transmitted', Madani argued that the Muslim remained an Indian forever. As Metcalf notes, for Madani the 'very soil of India was alive for Muslims.'[71] However outlandish these arguments may appear, they imply not only a sense of national ownership for the Muslim minority but one that supersedes Hindu claims; the Muslims were, in fact, more Indian than the Hindus. This endeavour alone is enough to separate him from Azad and his obsession with the factor of parity. But this is not all that divides these histories. More interestingly, while Azad and his associates turn to cultural history to provide the basis for an interactive national relationship between

[70] H.A. Madani, *Composite Nationalism and Islam*, M. Hussain and H. Imam (trans.), (Delhi, 2005), pp.118-9.
[71] Metcalf, 'Observant Muslims', pp.104-5.

Hindus and Muslims (or the *people* of India), Madani is simply interested in connecting Islam and Muslims to Indian *geography*. This, of course, should not surprise us for what Madani seeks in the modern nation is a facilitator of religious freedom. Once the apparently disputed connection between the Muslim community and the Indian homeland is favourably settled, the problem of nationality is solved. For Madani, relations between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority are, at best, simply unimportant to ideas of Indian belonging.

If the relationship between Azad and Madani has not been properly understood by historians, they have also failed to adequately separate Azad from Ansari. Though we only possess evidence of it from 1937 onwards, Azad nevertheless overcame the earlier Khilafatist logic to rethink the Hindu-Muslim relationship in terms of a cultural secularism.[72] Before his death in 1936, Ansari showed no signs of doing so; this was despite being a key contributor to Congress' shift towards a unitary Indian nationalism that culminated in the publication of the Nehru Report in 1928. Though Ansari agreed with his party colleagues that the religious community ought to be replaced by socio-economic interest as the primary unit of political organisation, he continued to imagine the Indian nation as contingent on the contemporary unification of discrete religious groups. Presiding over Congress' Madras session in December 1927, Ansari declared that:

> The political and religious differences which are straining the relations between the two communities are but outward manifestations of a deeper conflict, not peculiar to India or unknown to history. It is essentially a problem of two different cultures, each with its own outlook on life, coming in close contact with one another. The best remedy lies in a recognition of the right of each culture to exist, in a development of a spirit of tolerance and respect and in the encouragement and cultivation of cultural affinity by the establishment of national institutions where young people of both the communities will come into touch with each other and get opportunities to study and understand the ideals underlying the civilisations of both.[73]

For Ansari, culture was solely the domain of the religious community. Since Hinduism and Islam emerge as exclusive and self-contained cultures, the Indian nation that Ansari anticipates is to emerge not from a history of cultural cooperation but a present-day truce between two fundamentally alien (if not rival) systems that possess no organic

[72] The first public articulation of Azad's idea of the shared nation seems to be his speech to the 'Hindustani Committee, Bihar', Patna, 1937, in M. Ram (ed.), *Khutbat-e-Azad*, (Delhi, 1990), pp.256-268.
[73] M.A. Ansari, 'Presidential Address', Madras, 26-28 December 1927, in Hasan (ed.), *Muslims and the Congress: Select Correspondence of Dr. M.A. Ansari, 1912-1935*, (Delhi, 1979), p.286.

unity. Though described as 'cultural affinity', this truce essentially named nothing more than mutual understanding of, and respect for, separate socio-cultural spaces. A principally negative idea, Hindus and Muslims were simply being asked to acknowledge the right of the other community to an Indian existence; this was the only way to activate a 'normal state of human society' and avoid '[p]erpetual warfare'.[74] Since Indian success ultimately rests on an agreement to be considerate (rather than hostile) separatists, what Ansari imagined was far less interactive and wide-ranging than the theory Azad would come to prescribe. In fact, though Ansari did not resort to theology to make his claim and deployed a modern democratic language, by separating culture from the national and relegating it entirely to the communal, his arguments for Indian nationalism during the last phase of his career have more in common with those of Madani than Azad.

If Azad and his coterie of Hindustani Muslims evolved a mode of secular nationalist thought in the 1940s which was qualitatively different both from what they may have inherited (Ansari) as well as a contemporaneous Islamic argument for Indian nationality (Madani), this did not necessarily preclude differences between them. If they sketched out a coherent separation between a synthesised and shared national culture and the right to religious autonomy, the extent to which certain social practices traversed communal boundaries seemed to divide them. Mahmud's contention that Indian Muslim society had organised itself largely on Hindu lines was a view that few others shared. He noted how the Muslims, on settling in India, adopted the caste system for themselves despite Islamic injunctions to the contrary. 'This', Mahmud suggested, 'was not a good influence; yet its existence cannot be denied.' Muslim marriage no longer emphasised its original idea of a 'contract' and, instead, placed significance on the Hindu notion of 'sacrament'. Muslims had made Hindu ceremonies around birth and death their own, while the daily routines of Muslim women mimicked those of Hindu women.[75] Though Mahmud fails to recognise it himself, there is a clear distinction between the way in which he imagines the profane national culture marked by the equal significance of Hindu and Muslim elements, and this assimilationist reading of Indian Muslim social practices which they have apparently borrowed from their Hindu

[74] Ibid, p.287.
[75] Mahmud, *HMCA*, pp.31-2.

countrymen. After listing these practices in his tract on the Hindu-Muslim relationship, he notes: 'If we turn from such externals to the cultural aspects of life, we find the same kind of fusion there.'[76] Yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, we do not; Mahmud and his peers had rejected cultural assimilation and argued for something quite different. There could be a number of reasons why Mahmud fails to recognise this distinction. But that he is untroubled by it is itself instructive. After all, the intention of this 1949 text was quite clear. Having witnessed the squabbles of late colonial politics and the resultant rupture of Partition, Mahmud is keen to on the one hand reaffirm and remind us of the Indianness of the Muslims, and on the other mark out the path towards improved communal relations and cooperation. In this context, it was arguably unimportant to differentiate between instances of assimilation and synthesis, even if that was what he had achieved. Thus, intentionally or otherwise, what Mahmud provides us with is a fairly neat conception of Indian Muslim reality. Having preserved Islam in India they were unequivocally Muslim by religion; they were Indian by culture for they had assisted in the creation of that joint identity; and finally, in their social organisation, they were essentially Hindu.

The position that Mahmud assumes was one that Azad never countenanced; this was so even after his ideological shift following the collapse of the Khilafat movement. Muslims, Azad continued to contend, had many significant social practices of their own. Earlier we saw that one of his many refutations of the Pakistan demand was couched in the belief that Indian Muslims—having avoided the inequalities of caste by remaining true to their faith—possessed an unmatched social cohesion which helped to offset any meaningful minority status. In a complete reversal of Mahmud's reading, Azad affirms not only the theory, but the reality, of an egalitarian Islam in India.[77] But Azad is seemingly uninterested in any detailed documentation of Hindu and Muslim social practices. Though we are told that lines of division exist, no attempt is made to draw them with any great precision. Of course, to do so may have been politically unhelpful. But there is perhaps a more significant explanation. Ultimately, Azad is concerned with the protection of his theory. That is, the separation between shared national and autonomous religious spaces. Neither should the nation be defined by religion nor

[76] Ibid, p.33.
[77] Azad, 'Presidential Address', p.17.

should religion be impinged upon in the name of nationalism. In this fundamentally theoretical equation, the actual social practices of Indians are unimportant for they cannot bring this delicate balance between nation and community into disrepute. At worst, they could cast doubt over the extents and limits of these domains, but never their very existence. Perhaps, then, it is because this question lacked any significant existential quality that Azad gave it such little attention. Instead, what really mattered was the theoretical separation between nation and community and the way it would consequently inform the choices of Indians and the structures of their postcolonial state.

Imperfect India

Though these intellectuals took the equilibrium at the heart of Indian nationhood to be a great achievement, they nevertheless discerned its great deficiency. I began this chapter with what I perceive to be the Maulana's allegorical representation of India as his newfound intoxicant; the idea that inclusive Indian synthesis was rich and beautiful, but also fragile and corruptible, was one he shared with his intellectual peers. For Kabir, too, the retention of religious autonomies, however necessary, nevertheless left Indian synthesis incomplete. Though he ultimately concludes that this incomplete fusion was preferable to any homogenising project, he understood that neither was free from peril. Summarising the story of synthesis which had 'changed' Indian 'art', 'language', and 'social habits' among other things and had, thereby, 'introduce[d] a new consciousness among its peoples', Kabir noted that '[t]he movement towards unity however remains incomplete. A composite culture is created but it does not transform the core of Indian life. Diverse elements are held together but not merged.'[78] In a similar vein, he wrote:

> It was, however, an unstable equilibrium. From the very nature of the case, the process of such a synthesis can never be complete. Introduction of a single new element or the least shift in the relative importance of existing elements alters the balance and the changes which follow prove revolutionary.[79]

That the original elements still exist in another capacity beyond the sphere of national culture means that this 'synthesis can never be complete'. Indians are conscious of both their communal and national identities; in this stark duality, the threat of collision constantly lurks. Two highly developed religio-cultural elements, despite their national

[78] Kabir, *IH*, pp.130-1.
[79] Ibid, p.113.

fusion, have not dissolved into each other; they have retained an independent existence and that is what allows for their appropriation by other experiments. Pakistani and Hindutva 'revolution[s]', then, always remain possibilities. In these lines, Kabir almost rues Indian heterogeneity. And yet, he refuses to describe this as a failure; India could not have failed to implement a homogenous nationality if it had no intention of ever creating one. Nonetheless, that it had 'not merged' its 'elements' provided a perennial existential threat.

Born into a family of writers and theologians at Gwalior, the Progressive Urdu poet and prolific Bollywood lyricist Jan Nisar Akthar unwittingly brings Kabir's palpable concerns and Azad's more ambivalent allegory together in his aptly titled national poem *Bada-e-Watan* (Wine of the Homeland).[80] Beginning with a celebration of the natural beauty of India, it soon morphs into the ideal anthem for the Azadian idea. Much like the Maulana at Ramgarh, Akhtar begins his commentary on history and culture by first evoking the clichéd 'confluence' of the Ganges and the Yamuna by comparing their destined streams to the 'flowing locks' of the beloved. From the 'columns of Ashoka' to the Taj Mahal which he describes as the 'crown of love', Akhtar contributes to the obsession with a presentist inheritance by claiming the entirety of precolonial north Indian history almost solely through its surviving monuments.[81] Again, like Azad and his political associates, Akhtar also draws our attention to the shared nature of profane culture in north India. Celebrating its literature, he writes:

> *rahe dhum taigor-o-iqbal ki*
> *rahe shan panjab-o-bangal ki*
>
> *rahe nam apne adab ka buland*
> *dilon men samaya rahe premchand*
>
> *sada zindagani ghazalkhwan rahe*
> *zamane men ghalib ka diwan rahe*
>
> May the fame of Tagore and Iqbal remain,
> May the glory of Punjab and Bengal remain.
>
> May the renown of our literature remain,
> May Premchand continue to dwell in our hearts.
>
> May those who read couplets always remain,

[80] Akhtar, 'bada-e-watan', *HH*, Vol.1, pp.77-81.
[81] Ibid, p.78.

May the world retain the ghazals of Ghalib.[82]

Though the regions of Tagore and Iqbal retain their 'glory', as in much of this Hindustani narrative these heroes of Bengal and the Punjab are ultimately subordinated to the role of contributors to the national; what matters is achieving lofty heights for 'our literature'. More significant, perhaps, is the equalisation of Akhtar's four emblems of this shared literary culture: the two poet-philosophers; the twentieth-century Hindi and Urdu author Munshi Premchand; and the great nineteenth-century Urdu poet Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib. Since so much of this poem obsesses over an esoteric coupling of Indic and Persianate (as well as more explicitly Hindu and Muslim) themes, Akhtar's choices seem significant as he upholds the shared nation. This effect is repeated elsewhere. For instance, the tranquil morning of the temple town of Benares (*subh-e-banaras*) is partnered by the 'evening of Awadh' (*sham-e-awadh*) associated with the poetry, music, dance, attire, and food of the royal courts around Lucknow.[83] Elsewhere he deals with more explicitly religious themes but the effect is the same: the 'dazzling bloom' and 'rows of burning oil lamps' of Diwali are equalised with the 'smiling beauty' of a 'passionately burning crescent' on Eid.[84] In an effort to retain them for the nation, these themes and festivals are never reduced to a single community by way of explicit naming. However, while this religious undercurrent is forced into the background and made quotidian, the repetitive act of coupling conjures a conception of India that is unimaginable without its 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' elements. Whether he thinks of the shared profane world or the religious landscape, Akhtar is bound by this same rule. And yet, this excessive coupling speaks of a self-critical suspicion (if not paranoia) which only further ties Akhtar to the intellectual world of Azad and Kabir. While the nation is undoubtedly shared, its lack of religious homogeneity seemingly haunts the poem. At the end of his commentary on religious festivals, Akhtar acknowledges that Indians were as divided in the realm of religion as they were united in the sphere of culture. There was a need, therefore, to constantly reaffirm interreligious understanding and respect:

gale se gale log milte rahen
dilon ke javan phul khilte rahen

[82] Ibid, p.80.
[83] Ibid, p.78.
[84] Ibid, p.79.

May people continue to embrace each other,
May the youthful flowers of their hearts continue to bloom.[85]

Written as a plea rather than an assured prophecy, the poem keeps the possibility of failure firmly intact. Consequently, Akhtar begins to allude to an Indian fragility that is made far more explicit in the final four couplets of the poem:

rahe saqiya badakhwaron ki khair
rahe saqiya tere pyaron ki khair

ubharte rahe zindagani ka josh
rahe tere rindon ko duniya ka hosh

surahi se saghar rahe muttasil
na tute kabhi tere shishon ka dil

utha jam, han, daur saqi rahe
jahan men sada aman baqi rahe

O Cupbearer, may the drinkers remain well,
O Cupbearer, may your lovers remain well.

May the excitement of life continue to emerge,
May your drunkards retain a consciousness of the world.

May the goblet stay adjoined to the decanter,
May your heart of glass never break.

Raise the glass, O Cupbearer, may this round of drinking endure,
May there be eternal peace in the world.[86]

Personified as the beloved '*saqi*' (cupbearer) of the Persian tradition, India is celebrated for providing its patriotic 'lovers' with intoxicating gifts. But since they are now drunk on the 'excitement' of Indian life, there is no guarantee that these patriots will remain 'well'. Much like Azad, intoxication for Akhtar seemingly marks both the joy of unity as well as the possibility of its thoughtless destruction. The task for the *saqi* is unenviable: to retain the intoxicated state of its patriotic 'drunkards' while nevertheless safeguarding their 'consciousness of the world'. In fact, by once again making a series of hopeful pleas, Akhtar comes to accept the difficulty of guaranteeing 'peace' in a fragile nation marked as much by cultural unity as religious difference. Though he wishes for it 'never' to 'break', there is no question of the Indian 'heart' being anything other than a brittle one made 'of glass'. Thus, the solution is simple: since the nation had been

[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid, p.81.

founded on the serving of the intoxicant, the only way to retain it is to continue drinking from the 'goblet'. This means embracing unity but also the possibility of destruction; both are intrinsic to the '*bada-e-watan*'. With this being the only way to extend the shared '*daur*' (which, here, might refer as much to a 'round of drinking' as the 'lifespan' or 'era' of the Indian nation), Akhtar resigns himself to this imperfect situation and urges the *saqi* to continue filling his wineglass.

To end, I want to illustrate what Kabir perceived as the limits of synthesis by returning to his commentary on north Indian art and architecture. Kabir held that, '[t]wo different and contrary tendencies rule all art. One aims at decoration, prolixity and splendour. The other is dominated by the ideal of simplicity, economy and sobriety.' Seeking to 'overwhelm us by the profusion of form and the excess of its material wealth', ancient Indian art fell into the former category; the Central Asian art that the Muslims brought to India from the medieval period, relying on the 'unexpressed' and 'the barest hints', represented the latter qualities. If the former was expressed through 'the wealth of its achievement', the latter provided a domain in which 'imagination finds free play'.[87] By marrying these two tendencies over the last millennium, Indians had produced a complete art form. All that art as a discipline could conceptually offer was to be found in north India:

> These two modes express two complementary ideals of life. We find perfection in art where the rival streams of romantic and classical tendency are held in exquisite balance. We find a new excellence in life where the mentalities represented by these ideals are fused to create a new philosophy and culture. The Indian and Saracenic styles supplied complementary elements whose fusion created not only a great art but a deep abiding culture.[88]

But even this perfection had its imperfections. Despite its successful attempt to seize all of art, north Indian creations did not quite display the kind of consistent harmony evident in more culturally homogenous settings. Noting that north India housed some significant 'unfulfilled experiments in synthesis' such as the tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah at Agra and Akbar's court at Fatehpur Sikri, these 'architectural curiosities' prompt Kabir to tellingly omit north India from a passage in which he lists those societies that had evolved a consistent architectural style emanating from their 'deep communal

[87] Kabir, *IH*, p.100.
[88] Ibid.

sense'. And religion is made paramount here; it is religious architecture that conveys a 'common purpose and endeavour'. Interestingly, south India, notably othered here rather than owned, does feature in Kabir's list. This is significant not least because these north Indian Muslim intellectuals shared a rather ambiguous relationship with that part of the country. If the Hindu philosophers of Kerala were important to their quest for a theological reconciliation, the South could also be made the Indic other that helped to underscore the shared character of the North. Whenever south India receives some rare attention in their writings, this inconsistency persists. Whether Kabir and his peers took this to be something too unimportant to fix or were simply unaware of it, that there is no attempt at a resolution is itself revealing. And so, south India is bundled together with Muslim Central Asia and the nations of Christian Europe while the tensions at the heart of north Indian society between national and communal domains prevent it from qualifying as 'a unified society at peace with itself':

> Architecture must depend on social factors at every stage. Only the co-operative endeavour of many can build up great architectural monuments. Not only the master builder but his associates must have a feeling for craftsmanship. The whole of society must be informed by a sense of common purpose and endeavour. It is only when there has been a deep communal sense that great architectural monuments have been raised. The Gothic churches of Europe, the rock temples of south India or the great mosques of the Saracens are all visible symbols of a unified society at peace with itself.[89]

Having refused homogeneity, the Indian nation had forgone the road to perfect harmony. The task it had set itself was something entirely different: to achieve as much harmony as was possible without destroying its commitment to diversity. Therefore, having acknowledged the pitfalls of the Indian project, Kabir nonetheless concludes:

> At first sight the present struggle between Hindus and Muslims suggests that the solution has not been complete. When we consider the volume of the population and the many points at which their lives impinge, what is surprising is not that perfect fusion has not yet been achieved but that there should have been the degree of synthesis which has actually been realised.[90]

[89] Ibid, pp.151-2.
[90] Ibid, pp.75-6.

3

A Three-Nation Theory

On 1 August 1945, Abdullah welcomed a Congress delegation led by Azad and Nehru to Srinagar. With India's political future at the crossroads, Abdullah organised a grand afternoon boat procession along the Jhelum River to flaunt the alliance between his National Conference and the leaders of a countrywide struggle for Indian freedom. But at a political rally held in honour of his Congress friends that evening, Abdullah was unafraid of boldly declaring his personal views on their unending stalemate with Jinnah and the Muslim League. In front of a large gathering at Hazuri Bagh, Abdullah pleaded with the Congress president to come to terms with his great rival:

> We are aware of the fact that only a unified India can drive away British usurpers, and liberate the country. We firmly believe that on the question of independence all communities should speak with one voice. Esteemed Maulana Sahib, we need to make renewed efforts to achieve this unity. We would like to know why is it that despite the sacrifices made by the Congress, the greatness of its leaders, and undeniable urge for freedom among the Muslims, so few of them are with the Congress. We strongly urge the need for a changed attitude. It is your responsibility to assess the modus operandi of the Muslim League and other Muslim organisations. Its just demands must be conceded. Whatever the source of goodness, so long as it benefits society, it must be acknowledged.[1]

There is undoubtedly an irony in Abdullah making this plea to Azad. For his prescription was identical to the course that the Maulana was currently proposing to his colleagues. Though Azad enjoyed the support of provincial Congress leaders, he ultimately failed to convince Nehru, but also Gandhi, of his own 'changed attitude' towards the constitutional question. They were less willing to forgo pure democracy to, first, assuage the minoritarian fears of the Qaid-e-Azam and, in turn, save Indian unity.[2] Whether Abdullah was aware of these internal struggles by the middle of 1945 is difficult to ascertain. In any case, what is more interesting here is that he shared so much of his logic with the Maulana. Once it has 'assess[ed] the modus operandi of the Muslim League' and determined which of its 'demands' are 'just', Congress must finally 'concede' these for the 'goodness' or 'benefit' of Indian 'society'. Abdullah is evidently unconvinced that the 'source' of this anticipated 'goodness'—which must, of course, go

[1] Abdullah, Speech at Political Rally, Srinagar, 1 August 1945, reprinted in Abdullah, *Flames of the Chinar: An Autobiography*, K. Singh (trans.), (Delhi, 1993 [1986]), p.65.
[2] For more detail, see Sohal, 'Ideas of Parity', pp.720-22.

some way to meeting Jinnah's demand for constitutional equality between Hindus and Muslims—is itself an entirely good thing. In fact, Abdullah was a great critic of this 'two-nation' theory and held that the 'individual problems' of Hindus and Muslims in India 'need not separate them once and forever.'[3] But what takes priority is the achievement of 'goodness'; the means—'whatever' it may be—had to be tolerated to achieve the hallowed end of unity. In other words, like Azad, Abdullah is interested not so much in the terms of an accord as its achievement. For both these political thinkers, Hindus and Muslims emerge as two equally significant units of an Indian nation that has great intrinsic value. Abdullah's reaction to the failure of the highly publicised Gandhi-Jinnah talks a year earlier confirms this. Speaking to party workers at Srinagar, he declared that Hindus and Muslims made for 'the two great communities' of India. Even if it was a 'prime duty imposed by' his 'love of freedom', Abdullah made intercommunal unity an inherent element of Indian 'patriotism' and, therefore, a 'cause' of its own; one to be 'championed and supported'. The now disappointed Kashmiris had been obliged to encourage Gandhi and Jinnah's 'move for unity'.[4]

But if their approaches to this deadlock united Azad and Abdullah, a great deal separated these thinkers, too. In this chapter I want to argue that while he repeated some of the Maulana's cultural argument for an Indian nation defined by communal parity, Abdullah surpassed it in crucial respects. For alongside his interest in nationwide Hindu and Muslim communities and their Indian unification, Abdullah also integrated the regional or ethnolinguistic categories of India into his national idea in ways that Azad did not. Choosing to inherit as a Kashmiri, Abdullah was unable to simply replace the threat of Hindu majoritarianism with a secular equivalent that all but took Hindustan and its profane culture to be the Indian nation. The Sher-e-Kashmir, or Lion of Kashmir, as he came to be known among his followers, jealously guarded the distinction of an ethnolinguistic Kashmiri nation just as he sought to tie it to a grander heterogenous India. If this meant that he was perhaps truer to the Maulana's search for an India defined by equality than Azad himself, Abdullah also diverged from this principle by connecting his Kashmiri nation to the Muslim identity of its religious majority. It was this anchoring of religion at the subnational—and the concurrent

[3] Abdullah, '*Shabistan*', p.130.
[4] Abdullah, Presidential Address to National Conference, Srinagar, 29-30 September 1944, quoted in F.M. Hassnain, *Freedom Struggle in Kashmir*, (Delhi, 1988), p.127.

concentration of postcolonial power at this level as opposed to an Indian centre—which the Sheikh deemed necessary to evade the problem of Muslim minoritisation and make the Indian nation his own.

Iqbal the Kashmiri

In its manifesto for a socialist future published in 1944 under the title *Naya Kashmir* (New Kashmir), the National Conference made frequent references to the many 'nationalities' of Jammu and Kashmir.[5] Some years later in 1970, Abdullah reiterated this understanding of the erstwhile princely state when he claimed that it was 'not a homogenous one. It is a combination of different areas having different cultures and speaking different languages, viz., Kashmir, Jammu, Ladakh, Gilgit, Mirpur, Poonch, and so on.'[6] While the state may not have been homogenous, the Sher-e-Kashmir had certainly imagined its 'nationalities' as such. These nationalities were not too dissimilar from those imagined by the political thinkers of modern Europe: homogenous collectives characterised by a shared bloodline, historical narrative, rootedness in the land, and a set of cultural features that conventionally included language, custom, and art. Like all secular Indian nationalists, Abdullah refused to accept that religious homogeneity was a necessary criterion for nationality. In this respect, then, his idea of Kashmiri nationality sought to separate itself from the European original. He once noted that 'Kashmiris, whether Hindu or Muslim, have a similar character, similar complexion, belong to the same race, and even have similar names.'[7] But since his idea of Kashmir often collapsed into a Muslim majoritarianism, the comparison with conventional European nationalism holds far better than Abdullah perhaps intended.

Though the Sheikh conceived of the Kashmiri nation in this way, it was perhaps Iqbal who, through his Urdu but mainly Persian poetry, provided the most wide-ranging exposition of this idea. And while historians have tended not to acknowledge this, Abdullah seemed to have recognised his debt to the poet-philosopher. Borrowing a phrase coined by Iqbal, Abdullah titled his political autobiography *Atish-e-Chinar* (The Fire of the Chinar) and prefaced his text with the original couplet.[8] Referring to the

[5] All-Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, *New Kashmir*, (Delhi, 1948 [1944]), pp.13, 16, 40.
[6] Abdullah, 'View Explained', Srinagar, 8-13 June 1970, *Reflections*, p.94.
[7] Abdullah, '*Shabistan*', p.134.
[8] Abdullah, *Autobiography*, p.vii.

chinar trees of the Kashmir Valley, at the height of the anticolonial struggle Iqbal wrote glowingly of his ancestral land:

> *jis khak ke zamir men ho atish-e-chinar*
> *mumkin nahin ke sard ho woh khak-e-arjumand*
>
> The earth that enshrines in its soul the fire of the chinar,
> That noble earth can never be lifeless.[9]

In chapter one, I mentioned that Iqbal—for ethical and theological reasons—rejected a modern territorial Indian nationalism for Hindus and Muslims. Still, that did not prevent them from belonging to the same historical communities of which one was the Kashmiri nation. A Kashmiri who was born and lived out his adult life in the Punjab, Iqbal was able to furnish his poetry with patriotic sentiment and a sense of belonging even as his politics was often found to be at odds with those who, like Abdullah, shared these feelings. And so, though Iqbal begins the following passage from his 1932 Persian work, *Javid Nama* (Book of Eternity), with an unsubtle criticism of the world order of nation-states and their empires, he still provides a detailed description of the Kashmiri nation and its contemporary plight:

> *zir-e-gardun adam adam ra khurad*
> *milati bar milat-e-digar chard*
> *jan 'z ahl-khateh suzad chun sapand*
> *khizad az dil naleh haaye dardmand*
> *zirak-o-derak-o-khushgil milati ast*
> *dar jahan tar dasti-e-u ayati ast*
> *sagharesh ghaltande andar khun-e-ust*
> *dar nai-e-man naleh az mazmun-e-ust*
> *az khudi ta be nasib uftadeh ast*
> *dar dayar-e-khud gharib uftadeh ast*
> *dastmazad-e-u badast-e-digaran*
> *mahi-e-rudesh beh shast-e-digaran*
> *karawanha sui manzil gam gam*
> *kar-e-u na khub-o-biandam-o-kham*
> *az ghulami jazbeha-ye u bemirad*
> *atishi andar rag-e-takesh fasard*
> *ta napindari keh bud ast inchonin*
> *jabhe ra hamvareh sud ast inchonin*
> *dar zamani saf shekan ham budeh ast*
> *chireh-o-janbaz-o-pordam budeh ast*
>
> Under the heavens man devours man,
> nation grazes upon another nation.
> My soul burns like rue for the people of the Vale;
> cries of anguish mount from my heart.

[9] Iqbal, *Armughan-e-Hijaz*, (Aligarh, 1975 [1938]), p.39. Translation my own.

They are a nation clever, perceptive, handsome,
their dexterity is proverbial,
yet their cup rolls in their own blood;
the lament in my flute is on their behalf.
Since they have lost their share of selfhood
they have become strangers in their own land;
their wages are in the hands of others,
the fish of their river in other men's nets.
The caravans move step by step to the goal;
but still their work is ill-done, unformed, immature.
Through servitude their aspirations have died,
the fire in the veins of their vine is quenched.
But do not think that they were always so,
their brows ever lowered thus to the dust;
once upon a time they too were warlike folk,
valiant, heroic, ardent in battle.[10]

Much like Abdullah, Iqbal gave Kashmiris the attributes of an Old World nation. They are distinguishable by their shared characteristics: observant, skilful, and handsome, they have lost their courage and belligerence. The dark history they have shared similarly binds them: 'their cup rolls in their own blood' as alien powers extract wealth from their homeland. This misfortune, of foreigners having snatched away 'their share of selfhood', now dominates their collective identity. As we will soon discover, the foreignness of their many oppressors was a key theme for Abdullah. For Iqbal, however, there is an added nuance at play. The loss and retrieval of *khudi* (selfhood) was central to Iqbalian philosophy. Particularly (though not exclusively) appealing to the Muslim community in and beyond India and predicated on his belief that Islam guaranteed human freedom, Iqbal argued that salvation lay in self-aware individuality. He positioned his idea in opposition to two others: Sufi *fana* (self-annihilation) that sought to lose the self in order to attain union with God and, more pertinently for his commentary on Kashmir, the tendency of colonialism to negate the humanity of its subject population.[11] Indeed, the loss of selfhood is a recurring feature of Iqbal's work on Kashmir. If his flute composed a dirge as his 'soul burn[ed] like rue for the people of the Vale' in *Javid Nama*, he similarly lamented their material and intellectual poverty in the poem *Saqi Nama* (Book of the Cupbearer) published earlier in 1923.[12]

[10] Iqbal, *Javid Nama*, (Lahore, 1932), pp.186-7. Translation from A.J. Arberry, *Javid-Nama*, (London, 2011), pp.117-8.
[11] J. Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics and Postcolonialism*, (Delhi, 2009), pp.20-3.
[12] Iqbal, 'Saqi Nama', in *Payam-e-Mashriq*, (Lahore, 1923), pp.104-5.

Historians have documented how, once Muslim power began to give way to European dominance in the subcontinent during the modern period, lament characterised much of the poetry emanating from Persianate north India.[13] Though he, too, inherited this legacy, Iqbal was keen to combine the theme of loss with a future-oriented optimism. Consequently, his work consistently appears more constructive than much of what came before it. But, in Kashmir, lament had a longer history than on the plains. For while the Mughals were among the last Indian rulers of Hindustan for its writers, it is they who initiate a perpetuating story of alien rule for Kashmiri chroniclers. During the height of the Mughal Empire, the seventeenth-century Kashmiri poet of Persian, Muhammad Tahir Ghani, better known as Ghani Kashmiri, was lamenting the poverty and destruction of his people. The literary scholars Mufti Mudasir Farooqi and Nusrat Bazaz contend that the heavy handedness of the Mughal governors of Kashmir had a significant effect on Ghani and his contemporaries. 'It was', they note, 'only natural for Ghani to be deeply perturbed by these conditions and he imbibed the general mood of gloom and dejection.' In an attempt to explain his 'fatalism and pessimism', Farooqi and Bazaz argue that '[i]f Ghani seems too gloomy at times, it is because the conditions he lived in offered little reason for a brighter outlook.'[14] But if Iqbal contributed to a Kashmiri tradition of lament that had a longer lineage than its Hindustani equivalent, more interesting is the fact that he seems to have recognised it. For in *Javid Nama*, Zinda Rud, the pseudonym Iqbal uses throughout this epic, finds the spirit of Ghani characteristically mourning the loss of Kashmiri freedom. But Ghani, as imagined by Iqbal, is now lamenting not Mughal but contemporary Dogra domination in a hypocritical world produced by the free and powerful nations of the West. Situating Ghani in his own time, Iqbal makes a comment on the 1846 Treaty of Amritsar under which the East India Company had sold the Kashmir Valley to the Raja of Jammu for the meagre sum of seventy-five lakh rupees as a token for his loyalty during the First Anglo-Sikh War:

> *bad-e-saba agar beh geneva guzar koni*
> *harfi 'z ma beh majlis-e-aqwam baz gui*
> *dahqan-o-kisht-o-jui-o-khiaban farukhtand*
> *qaumi farukhtand-o-cheh arzan farukhtand*

[13] See F.W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*, (Berkley, 1994).
[14] M.M. Farooqi and N. Bazaz, *The Captured Gazelle: The Poems of Ghani Kashmiri* [Kindle Version], (Delhi, 2016).

O morning breeze, if you
pass over Geneva,
Carry word from us
to the League of Nations.
The peasant, the field, the river,
the garden, all have they sold.
They have sold a people and how
cheaply have they sold![15]

By taking the case of Kashmir to the League of Nations, and that too via an early modern poet whose work was rooted in the supposedly pitiful circumstances of his homeland, Iqbal furthers its national status. Whatever he may have otherwise thought about this interwar body,[16] it is significant that Iqbal proposes an international conversation about Kashmir and, thereby, effectively equates his homeland with its member states. For both Iqbal and Abdullah, Kashmiris made for a nation as much as the French or Germans did. Whether or not that nationality, following the example of its European counterparts, was to achieve a similar political manifestation was another matter entirely. What could not be denied, however, was the right of Kashmiris to take their place among the other self-defined nations of the world. Equally striking here is how Iqbal infuses his argument for international recognition with the thoroughly negative contemporary experience of Dogra subjugation. During the colonial period, a narrative of injustice all but drowned out any attempt to convince the world outside of the more positive characteristics of Kashmiri nationhood. That this colonial truism has only been amplified in the postcolonial era adds haunting value to Iqbal's verse. For to this day, any claim made by Kashmiri nationalism for international recognition must confront its continued denial by the two uncompromising national ideas now enshrined in the powerful states of India and Pakistan.

But if Iqbal mourned the plight of Kashmir, he was not content with lament alone. Just as he disentangled himself from the literary inheritance of the plains to imagine a positive future for Indian Muslims, Iqbal did much the same for Kashmiris. During the final decade of his life, Iqbal was a keen supporter of the movement for

[15] Iqbal, *Javid Nama*, 189. Translation from Farooqi and Bazaz, *Captured Gazelle*.
[16] Iqbal used the model of this 'Anglo-French institution, miscalled the League of Nations' to posit the creation of an 'Eastern League of Nations'. Made up of Asian and Middle Eastern countries to foster their cooperation and, thereby, avert the global hegemony of western capitalism and imperialism, this alternative body also appears to be a convenient mechanism by which Iqbal could bypass—or at least minimise the influence of—the nation-state in the Muslim world. See Iqbal, 'Statement on the Report Recommending the Partition of Palestine', 27 July 1937, in L.A. Sherwani (ed.), *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, (Lahore, 1995), p.295.

Kashmiri democratisation.[17] As a poet, meanwhile, he employed lament only to finally inspire the change he sought. Having chronicled Kashmiri degradation for much of *Saqi Nama*, Iqbal nevertheless concludes by calling on his readers to provide the 'soul-enkindling wine' for a revival.[18] In the hopeful couplet that inspired Abdullah and with which I began this section, Iqbal gave the 'noble earth' of Kashmir an eternal quality. Similarly, in *Javid Nama*, its inhabitants possess a lasting if dormant potential. Ultimately, Iqbal returns to the spirit of Ghani but this time to enthuse the mournful Zinda Rud. Kashmiris, Iqbal claims, are a free people in waiting. Capable of achieving *khudi*, it was only a matter of time before they retrieved their national consciousness.[19]

Beauty as Self

Rai has deplored the historical propensity of rulers and writers from beyond the Kashmir Valley to dehumanise it by focusing on its natural beauty at the expense of a conversation about its inhabitants. Whether it was the Mughal emperors, European travellers of the colonial period, or ideologues of the postcolonial Indian state, all have indulged in 'effacing Kashmiris from depictions of Kashmir.'[20] Contending that this view requires qualification, Zutshi argues that 'it forecloses the possibility' of Kashmiris 'reinsert[ing] themselves in artistic or poetic renditions of their beautiful Valley.' Kashmiris did not simply participate in creating the Mughal culture that initiated a lasting fascination with a supposedly prelapsarian landscape, but also assimilated this 'newly emerging vision of their land into a discourse on [regional] belonging.' By enshrining this idea in 'the cultural repertoire of the Valley, the symbols of which were created and manipulated by Kashmiris themselves', these early modern artists and poets laid the foundations for its local legacy.[21] Over the following pages, I wish to build on Zutshi's claim by suggesting that twentieth-century thinkers made use of this bequest to construct a sense of Kashmiri distinction.

[17] Iqbal was for a while president of the short-lived All-India Kashmir Committee established at Lahore in 1931 and which assisted Abdullah's movement with legal and financial aid. For Iqbal's views on Kashmiri democratisation, see 'Statement on the Administrative Reforms in Kashmir', 3 August 1933, in Ibid, p.281.
[18] Iqbal, 'Saqi Nama', p.120. Translation from M.H. Hussain, *A Message from the East: A Translation of Iqbal's Payam-i Mashriq into English Verse*, (Lahore, 1977), p.82.
[19] Iqbal, *Javid Nama*, p.195.
[20] Rai, *Hindu Rulers*, pp.2-4.
[21] Zutshi, *Languages*, pp.30-1.

Iqbal and Abdullah never effaced Kashmiris from the Kashmir story but made them central to it. However, their almost excessive descriptions of—or allusions to—the mountains, rivers, and meadows of the Valley have a powerful effect. Since they conjure vivid images with useful immediacy and deploy them so frequently, this landscape begins to act as a metaphor for Kashmiri distinction and so transcends the simple demarcation of any territory. For instance, when we take the poetry of Iqbal as a whole, we learn that almost every mention of Kashmir is coupled with a reference to its natural beauty. Whatever his intention, the effect is of an instantaneous marker. The reader knows immediately that Kashmir is being referenced and that it exists as a distinct place in the imagination of their poet. Iqbal has some extended odes to the Valley, most notably in *Javid Nama*. But it is elsewhere where this effect is more striking. Even when his theme is Ghani's renunciation of material possession in favour of the path of Sufi *faqr* (poverty), Iqbal still cites the 'paradisal land' in which 'that nightingale of poetry' sang.[22] Similarly, when the spirit of Ghani appears in *Javid Nama* urging Kashmiris to shake off foreign rule, he demands that they conjure 'a new tumult' and 'an intoxicating air in Paradise'.[23] In this way, Iqbal ties the Kashmiri landscape to its inhabitants. For him, there was no significant distinction between the two. In fact, in his poem *Kashmir*, it is the foreign onlooker who Iqbal separates from the unified land and people. Travellers are encouraged to visit Kashmir only to be finally othered:

> *zakhme bah tar saz zan badeh basatagin bariz*
> *qafila-e-bahar ra anjuman anjuman nagar*
> *dokhtaraki brahmani lale rukhi saman bari*
> *cheshm barui u gosha baz bakhishtan nagar*
>
> Come bring your lute and strike its strings,
> And fill your cup with wine,
> And let there be gay gatherings
> To greet the caravan of spring.
> Look at that Brahmin girl,
> Lily-limbed, tulip-faced,
> And then look at yourself.[24]

This was surely a beneficial reinvention rather than simple appropriation of the caste hierarchy, for Iqbal showed considerable dislike for this institution and famously

[22] Iqbal, 'Ghani Kashmiri', *Payam-e-Mashriq*, p.120. Translation from Hussain, *Message from the East,* p.90.
[23] Iqbal, *Javid Nama*, p.195. Translation from Arberry, *Javid-Nama*, p.122.
[24] Iqbal, 'Kashmir', *Payam-e-Mashriq*, pp.114-5. My translation modifies Hussain's, *Message from the East*, p.95.

celebrated the Buddha and Nanak for rebelling against it.[25] Nevertheless, here, in his attempt to unite the lilies and tulips of the Valley with his compatriots and, in turn, divide them from their visitors, Iqbal makes use of the fact that many Kashmiris—whether Muslim or Hindu—claimed a Brahmin lineage. Abdullah consistently established a similar distance between the inhabitant and the outsider. Writing to a party colleague from prison in Delhi in December 1967, Abdullah noted:

> For a very long time, Kashmir has attracted people by its natural beauty, by the art and industry of Kashmiri artisans. Nature has enriched the land and attracted people from many nations. But if Kashmir has been such an object of attraction for people from outside, how much more is it for the Kashmiris who have been born in this beautiful setting![26]

Abdullah achieved a similar effect in a speech he made on his release in March the following year. Connecting a history of subjugation with the contemporary campaign for a referendum that would finally decide the disputed future of Jammu and Kashmir, he declared at Mujahid Manzil in Srinagar that:

> I want our young men who raised the slogan "We want Plebiscite!" to realize what the background to this demand is. Kashmir has had a chequered history. It was in turn overrun by Moghuls, Pathans, Sikhs, and later by Dogras. They were all bewitched by the beauty of this place, but, drunk with power and intransigence, they treated its inhabitants as mere chattel, destined only to provide creature comforts to them.[27]

What interests me about the quotations above is how Iqbal and then Abdullah use the fundamentally universal perception of natural beauty to so successfully—and somewhat counterintuitively—other the 'people from outside'. This 'caravan of spring' or 'object of attraction' is made perceptible to all. One did not need to be a Kashmiri, or even a well-wisher, to recognise this indisputable truth for the imperial powers that had 'overrun' the Valley had acknowledged it, too. They might have subjugated and even despised Kashmiris, but they nevertheless had to bow in obedience before a landscape that demanded recognition. Despite this universal perception of natural beauty, however, the outsider—whether traveller or conqueror—can never be on as intimate terms with it as the inhabitant. If perception is universal, intimacy remains exclusive. Yet, it is the very delicate nature of this equation—of universalising perception while limiting intimacy—which makes this attempt at othering so effective. Iqbal and

[25] Iqbal, 'Nanak', *Bang-e-Dara*, (Lahore, 1977 [1924]), pp.239-40.
[26] Abdullah to G.A. Kashmiri, 11 December 1967, *Reflections*, p.45.
[27] Abdullah, 'Speech at Mujahid Manzil', Srinagar, 4 March 1968, in Ibid, p.61.

Abdullah lure the foreigner into an association with their beautiful homeland only to hurriedly shut the door on this relationship with a language of hierarchy or unconsciousness. For Iqbal, it is precisely because the foreigner can come close but never quite close enough to Kashmir that they are made to be so perceptibly aware of their otherness. In *Kashmir*, just as the Kashmiri 'earth veils its fair face' from 'the jealous sky' and, therefore, refuses intimacy,[28] the presumably non-Brahmin foreigner only recognises their place in this hierarchy once it understands that 'the caravan of spring' belongs to the attractive 'Brahmin girl'. If Iqbal's foreigners must retain their consciousness to recognise their otherness, Abdullah achieves the same end but by conjuring an image of intoxicated outsiders disoriented by the sorcery of an attractive Valley. The 'beauty' of Kashmir is made to 'bewitch' all those who had captured it. They are simultaneously juxtaposed with the self-aware 'inhabitants' who, by virtue of being 'born in this beautiful setting', possess greater knowledge and experience of it. Having separated the outsider from the native—or the conqueror from the conquered—in such stark terms, one is left with no doubt as to whom Kashmir really belongs.

It is interesting that four days after his remark at Mujahid Manzil, Abdullah repeated this idea of separation at Sopore but by drastically refashioning its content. Foreign rule and exploitation had 'for centuries' made the Valley 'a veritable hell' for 'its inhabitants'. Since Kashmiris 'could not get enough to keep their body and soul together' and 'were famished for want of food, raiment, and the like', it was 'a real paradise' only 'for those who' visited it on 'holiday'. If Kashmiris could boast of an intimacy with their beautiful homeland, their battle for mere sustenance—an apparent consequence of their lost sovereignty—meant that they were unable to indulge in it:

> I used, therefore, to put this question to myself: what sort of unkind fate was this that brought about this contrast between those who were the natives of this place and those who visited it for their "pleasure"?[29]

Despite almost threatening to disrupt his earlier claims about the universality of beauty and the limits of intimacy, the final effect that Abdullah seeks—of separating inhabitant from outsider—is heightened by this 'unkind fate'. The outsider is now not only incapable of intimacy with Kashmir but is marked as a socio-economic other, too. They can afford 'to take a holiday here' and are 'contrast[ed]' with the underprivileged

[28] Iqbal, 'Kashmir', p.114. Translation from Hussain, *Message from the East,* p.95.
[29] Abdullah, 'A Mammoth Gathering', Sopore, 8 March 1968, *Reflections*, p.58.

'natives of this place'. We have seen how Iqbal sought to unify Kashmiris through their shared contemporary poverty (among other characteristics). And while this remained an important theme for Abdullah, too, later I will illustrate how the Sher-e-Kashmir extended it in the hope of positing a socialist politics for the entire princely state.

If the natural beauty of Kashmir helps Iqbal and Abdullah to mark out the ethnolinguistic national community, it haunts Nehru's diasporic infatuation with the distant homeland of his ancestors. Before exploring this difference, I want to note the extent to which Nehru converges with much of Iqbal and Abdullah's narrative. In *Discovery*, Nehru complains about how '[m]odern industrialised communities have lost touch with the soil and do not experience that joy which nature gives and the rich glow of health which comes from contact with mother earth.' For Nehru, nature—or more precisely 'its song of life and beauty' from which one can 'draw vitality'—is to be found 'almost everywhere'. However, only in 'some places' it 'charms even those who are unprepared for it and comes like the deep notes of a distant and powerful organ.' Therefore, Kashmir—'where loveliness dwells and an enchantment steals over the senses'—is once again summoned to play a universal role. In a way that replicates Abdullah more than Iqbal, Nehru places a limit on intimacy, too. 'Enchant[ed]' by a force that is 'distant and powerful', the 'unprepared' are compelled to abandon their 'senses'.[30] But if Iqbal presents himself as the assured émigré who nevertheless gave Abdullah the impression that he longed for the Valley,[31] Nehru also styles himself—albeit only in part—as an intimate descendent. On his release from Ahmednagar Fort after a two-and-a-half-year internment in 1945, Nehru 'felt somewhat as a stranger and an outsider' in an India that had been changed by the experiences of the Second World War. As his 'mind wandered to mountains and snow-covered peaks', he determined that a 'trek to the higher regions and passes' in Kashmir would resolve his feeling of alienation. So once an opportunity for a visit presented itself at the conclusion of the Simla Conference in June, Nehru headed for Kashmir. And while this might partly be attributed to his love for 'nature', that he opted to visit Kashmir despite already being in the vicinity of the hills and mountains of present-day Himachal Pradesh makes his claim all the more intriguing. The 'stranger' or 'outsider' was going home in the hope of

[30] Nehru, *Discovery*, pp.618-19.
[31] Abdullah, *Autobiography*, p.52.

reacquainting the self with the world. And yet, he knew well that its alluring landscape was not part of his 'everyday life' in urban north India.[32] Born in Allahabad to a Hindu Pandit family that had long been settled on the plains, the disjointed nature of Nehru's relationship with his ancestral homeland is better represented in the following extract from 1940:

> Like some supremely beautiful woman, whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire, such was Kashmir in all its feminine beauty of river and valley and lake and graceful trees. And then another aspect of this magic beauty would come to view, a masculine one, of hard mountains and precipices, and snow-capped peaks and glaciers, and cruel and fierce torrents rushing down to the valleys below. It had a hundred faces and innumerable aspects, everchanging, sometimes smiling, sometimes sad and full of sorrow. The mist would creep up from the Dal Lake and, like a transparent veil, give glimpses of what was behind. The clouds would throw out their arms to embrace a mountain-top, or creep down stealthily like children at play. I watched this everchanging spectacle, and sometimes the sheer loveliness of it was overpowering and I felt almost faint. As I gazed at it, it seemed to me dreamlike and unreal, like the hopes and desires that fill us and so seldom find fulfilment. It was like the face of the beloved that one sees in a dream and that fades away on awakening. …Twelve days in Kashmir, twelve days after three-and-twenty years. Yet one vital moment is worth more than years of stagnation and vegetation, and to spend twelve days in Kashmir was good fortune indeed. But Kashmir calls back, its pull is stronger than ever, it whispers its fairy magic to the ears, and its memory disturbs the mind. How can they who had fallen under its spell release themselves from this enchantment?[33]

Nehru claims an unquestionably intimate relationship with Kashmir. He knows both the 'feminine' and 'masculine' elements of its 'magic beauty'. Its 'hundred faces and innumerable aspects' and the multitude of emotions they encapsulate are known to him. But seemingly frustrated by the limits of time and his urban life, Kashmir 'fades away', 'calls back', and 'disturbs the mind.' Despite the intimacy Nehru enjoys, Kashmir must ultimately remain an 'impersonal' 'beloved' that was 'above human desire' and belonged to some dream world from where it cast an eternal 'spell' on its hapless prey. Ultimately unfulfilled, Nehru's relationship with his Kashmiri homeland (and identity) remains unstable if not insecure. He could both address National Conference workers as 'my brother and sister Kashmiris, people of the same blood and kith and kin' during a visit to the Valley in 1945,[34] and admit to his confidant Edwina Mountbatten that Kashmir 'affects me in a peculiar way'. This was, he added, 'a kind of mild

[32] Nehru, *Discovery*, pp.633-4.
[33] Nehru, 'Kashmir', 24-31 July 1940, *SWJN*, Vol.11, pp.403, 416.
[34] Nehru, 'Speech at the Annual Session of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference', Sopore, 4 August 1945, Ibid, Vol.14, p.388.

intoxification'.[35] Drawing on statements such as these, scholars and commentators have made the unprovable claim that a personal infatuation with his homeland led Nehru to obstinately pursue its integration into the Indian Union after Partition. More interesting is the fact that the diasporic Nehru—almost by his own admission—uncannily falls somewhere between Abdullah's intimate native and mesmerised outsider. It is no accident, then, that once their differing conceptions of postcolonial sovereignty came into political conflict after 1947, Abdullah treated Nehru as such. And, of course, Abdullah did not cast Nehru as his privileged holidaymaker (though the Congress leader, apart from visiting Kashmir for political reasons, seemingly claimed that appellation for himself during the late colonial period). Instead, the Sher-e-Kashmir would come to see the Nehruvian state as a successor to the long list of intoxicated imperial powers that had occupied Kashmir and run roughshod over the rights of its people. Still, he frequently (and perhaps fittingly) also expressed his confidence that Nehru—a son of the soil—would soon regain his consciousness and mend his ways. In fact, convinced that India's first Prime Minister had finally determined to settle the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan, this was exactly how Abdullah understood their repaired relationship in the months prior to Nehru's death in 1964.[36]

I want to end this section by briefly returning to the way in which Iqbal and Abdullah were able to use nature to immediately recall the distinction of Kashmir. It is true that in the examples given above Abdullah, more so than Iqbal, hitches Kashmiri natural beauty to a history of conflict with other peoples. And while we will increasingly find that this unhappy past added cogency to the argument for distinction, it is also noticeable that nature is not dependent on that history to provide its own meaning for Kashmiri particularity. In other words, history is not a prerequisite for establishing this beautiful geography as significantly different to others. In fact, while it is part of a nationalist imagination that largely belongs to the Old World and for which the human inheritances of language, culture, and tradition are important, these instantaneous references to an ever-present, inhuman nature possess an unusual ability to stand outside that logic. Unreliant on what humans have or have not done in the past, Kashmiri nature emerges as a pure element capable of signalling particularity unaided.

[35] Nehru to E. Mountbatten, 27 June 1948, quoted in A.V. Tunzelmann, *Indian Summer: The Secret History of the End of an Empire*, (London, 2008), p.285.
[36] Abdullah to L.B. Shastri, 17 March 1965, *Reflections*, p.32; and Abdullah, '*Shabistan*', pp.156-8.

This way of marking national distinction has more in common with imaginations found in the New as opposed to the Old World. Both before and after American independence in 1776, it is the grandiosity of nature and the remaking of it by frontiersmen which makes it possible for white colonists to imagine a new nation.[37] Similarly, in colonial Africa, but also during apartheid in South Africa, it was the supposedly unique ability of the white man to shepherd nature that allowed him to take leave of European history.[38] Of course, Kashmiri nationalism refuses to depart from the past and is committed to a sense of indigenousness. In this way, these imaginations are very different from it. Unlike white Americans or Africans, Kashmiris are not a people to be made by the manipulation of nature; they already exist. Nevertheless, it is interesting that Abdullah often wondered whether his people were deserving of their beautiful homeland. With India on the cusp of freedom in 1946, the Sher-e-Kashmir noted:

> Kashmir is dear to us because of its beauty and its past traditions which are common to all who inhabit this land. But it is the future that calls to us and for which we labour, a future that will be the common heritage of all, and in which we as free men and women, linked organically with the rest of India, will build the New Kashmir of our dreams. Then only shall we be worthy of the land we dwell in.[39]

Abdullah suggested that the natural beauty of Kashmir was seductive to conquerors precisely because territory can be forcibly delinked from its inhabitants and their wellbeing. If universal perception helped he and Iqbal to counterintuitively separate outsiders from—and connect intimate Kashmiris to—the landscape, they knew well that this universality was also what made Kashmir the site of foreign envy and, thus, political contestation. Whatever their intimacy, the nation and the landscape existed as distinct entities. Consequently, it might be said that to persist with natural beauty as the foremost source of Kashmiri nationality when (often more powerful) others looked upon it enviously was to jeopardise control over this identity. No matter how hard these thinkers try to tie Kashmiris to their beautiful abode, we cannot think of human beings (especially colonised ones) irrevocably owning physical geography in the way that they might possess genealogies, narratives of human history, religion, or even political visions for the future. It is significant, therefore, that when the Sheikh laid out the terms of an extensive nationalism and used nature yet again to distinguish Kashmir in 1946,

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[37] R.F. Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, (New Haven, 2014 [1967]).
[38] R.P. Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa*, (Berkeley, 1998).
[39] Abdullah, 'Against Autocracy and Aggression', Srinagar, 1946, *Reflections*, p.200.

he was clearly uninterested in making it the sole or even primary instrument for this project. Seemingly aware of the anxieties that this would create for a colonised people with a long history of invasion, Abdullah gives equal weight to these other themes. Hence it is these that will be our focus for the remainder of this chapter.

An Organic Country

We have already seen that Abdullah had appropriated the popular view that the Mughals were the first in a series of unwelcome alien rulers who had deprived Kashmiris of their sovereignty and used them for their own interests. This, of course, separated him from his Congress allies. For Abdullah, the Mughals could not possibly be the naturalised foreigners of Congress history who forged a national culture with the communities they governed over. Despite the variety of historical emphases found among different Congress intellectuals, they could broadly agree that Mughal rule was largely virtuous. In the case of figures like Nehru and Azad, this narrative belonged to political thinkers who chose, at best, to background the local as they sought to script a history for an Indian nation. If Nehru barely mentioned Kashmir in his writings on the Mughals, it is worth noting here that the role of Iqbal as a Kashmiri thinker did not extend to this debate either. While Kashmir may have appeared as the homeland whose story he claimed to know well, Iqbal's connection with the Indian past was multifaceted and not reliant on a single identity alone. His views on the Mughals, which in different contexts varied from criticism to celebration, seemed to have been shaped by his concern for human freedom in an ethical polity or ideas of the Indian whole. His Kashmiri identity does not feature in the same way, even if he showed an awareness of the traditional conflict between Kashmiris and their Mughal rulers. In fact, his renowned poem to regional defiance against Mughal authority was inspired by Pashtun and not Kashmiri history. Celebrating the valiant effort of Khushal Khan Khattak to safeguard Pashtun dignity, Iqbal recalls how this seventeenth-century warrior-poet united multiple tribes in the hope of liberating them from the tyrannous rule of Aurangzeb.[40] For Abdullah, however, things were quite different. A Kashmiri born and living in the Valley, his relationship with the grand narrative of Indian history almost had to be routed through the local.

[40] Iqbal, 'Khushal Khan Ki Wasiyat', *Bal-e-Jibril,* (Lahore, 1935), p.206.

Akbar was the enlightened emperor of Congress nationalism. His safeguarding of religious pluralism and proclivity for cultural synthesis provides the great forerunner for its contemporary project. But if in this narrative Akbar's expansion of the Mughal Empire was a gallant act of nation-making, Kashmiri nationalism had memorialised Akbar in a quite different way. In 1970 at Mujahid Manzil, Abdullah told his supporters to 'remember that our freedom movement did not start from 1931 [*sic*], but it began with the conquest of Kashmir by the Mughal armies' in 1589. He added that:

> The last independent reigning king of Kashmir surrendered to Emperor Akbar after resisting and defeating his forces several times. Even today one sees the vast graveyards, still called the *Mughal Maidan*, of Mughal soldiers in Kishtawar, where the Mughal armies had to face the last pitched battle of Kashmiris for their freedom and survival. Since that unfortunate day, Kashmiris have suffered innumerable injustices and hardships at the hands of their foreign conquerors, each one of whom spared no attempt to cripple the freedom spirits of Kashmiris.[41]

Prem Nath Bazaz, who began his political career as one of Abdullah's few eminent Pandit associates, chronicled this encounter with the Mughals in greater detail. In the years preceding the conquest, Akbar's envoys had reduced the local Chak dynasty to a 'nominal' authority. By 'meddling into the internal matters [*sic*] and taking [the] law in their own hands', these emissaries 'easily and wantonly violated the sovereignty of the State'. Though the Mughals had managed to capture the penultimate Chak ruler Yusuf Shah in 1586, Bazaz tells us that, 'as a last flicker of the dying Kashmir Nationalism, the patriotic nobles put Usuf's son Yaqub Khan on the throne and fought vigorously against the Mughal armies'. And while Bazaz admits that many of the Chaks had proved to be unfit rulers and that the Mughal emperors were generally sympathetic to Kashmiris, he nevertheless concludes that the governors they appointed did more damage than good to the Valley. They imposed harsh taxes on the toiling masses and divided Hindus from Muslims and Sunnis from Shias, that too despite having entered into a 'secular' covenant for religious peace with the 'patriotic nobles'.[42] However anachronistic his language may appear, it allows Bazaz to link this past to the questions and ideas of his own time. Abdullah achieves the same when he connects the contemporary freedom and referendum questions to this story of Kashmiri loss and suppression. Imagining the late sixteenth century as the moment at which the intercommunal unity of the Kashmiri

[41] Abdullah, 'View Explained', p.138.
[42] P.N. Bazaz, *The History of the Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir: Cultural and Political, From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, (Delhi, 1954), pp.70-1.

nation was destroyed, its wealth extracted by outsiders, and its inherent national right to self-rule forcibly denied, Abdullah and Bazaz are able to both define the ethnolinguistic nation and separate it from the Hindustani narrative.

It should now be evident that Abdullah called upon history and geography to sharpen the idea of Kashmiri distinction. But however confusing it may ostensibly appear, he also used history and geography to connect Kashmiris to other Indians. Before I substantiate this argument, I would first like to return briefly to Nehru and Iqbal who also spoke of these connections. As Nehru searched for an Indian national history, Kashmir served only to provide convenient local examples of a more general story. In a quest to plot 'the early history of India', Nehru admits in *Glimpses of World History* that his task was an impossible one since the Aryans 'cared to write no histories'. It was in this context that he assimilated the Orientalist view that Kalhana's much later *Rajatarangini*—a twelfth-century 'chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir'—was the only accurate Sanskrit history. So, while Nehru looked forward to reading the translation being prepared by his brother-in-law Ranjit Pandit since it would 'tell us a great deal about the past, and especially about Kashmir' which was 'our old homeland', we are left in no doubt about the essentially Indian interests of our author.[43] In *Discovery*, if 'Kashmir was for long a great Sanskrit centre of Buddhist and Brahmanical learning', it was ultimately only one part of the 'cultural and philosophic activity' to develop in northern India during the first millennium. Kashmir had to share the stage with Benares and Nalanda.[44] Similarly, Nehru notes that the fifteenth-century Kashmiri ruler Ghiyasuddin Zain-ul-Abidin 'became famous for his toleration and his encouragement of Sanskrit learning and the old culture' only to subordinate him to a 'new ferment' that was taking place '[a]ll over India'.[45] In the first chapter we saw how Nehru understood the arrival of Muslims and Islam to India in terms of absorption and assimilation; it was within this grand narrative that Nehru placed Zain-ul-Abidin. This tendency to subordinate the Kashmiri regional to the Indian national features in his treatment not only of history but also of geography. For though Nehru indulged in the individuality of Kashmir, he also recognised its national import. In an early passage from *Discovery*, Nehru notes that though his 'kinship with Kashmir especially drew' him to the

[43] Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, (Delhi, 2004 [1934-5]), pp.25-6.
[44] Nehru, *Discovery*, p.237.
[45] Ibid, p.262.

Himalayas, '[t]he mighty rivers of India that flow from this great mountain barrier into the plains of India [also] attracted me and reminded me of innumerable phases of our history.' This region was 'closely connected' to the 'myth', 'legend', 'thought and literature' that belonged to India as whole.[46]

If Nehru drew lucid historical and geographical linkages between Kashmir and India, Iqbal and Abdullah treat this connection as an unquestioned assumption. Refusing to delineate the relationship in any sophisticated way, both conclude that whatever its distinctions Kashmir was still Indian. Of course, the political imagination of the poet-philosopher was oriented towards the wider question of Indian Muslim minoritisation and, therefore, significantly transcended regionalism. As we will explore in greater detail later, from this vantage point, Kashmir ultimately emerges as one of many regions in a grander political picture. In fact, in his statements on Indian unity and how it needed to be reimagined in light of the contemporary prevalence of democratic thought, Iqbal gives Kashmir scant attention. And on the rare occasion that Kashmir is mentioned, its inclusion within the Indian whole is undisputed. In his presidential address to the All-India Muslim Conference at Lahore in 1932, Iqbal connected Kashmiris with the rest of India when he described them as 'a fine but down-trodden people who gave some of the best intellects to ancient India, and later added a real charm to Mughal culture.'[47] These intellects and charms, however, are not substantiated in any way. This leaves us with only one conclusion: that Iqbal assumed that there was little need to provide any further authentication for an audience that, like him, understood the connection between Kashmir and the rest of India to be self-evident.

Abdullah distanced his homeland from the Hindustani historical narrative in ways that Iqbal never did. Yet by counterintuitively persisting with history to construct an Indian unity rather than abandoning it for another theme or subject, Abdullah's attempt to join Kashmir to the rest of India appears even more empty and imprecise. The manner in which he denounced Partition during his inaugural address to the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly on 5 November 1951 is particularly instructive. Now prime minister of the Indian portion of the state, Abdullah rehearsed

[46] Ibid, p.42.
[47] Iqbal, 'Presidential Address Delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim Conference', Lahore, 21 March 1932, *SWSI*, p.42.

in good nationalist fashion what had since become the clichéd metaphorical critique of 1947:

> To our misfortune, and to the misfortune of millions of people in India and Pakistan…the Indian sub-continent which had acquired an organic unity through ages of social, cultural and economic intercourse, was suddenly vivisected into the two Dominions of India and Pakistan. I need not relate here the horrors that followed this unnatural operation. Millions of hearts in both countries still ache with wounds that will not heal.[48]

If India had cultivated a unity so 'organic' that its division was an 'unnatural operation', Abdullah fails to embellish this idea with any significant content. This is a country mysteriously bound together 'through ages of social, cultural and economic intercourse'. But however ambiguous the contours of this unity appear, there was no ambiguity over the claim itself. For Abdullah, like Iqbal, the place of Kashmir within the Indian whole is too obvious a fact to necessitate a lengthy argument. But once the corpus of his work is taken together, we begin to find these otherwise elusive explanations. When Abdullah is not directly addressing the question of Indian nationality but chronicling other details, and is therefore seemingly less conscious of it, an intricate connection emerges. There is the time-honoured Kashmiri sourcing of raw materials from across India; their consequent deployment in the construction of local mosques and shrines; as well as the production of crafts which are to be exported back to the low country.[49] His memoir is littered with references to the Urdu poetry of north India—a rich heritage, he claimed, to which Kashmiris, too, had contributed.[50] Therefore, since Kashmir was part of a political and cultural universe that was decidedly Indian, an Indian nationality appears intuitive. That Abdullah, rather than Iqbal, achieves this almost subconscious definition is surely because he was a predominantly regional political thinker and actor. When Abdullah thought about India he invariably thought of Kashmir concurrently. For Iqbal, and of course Nehru, things were quite different.

In the first chapter we saw that, for Azad, enmity as much as amity went into the creation of an Indian nationality. Of course, unlike the Maulana, Abdullah was interested as much in regional as he was in communal categories when thinking about

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[48] Abdullah, 'Statement by the Hon'ble Prime Minister', Srinagar, 5 November 1951, in *Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly Debate: Official Report*, Vol.1, (2 vols, Srinagar, n.d.), pp.100-1.
[49] Abdullah, *Autobiography*, p.53.
[50] For Abdullah's views on Urdu see, '*Shabistan*', p.149.

the Indian whole. Nevertheless, I want to argue that he opts for a very similar logic albeit by way of implication. His suggestion seems to be that, for better or worse, Kashmiris had historically shared political arrangements, economic trade, and literary traditions with other Indians. Whether these experiences had been positive or negative, Kashmiris could not deny these realities. In short, though sullied by political acrimony, history had produced an irreversible Indianness. It can only be this which led Abdullah to make references to an Indian association rooted in a common blood and soil, though these appeared as brief avowals rather than well-argued treatises. For as we just noted, the Sheikh had little choice in the matter since he had used the content of history and geography so liberally to distinguish Kashmir. Therefore, when four years prior to independence in 1943 Abdullah sought to refute the Pakistan demand and remind his colleagues of their duty to 'our motherland', he could only flatly declare that:

> We have been born of this earth and we will go to the same earth. India is our motherland and it will remain our motherland. It is our duty to free our motherland and our homes from the slavery of the foreigners.[51]

It is interesting that Abdullah called on his followers to join the wider Indian struggle by stressing 'the slavery of the foreigners', not least because he never gave up the claim that the rule of other Indian groups in Kashmir qualified as foreign. In what ostensibly appears to be an astonishing subversion of this frequently repeated view, Abdullah declared at Srinagar in 1968 that:

> The subcontinent, comprised of India and Pakistan, is a vast area, and it remained in foreign occupation for 200 years. The people of undivided India had to put up with untold suffering to achieve emancipation. The people of the State, in keeping with their high tradition, also joined their brethren in that struggle, as their own urges and aspirations were linked with theirs.[52]

When imagining 'undivided India' 'foreign occupation' is suddenly curtailed to two centuries—the implication being that only the British period falls into this category. So if prior to the British installation of a Dogra government Kashmir had been ruled by what Abdullah elsewhere describes as 'foreign conquerors', this appellation could only be given to Mughals, Afghans, and Sikhs in this specifically regional context. Kashmir belonged exclusively to Kashmiris which, therefore, made them the only legitimate

[51] Abdullah, Presidential Address to the National Conference, Mirpur, 1943, quoted in Hassnain, *Freedom Struggle in Kashmir*, pp.115-6.
[52] Abdullah, 'Speech in Shahi Masjid Grounds', Srinagar, 5 March 1968, *Reflections*, p.54

sovereign power in their own homeland. The political rule of any other group—whether Indian or not—was foreign and illegitimate. But in the countrywide Indian context this could not be so. Since Abdullah imagined India to be a federation of various peoples, Mughals, Afghans, and Sikhs cannot possibly be made foreign to it; they are, instead, integral to this grand union. Regardless of which of these Indian groups held the reins of power in various parts of the country and at different moments during precolonial Indian history, it made no sense to claim that India as a whole had somehow lost its sovereignty to 'foreign occupation' prior to the British period.

What Abdullah implicitly offers us in these supposedly paradoxical statements on foreignness is an idea of divided sovereignty for India. A concept which unsurprisingly translated into a proposal for political federalism as India moved ever closer to independence. In March 1946, the British prime minister, Clement Atlee, sent a Cabinet Mission to India with the hope of breaking the impasse between Congress and the Muslim League. In late April, with the Mission struggling to find a solution, Abdullah suggested redistributing existing Indian territories into more homogenous cultural and linguistic units. Sovereign, these units would be free to choose whether to send representatives to a constitution-making body for a federal Indian union. Writing in the *Khidmat*, Abdullah stated that the National Conference was 'convinced that the right of self-determination to all the Nationalities inhabiting India will eliminate the possibility of a constitutional solution on communal lines.'[53] The target of this particular article was clearly the League's separatism. Like Azad, Abdullah had realised that regional self-determination provided a convenient instrument with which to cut the Pakistan demand to size and improve the chances of retaining Indian unity. But despite this convergence, the Sheikh's recourse to regional self-determination was not nearly as instrumental as the Maulana's. For even if Abdullah was currently moved by a defensive desire to outmanoeuvre Jinnah and prevent a religious partition of his country, he was also referencing a more positive and longstanding idea: of equally autonomous ethnolinguistic 'Nationalities inhabiting India'. Soon after the Mission diluted the Pakistan demand and proposed its own decentralised federation in the middle of May, Abdullah's colleagues in Jammu reasoned that their Conference had been dealt as good a hand as it could have expected. Writing to the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari

[53] Abdullah, *Khidmat*, 24 April 1946, quoted in Zutshi, *Languages*, pp.301-2.

Singh, and the Viceroy of India, A.P. Wavell, they noted that the 'wisest course' for the state was to now 'join the Indian Union under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah.'[54] And the Sher-e-Kashmir, though currently imprisoned by Hari Singh for launching the Quit Kashmir campaign, seemed to agree. Perhaps believing that the tide had finally turned in his favour, Abdullah reiterated during his court trial that his endeavour remained the achievement of a self-governing Kashmir within India.[55] So when he recalled the Indian freedom struggle in 1968, we can see why Abdullah cast other Indians, not as foreigners primed to snatch away their Valley, but as 'brethren' of the Kashmiris. For this recollection reveals that, during the late colonial period, Abdullah had failed to foresee a postcolonial scenario which threatened his idea of Kashmiri self-rule. If the paradox of foreignness and brotherhood had historically always named Indian relations and made them so volatile, Abdullah hoped that political federalism—through its just division of sovereignty—would finally allow him to discard the language of foreignness (or enmity) and, thereby, give a free rein to brotherhood (or amity). Of course, the centralisation of power in India and Pakistan meant that Abdullah had no choice but to retain his paradoxical political language.

The complexities undergirding the federal Indian nation that Abdullah imagined do not end here. Recounting his visits to Iqbal as a student in Lahore, Abdullah writes:

> How he [Iqbal] longed for Kashmir, and how proud he was of being the descendent of the Saprus…. He always asked his servant, Ali Bakhsh, to prepare the special salty Kashmiri tea. How we enjoyed its familiar taste in these unfamiliar surroundings to which we had been exiled! He said that Lahore has his body—his soul was in Kashmir.[56]

That Abdullah can declare all of India to be the 'motherland' of Kashmiris and yet reduce the neighbouring Punjab to an almost foreign territory to which he and Iqbal 'had been exiled' requires explanation. Instead of simply suggesting that these contradictory utterances provide evidence of intellectual inconsistency, I wish to argue that beneath them lies a coherent idea. If the Indian whole was informed by a cross-regional connectivity, it nevertheless failed to rival the intimacy reserved for the regions themselves. The Kashmiri 'soul' could be lost in the Punjabi capital. Similarly, Abdullah could write about how the 'flat, dusty plains' of that province provided little more than

[54] Provincial National Conference Committee (Jammu) to Wavell and H. Singh, 20 June 1946, in *Kashmir: Constitutional History and Documents*, M.K. Teng et al. (eds), (Delhi, 1977), p.530.
[55] Abdullah, 'Against Autocracy', p.200.
[56] Abdullah, *Autobiography*, p.52.

'penury and degradation' to the hordes of Kashmiri economic migrants who had been 'forced to leave their beautiful country' during the colonial period.[57] However, Lahore could simultaneously be called upon to rouse Kashmiris into national feeling. Inaugurating the Quit Kashmir campaign in May 1946 at Srinagar, Abdullah reminded his supporters that their struggle was a constituent element of the Indian independence movement. Recalling the origins of that wider demand, he noted that its 'slogan was given on the banks of River Ravi.'[58] Lahore is not mentioned in name, rather an allusion is made to it through its familiar geography. Neither is Congress' call for *purna swaraj* (complete self-rule) in 1929 explicitly named; a reference to this 'slogan' is thought to be enough. Indian unity is made to reside in an epistemological awareness of what lay beyond the local. Therefore, while the most intimate bonds are reserved for the ethnolinguistic entity, a familiarity with the rest of the country is retained. If India was the homeland, it was not the conventional home. Abstract and civilizational, Indian nationality could never be as tangible as its Kashmiri equivalent. It was not possible, for instance, to conjure the Indian equivalent of *nun chai* (or 'the special salty Kashmiri tea') which, through its power of intimacy, could instantly transport Iqbal and Abdullah back to the Valley as they sat in a Punjabi city.

These ideas of a cultural orientation for Indian unity and varying degrees of familiarity connect Abdullah to the wider nationalist claim of 'unity in diversity'. On these questions, Abdullah had much in common with Nehru who might be said to have best theorised, and also popularised, this idea. '[S]ince the dawn of civilisation', Nehru wrote, Indians had harboured 'a dream of unity'. Refusing 'standardization', he claimed that the Indian idea sought to be 'something deeper and, within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom was practiced and every variety acknowledged and encouraged.'[59] Just as Abdullah reserved the most intimate cultural bonds for Kashmir while nevertheless declaring himself to be an Indian, Nehru, too, wrote about how returning to the Valley gave him 'a sense of coming back to my own'. Writing to his daughter Indira in 1940 Nehru wondered: 'it is curious how race memories persist, or perhaps it is all imagination'.[60] However, if Nehru and Abdullah broadly shared this

[57] Ibid, pp.14-5.
[58] Abdullah, 'Quit Kashmir Speech', 26 May 1946, *KCHD*, p.529.
[59] Nehru, *Discovery*, p.55.
[60] Nehru to I. Nehru, 29 May 1940, *SWJN*, Vol.11, p.473.

cultural idea, only the Sher-e-Kashmir imagined its full translation into constitutional terms; a fact which might itself explain why their imaginations struck such different balances between regional and national. Anticipating changing the destinies of impoverished Indians through centralised planning, Nehru could scarcely propose dividing sovereignty between the regional units of his socialist nation-state. Just as significantly, he also held the more common nationalist view that concentrating power in a central government would prevent the fledgling country from being pushed in different directions by multiple regional authorities. A unitary state would be better placed to maintain the integrity and newly acquired independence of a future India.[61] So while cultural diversity was an indisputable reality, Indians could not afford to convert it into political autonomy. Later, I will illustrate that Abdullah made socialism, like sovereignty, a principally regional idea. Indeed, during the colonial period, common commitments to sovereignty and socialism had politically united Nehru and Abdullah. But once independence offered them the chance to implement their ideas, these friends unsurprisingly came into great conflict with each other. We will increasingly find that apart from the light maintenance of two broad values—postcolonial democracy and cultural diversity—the Indian political had very little meaning for Abdullah, especially prior to 1947. The India that he imagined was a fundamentally cultural, as opposed to ideological, unity. For Nehru it was both. It is also interesting that this approach to federalism separates the Sheikh not only from Nehru but much of its modern global history. After all, the ideologues of both the United States of America and the Soviet Union provided their grand federations with a political idea.

In a meeting with the Cabinet Mission in 1946, the Congress prime minister of the North-West Frontier, Khan Sahib, buttressed his demand for an independent India by stating that Pashtuns 'would prefer a regime in which they enjoyed a large measure of Provincial Autonomy.'[62] For both he and Abdullah, federalism was not only a useful tool for assuaging the fears of the Muslim League, though they recognised that Congress could well employ it in this way. From their regional perspectives, it also catered for the (sub)national ambitions of their ethnolinguistic constituencies; it provided the means for Indians to reconcile two nations—the homogenous region and the heterogenous

[61] For an example of Nehru's rejection of federalism, see his conditional acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan in 'Nehru's Press Conference', 10 July 1946, *TP*, Vol.8, pp.27-8.
[62] Meeting between CD, Wavell, and Khan Sahib, 1 April 1946, *TP*, Vol.7, p.74.

whole. Kashmiris and Pashtuns required federalism in India not simply because they were Muslims, but because they were Kashmiris and Pashtuns. This logic tied them to other regionalists—such as the Sindhi politician G.M. Syed or the leader of the south Indian Non-Brahmin Movement E.V. Ramaswami Naicker—who, at least in part, leant on secular ethnolinguistic distinction to make federal (as well as secessionist) arguments either side of 1947.[63] But if Khan Sahib vehemently refused the notion that Hindus and Muslims could ever make for separate political interests in India,[64] we have already begun to see that Abdullah held a more nuanced view. The religious fault line, though exaggerated by the colonial state and political parties founded solely on community, was one of many to be accommodated in the political structure of the future Indian state. For instance, though Abdullah criticised the Pakistan demand for not acknowledging that Hindus and Muslims made for shared economic interests across much of India, he did not rely on this argument to the extent that a Nehru or a Khan Sahib did. Abdullah was just as willing to contend that: 'In our State this question [of Pakistan], however, does not arise, because an overwhelming majority of the people are Muslims and there is no need to fear Hindu domination.'[65] Put differently, the self-governing Kashmir of the future, sufficiently autonomous of a Hindu-dominated Indian centre, would have the effect of empowering its Muslim majority. Thus, though his call for a united Indian federation was significantly premised on secular ethnolinguistic distinction, it refused to depart entirely from religion.

Minor Iran

Both Iqbal and Abdullah connected Kashmiri national identity to the Perso-Islamic religious culture that developed in the Valley from the late medieval period. In *Javid Nama*, Iqbal suggests that this nation was given its modern identity by Sayyid Ali Hamdani, the Sufi mystic from Persia who settled in Kashmir during the fourteenth century. The appropriation of this culture is comprehensive, so much so that Kashmir has been transformed into an '*iran-e-saghir*', or Minor Iran. Momentarily leaving aside the diversity he acknowledges elsewhere, Iqbal suggests that an undifferentiated

[63] See, for instance, Meeting between CD, Wavell and G.M. Syed, 2 April 1946, Ibid, pp.92-3; and E.V.R. Naicker to Jinnah, 9 August 1944, in Pirzada (ed.), *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah's Correspondence*, (Karachi, 1966), p.225.
[64] Meeting between CD, Wavell, and Khan Sahib, p.75.
[65] Abdullah, 'Statement', 1946, *KCHD*, p.526.

people have been bestowed with new 'science, crafts, education, [and] religion' by a generous patron:

> *shayar-e-rangin nawa tahir ghani*
> *faqar-e-u batin ghani, zahir ghani*
> *naghmei mikhanad an mast-e-modam*
> *dar hazur-e-sayad vala maqam*
> *sayad as-sadat salar-e-ajam*
> *dast-e-u mo'amar-e-taqdir-e-umam*
> *ta ghazali dars-e-allah hu girift*
> *zikr-o-fikr az dudman-e-u girift*
> *murshid-e-an kishwar minu nazir*
> *mir-o-darvish-o-salatin ra mushir*
> *khate ra an shah-e-darya astin*
> *dad ilm-o-saniat-o-tahzib-o-din*
> *afrid an mard iran-e-saghir*
> *ba honarha-ye gharib-o-dilpazir*
> *yek nigah-e-u goshaid sad girah*
> *khiz-o-tiresh ra badil-e-rahi badeh*
>
> That poet of colourful song, Tahir Ghani,
> whose poverty abounds in riches inward and outward,
> drunk with eternal wine, is chanting a melody
> in the presence of the Sayyid sublime,
> noble of nobles, commander of Persia,
> whose hand is the architect of the destiny of nations.
> Ghazali himself learned the lesson of God is He
> and drew meditation and thought from his stock.
> Guide he of that emerald land,
> counsellor of prince and dervish and sultan;
> a king ocean-munificent, to that vale
> he gave science, crafts, education, religion.
> That man created a miniature Iran
> with rare and heart-ravishing arts;
> with one glance he unravels a hundred knots—
> rise, and let his arrow transfix your heart.[66]

This close association between region and religion found its way into what began as an unapologetically communal political movement led by Abdullah from 1931. Facing systematic disenfranchisement from the Dogra state, Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir had been denied many of the civil rights enjoyed by Hindu and Sikh subjects. Converting his party into the National Conference only in 1939, the early politics of Abdullah and the All-Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference that he inaugurated in late 1932, centred around Muslim exclusion from civil service employment and an unrepresentative government apparatus. The party had other criticisms of the state,

[66] Iqbal, *Javid Nama*, pp.184-5. Translation from Arberry, *Javid-Nama*, pp.116-7.

too: an underinvestment in higher education; an unwillingness to defend the proprietary rights of a largely Muslim peasantry; and restrictions placed on religious gatherings. To alleviate these concerns, the Conference called on Hari Singh to both guarantee the freedom of religion, speech, and assembly to all his subjects, and refashion his kingdom into a constitutional monarchy whose executive, legislature, and civil service would be wedded to the principle of proportional communal representation. This would finally allow the subjugated Muslims not only their basic rights but a significant share of political power. Zutshi has shown that Abdullah and his party drew on an ecumenical reading of Islam for their project. This, it was hoped, would create the political unity necessary among the internally diverse Kashmiri Muslims to make an effective appeal to the Maharaja.[67] Abdullah began by turning the Pathar Masjid, a mosque located in the heart of Srinagar, into a symbol of Muslim self-statement by hosting his political meetings on its premises. In fact, its symbolic value had been in large measure provided by the Dogras themselves. The state had closed the mosque only to reopen it as a concession to the agitation of Abdullah and his supporters. Writing to Prime Minister Hari Kishen Kaul in November 1931, the Sheikh noted that the 'vast gathering of Kashmir Muslims' which had assembled for the reopening of the mosque was 'representative of all Muslim sects' and 'resolves that, as this Mosque symbolises perfect unity among' them, no sermon 'would be allowed in it which may be likely to break the unity and injure the feelings of any sect.'[68]

Abdullah and his Conference—even prior to its formal rechristening in 1939—soon extended their political ambitions and claimed to speak not merely for the disenfranchised Muslim majority but all the Maharaja's downtrodden subjects. And this was, at least in theory, possible to achieve since the future that Abdullah had anticipated for the Muslim majority was not a religious utopia but a just solution to their secular grievances. However, despite courting Hindus and Sikhs for a socialist project, Abdullah refused to abandon his established Islamic symbols and idiom and, in turn, fully secularise his politics. More interesting than his simple retention of the mosques, shrines, and religious festivals that had been used to unite the Muslims of Kashmir, was how Abdullah reflected on his early career later in life. Recounting the history of

[67] Zutshi, *Languages*, pp.210-44.
[68] Abdullah to H.K. Kaul, 30 November 1931, quoted in Ibid, p.232.

Kashmiri nationalism to an audience in Srinagar in 1968, Abdullah saw no contradiction in connecting his present demand—for a referendum to finally decide the fate of the secular political community he claimed to represent—with the decidedly communal beginnings of his original movement. Marking the Khanqah-e-Mualla (a shrine to Hamdani and, therefore, another significant religious monument in Srinagar) as the birthplace of a continuing struggle, Abdullah noted:

> So, in 1931, some of us decided that we would strive to change this fate, cost what it may. Pursuant thereto, we met in the compound of Khanqah-i-Mualla where we took an oath that we would embark upon this task. We have since 1931 been working ceaselessly in this direction in order to vindicate our stand that this country belongs to us, and we have the sole right to decide its destiny.[69]

When Abdullah recalls this same meeting at the Khanqah-e-Mualla in his autobiography, the effect is similar. 'This was the beginning of our movement for independence', he notes. 'We swore an oath of loyalty to the nation.'[70] By refusing to differentiate between its communal beginnings and the claim to inclusive nationalism which followed, and instead drawing a line of uninterrupted continuity for a single Kashmiri movement, the religious majority and the shared nation begin to collapse into each other. Though the nation does not necessarily cease to be shared as a result, it is nevertheless overwhelmed by this injection of Muslim majoritarianism.

This explains not just his inability to significantly integrate Hindus and Sikhs into his movement, but why another of his ideas failed to assume a dominant position in his political language. For Abdullah also developed a historicised notion of Kashmiri national unity between the Muslim majority and Pandit minority which drew on *Kashmiriyat:* the great colonial myth which declared the Valley a special example of intercommunal harmony in India.[71] But if his mixing of region and religion leads Abdullah to an equivocal relationship with Kashmiri minorities, localising Islam in his idea of Kashmir enabled him to coherently connect Kashmiri Muslims to a multireligious Indian whole. To begin elucidating this counterintuitive argument, I

[69] Abdullah, 'Speech at Mujahid Manzil', p.49.
[70] Abdullah, *Autobiography*, p.22.
[71] An important idea requiring a longer discussion, I have not been able to record my findings and do justice to it here. For Abdullah's thoughts on historical and contemporary Muslim-Pandit relations, see Ibid, pp.26, 38, 170-2; and his statements in S.N. Kaul and J.N. Sapru, Untitled Pamphlet in enclosure of G.M. Bakhshi to R. Kapadia, 27 May 1939, NMML, All-India States Peoples' Conference, 3/92.

want to explore how Abdullah recounts the legend of the *mu-e-mubarak*, or sacred hair of Muhammad, in his autobiography:

> It is said that a hair of the Prophet was in the possession of a sheikh [preacher] who belonged to the inner circle of the Haram-e-Kaaba [sanctuary of the Kaaba]. Differences arose between him and the ruler of the day, and he migrated to India and settled down in Hyderabad. A Kashmiri khwaja [Sufi master] who happened to be visiting Hyderabad acquired the relic at an enormous price. When he was transporting it to Kashmir, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb heard about it and immediately ordered it to be confiscated and placed at the Dargah [tomb] of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer. That night Aurangzeb dreamt that the Prophet had embarked on a journey towards Kashmir. "Why are you trying to stop me from going to Kashmir?", the Emperor was asked in reply to his respectful salaam [salutation]. The Emperor understood the divine message and the holy relic was sent to Kashmir under royal protection. When it reached Kashmir the entire *Jamiat* [congregation] gave it the most reverential welcome. By common consensus it was placed at Hazratbal and became the symbol of faith and instruction to all the Muslims of the valley.[72]

The Indian context in which Abdullah sets this story is important. Just as Kashmiri Muslims are made part of an Indian Muslim world, they are also separated from it. Ordained by divine intervention to house this relic, Kashmir becomes not only an important centre of Islam but is provided with further content to bind its Muslims into a collective. They have their own '*Jamiat*'. It can come to its own 'common consensus' and is worthy of its own 'symbol of faith and instruction.' It is also significant that Abdullah chose to make this story the central feature of a longer passage about his role in the renovation of a host of Kashmiri mosques and shrines. After all, there could be no greater endorsement for the Kashmiri claim to Islam. In the eyes of the Prophet himself, the Valley was usurping a favourite Sufi shrine of the Mughals—the great villains of Kashmiri nationalist historiography. Abdullah seems to be making two connected claims. It is not simply that an autonomous Kashmiri Muslim community, apparently sanctified by the Prophet, exists. Having made the religious community a principally regional category, Abdullah is also clear that a wider Muslim collective is *not* fundamental to the maintenance of Islam in India. By casting Aurangzeb and Moinuddin Chishti as regional competitors as opposed to friendly coreligionists, Abdullah foreshadows the very conditional Indian Muslim unity he proposed during his own time. For if he explicitly separates Hazratbal from Ajmer to consolidate Kashmiri Muslims here, he was also capable of implicitly bringing religious sites like these together. Part of his critique of the Pakistan demand drew on Muslims inhabiting 'the

[72] Abdullah, *Autobiography*, pp.53-4.

whole continent of India' and having 'their places of worship, educational institutions, and properties' spread across it.[73] So it is important to reemphasise that Abdullah did not refuse to imagine countrywide religious communities altogether; rather they, like Indian nationalism, had to be prevented from wrecking Kashmiri autonomy. It is not at all surprising, then, that the Sher-e-Kashmir revelled in this old myth. His ancestors, albeit with a little assistance from the Prophet of Islam, had not only produced a local defiance to ward off this most powerful of Indian Muslim groups, but also resisted their own amalgamation within a hierarchical rendering of this religious collective headed by their great enemies. The implications for secular Indian nationalism should also be clear. By essentially regionalising Islam, it is easy to understand why Abdullah was uninterested in restricting the connections between Kashmiris and other Indians to religion. Instead, Abdullah was free to draw on this localised Islam at the national level—not for any great conflict between Hindus and Muslims—but in Kashmiri service of Indian unity. Launching the Quit Kashmir movement in 1946, Abdullah called on the people of Srinagar to begin a jihad, or holy war, for the freedom not merely of Muslim Kashmir but a multireligious India. Moving seamlessly from an Islamic language well understood by his supporters to their place within—and duty to—their country, Abdullah exclaimed:

> To end your poverty, you must fight slavery and enter the field of Jehad as soldiers. The fight slogan [*sic*] of our struggle is not only for our State but for the whole of India. India is fighting against Imperialism.[74]

Scholars have claimed that the amalgamation of regional and religious identities within Kashmiri nationalism heightened its otherwise secular conflict over postcolonial sovereignty with its Indian equivalent after 1947.[75] Perhaps this was so. But what can be said with greater certainty is that this very amalgamation of Kashmiri and Muslim originally allowed Abdullah to easily embrace an Indian nation. In a colonial society that had come to privilege the category of community above all else, Abdullah seems to have reasoned that the best way to appropriate secular Indian nationalism was to first refuse secularisation closer to home.

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[73] Abdullah, '*Shabistan*', p.130.
[74] Abdullah, 'Quit Kashmir Speech', p.529.
[75] S. Bose, *The Challenge in Kashmir: Self-Determination and a Just Peace*, (Delhi, 1997).

On this question of connecting communalised regional and shared national spheres, it is once again Iqbal with whom Abdullah has something in common. In his presidential address to the Muslim League in 1930, Iqbal called for the creation of an amalgamated and autonomous Muslim province in the northwest of India. If other Indians consented to his demand and, thereby, left a crucial frontier in Muslim hands, Iqbal declared that the resultant goodwill would have a powerful effect on his coreligionists:

> It will intensify their sense of responsibility and deepen their patriotic feeling. Thus, possessing full opportunity of development within the body politic of India, the North-West Indian Muslims will prove the best defenders of India against a foreign invasion, be that invasion the one of ideas or of bayonets.[76]

Iqbal and Abdullah shared an idea: by providing a regional domain for unfettered Muslim self-expression, Muslim majorities would be well-placed to tie themselves to an Indian whole. But since they reached this conclusion from entirely different premises, this can only be a limited, if not superficial, agreement. If Iqbal wishes to finally win a sizeable political sphere for his constituents (Indian Muslims), Abdullah believes that he already has one for his regional majority (whether that included all Kashmiris or simply Kashmiri Muslims). Iqbal's new province is designed to free Indian Islam from the burden of minorityhood and, thereby, allow it to realise its potential as both a communal ethic and an influential force in national politics. This polity would, at last, give the Indian Muslim community an opportunity to 'mobilise its law, its education, [and] its culture' in a part of the country where it enjoyed a majority; it would also establish an 'internal balance of power' with the Hindu majority. By empowering Muslims with a significant polity of their own, Iqbal hoped to finally circumvent the established religio-political logic of majority and minority and, instead, equalise Hindus and Muslims for a more constructive future. Under his new constitutional structure, Iqbal contended that both Hindu and Muslim regional majorities would have the political strength to protect their weaker coreligionists and sacred sites remaining beyond their provincial fiefdoms.[77] Therefore, though it eventually acquired a negative label, the 'hostage' theory was originally conceived as a positive idea. While the threat of retaliatory action or, worse still, civil war remains a possibility in the event of

[76] Iqbal, 'Presidential Address', Allahabad, 29 December 1930, in *Foundations*, Vol.2, p.159.
[77] Ibid, pp.159-60.

communal abuses by a regional majority, in principle it is merely that—a threat. Ultimately, neither community can afford to declare war without endangering its weaker populations elsewhere. Thus, Iqbal and his heirs stressed that this truce, enabled by a Hindu-Muslim equilibrium, was guaranteed to bring lasting 'security and peace' to India;[78] this was a nonunitary country imagined as a group of interlinked societies whose connections were made possible by the existence of an assortment of regional minorities.[79] There were important variances, then, between Iqbal and Abdullah. So indifferent was Iqbal to the type of ethnolinguistic consolidation that interested Abdullah, that he forcibly merged the regions of the northwest together to achieve his powerful Muslim polity. To instrumentalise India's regional units in this manner, of course, was anathema to the Sher-e-Kashmir. For if Iqbal regionalised India to allay his nationwide concerns about a Muslim future, Abdullah—principally interested in securing Kashmiri autonomy—approached the constitutional question in reverse. That is to say that his regional ambitions shaped his Indian ones.

For Abdullah, empowering ethnolinguistic Muslim majorities within their own provinces or states largely precluded a countrywide Indian Muslim politics. Writing in *The Tribune* in January 1946, he refuted provincial amalgamation in the context of the now increasingly popular Pakistan demand. Erroneously claiming that Pakistan would 'rescue Muslims from Hindu domination', Jinnah and his League had forgotten that 'there are provinces in India where Muslims are in the majority. Obviously they do not need Pakistan.' Dismissing the 'hostage' theory as 'absolutely lacking in moral justification', Abdullah added that if a Muslim state was 'needed at all' it ought to be for those Muslim minorities who were 'being kept out of the orbit of Pakistan.' This, he added, was 'undoubtedly a curious solution and unjust.'[80] But Abdullah did not restrict his criticism to the simple fact that the interests of Muslim majorities and Muslim minorities did not align. It was not merely that these majorities did not 'need' a Pakistan. More importantly, their own visions of the future would be jeopardised by it:

> …in spite of notions of Muslims being one and a cultural community, provincial animosities between the different units of Pakistan are bound to come to the forefront sooner than later. The Pathan, for instance, does not like the Punjabi and we know a good deal of the 'Sind for Sindhis psychology'. Here in the case of Kashmir how much do

[78] Ibid, p.160.
[79] I have published this reading of the 'hostage' theory in Sohal, 'Ideas of Parity', pp.709-10.
[80] Abdullah, 'Thoughts on Pakistan', 9 January 1946, *The Tribune*, in B.N. Pandey (ed.), *The Indian Nationalist Movement, 1885-1947: Select Documents*, (London, 1979), p.184.

> we resent interference from our immediate neighbours. It is quite reasonable to assume that, because of these hatreds and animosities which are more deep-rooted than all the current cant about religious affinity, the different units of the proposed Pakistan would find it hard to be bossed over by one another and they may, as a result, demand some kind of a near self-determination. Kashmir could, for instance, choose not to federate with other units of Pakistan.[81]

More than its apparent immorality, what troubled Abdullah the most about the 'hostage' theory was that it gave a permanent quality to nationwide religious categories and elevated them above regional groupings. Therefore, while Abdullah conceives of relations between Indian Muslim majorities in an entirely negative way here, it is significant that these 'hatreds and animosities' are not made absolute. That is to say that however belligerent his tone, Abdullah concerns himself with qualifying what exactly makes for interregional hostility. These groups 'resent interference' from each other. Their 'psychology' was such that they 'would find it hard to be bossed over by one another'. What emerges is principally the fear of what a centralised Muslim state—designed for the benefit of a grand Indian political game with a Hindu equal—will mean for this fierce commitment to regional individuality. These interregional relationships appear so fraught only because the Pakistan demand endangers the promise of mutual 'near self-determination' and replaces it with an expansionist fight in a unitary state. In other words, the animosity shared by Punjabis, Pashtuns, Kashmiris, and Sindhis comes to the fore precisely because of the context in which Abdullah is operating. There is no other explanation for why Abdullah can be so suspicious of other ethnolinguistic groups here, and concurrently speak of Kashmiris taking their place within a decentralised federation made up various 'nationalities' once they and their Indian 'brethren' had successfully completed the anticolonial struggle to achieve it.

So if animosity characterised interregional relations when they threatened to disrupt local distinction and ambition, the reverse could be true when these were provided adequate political autonomy. However, it was perhaps not Abdullah but Khan Sahib who offered the most succinct summation of this point of view in his aforementioned meeting with the Cabinet Mission in April 1946. Repeating the Sher-e-Kashmir's logic on the Partition question, Khan Sahib said that Pashtuns:

[81] Ibid, p.185.

> …were different from their neighbours in the Punjab and would never join Pakistan. If they could not stay in a united India, they would like the Province to become entirely independent.[82]

If they were so 'different', what made the Pashtuns seemingly content to live alongside the Punjabis in an undivided India but very anxious about doing so in Pakistan? The answer lay in that the India to which Khan Sahib referred was a polity that figures like him and Abdullah had conceptualised for themselves: a multinational country that conjoined its many ethnolinguistic nations into a greater Indian one without compromising their individualities. This kind of federal arrangement was something which a separate Muslim state—the brainchild of their adversaries who had an entirely different set of aspirations—could not possibly offer them. I have already touched upon how Abdullah and the National Conference were able to endorse an independent Indian state during the late colonial period because they had sufficient freedom to imagine it in their own way. For whatever the political dominance of the Nehruvian Congress, its idea of a centralised state had yet to achieve the hegemony it would enjoy after 1947. This was not least because the 1935 India Act restricted representative government to a regional sphere. Indeed, that a self-governed India represented not the present but the future is what allowed Abdullah and Khan Sahib to so easily give it a federal quality.

Parity for Pakistan

It should now be clear that prior to independence Abdullah opposed the Pakistan demand because it threatened to disrupt his two-pronged idea of Indian equality. Indians stood to lose both their organic union of equally autonomous ethnolinguistic nationalities and an intercommunal unity between Hindus and Muslims. It is interesting, then, that once Pakistan came into being, his attitude towards it underwent a transformation of sorts. From 1947, Abdullah equalised accession to Pakistan or the Indian Union as choices for Kashmir. The Pakistani claim to Kashmir was, at least to begin with, as strong or as weak as that of the Indian Union. During his inaugural address to the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly in 1951, Abdullah insisted on celebrating the impartiality he and his party had shown when considering this lingering

[82] Meeting between CD, Wavell, and Khan Sahib, p.74.

question. Recalling the position he had taken at Partition and claimed to have stood by ever since, Abdullah declared:

> I also made it clear that the National Conference would consider this issue without prejudice to its political friends and opponents and strictly in accordance with the best interests of the country as a whole. I said that, in the state of tension and conflict that obtained both in India and Pakistan, it was difficult for the people here and now to predict what the final shape of both would be. You will realize, therefore, that we could not be accused of being partial to one side or the other.[83]

But this position was, in fact, not as new as it may seem. It represented neither a pragmatic calculation as Kashmir found itself locked between two powerful dominions nor an ideological shift. As the remainder of the address reveals, Abdullah had not changed his mind about the Muslim League and its separatism. Instead, he seems to have reasoned that the idea of a separate Muslim state could be aggressively rebuffed with a staunch defence of the Indian national whole only while it remained in the realm of theory. Now a reality, Pakistan was forcing the constituent elements of the India it had destroyed to recalibrate their ideas and affiliations for an entirely new context. This, I would like to suggest, was principally because Abdullah had imagined undivided India as a union of multiple regional and religious groups which relied exclusively on history and geography for whatever little content it possessed. Since both Pakistan and the Indian Union had an identical claim to that legacy, this theory could only equalise the two new states rather than differentiate between them. In other words, neither dominion could fully encapsulate the old India as long as it remained divorced from the other. Equalising Pakistan and the Indian Union, therefore, represented not a departure from this original theory but its logical response to the Partition of India. And yet, after 1947, it could furnish little more than the set of cultural assertions that we have already encountered: Abdullah continued to insist that though constitutionally nonexistent, undivided India remained an organic unity. Prepared solely for the integration of Kashmir within a single Indian federation, his established theory was politically obsolete. It was incapable of responding effectively to this new context and Abdullah understood that well. Instead, Kashmiris would have to make a judgment on the two new states once the initial 'tension and conflict' had subsided and allowed both to assume their 'final shape'. Political unity with other Indians (or Pakistanis) now had to be imagined, if at all, by producing an entirely civic logic. It is true that between Partition

[83] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', p.103.

in 1947 and his imprisonment by Nehru in 1953, Abdullah deliberated over two options as he sought to recalibrate his nationalist thought: Kashmiri independence and accession to the Indian Union. Be that as it may, it is nevertheless significant that his argument for confirming Indian accession with a referendum entirely shunned the themes of shared history and geography. As Abdullah would put it some years later, a 'community of ideas' had 'attracted' the National Conference 'to India' during this initial period.[84] Abdullah had shown little interest in ascribing ideological content to the Indian nation in colonial times. Partition had forced him, however cautiously, to finally do so. Though Pakistan remained a part of an organic but lost unity, by 1951 it was clear to him that democracy and inclusivism had become exclusively Indian principles. In fact, Abdullah tentatively added a slice of socialism to this wholly modern concoction. Making his pitch for India to the Constituent Assembly, he said:

> In the final analysis, as I understand it, it is the kinship of ideals which determines the strength of ties between two States. The Indian National Congress has consistently supported the cause of the States peoples' freedom. Steps towards democratization have been taken and these have raised the people's standard of living, brought about much needed social reconstruction, and, above all built up their very independence of spirit. Naturally, if we accede to India there is no danger of a revival of feudalism and autocracy. …The national movement in our state naturally gravitates towards these Principles of secular democracy. The people here will never accept a principle, which seeks to favour the interests of one religion or social group against another. This affinity in political principle as well as in past association, and our common path of suffering in the cause [of] freedom, must be weighed properly while deciding the future of the State.[85]

Once it was clear that Delhi would not tolerate a referendum for Jammu and Kashmir to pronounce a sovereign verdict on its future in a new and partitioned South Asia, it became progressively difficult for Abdullah to finally reconstruct his nationalist theory. Though he had wished to replace it with a civic alternative, the Sher-e-Kashmir was, instead, forcibly imprisoned by his old historical language. When asked during his 1968 interview to the *Shabistan Urdu Digest* if he considered Kashmir to be an integral part of the Indian Union, Abdullah was predictably evasive. But however empty his response may have seemed in the immediate context, it tellingly reaffirmed his reading of what Partition really meant to Kashmiris. 'We are', he said, 'no doubt, a part of the undivided Indian subcontinent, which is the only correct geographical designation.'[86]

[84] Abdullah, 'View Explained', p.100
[85] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', pp.105-6.
[86] Abdullah, '*Shabistan*', p.151.

More than just a tired reiteration of nationalist lament, Abdullah was suggesting that the erstwhile India was the only national whole to which the Kashmiri nation had ever rightfully belonged. If the people of India and Pakistan had been given the opportunity to move beyond Partition and take their place in a free world, Kashmiris had been held hostage to that moment. Comical and tragic, perhaps nothing captures this idea as well as the following allegory from the same interview:

> Kashmir is like a beautiful woman who has two suitors, each a neighbor and each anxious to marry her. Both are so love-stricken that they are willing to battle for her and, as a result, tension mounts in the neighborhood, and the woman herself is deeply affected. Her suitors seem to have no regard for her pitiful condition, even though they themselves suffer tremendously for her sake. The people of Kashmir would like to have intimate relations with both suitors—India and Pakistan. But a woman cannot be a wife to two men at the same time. Kashmir is in the same position and is having trouble keeping the two suitors in a good mood.[87]

Having elsewhere made postcolonial pain an entirely Kashmiri ailment, here Abdullah acknowledges that India and Pakistan—equalised yet again—'suffer tremendously', too, even if they 'seem to have no regard for her pitiful condition.' That Abdullah can sympathise with these oppressive suitors is not entirely surprising. His personal retention of Indian unity prevented him from ever turning India and Pakistan into his permanent enemies. 'Whatever our lot in this tragic struggle may be, we should never harbour any bitterness', he told a colleague from jail in 1960. 'Moreover, against whom should one be bitter? After all, we are a part and parcel of the subcontinent.'[88] Attempting to conjure an end to this ensuing crisis, Abdullah indulges briefly in a fantastical resolution. Kashmir is all set to have 'intimate relations with both suitors', only for Abdullah to remember that 'a woman cannot be a wife to two men at the same time.' What Kashmir needs is simply one suitor (or none at all). That she had once been in that now enviable position, of course, haunts this attempt at tragicomedy. For what is left unsaid here, but is mentioned repeatedly not only in the interview but throughout Abdullah's postcolonial career, is the folly of Partition. The cataclysmic event that ruined the happy marriage between Kashmir and India by, absurdly, pluralising the latter. Perhaps what Abdullah is left with is a strange inversion of a well-known conversation from English literature between the Bennet sisters in Jane Austen's iconic 1813 novel *Pride and Prejudice.* Assessing the qualities of the warring bachelors

[87] Ibid, p.160.
[88] Abdullah to C.N. Hussain, 25 January 1960, *Reflections*, p.35.

Fitzwilliam Darcy and George Wickham, Elizabeth tells Jane that 'there is but such a quantity of merit between them; just enough to make one good sort of man'.[89]

It is important to note that on the question of accession, Abdullah significantly backgrounded the religious community. India and Pakistan do not emerge as communal choices. Like his established Indian nationalism, even his idea of an Indian Muslim community could only equalise rather than differentiate between the two dominions. In 1951 he told the Constituent Assembly in Srinagar that Pakistan was 'not an organic unity of all the Muslims in this sub-continent' and had, instead, 'caused the[ir] dispersion' across three territories. And since only two were 'contiguous to our State', Abdullah had an almost mocking suggestion for those Kashmiri Muslims who still insisted on making a communal choice: they 'should choose the forty millions living in India' for they far outweighed the 'total population of Western Pakistan'.[90] If Abdullah argued that Indian Muslim unity failed to hold as an argument for accession to Pakistan, we have already seen how in the same address he also alluded to Muslim 'favour' in that country being an unacceptable 'principle'. Towards its conclusion the Sheikh was less equivocal: 'What will be the fate of the one million of non-Muslims [*sic*] now in our State? As things stand at present, there is no place for them in Pakistan.'[91] But despite rejecting Pakistan for its communalism, it did not follow that the Muslim identity of the Kashmiri majority was irrelevant to its equation with the Indian Union. More precisely, if the argument for Indian *accession* had to be solely secular so as to both be acceptable to all citizens of Jammu and Kashmir and outmanoeuvre the exclusive religious logic of Pakistan, the same did not hold for Indian *federalism* which could be awarded for multiple reasons. Partition did not change the fact that autonomy had always been—among other things—partly predicated on the idea of (Kashmiri) Muslim self-expression free from (Indian) Hindu domination. Abdullah would later speak about how he had 'regrets and genuine complaints over the manner in which this important aspect of the problem was either ignored or left uncared for' by the Congress leadership.[92] The Sher-e-Kashmir was demonstrating, as he did throughout his career,

[89] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, (London, 1996 [1813]), p.185.
[90] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', p.108.
[91] Ibid, p.109.
[92] Abdullah, 'Inaugural Address delivered at Convention of Delegates', Srinagar, 11 August 1974, *Reflections*, p.71.

that it was possible to possess a regional Muslim politics which subscribed to a secular—as opposed to religious—Indian nationalism. Indeed, the former significantly enabled the latter.

The Third Nation

In January 1946, the National Conference Working Committee reiterated its demand that the subjects of the princely states finally be awarded self-government. Its resolution insinuated that if the recently elected Atlee government was sincerely committed to Indian freedom and democracy, it could no longer maintain 'a dividing wall between their progress and that of their brethren in British India'.[93] Three months later, Abdullah made a similar appeal to the Cabinet Mission noting that the Maharaja's recalcitrance had 'exposed the continuance of the "feudal master governing the serfs" mentality'.[94] But as much as Abdullah now wished for the British to put him on the same plane as his Congress allies, he had long held the view that this starker collision of political ideas which so separated a stubbornly nonrepresentative Dogra Kashmir from a steadily democratising British India had furnished a leftist political culture unique to the underprivileged masses of the state. So far, this chapter has illustrated that if Abdullah could guarantee political autonomy for his Muslim-majority Kashmiri nation, he was able to imagine its participation in a grander Indian nation and endorse a communal solidarity for Indian Muslims. I want to now further this argument by suggesting that his demand for political autonomy was not restricted to the idea of Kashmiri cultural distinction; it also possessed ideological content. During the final decade of colonial rule, Abdullah concurrently moved beyond themes of history, geography, and religion to claim that Kashmiris had imagined a socialist welfare state which prioritised the needs of its worker and peasant majority; a Naya Kashmir. This gave them another reason to seek self-rule within an independent India. But Abdullah claimed that this was not simply a Kashmiri idea. It belonged as much to the other 'nationalities' or 'sub-national groups' inhabiting the state of Jammu and Kashmir. By 1938, Abdullah was moving decisively away from communal organisation and had begun to frame Kashmiri politics as a battle between his social democracy and the

[93] 'Resolution of the All-Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Working Committee', 17 January 1946, *KCHD*, p.525.
[94] Abdullah, 'Statement on Ministerial Crisis', 22 April 1946, Ibid, p.524.

Maharaja's stubborn feudalism. Recognising their shared socio-economic grievances, he began to claim that many peasants and labourers of the state were transcending their ethnolinguistic and religious differences. As Abdullah once put it:

> Although culturally diverse, history has forged an uncommon unity between them, they all are pulsating with the same hopes and aspirations, sharing in each other's joys and sorrows.[95]

This unwieldly principality had accidentally provided an intermediate sphere for Abdullah to develop the idea of a post-identitarian political community to which he frequently gave a national status. Sandwiched between the homogenous Kashmiri nation and the organic community of heterogenous Indians, it made for a third nation in the Sher-e-Kashmir's imagination.[96] Entirely civic, I will illustrate that it often collapsed into a Kashmiri majoritarianism and, therefore, lacked the intellectual coherence of his other two nations. Be that as it may, whether Abdullah was able to persuasively articulate a civic nationalism for the whole princely state is only secondary to our main purpose here. More significant is the fact that the Sher-e-Kashmir endowed regional autonomy with a political idea.

In 1938, a cross-communal and almost entirely Kashmiri group of twelve nationalist leaders led by Abdullah penned a memorandum to the Maharaja significantly titled the National Demand. Detailing the common interest that bound this impoverished nation of Kashmiris, Dogras, Ladakhis, and other ethnolinguistic communities together, these leaders claimed that:

> The ever-growing menace of unemployment amongst our educated young men and also among the illiterate masses in the country, the incidence of numerous taxes, the burden of exorbitant land-revenue, the appalling waste of human life due to want of adequate modern medical assistance, the miserable plight of uncared-for thousands of labourers outside the state boundaries and in face of all this the patronage that is being extended by the Government in the shape of subsidies and other amenities to outside capitalists as also the top-heavy administration that daily becomes heavier, points to only one direction that the present conditions can never be better as long as a change is not made in the basic principles that are underlying the present system of Government. Our cause

[95] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', p.87.
[96] The *Naya Kashmir* manifesto saw little contradiction in referring to two of these nationalities in the same breath. Committing the Conference to an equal application of civil rights across Jammu and Kashmir, it noted: 'The equality of the rights of all citizens, irrespective of their nationality, religion, race, or birth, in all spheres of national life—economic, political, cultural, and social—shall be an irrevocable law' (*NK*, p.13).

> is both righteous, reasonable and just. We want to be the makers of our own destinies and we want to shape the ends of things according to our choice…[97]

Quintessentially social democrats, what these leaders were proposing was a decidedly illiberal state. It dismissed, certainly in theory but also in practice, a host of liberal prerequisites that had captured the imagination of other Indian nationalists. They were uninterested in maintaining political pluralism. The silencing of opponents during Abdullah's first government in the Indian portion of the state between 1947 and 1953 demonstrates that,[98] but equally telling is an earlier comment the Sher-e-Kashmir made in his foreword to the 1944 *Naya Kashmir* manifesto compiled by the Punjabi communist B.P.L. Bedi. That the Soviet Union brooked no dissent did not prevent Abdullah from commending it for providing 'an unanswerable argument for the building of democracy on the cornerstone of economic equality.' Claiming to draw on Soviet success, he added that the Conference had 'drawn up a scheme which politically is based on the democratic principle of responsible government'.[99] The democracy that Abdullah and his colleagues advocated, then, was of an entirely majoritarian kind. Contending that the majority had reposed political faith in Naya Kashmir, democratic rule was to be defined by what socialist representatives took to be the collective interest rather than any liberal notions of discussion, debate, and dissent. The manifesto produced a radical agrarian policy, too. Aiming to rescue the Kashmiri masses from poverty, the Conference refused to make property an inalienable right. Limits were to be placed on personal wealth and its further creation since what came first was collective national welfare. The 'nation' was 'the ultimate custodian of all wealth and resources' and its representatives were tasked with distributing these for the benefit of the many.[100] As far as the Conference leaders were concerned, till now agricultural land had been used solely to improve the lot of an elite landowning class. They argued that these landowners had attained their estates by currying favour with a despotic regime and subsequently acquired their wealth from the toil of the poor peasant. On both counts they had acted in direct opposition to the national interest; this now had to be redressed. In practice, the Big Landed Estates Abolition Act of 1950 passed by the Abdullah government conceded far more generous terms to landowners than its

[97] Abdullah et al., 'National Demand', 1938, *KCHD*, pp.409-10.
[98] Zutshi, *Languages*, pp.311-22.
[99] Abdullah, 'Introduction', pp.7-8.
[100] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', p.85.

original theory had envisaged.[101] Nonetheless, this was still the most far-reaching scheme of its kind in modern South Asian history. This concern with social uplift also produced a suspicion of free trade not just with foreign states but even within any Indian federation. *Naya Kashmir* declared that protectionism was essential since it was 'a criminal betrayal of the toiling masses of Kashmir to export grains and foodstuffs which are needful for the people of the State.' Exports would only be permitted if 'the needs of the State have been provided for, both immediate needs and the needs of a healthy reserve.'[102] When in 1951 Abdullah and his colleagues met at the old seat of Dogra authority in Srinagar to inaugurate their Constituent Assembly, he claimed that they were 'free citizens of the New Kashmir for which we have so long struggled.' By now, the people of the state not only made for a political nation but one that had endured its own triumphant freedom movement 'against privilege and oppression'. Though careful not to entirely separate his Conference from the wider Indian nationalist struggle, Abdullah made sure to assert the individuality of its regional campaign. Possessing its own symbols and stories which its Indian counterpart did not share, the exceptionality of Kashmiri nationalism was now underscored more forcefully than ever by the emblematic power of the Sher-e-Kashmir addressing his colleagues 'in this palace hall, once [a] symbol of unquestioned monarchical authority'. Resisting those 'darker powers' that had sought to turn religious groups into competing political constituencies, the 'poor and downtrodden' people of the state had chosen the wiser path proposed by their leaders: a socialist fix for their material ills. And having shared a set of 'aspirations' and 'ideals', they were finally free to give them constitutional 'shape' in a polity that was all their own. Supposedly no 'person' or 'power' stood 'between them and the fulfilment of this, their historic task.'[103]

It is interesting that in a speech at Jammu towards the end of his career in 1976, Abdullah compared the widely celebrated idea of Indian cultural variety with his long held and less accepted notion of regional political distinction. The context of this address to his party colleagues was very different to the many that had come before it. Having rescinded his demand for a referendum and signed an accord with Prime

[101] According to Rai, a pragmatic Conference reasoned that it could not afford to alienate the landed elite and, therefore, allowed landowners to retain twenty-two and three-quarter acres of their estates. For more detail, see *Hindu Rulers*, pp.282-4.
[102] *NK*, p.26.
[103] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', pp.82-3.

Minister Indira Gandhi the previous year, Abdullah had all but abandoned the kind of Kashmiri self-government and Indian federalism that he had imagined for most of his political life. With his popularity diminishing, the Sher-e-Kashmir sought to explain why he was resisting one final capitulation to Congress by refusing to merge his National Conference within it:

> The history of the National Conference, its traditions and struggles, notwithstanding its regional character, formed part of the great freedom movement of India in which all Indians participated without regard for caste or creed. Even so, our respective movements carried their own stamp and bore their distinctive individuality. This fact about our organization was recognized by Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and other leading personalities of India. This recognition of a distinct personality and the assertion of an individuality does not negate the unity of India. On the other hand, it projects the political character of our country and its cultural diversity. Just as the regional hues of India combine to decorate and put life in the cultural rainbow of the country, so would the regional character or the individuality of political movements launched in different regions enrich the political system of India. The greatness of an ocean and its span is a natural truth, but its greatness does not lessen the importance of the existence of rivulets, brooks, or springs. In their own way they too serve and are not irrelevant. We may go further and say that these very water courses, [o]n the other hand, contribute to the glory of an ocean and the power of its waves. Who would, for instance, dispute the grandeur of mountains and their peaks? But the tiny flowers growing at their feet also own a pattern of beauty with a unique appeal.[104]

We have already noted that if the dominant strand of secular Indian nationalism, represented by the Nehruvian Congress, had broadly refused cultural homogeneity in favour of plurality, it had concurrently searched for a political uniformity to meet the demands of a modern age. Here Abdullah asks it to recalibrate the latter with the methodology of the former. The India that Abdullah imagined was strong enough to withstand not only cultural—but also political—diversity. If India could 'decorate' its 'cultural rainbow' with its many 'regional hues', it was equally capable of embracing the 'distinct personality' of multiple 'political movements'. Their acknowledgement need 'not negate the unity of India', not least because they were bound by common commitments to freedom and inclusion. Abdullah claimed, after all, that his party 'formed part of the great freedom movement of India in which all Indians participated without regard for caste or creed.' It was possible, then, to be politically (and culturally) different whilst remaining nationally united. Abdullah is also concerned with generalising his argument and avoiding the charge of parochialism. Though he talks specifically about a Kashmiri political distinction, he is also interested in establishing a

[104] Abdullah, 'Presidential Address', Jammu, 24 April 1976, *Reflections*, pp.83-4.

broader Indian principle: he wants to consider, at least theoretically, the possibility of other 'political movements launched in different regions enrich[ing] the political system of India.' And these are understood to be organic phenomena; a vast country marked by changing conditions and contexts can only but produce multiple political consciences. It is not coincidental, then, that Abdullah concludes his argument with metaphors that conjure a natural imagery. It is nature—once again made a pure element standing beyond the realm of human life—which can nevertheless best illustrate the distinctions among, but also the overarching unity of, the Indian people. Coming late in his career, this address demonstrates that his failure to establish an alternative Indian principle did not deter Abdullah from continuing to suggest it. It also shows that he was unafraid of claiming it particularly for Kashmir. In fact, eight years earlier in his interview to the *Shabistan*, Abdullah spoke about how, 'without seceding from India', it would have been possible for the various princely states—significantly separated from the political conditions of the provinces in colonial times—to have remained 'independent' after 1947. Once it became clear that other states were less interested in, or had been forced to forgo, this federal possibility, Abdullah still had to 'consider' what was 'best for Kashmir'. 'What others do', he noted, 'is their job.'[105]

Acknowledging the structural vagaries of the Raj which made it difficult for Congress to operate in the nominally sovereign princely states as it did in the British provinces, in the summer of 1935 a resolution of its Working Committee declared that 'under existing circumstances' the party could do no more than 'exercise moral and friendly influence upon the States'. But just as it put limits on Congress activity and encouraged the creation of separate political *initiatives* among the 'States people themselves', the resolution simultaneously shut the door on separate political *identities* emerging from this process. Indians, whether they lived in states or provinces, were 'one and indivisible.'[106] Once Abdullah found himself at the helm of affairs in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir after independence, he was increasingly confronted by this logic as he sought to retain as much autonomy from Delhi as possible. In a deft manoeuvre that produced a profound legacy for Kashmiri politics into our own time,

[105] Abdullah, '*Shabistan*', p.168.
[106] 'Resolution of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress', 29 July-1 August 1935, *KCHD*, p.406.

Abdullah turned the Instrument of Accession into an expression of his argument for regional self-rule. Written into the 1935 India Act, the Instrument of Accession had originally been designed to cajole the autonomous princes into joining an anticipated Indian federation. Consequently, it allowed a federating state to retain vast powers. Signed by the Maharaja in October 1947, its terms had since been enshrined in the constitution of the Indian Republic. Addressing the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly in March 1952, Abdullah triumphantly declared that there was:

> …no other State which enjoys similar constitutional status. Under Section 370 of the Indian Constitution our State has been granted a special position. In short, this State like other States has acceded to India in respect of External Affairs, Defence and Communications but it enjoys full autonomy with regard to all other matters according to the Indian Constitution and can shape its own destiny through its own Constituent Assembly. Such a status for Kashmir is a matter of pride for us… Today if we are electing members for the Indian Parliament from this State it is in consequence of that very status. Such steps are going to make the position of the State invulnerable and forge stronger links between India and Kashmir. The enemies of India and Kashmir will find in our country a strong wall and [be] dismayed to break it. They will finally have to give up their sordid attempts.[107]

Later in life, Abdullah was even more explicit about this attempt to restyle this constitutional ruse. Though it undoubtedly catered for a broad conception of autonomy which also housed ideas of ethnolinguistic and religious particularity, it was especially emblematic of his political idea. Recounting these events at Jammu in 1976, he noted how:

> …a special status was guaranteed to us under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. We were assured by the top leaders at the centre that even though we would constitute a part of the Indian Federation, we would be absolutely free to execute our programs as laid down by us in "Naya Kashmir".[108]

Earlier we saw how Iqbal believed that empowering regional groups could render service to the Indian national whole. The Sheikh's statement from 1952 was perhaps his most forceful articulation of that idea. If Kashmir was participating wilfully in the democratic processes of the new Indian state, it was because Congress had hitherto respected its wish to govern itself. Momentarily backgrounding his referendum demand, Abdullah implies that this was a sure way to finally settle the question of accession. Mocking the Pakistani state without naming it, he seeks to almost goad it into

[107] Abdullah, 'Nomination of the Representatives of Jammu & Kashmir State for the Lower and Upper House of the Indian Parliament', Srinagar, 25 March 1952, *JKCAD*, Vol.1, p.210.
[108] Abdullah, 'Presidential Address', p.79.

an impossible fight. Of course, events took a very different turn. As far as Abdullah was concerned, the full-fledged merger that was fast becoming the want of Congress had never been on the table. The 'objectives of our movement', Abdullah notes in his memoir, 'could not allow it.'[109] So during his negotiations with the Congress leaders in the years immediately following accession, Abdullah was loath to concede anything beyond its original terms to Delhi. This meant remaining exempt even from the fundamental rights laid down in the Indian constitution. Justiciable, they had conceded the right to property to the citizens of India and so threatened to dilute and delay the land reforms envisaged in *Naya Kashmir*. Vallabhbhai Patel, now the Home Minister of an Indian state that he wished to turn into a centralised Leviathan, alluded to these priorities in a bitterly sarcastic letter to his cabinet colleague Gopalaswami Ayyangar in October 1949:

> You can yourself realise the anomaly of the State becoming part of India and at the same time not recognising any of these provisions. I do not at all like any change after our party has approved of the whole arrangement in the presence of Sheikh Sahib himself. Whenever Sheikh Sahib wishes to back out, he always confronts us with his duty to the people. Of course, he owes no duty to India or to the Indian Government, or even on a personal basis, to you and the Prime Minister who have gone all out to accommodate him.[110]

If Patel wanted Abdullah to adjust his position out of gratitude for the Indian state that had saved his people from Pakistani expansionism, an alteration of this kind would have meant forgoing his conception of Kashmir. That Patel cannot find in Abdullah a 'duty to India or to the Indian Government' is unsurprising. Their ideas of India were poles apart. For Abdullah, political 'duty' principally lay in preserving the autonomy of his constituents. It was only after their political distinction had been recognised by Delhi, that Abdullah could permit their membership of a postcolonial Indian nation. This new affiliation had to uphold the idea that because different groups of Indians had evolved different political philosophies, they were entitled to meaningful and separate shares of political power.

I have already noted that Abdullah, unlike his friend Nehru, gave no meaningful political content to his idea of an independent Indian democracy during colonial times. For the Sher-e-Kashmir, India was only a loosely connected cultural union. And though

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[109] Abdullah, *Autobiography*, p.113.
[110] V. Patel to N.G. Ayyangar, 16 October 1949, in A.G. Noorani (ed.), *Article 370: A Constitutional History of Jammu and Kashmir*, (Delhi, 2011), p.62.

Partition finally forced him to entertain a civic argument for Indian accession which alluded to some kind of common socialist future, it remained tempered by efforts to secure political autonomy for Kashmir. I want to explore the political emptiness of this India a little further by returning to the colonial period. In 1939, Abdullah's Conference issued a pamphlet which connected it to the wider Indian freedom movement and its Congress ally. Penned by two Pandit activists, Shambhu Nath Kaul and Janki Nath Sapru, it noted that the 1929 Congress session at Lahore, 'attended by a large number of politically minded Kashmiri young men', had 'produced a keen desire among them to follow in the wake of the political movement in British India'.[111] And while their Kashmiri campaign was 'an integral part of the bigger struggle', Kaul and Sapru were unwilling to share anything more than the values of 'freedom and democracy' with it.[112] They 'appealed to all fellow Indians to stand by us' since 'our battles are their battles, and we have all to march forward together as one army'. However, the goal of this wider 'great struggle' was only very vaguely defined: 'a free, prosperous and united India.'[113]

Aside from leading his regional party, Abdullah was also an important leader of the Congress-affiliated All-India States Peoples' Conference. He used this position to demonstrate the political role his federal theory prescribed for a central Indian figurehead: supportive encouragement rather than ideological imposition. During his Quit Kashmir trial in 1946, Abdullah called for the termination of 'arbitrary' princely rule in favour of a 'law that represents the people's will and secures their well-being'. He added that his 'claims' were 'made not merely on behalf of the four million people of Jammu and Kashmir but also of the ninety-three million people of all the states of India.' However, like Kaul and Sapru seven years earlier, the Sheikh refused to give this demand much content. Apart from claiming that it 'ha[d] not been confined to the people of any particular race, or religion, or colour', Abdullah simply added that it was '[t]he fundamental right' of all people to both 'live and act as free beings' and 'make laws and fashion their political, social, and economic fabric, so that they may advance the cause of human freedom and progress'.[114] Having restricted the Indian political to democracy, independence, and inclusivism, the subjects of princely India come together

[111] Kaul and Sapru, Untitled Pamphlet, p.8.
[112] Ibid, p.2.
[113] Ibid, p.36.
[114] Abdullah, 'Against Autocracy', pp.199-200.

to uphold or realise these principles alone. Thus, Abdullah remains revealingly silent on what these various and scattered peoples would do with the democratic power they had been so unfairly denied till now. He has to, instead, speak vaguely about 'mak[ing] laws', 'fashion[ing]' 'fabric[s]', and 'advanc[ing]' 'progress'. Similarly, in 1951, Abdullah revealing implied that his Kashmiri movement was only ever a source of 'strength and inspiration' for the subjects of other states;[115] an encouraging template which they could, at most, adapt to give shape to their own collective wills. His interest in the late colonial politics of Hyderabad—the other large Indian princely state—confirms this mode of thinking. Reflecting on how Hyderabad, like Kashmir, 'was not a case of Hindu versus Muslim—but of the exploiter versus the exploited', Abdullah remained vague about its postcolonial future. If 'a great injustice was being done to the people by the ruler' and the 'masses needed care and concern', Abdullah had proposed no project of his own implying that it had to be conjured locally.[116] Similarly, in 1946, though he hoped that the Hyderabadis would follow his example, the Sheikh left the ball unambiguously in their court:

> When we raise the slogan of 'Quit Kashmir', we naturally visualise that the princes and nawabs should quit all the States. I am sure this demand applies similarly to a State like Hyderabad where the people will, I am sure, raise their voice, 'Quit Hyderabad'.[117]

That Abdullah spoke in this way of Hyderabad, a state with a Muslim ruler and a predominantly Hindu population, helps to further illustrate that his was not a deeply identitarian vision. This is not to suggest that Abdullah was unconcerned about communal interests. Rather, what is important to recognise is that Abdullah was simultaneously capable of surmounting these to comprehend the structural roles or general principles that his politics occupied. If Hyderabad offered a reverse of the Kashmiri religious equation, that is unimportant to him here. What matters, instead, is that these two states can be made crucial to imagining a federalised India; a country in which the political power of princes is replaced with democracy and the rights of all religious and regional communities are upheld.

As much as Abdullah sought to leave identity aside to construct a civic national community for the entire princely state, we find that he was not always able to do so.

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[115] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', p.83.
[116] Abdullah, '*Shabistan*', p.155.
[117] Abdullah, 'The Sovereign People', Srinagar, 26 May 1946, in *Kashmir on Trial: State Versus Sheikh Abdullah*, (Lahore, 1947), p.8.

When Abdullah continued to connect his political movement to the Valley's mosques and shrines or a jihad for Kashmiri and Indian freedom, there were majoritarian implications not only for ethnolinguistic Kashmir but his larger socialist nation, too. But more often than collapses into Muslim communitarianism, it was Abdullah's Kashmiri regionalism that beset his third nation as he consistently conflated the historical inheritance of the Valley with his contemporary campaign for self-government for the entire state. Earlier we explored the great Kashmiri myth of a lost independence since the late sixteenth century. This story had no meaning for the other regional or ethnolinguistic groups of the state and its political usage, therefore, both before and after Partition, automatically minoritised them. Not least the Dogras of Jammu from whose ranks the royal family of the state had come. The most obvious example of this comes from the late colonial period when Abdullah persistently argued that the illegality of the 1846 Treaty of Amritsar was alone sufficient ground upon which to terminate Dogra autocracy and establish democratic rule across the princely state.[118] This document, however, had relevance only to Kashmir. Though it had the effect of adding the Valley to the Raja's territories and creating the new princely state of Jammu and Kashmir as a result, the Dogra heartland of Jammu had already been under his control; as had the provinces of Ladakh and Baltistan, while Gilgit Agency and Poonch were added to the state only much later.

But if Abdullah could conflate his ethnolinguistic and civic nations, he was also capable of acknowledging interregional differences within Jammu and Kashmir. We have established that he imagined secular India in historical and cultural terms; a nation marked as much by separation as unity, its constitutional translation was federal. And since the 'nationalities' of Jammu and Kashmir were ultimately constituent homogenous units of this heterogenous Indian nation, the broader terms of this thought necessitated that the state be treated simply for what it was: India in miniature. So Abdullah and his party frequently contemplated constitutional accommodation of this diversity, even if these attempts fail to offset the inconsistencies found in his political language. Despite claiming that its overwhelmingly poor inhabitants made for a socio-economic interest group, Abdullah took the view that one could never fully overcome the dividing lines of identity in politics. Just as he demonstrated his predetermined role

[118] See, for instance, Abdullah, 'Statement on Ministerial Crisis', p.524.

for a central Indian power as a leader of the States Peoples' Conference, in 1951—and then again after a lengthy internment in 1970—Abdullah imagined Jammu and Kashmir as a theatre in which he could enact his idea of Indian autonomy. Warning his colleagues against the pitfalls of majoritarian centralisation as well as what too much devolution would mean for their socialist designs, Abdullah spoke of striking a balance between ethnolinguistic national self-determination and Naya Kashmir. Proposing to go beyond just linguistic autonomy and universal civil rights, Abdullah contended that these nationalities would require their own political 'power and privilege' to 'grow and flourish'.[119] Since the people of Jammu and Kashmir 'sp[oke] different languages and profess[ed] different faiths', only their 'fullest participation' in state affairs and an 'autonomous status' would put an end to 'their apprehension against the domination of one region over the other'.[120] Earlier we saw how Abdullah's eagerness to establish parity between identity groups had a great deal to do with his dual status as an Indian minority. He was concerned with avoiding both Kashmiri and Muslim minoritisation and making these groups as Indian as any other regional or religious community. Therefore, these schemes to decentralise Jammu and Kashmir—and the idea of constitutional monarchy that we will encounter shortly—are interesting because they invert that equation. Like his approach to Hyderabad, it demonstrates that Abdullah was capable of equalising different Indian groups *even when* he and his community (whether of Kashmiris or Muslims) occupied the position of majority and, therefore, stood little to gain.

If Abdullah consistently contemplated ceding a portion of political authority up the chain to an Indian centre, his willingness to also pass it down the chain confirms his divisible conception of sovereignty. Earlier we saw that during the late colonial period, Abdullah seemed to take this logic even further by proposing to break up Jammu and Kashmir into multiple federating units of a single Indian state. This was the implication of his 1946 scheme for a future constitution that redistributed India's existing territories so as to both undercut Jinnah's Pakistan demand and empower 'all the Nationalities inhabiting India'. One could argue, in line with the established historiography, that Abdullah was implicitly admitting that the National Conference

[119] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', p.87.
[120] Abdullah, 'View Explained', pp.160-1.

barely existed beyond the Valley and that Naya Kashmir was an essentially Kashmiri idea. Whatever his theory, it might be said that, in reality, the ethnolinguistic and civic nations that Abdullah conceived were coterminous. Be that as it may, I want to suggest that even this proposed territorial division of the civic nation took little away from his most fundamental claims. Of course, it caters for the idea that Kashmiris—as well as other ethnolinguistics groups ruled by the Dogras—required constitutional autonomy to give shape to both their *ideological* (or *political*) and *cultural* distinction. These groups, having collectively imagined a *political* future that responded directly to the peculiar circumstances of their princely state, had to be sufficiently protected from the interference of other Indians. But if they had to be separated from these other Indians for *cultural* reasons, too, they had to also be adequately freed from each other. In light of their shared socialism, however, the extent to which they ought to be so was a matter of debate. So, prior to 1947, Abdullah seemed open to Jammu and Kashmir joining a decentralised Indian union in one of two ways: as a single state which made its own arrangements for internal autonomy; or as three or more self-governing ethnolinguistic ones. Perhaps it is true that while the former catered better for the Sheikh's Naya Kashmir, the latter remained sincerer to his cultural federation of India. Nevertheless, neither entirely contravened his nationalist theory. Once colonial India was partitioned, and two increasingly centralised and competing successor states replaced it, it is interesting that Abdullah quickly dropped the option of dissolving the erstwhile princely state as a way to give constitutional shape to his idea of autonomy. Suddenly faced with a postcolonial environment that could not have been any more hostile to these ideas, Abdullah realised that he must attach himself to two mechanisms that gave him at least some hope of resisting this unfavourable tide: the already signed Instrument of Accession but also the promise of a legally binding referendum supervised by the United Nations. But if the legal force of these mechanisms seemed to attract Abdullah to them, they were largely ignored by the more powerful governments of India and Pakistan. Therefore, in order to convince his opponents of his (now significantly more legalistic) argument, Abdullah had to not merely draw attention to them. He needed to also speak the language of a united Jammu and Kashmir since these mechanisms were inseparable from the princely state context in which they had been originally formulated.

The Maharaja's Makeover

Perhaps the most innovative attempt at allaying identitarian divisions in Jammu and Kashmir involved Abdullah and his party reimagining the role of the Dogra dynasty. It is interesting that their argument for self-rule never extended to an unequivocal demand for a republic. The 1938 National Demand,[121] the resolution for responsible government passed by the National Conference in 1939,[122] and its radical *Naya Kashmir* manifesto which followed in 1944,[123] all envisaged some form of constitutional monarchy. Moreover, contrary to the common assumption found in both popular and scholarly accounts of the Kashmiri nationalist movement, Abdullah refused to rule out the possibility of a truce with the Dogras even during the 1946 Quit Kashmir agitation. As his defence counsel, the Congress lawyer-politician Asaf Ali, put it to the court: Quit Kashmir did not mean 'the physical elimination of any individual' but rather that Hari Singh 'should relinquish autocratic authority and transfer to the people the power to rule themselves with him as the symbol of authority.'[124] This consistent retention of the Maharaja begs the question: why did Abdullah and his party struggle so greatly with his future role when they had received so very little from him since 1931? After all, the Sheikh knew well that the increasing ascendancy of his Congress friends, backed by a liberal tide of world opinion, meant that a democratic era surely beckoned for all of India. Therefore, beyond whatever pragmatic benefits a bloodless transition to a constitutional monarchy entailed, I want to suggest that the Sher-e-Kashmir was intellectually attracted to the idea of converting the unaccountable Dogra ruler into a benign, almost ornamental figurehead for the state. Indeed, it was not coincidental that Asaf Ali anticipated a 'symbol[ic]' future for Hari Singh.

But it was only four years after the British had left India and the postcolonial shape of Jammu and Kashmir was to be debated in its Constituent Assembly that Abdullah gave significant meaning to this new relationship between monarch and citizenry. Recalling the events of the preceding few years, Abdullah began by claiming that Hari Singh was, in fact, unfit for the new role:

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[121] Abdullah et al., 'National Demand', pp.409-11.
[122] Proceedings of National Conference Session, Anantnag, 2 October 1939, NMML, AISPC, 3/91, p.18.
[123] *NK*, p.16.
[124] A. Ali, 'Asaf Ali Defends', *KT*, pp.79-80.

> After the attainment of complete power by the people, it would have been an appropriate gesture of goodwill to recognize Maharaja Hari Singh as the first Constitutional Head of the State. But I must say with regret that he has completely forfeited the confidence of every section of the people. His incapacity to adjust himself to changed conditions and his antiquated views on vital problems constitute positive disqualification for him to hold the high office of a democratic Head of the State. Moreover, his past actions as a ruler have proved that he is not capable of conducting himself with dignity, responsibility and impartiality. The people still remember with pain and regret his failure to stand by them in times of crisis, and his incapacity to afford protection to a section of his people in Jammu…. Because of his background, it would, therefore, be impossible to think of his being associated again with the administration of the state.[125]

That Abdullah partly used this address to normalise a secular political discourse for a new state and reassert his commitment to intercommunal unity may explain why his criticisms of Hari Singh appear vague. Though the Sher-e-Kashmir holds little back when he rebukes the Maharaja for failing to accept the arrival of democratic modernity, less transparent is a disapproval of his religious chauvinism. What we have here is seemingly analogous to the secular argument Azad made for Urdu in the Indian Constituent Assembly in 1949. Perhaps wishing to break free from the popular perception that he was fundamentally a Muslim leader in search of justice for his coreligionists alone, Abdullah opted for this somewhat indirect criticism of the Maharaja's failure to abate the massacre of Muslims in Jammu after Partition. It was alleged elsewhere that Hari Singh had even encouraged the pogrom.[126] So though veiled in a language of 'impartiality' and 'incapacity', Abdullah's audience would have understood well what this denunciation of the Maharaja really was. Like Azad two years earlier, the Sheikh's refusal to name communalism suggests that he wishes to avoid being drawn into a Hindu-Muslim debate. That would inevitably allow his opponents to classify or dismiss his own position as *communal* when he believed only theirs was; his was *secular* and *nationalist*. The contexts in which Azad and Abdullah made these linguistic choices was vital. It seems that Muslim votaries of intercommunal unity were more vigilant once 1947 reinvigorated the Hindu nationalist claim that Muslims were responsible for Indian disunity; not least because they were helping to script constitutions that sought to break away from the discord of Partition and replace it with a shared future. It is precisely because Abdullah's rejection of Hari Singh's candidature

[125] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', pp.93-4.
[126] C. Snedden, 'What happened to Muslims in Jammu? Local identity, '"the massacre" of 1947' and the roots of the 'Kashmir problem'', *South Asia*, 24/2 (2001).

was so implicit, that he could simultaneously begin to demonstrate what the purpose of this new constitutional role was: to exemplify the values of the nationalist movement which promised to unite the diverse peoples of the state. Any aspirant, if they wished 'to hold the high office of a democratic Head of the State', would have to embrace 'every section' of 'his people'. Therefore, despite believing that monarchy was not only a present-day anachronism but a historically illegal imposition, Abdullah ultimately wants this century-old dynasty to help him unite the disparate regions and communities of Jammu and Kashmir. Whatever its ostensible appearance, there was nothing opportunistic about this; it simply shows that Abdullah was mentally flexible in his endeavour to achieve his real project: the offsetting of identitarian divisions in a future India. It was significant that Asaf Ali drew on the indigenousness of the Maharaja during the Quit Kashmir trial. If Quit India claimed that 'the foreign rulers of India' had no further role to play in its governance, the champions of Quit Kashmir were willing to strike a deal with Hari Singh since: 'Here the Ruler is not a foreigner'.[127] We have seen how, for Abdullah, foreignness had different meanings within and beyond the Kashmir Valley. But there is still an irony here. If Dogra feudalism and autocracy had initially prompted the indistinguishable interests that tied the diverse people of the state into a national collective, it was now being used to buttress that very claim. As much as Abdullah wished to believe that his movement was a state-wide one, in truth he lacked substantial support beyond the Muslims of the Kashmir Valley.[128] And so, he seemingly looked to the Hindu rulers from Jammu to assist his effort to transcend both communal and regional identity politics. He seems to have reasoned that the Dogra dynasty, however ceremonial its presence was to be in a new political formation, offered an intriguing counterbalance to provide a mutual sense of belonging and unity among the people of the state. Because authority exercised by a majority is always by threat of force, reinserting the minority—even if in this merely 'symbol[ic]' way—held the possibility of replacing the language of coercion with that of consent; and that, too, without diluting the commitment the Conference had made to individualistic democratic representation. Put differently, this retention of the Maharaja made for a final—and crucially esoteric—intervention in the realm of identity politics before exiting it once and for all. The creation of 'goodwill', though ostensibly defined as

[127] Ali, 'Asaf Ali Defends', p.80.
[128] Zutshi, *Languages*, p.262.

between monarch and citizenry, almost certainly has an alternative and hidden meaning for communal and regional relations. All but accepting that his party would presently be defined by its majoritarian character and had, in fact, not yet achieved its inclusive national community, Abdullah searches for 'an appropriate gesture' to finally repair the relationship between both Hindus and Muslims and Dogras and Kashmiris. Relationships that would, owing to this resort to symbolism, have little further political import. The outcome Abdullah sought was not entirely different from what Jinnah had anticipated in the final years of colonial rule: Indians, the Qaid-e-Azam claimed, could only evolve an interest-based political culture once they had been granted constitutional parity as Hindus and Muslims.

Just as Abdullah sought to remodel the Instrument of Accession for the actuation of a new future-oriented relationship between his state and the Indian Union, this remaking of the Maharaja represented another example of his productive use of existing political structures. And since retaining the unity of Jammu and Kashmir had become inextricably linked to achieving some version of Kashmiri autonomy in a now partitioned South Asia, Abdullah unsurprisingly refused to give up on the idea of a Dogra figurehead simply because Hari Singh was unfit for the new role. Needing to harden the integrity of this accidental state more than ever before, he looked towards Karan Singh, the twenty-year-old *yuvraj* (crown prince), who remained Sadr-e-Riyasat (Head of State) until 1965. If the Sheikh required a minority figurehead for his grand purposes, the 'broad outlook' of the Yuvraj suggested that he would fit the bill. In fact, appropriating Karan Singh enabled Abdullah to give expression to multiple political ideas. I have already stressed the intercommunal and interregional implications. But by preventing the shadow of his father—let alone that of a monocratic Dogra legacy—from enveloping the young Yuvraj, Abdullah also made a strong assertion of the democratic notion that individual agency trumped all forms of group identity; whether that was religious, regional, or in this case familial:

> I am sure none of us is [*sic*] interested in a personal controversy with the Maharaja's family. In the conduct of public affairs, it is necessary that an impartial view on every individual's deeds should be taken. Our judgment should not be wrapped by ill will or personal rancour. During our association with Yuvaraj Karan Singh these last few years, I and my colleagues in the Government have been impressed by his intelligence, his broad outlook and his keen desire to serve the country. These qualities of the Yuvaraj Singh [single] him out as a fit choice for the honour of being chosen [as] the first Head of the State. There is no doubt that Yuvaraj Karan Singh in his capacity as a citizen of the

> state, will prove a fitting symbol of the transition to a democratic system in which the ruler of yesterday becomes the first servant of the people, functioning under their authority, and on their behalf.[129]

The idea that monarchy was specially disposed to safeguard Indian pluralism was not new. If precolonial rulers frequently found legitimacy by upholding the rights and customs of their subjects,[130] British colonial ideologues came to argue that the Indian princes—through the personal and feudal connections they had cultivated with their subjects—were best placed to preserve communal harmony.[131] Abdullah's claim, of course, differed significantly. He could not possibly endorse this myth, not least because the Dogras had systematically sought to marginalise their Muslim subjects. Instead, what Abdullah sought was something altogether more modern. Grounded firmly in contemporary constitutionalism as opposed to old feudal loyalties, his was an effort to make an increasingly irrelevant royal seat productive for a plural democracy. And yet, neither was this idea—of constitutionalising the monarch—entirely new to political thought in India. Both British and Indian intellectuals had been engaging with it much before the Sher-e-Kashmir began to think about a future constitution. Once Queen Victoria issued her Royal Proclamation in the aftermath of the 1857 Indian Rebellion, Indians began to seriously engage with the idea that a legal promise made by a royal figurehead to maintain the noninterference of the state in religious practices was an effective way of holding diverse communities together. Committing herself to impartiality, Victoria assumed a secular role in India which she, as the head of the Church of England, could not possibly perform in Britain.[132] Victoria and her Proclamation, having effectively superseded the authority of the Government of India, could be appealed to against it. And from the second half of the nineteenth century, Indians—whether defunct princes or political activists—frequently resorted to it in this way. Indeed, the Proclamation was arguably the foundational document for modern secularism as it evolved as a distinctly Indian idea. For while the royal connection to religious neutrality had a longer history and has since been disposed of, to this day religious minorities in the Indian Union find themselves appealing to the similar high

[129] Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', p.94.
[130] Devji, *Impossible Indian*, pp.9-40.
[131] I. Copland, 'The Political Geography of Religious Conflict: Towards an Explanation of the Relative Infrequency of Communal Riots in the Indian Princely States', *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 7/1 (2000).
[132] 'Queen Victoria's Proclamation', 1 November 1858, in P. Mukerji (ed.), *Indian Constitutional Documents, 1773-1915*, (Calcutta, 1915), pp.355-58.

principles laid down in its constitution whenever they believe their rights are being denied—or the impartiality of the state is being flouted—by an incumbent government.

Constitutional monarchy continued to hold sway over a significant section of Indian politicians well into the twentieth century. It was only once younger nationalists led by Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose managed to wrestle the reins of Congress from the older liberals that the declared objective of the party changed from dominion status to independence in 1929. Only a year before, the Nehru Report, whose chief author was Jawaharlal's father Motilal Nehru, had called for self-government under the aegis of the British crown.[133] Even once independence had been granted, Atlee believed that constitutional monarchy still had enough currency as an Indian idea for him to convince the younger Nehru, now his Indian counterpart, to consider retaining not only the connection to the Commonwealth but the king of England.[134] The shadow of monarchy, then, remained part and parcel of Indian political thinking. Even some of those who had little desire to see the princes remain in charge of their states were at least indebted to their political language. Gandhi, for instance, frequently discussed the moral relationship between *raja* (ruler) and *praja* (the people),[135] while the Hindi idiom of the postcolonial Indian state is steeped in monarchical phraseology. And we saw in chapter one that both the Congress Muslims of Hindustan as well as Hindu nationalists resorted to erstwhile kings to find a culture for their national communities. So when Abdullah chose to reimagine the Dogras, he not only added to a longer intellectual tradition. He also participated in a wide-ranging contemporary conversation among twentieth-century Indian political thinkers about fusing the democratic with the monarchical.

Those who seemed to have come closest to the Sheikh's designs were the rulers of Travancore. Though Kashmir was the only significant princely state in which eminent nationalists seriously considered constitutional monarchy as a political model in the late colonial period, Sarath Pillai has shown how the Maharaja of Travancore, Balarama Varma, encouraged by his *diwan*—the lawyer from Madras C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer—made strides towards a similar end. Admittedly, unlike Abdullah, the termination of

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[133] The Committee Appointed by the All Parties' Conference, *The Nehru Report: An Anti-Separatist Manifesto*, (Delhi, 1975 [1928]), p.2.
[134] H. Kumarasingham, *A Political Legacy of the British Empire: Power and the Parliamentary System in Post-Colonial India and Sri Lanka*, (London, 2013), pp.39-41.
[135] A. Parel, 'Gandhi in Independent India', in J. Brown and Parel (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, (New York, 2011), p.220.

communal or regional political rivalries was not their most pressing concern even if the 1946 Travancore constitution was the first in all of India to remove separate electorates in favour of a single joint one.[136] More significant for this comparison is how the Travancore government democratised its politics under the aegis of its Maharaja and, thereby, sought to retain his relevance for a new age. In fact, in their 1939 pamphlet, Kaul and Sapru already seemed impressed with its attempts. Denouncing the consultative assembly founded by Hari Singh as 'a mock show', they compared it unfavourably with 'the legislative Assembly of Travancore which consists of two houses with a non-official majority elected on a wide Franchise.' Not only were budgets 'prepared in consultation' with elected representatives, but '[t]he House has the right to vote on the[m].' Moreover, any '[e]xcess demands have to be sanctioned by the legislature'.[137] This unlikely convergence between Kashmiri nationalists and the Travancore government does not end here for the 1946 constitution, authored by Aiyar, laid the groundwork for Abdullah's greatest objective: the retention of political autonomy in a genuinely federal Indian union.[138] When focusing on the princely states, historians have largely obsessed over political manoeuvres of rulers and the competing claims for accession made by the new dominions of India and Pakistan.[139] There is, however, a different way of understanding their significance to Indian political history as sites for federalism. Of course, this project failed principally because Congress and the Muslim League, two far more powerful political entities, had converged on the idea of the centralised nation-state by 1947. It might be said that though figures like Abdullah and Aiyar had many disagreements with the League, its opposition to unitary Congress nationalism and its significance as a political actor in colonial India was what made their federal imaginings possible in the first place. Indeed, a federalised India had been the original aim of the League. And it was only once Jinnah finally betrayed what his party had once set out to achieve that this alternative vision was finally destined for failure.

If Abdullah was a socialist, a Kashmiri nationalist, a Muslim regionalist, and an Indian federalist, by redefining the character of the princely state instead of destroying

[136] S. Pillai, 'Fragmenting the Nation: Divisible Sovereignty and Travancore's Quest for Federal Independence', *Law and History Review*, 34/3 (2016), p.772.
[137] Kaul and Sapru, Untitled Pamphlet, p.17.
[138] Pillai, 'Fragmenting the Nation', pp.771-2.
[139] See Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947*, (Cambridge, 1997).

it, the Sheikh must also be understood as a constitutional monarchist. However strange a description that may ostensibly appear for an enthusiastic anticolonial leader whose early career saw him pitted squarely against his Dogra overlords, the truth is that the Sher-e-Kashmir was unwilling to fulfil the final act of the French Revolution that apparently inspired him.[140] So while he was led to it for different reasons, Abdullah participated in a neglected discussion about renewing monarchy for an Indian future that included the more likely *diwan*s such as Aiyar in Travancore but also Mirza Muhammad Ismail who served in Mysore, Jaipur, and Hyderabad.[141] For Abdullah, constitutional monarchy emerged as one of many ways to maintain an equilibrium between unity and separation in modern India. To solve this problem, Abdullah produced other ideas, too. Together they appear disparate but, in fact, cohere into one project. There were his reflections on the prevalent twentieth-century themes of religion, history, and socialism, but we have seen that Abdullah also inserted into the Indian debate an unusual conception of natural purity.

That Abdullah held multiple political identities and cannot be easily placed within the received categories of modern Indian history is perhaps what led figures like Nehru, Patel, and also Jinnah to have such strong responses to him. Unlike the Sher-e-Kashmir, all three came to endorse the centralised nation-state. Another important contemporary who did so was Ambedkar. Addressing the Indian Constituent Assembly in November 1948 as chairman of its Drafting Committee, Ambedkar called upon the former princely states to do away with the remaining constitutional disparities between them and the erstwhile provinces of British India. As we noted earlier, the Instrument of Accession had allowed the states to frame their own constitutions, retain vast powers, and merely concede the subjects of defence, foreign affairs, and communications to Delhi or Karachi. Calling for all component units of the Indian Union to be treated equally, Ambedkar commented that the current asymmetry was:

> …very unfortunate and, I submit quite indefensible. This disparity may even prove dangerous to the efficiency of the State. So long as the disparity exists, the Centre's authority over all-India matters may lose its efficacy. For, power is no power if it cannot be exercised in all cases and in all places…. I appeal to those States that remain to fall in line with the Indian Provinces to become full units of the Indian Union on the same terms as the Indian Provinces. They will thereby give the Indian Union the strength it

[140] See Abdullah, 'Statement by PM', pp.84-5; and '*Shabistan*', p.141.
[141] See Ismail's memoir My Public Life: Recollections and Reflections, (London, 1954).

> needs. They will save themselves the bother of starting their own Constituent Assemblies and drafting their own separate Constitution and they will lose nothing that is of value to them. I feel hopeful that my appeal will not go in vain and that before the Constitution is passed, we will be able to wipe off the difference between the Provinces and the Indian States…. Though the country and the people may be divided into different States for convenience of administration the country is one integral whole, its people a single people living under a single *imperium* derived from a single source.[142]

Now a key architect of the Congress constitution that was beginning to take shape, Ambedkar had, until recently, been a critic of that grand old party. But like Jinnah—its other great critic in late colonial times—Ambedkar never called into question the Hobbesian state that Nehru and Patel had imagined for a free India. Both Ambedkar and Jinnah agreed that if large states were to survive and be successful in the modern epoch, they would have to concentrate power at their centres.[143] It was this agreement that led both these critics to safeguard the interests of their minority constituencies at the level of the nation-state. Ambedkar realised that affirmative action for Dalits would have to be enshrined in the founding document of the new state. Meanwhile, by 1937, Jinnah had abandoned the idea of a single decentralised federation. If Muslims were serious about protecting their interests in the independent India of the future, it would have to be made up of two centralised polities. It is interesting, then, that perhaps the most forceful opposition to the Congress idea of the state came from one of its allies. For Abdullah, contrary to Ambedkar's suggestions, Kashmiris had plenty 'that [wa]s of value' to 'lose' if they readily 'g[a]ve the Indian Union the strength it need[ed]'. By scripting their own constitution, Kashmiris would be giving expression to their ethnolinguistic, religious, and ideological distinction. This was an existential task; they could scarcely escape it and 'save themselves the bother'. Nor was there any question of 'fall[ing] in line' simply because other constituent units of the now divided heterogenous Indian nation had forgone their national rights. Abdullah would have agreed with Ambedkar that India was, or at least had been, 'one integral whole'. Nevertheless, in the Sheikh's estimation it neither was nor had ever been a 'single *imperium* derived from a single source'; a phrase that eerily evokes the ghost of a recently slain empire. If this clash between two national ideas remained hidden prior to independence, the arrival of postcolonial sovereignty brought it into view. A clash

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[142] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Basic Features of the Constitution', Delhi, 4 November 1948, in V. Rodrigues (ed.), *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, (Delhi, 2004), pp.491-2.
[143] For Ambedkar, Ibid, pp.473-94; for Jinnah, 'Presidential Address', Lahore, 22-24 March 1940, in *Foundations*, Vol.2, pp.327-39.

that still haunts relations between Delhi and Srinagar, and one that should remind us of why Kashmiri nationalism has been unable to find refuge in the most pervasive renditions of its Indian—but also Pakistani—equivalent.

4

An Ethical Country

During his extended tour of India in 1934, Ghaffar Khan repeatedly recounted how his Khudai Khidmatgars came to be integrated into Congress between 1929 and 1931. In April 1930, the colonial state had banned his organisation. By now distinctly anticolonial, the British realised that the Khudai Khidmatgars of the North-West Frontier would no longer be satisfied with simply instituting community schools and putting an end to Pashtun blood feuds. Believing they would be unable to continue their struggle alone, Ghaffar Khan and his associates sought the support of an influential pan-Indian organisation. They were rebuffed by the Muslim League whose constitutional politics of minority continued to depend on colonial support. Instead, they found an ally in Congress with whom they already shared informal links. Anxious about what this official alliance would mean for their hold over India's north-western borderlands, the British tried to break it by offering to revoke their ban if the Khudai Khidmatgars agreed to quit Congress. Ghaffar Khan explained to an audience at Bombay why his Pashtun nationalists refused to accept these terms:

> We replied: "we cannot do this, because we have already told you before that the Pathans are not a faithless people. When we were in our difficulties, neither the Musalmans nor the Muslim League nor any other Muslim organisation came to our help. At that time the Congress helped us; the Congress then saved us from ruin and destruction. Now we Pathans, and anyone who is a Pathan, will never forget the obligation done to us by the Congress. …We shall never desert anyone who does us a good turn."[1]

Like Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan held that British imperial rule—the mutual misfortune of this subjugated collection of peoples known to the world as Indians—was what had made their common nationality possible. All Indians, he said, would recognise this once 'they realised their degradation and destruction.'[2] Those in the nationalist movement already had. Colonialism, through its machinations and deceit, had counterintuitively provoked an Indian nationalism to bind the Muslim Pashtuns on the Frontier to the predominately Hindu Congress of the low country. For the Fakhr-e-Afghan, or Pride of the Afghans, as he was titled by his supporters, these new national relations were to be

[1] Khan, 'Congress', pp.210-1.
[2] Khan, 'Slavery is a Curse', Patna, 29 August 1934, *MSBK*, p.181.

sustained by a mutual trust founded on the upholding of honour and obligation. Of course, these ideas are classically taken to be part of Pashtunwali. But even if these principles were well understood by his Bombay audience in this clichéd, ethnocultural manner, they need not have been since Ghaffar Khan fails to restrict them to the ethnos. In other words, though his politics of honour and obligation has a Pashtun derivation it is, in fact, comprehensible and accessible to all. It was not just the Khudai Khidmatgars who could make and fulfil commitments. If Pashtuns were 'not a faithless people' and could 'never desert' their friends, other Congressmen had shown an equal aptitude for these values by coming to the aid of the Khudai Khidmatgars at their time of need. They, too, could render an 'obligation' or 'a good turn' to save Pashtuns 'from ruin and destruction'. So Ghaffar Khan locates this idea in the ethnos while simultaneously providing a language that is universalizable. It is this propensity to think beyond the local which leads me to argue that the Fakhr-e-Afghan was a political thinker who possessed not only Indian national—but also global—ambitions.

This was made amply clear at Bombay in 1934 when he stated that his Khudai Khidmatgars should never have been reduced to the 'Red Shirts'. Claiming that this appellation was a convenient British ploy to equate politicised Pashtuns with Russian communists or right-wing paramilitary groups found in western Europe, he felt it necessary to outline just how different his organisation really was:

> They [the British] want that they should show to the world that we are the type of shirts just as there are Mussolini's shirts, Hitler's shirts and Sir Oswald Mosley's Shirts. We are not any shirts. They are deceiving the world. We are only Khudai Khidmatgar and our movement is based on universal brotherhood. We desire the welfare of the entire humanity [*sic*]. There German shirts are after the welfare of Germany only and they want to destroy the other nations of the world. The same is the condition of Italy and England. They also desire the welfare of Italy and England respectively and want the destruction of other nations. But our shirts are not like that, we desire the advancement of all nations. There is a great difference between these two points of view.[3]

As far as Ghaffar Khan was concerned, Europeans had shown that a nationalist project—giving rise to exclusivism and greed in that continent—could be a perilous one. Rejecting the apparently narrow nationalisms of Germany, Italy, and England, his was to be the first step towards 'universal brotherhood'. Pashtuns, or Indians more generally, would be achieving nothing at all if they could not foresee the international

[3] Khan, 'Awakened Women', p.220.

import that their movements might one day possess. Indeed, that the Fakhr-e-Afghan's Indian nation was not an organic entity housing a single people but a new phenomenon made up of multiple groups, meant that it promised to foster an ideological as opposed to exclusive nationalism. If 'universal brotherhood' was the project of the Khudai Khidmatgars, then India provided its ideal laboratory. A successful experiment with Indian diversity would have ramifications for peace and plurality everywhere. Thus, the problem of India was not peculiar to it. Its diversity meant it was the world in miniature and, therefore, its problems belonged as much to it as they did to the world. The Europeans, with their insular nationalisms that had morphed into avaricious imperialisms, had failed the world. The Indian nation, however, a most unEuropean idea in this rendering, promised to fare better. So I will argue that more than any long narrative of shared history, the Indian nation imagined by Ghaffar Khan and his young understudy Mohammad Yunus was inspired primarily by contemporary ethics. This effort to fashion the shared nation—almost from scratch—had fostered bonds of 'national love'[4] between its chief creators: the Pashtuns and the Hindus. By 1947, they were as Indian as each other. This is not to say that they entirely discounted history; they sometimes found it to be useful as they endeavoured to do away with a pregiven peripheral status and, instead, make Pashtuns central to Indian nationality. Still, their heightened presentism separated Ghaffar Khan and Yunus from Azad and Abdullah, even if a greater objective united them: the achievement of an integrative Indian national equality that enabled its propagators to defy the subject position of Muslim minority while still retaining forms of religio-cultural autonomy.

Ghaffar Khan had to confront the question of autonomy very soon after he hitched his party to Congress. Faced with a rebellion from two colleagues who feared that this merger would endanger Islam and Pashtun culture, he issued the following statement in September 1931. And while these words laid out the terms on which he would seek to build an Indian nation with his Congress colleagues over the next sixteen years, importantly for our purposes in this chapter, they also signalled his perceptive understanding of the great pitfall of his politics of 'pledges'—the possibility of betrayal:

> I assure you that I would be the first man to sever my connection with the Congress if our union with it was, in any way, going to prove disadvantageous to the Pathans or to the Faith, and I would be the first person to declare a peaceful war against the whole world for the

[4] Ibid, p.219.

> interests of the Pathans. The Congress is, in accordance with its past pledges, bound to render us every sort of help. If the Congress breaks its pledge, we reserve the right to withdraw. No body has tied our hands. Brethren! You should now settle for yourself what religious and worldly harm can come to us by joining with the Congress, a strong companion.[5]

Warriors of Love

According to Gandhi, capturing the state had only become necessary because the British had shown themselves to be discriminating, self-interested, and, therefore, inappropriate rulers. The non-Indian character of the Raj had never been of any consequence to the Mahatma; theoretically, *swaraj*, or self-rule, was achievable under the auspices of a benevolent foreign government. And while hostile British rule had made collective *swaraj* impossible to achieve, even it could not prevent the achievement of personal freedom for this was possible if one merely stopped cooperating with the state. For Gandhi, anyone could achieve *swaraj* if they were willing to suffer and die for it.[6] Drawing on Islamic theology, Ghaffar Khan also posited two conceptions of self-rule. Before establishing collective justice by evicting the British in a *jihad-e-asghar* (lesser struggle), each Khudai Khidmatgar had to overcome the internal *jihad-e-akbar* (greater struggle) by harnessing the necessary patience and self-control to withstand suffering.[7] But however close this took him to the ideas of the Mahatma, I want to suggest that Ghaffar Khan was unable to disconnect sovereignty from the state in the same way. This was because his recourse to anticolonialism was accompanied by his choice to inherit the mythical notion of the self-governing Pashtun whose political independence was a validation of his honour. It was true that a despicable material greed had led the British to squeeze the Frontier and the rest of India of its riches and had, thereby, impoverished its inhabitants. But while this remained an important part of the Fakhr-e-Afghan's argument for political freedom, it had to be subordinated to the basic right of an indigenous people to sovereignty in an inherited land. The intentions of the foreign power, whether sincere or selfish, could not alter the intrinsic truth that was home rule; the 'Firangi' (white-skinned European) had 'no right to rule over' what had been left to

[5] Khan, 'Contradiction of the Statement of Abdul Akbar Khan and Mian Ahmad Shah, and the Exposition of the Facts', 21 September 1931, NMML, Tendulkar Papers, 3/2, p.924.
[6] Devji, *Impossible Indian*, pp.7, 23.
[7] Banerjee, *Pathan Unarmed*, p.148.

Pashtun 'children' by their 'fathers'.[8] A speech made by Ghaffar Khan to a large meeting at Jehangira in December 1931 offers a good example of this prioritisation:

> …ask an English "Alke" [chap] whether he has received only our country as his share or possesses one of his own also. He would tell you that he has got his own country too. O my Pakhtun brothers, it is not a difficult problem. Just think and try to see [for] yourself. We are also a nation like others. God has given us a land. But my brothers I ask you who is ruling the country which God has given to us? Who are the Khans here and who is the king here? "A Firangi". Just try to think yourself that the Firangis are the Khans, the "Waks" [those who possess authority] and the king in a country of the Pakhtuns. To you it may appear very difficult but we think it to be very easy. O my brothers, our country is not "Och Qalak" [fallow]. Who is enjoying the wealth and the treasure of our country?—"A Firangi". Have some shame. O you cowards! You call yourself 'Pakhtuns'. Do not be so shameless.[9]

Banerjee has illustrated that by accusing his people of cowardice in numerous speeches like this one, Ghaffar Khan was 'explicitly impugning' their 'honour and laying a challenge before them' as he attempted to expand the rank and file of his Khudai Khidmatgars in the early 1930s.[10] These scolding statements assumed that Pashtuns had internalised an inherited tradition, but only in part. For it would have to be applied with greater fervour if Pashtuns were to reconstitute their nation for a better future. Even if Ghaffar Khan claimed that Pashtuns were 'also a nation like others', authentic national status could not be measured by universal standards of blood and soil alone. Compliance with colonialism had replaced freedom and honour with 'shame' and reduced the Pashtun to a 'coward'. By way of their contemporary absence, then, freedom and honour characterise not the nation but, more accurately, the national ideal. In other words, Pashtun named not merely an ethnolinguistic identity but an ethical commitment. It was not enough to be 'given' a 'land' or 'country'; to be truly Pashtun one had to 'possess' or 'rul[e]' it, too. This unwillingness to separate ethical from ethnic was perhaps best illustrated in an earlier speech at Baffa. Observing that the Frontier was not the inheritance of his Khudai Khidmatgars alone, Ghaffar Khan asked his audience whether they, too, would partake in the struggle 'to liberate' it. The Khudai Khidmatgars were preparing a scrumptious '*Pullao*' and would finally invite all their 'brethren' to 'share' it with them. But there was no honour in remaining outside the kitchen 'at the time of cooking' and being in attendance 'at the time of meals.

[8] Khan, 'Wake Up from the Slumber', Chamkani, 26 November 1931, *MSBK*, pp.84-5.
[9] Khan, 'Beware of Tricks and Treachery', Jehangira, 11 December 1931, Ibid, pp.113-4.
[10] Banerjee, *Pathan Unarmed*, p.154.

Wouldn't such a meal be a meal of shame?' And while the Khudai Khidmatgars 'would give them their shares', these fair-weather compatriots 'would keep their heads drooping' knowing well that they had played no role in the struggle for freedom. If Ghaffar Khan stops short of ostracizing bystanders from the national community of the future, full membership is clearly impossible unless one renounces shame for honour. It is significant, then, that while Ghaffar Khan claimed to be addressing his own Pashtun 'brethren' at Baffa, he alerted them to the fact that they had yet to 'make a brotherhood'.[11] Fraternity was not simply about blood.

It is well-known that Ghaffar Khan appropriated nonviolence, or *adm-e-tashadud*, in an effort to humanise a region riven by blood feuds. Like Gandhi, his 'pure servants of God and humanity' refused to take 'any life' but willingly offered to sacrifice their own to prove their universal claim: that nonviolence was an intrinsic moral good of 'permanent value'.[12] Arbab has argued that by reinterpreting Pashtunwali, Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgars were able to persuasively challenge 'Pashtun valorizations of violence' and locate nonviolence in the ethnos. Most significantly, they undermined the popular but narrow interpretation of the precept of *badal* as violent retribution by both returning it to its 'broader meaning' of reciprocity and prizing the less common value of *nanawati*, or forgiveness.[13] But if honour was so irrefutably connected to sovereignty in this ethnocentric imagination, Pashtuns had to be prepared to go into battle against those who had snatched it from them. Therefore, connected to the myth of the proud, autonomous Pashtun was also his status as a warrior. Perpetuated as much by local metacommentaries as those orientalist writers who propagated the idea of Indian martial races, I want to suggest that Ghaffar Khan made use of this customary stereotype but only after splitting it into two detachable characteristics: bravery and violence. By retaining bravery and discarding violence, Ghaffar Khan was free to recreate the Pashtun warrior as a nonviolent agent actively courting violence to prove the moral superiority of his new creed:

> Oh brothers, we are to take part in a war. What kind of war. War of patience. We are about to be put to a test. God says, before conferring kingship upon a nation I see

[11] Khan, 'The Other Side of the Curtain', Baffa, 6 November 1931, p.27.
[12] Khan, Statement to Congress Working Committee, quoted in Gandhi, 'Khan Sahib's Ahimsa', 16 July 1940, *CWMG*, Vol.72, p.277-8.
[13] Arbab, 'Nonviolence', pp.231, 240-3.

> whether the nation is coward or a brave one [*sic*]. Whether it is really as patient as it claims to be. O' brothers if you come out successful from this test the victory is ours.[14]

If this militarism enabled Ghaffar Khan to appropriate received Pashtun themes, he also gave it a distinctly Islamic idiom to which he only alludes in this passage. Elsewhere he was more explicit about what had inspired him to launch a '[w]ar of patience' or *sabr*.[15] Faced with persecution in the city of Mecca, the Prophet of Islam called on his followers to exercise restraint and endure the suffering inflicted on them by their rulers.[16] According to Ghaffar Khan, Muhammad established nonviolence as the 'real way of Muslim life'; he would later recall how political leaders like himself and Gandhi had merely reminded Muslims of this 'forgotten' fact.[17] Like the other great religions, Ghaffar Khan repeatedly noted that Islam had come into the world for human freedom and not to legitimise colonial slavery. Claiming that the Quran and Bhagavad Gita agreed on this score, any invocation of religion by colonised Indians was meaningless in the absence of sovereignty. So just as he temporarily removed freedom and honour from the enslaved Pashtuns, he similarly denied Hindus and Muslims their religions. In August 1934, Ghaffar Khan told a gathering at Patna that since '[o]ur religious books say that the slave had no religion', he was 'surprised' to find Indians vaunting the greatness of their faiths. 'The principles of religion could not be maintained without political power. The political power is with the English so where is your religion', he chided.[18] This was partly why the Fakhr-e-Afghan was unable to comprehend a fearful Muslim League clinging to a foreign power in the name of communal interest. This was troubling not only because Ghaffar Khan had internalised an idea of Pashtun honour; it was also a great contravention of Islam. As his son and political successor Wali Khan put it, if the League 'liked the British regime, they should have openly supported it.' However, 'hiding behind the veneer of Islam' was a 'heinous act' impossible to 'condone'.[19] As for the more pious Khudai Khidmatgars, since they were 'suffering' from the 'same' fate as the companions of Muhammad in the seventh century,[20] they, too, had

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[14] Khan, 'Wake Up', p.87.
[15] Ghaffar Khan was not the first to connect nonviolence to the Islamic concept *sabr*. Though published only posthumously, the satirical Urdu poet Akbar Allahabadi did so as early as 1919 in his Book of Gandhi, or *Gandhi Nama*, (Allahabad, 1948).
[16] Khan, 'Wake Up', p.85.
[17] Khan, Interview with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, conducted by H.D. Sharma, 10 July 1968, NMML, 34, p.17.
[18] Khan, 'Slavery', p.182.
[19] W. Khan, *Facts are Facts*, (Delhi, 1987), p.6.
[20] Khan, 'Wake Up', p.85.

to now instigate a nonviolent holy war. Addressing a crowd at Bannu at the beginning of 1930, Ghaffar Khan maintained that:

> I belong to that party which intends to free the country from the clutches of the tyrant English people, who have not only ruined India but almost the whole Islamic world…. There is no better "Jihad" from the point of view of Islam than to free your own country from slavery and a foreign yoke.[21]

On other occasions he claimed his Khudai Khidmatgars were not only the servants but also the 'Fauj' (army) of God;[22] a Pashtun 'Hazbullah' (party of God) prepared to confront the British agents of 'Shaitan', or Satan.[23] If Ghaffar Khan claimed nonviolence, warfare, and freedom to be authentically Pashtun, these were equally made Islamic legacies. Much like how the Pashtun warrior is reimagined as brave but peaceful, the Muslim mujahid is similarly engaged in a jihad free from violence. Of course, these figures and idioms were not mutually exclusively and often overlapped each other. Like Abdullah in Kashmir, Ghaffar Khan made Islam a significant element of a majoritarian ethnolinguistic nationalism.

But while the figure of the warrior helped the Fakhr-e-Afghan to claim Pashtun and Islamic legitimacy for his nonviolent freedom movement at the regional level, positivising this image for a wider Indian nationalist politics was a far greater challenge. The Pashtun warrior, though not entirely divorced from his bravery and honour, was an essentially negative figure in the Indian imagination: irrationally violent and threateningly untameable. Writing in 1872, Syed Ahmad Khan provided a succinct endorsement of this stereotype. As much a champion of a chauvinistic Hindustani regionalism as he was of social reform among north Indian Muslims, Syed Ahmad had the following to say about the Pashtuns:

> …these mountain tribes have been turbulent from time immemorial; that they have never allowed any peace to any nation living on their frontiers, whether so-called infidels or Musalmans; that they fought indiscriminately with the Mahomedan Emperors of Delhi, and with the Sikhs in the Punjab. Like the Irishman at a fair, it mattered little to them who it was as long as it was someone to fight with. Even the great tyrant, Nadir Shah, whose name was feared throughout India, was never able to keep them in subjection.[24]

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[21] Khan quoted in Shah, *Ethnicity*, p.46.
[22] Khan, 'Beware of Tricks', p.109.
[23] Khan, 'Englishman is No Body's Friend', Jathi, 15 November 1931, *MSBK*, p.73.
[24] Khan, *Review on Hunter's Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?,* (London, 2013 [1872]), p.19.

Wanting to remind his colonial overlords of the chasm that separated refined Hindustani nobles like himself from his barbaric coreligionists, it is instructive that this loyalist plays to his gallery by comparing the Pashtun to the Irishman—the quintessential savage in a certain kind of British imagination. And though he is, much like the orientalist writer, barely able suppress his own admiration for Pashtun independence, it is this essential difference which Syed Ahmad accentuates. Writing seventy years later in 1942, Nehru repeated these clichés just as he condemned the British for creating a 'mental barrier' between Hindustanis and Pashtuns 'based on ignorance and fear'. Complimenting his Pashtun colleagues for their role in the ongoing freedom struggle, Nehru admitted that the success of nonviolence on the Frontier was 'so surprising' because the Pashtun 'loved his gun better than his child or brother'. Since he had long 'valued life cheaply' and 'avenged the slightest insult with the thrust of a dagger', his 'conversion' to nonviolence was 'far from complete' not least because 'he does not worry himself about philosophical or metaphysical speculations.' An intellectually incapable people, what made Pashtuns 'the bravest and most enduring of India's non-violent soldiers' was their simple 'love' for—and 'trust' in—their leader. In fact, Nehru barely spared Ghaffar Khan; it was a 'remarkable thing' that he, being the 'typical Pathan that he is, should have taken to non-violence so earnestly and so thoroughly.'[25]

If Nehru was using this language eleven years after the Khudai Khidmatgars had joined Congress, we can imagine the enormity of the task Ghaffar Khan had set himself when he spoke of replacing 'propaganda' with 'knowledge' and 'fright' with 'love'.[26] Though the division between Pashtuns and other Indians represented a classic case of *divide et impera*, the Fakhr-e-Afghan claimed that it had been heightened by the strategic importance of his province. Since collaboration was sure to put their empire in jeopardy, the British had reasoned that their fraudulent narrative of Pashtun aggression and savagery should be kept alive in the low country. But if Hindustanis had been warned that Pashtuns would 'descend and swallow you' in the event of independence, the British had also sought to frighten the almost exclusively Muslim Pashtuns by calling on the spectre of 'Hindu Raj'. To counter this imperial mythology,

[25] Nehru, 'Foreword', in Yunus, *Frontier*, pp.vii-x.
[26] Khan, 'Congress', pp.204-5.

Ghaffar Khan not only confronted—but occasionally reinvented—it, as he did during his public speeches at Bombay in October 1934. Explaining that in British parlance the Frontier made for 'the gateway of India' and the Pashtuns its 'gate-keepers',[27] Ghaffar Khan noted that:

> Our offence was only this that we had joined you, i.e. the Indians. The Frontier is the Gate of India. It is the door to India. Therefore, the people there are the gate-keepers. They [the British] say that when the gate-keepers join India then how can the gate be protected? Then India would certainly get *Swaraj*. This is our offence. …they always want that we should remain separate from you and you should remain separate from us. They want to create hatred between you and us. When do they want that national love should be created among us. When we become one, then what will they do? …I tell you that [the] government is displeased with us for this reason that we love you. It will be further displeased to hear that you had invited me.[28]

> Brothers, all this is mere propaganda. All the Pathans are not Angels. In every community there are good as well as bad people…. In the year 1932, a congressman asked me: 'Is it true that the Pathans suck the blood of human beings[?]' I replied that it was quite true. He asked me the reason. I said 'human blood is very delicious[,] you have never tasted it[?]' I tell you that such is the knowledge of a Congressman. All of you, sisters and brothers of India, in our India, the Hindu, the Musalman, the Parsis and the Sikhs are quite ignorant of this little province of India which is your gate-keeper, and which is your gate.[29]

Reusing the apparent importance afforded to his people and homeland by the Raj, Ghaffar Khan makes them central to its rival project. For if subdued Pashtuns and a secure Frontier were vital to British interests, it was consequently also true that they held great potential for Congress nationalism. The 'offence' of the Khudai Khidmatgars lay not in simply adding their voice to the rising cacophony of anticolonial protest, but in their facilitation of an almost guaranteed path to Indian freedom. Growing unity between Pashtuns and other Indians under the Congress banner is posing increasingly unanswerable questions for the now endangered British; 'what will they do?', asks the Fakhr-e-Afghan. And while he is sure that the process of national unity remains unfinished, he alludes to how reciprocal adoption (or even ownership) might complete it. If Ghaffar Khan referred to the people of the low country as 'Indians' or Hindustanis from whom Pashtuns were ethnically and culturally different, he concurrently took possession of 'our India'. Similarly, he requests his Bombay audience to make 'this little province of India' its own. And while these originally negative appellations of 'gate' and

[27] Ibid, p.204.
[28] Khan, 'Awakened Women', pp.219-20.
[29] Khan, 'Congress', p.205.

'gate-keepers' had been used by the British to justify curtailing civil liberties, political reform, and the development of educational institutions in the Frontier, Ghaffar Khan begins to imbue them with a positive content of his own to redefine the relationship with the rest of India. Stripping the Frontier of its British ownership, he finally hands his homeland over to his countrymen; it is now 'your gate-keeper' and 'your gate'. This is despite (or perhaps because of) their 'ignorance' and even prejudice; other Indians are asked to trust in his sincerity, leave aside their preconceptions, and reimagine the Frontier for a new, national partnership. A distant place from which they had been deliberately cut-off, many other Indian political thinkers were neither sure whether it belonged to their country nor willing to distinguish between the Pashtuns of India and Afghanistan. Syed Ahmad, for instance, made no effort to draw a modern border and preferred to use the established language of undifferentiated Pashtun aggression when he described them as 'a swarm of locusts' waiting for their opportunity to 'make rivers of blood' out of northern India and Bengal.[30] And if Abdullah admired Ghaffar Khan as a 'patriotic Indian' who gave his 'all for freedom',[31] in 1946 he had also wondered whether the Frontier would 'prefer' to 'throw its lot with Afghanistan' where Pashtuns made for the largest ethnolinguistic group.[32] I will return to the relationship with Afghanistan later, but let us now briefly examine the connotations of the name coined by the colonial state for its Pashtun lands: the North-West Frontier Province. Soulless and topographical, it must have furthered its mystique not least because it was an oxymoron. A frontier, by its very definition, connotes something inexact. An expansive area between the known and the unknown, to what and whom it belongs is easily made into a matter for contestation. By stark contrast, the modern province is a precisely demarcated administrative unit sharing boundaries and connections with other units in a single country or empire. It seems that Ghaffar Khan sought to lift this air of mystery from the Indian imagination by convincing his compatriots that his homeland was not an inexact frontier, but a bona fide province situated on the Indian side of an international border. It may have been 'little' but it was still a 'province of India'.

In his 1942 treatise *Frontier Speaks*, Yunus furthered this Indian claim to the Frontier with a similar inversion of British logic while chalking out a scheme for the

[30] Khan, 'The Indian National Congress', Meerut, 16 March 1888, *WSSSAK*, p.185.
[31] Abdullah, '*Shabistan*', p.131; and 'Statement by PM', p.110.
[32] Abdullah, 'Thoughts on Pakistan', p.185.

integration of the centrally-administered Pashtun Tribal Areas in a 'Free India'. Buoyed by the careful attention that Nehru, his other famous mentor, was giving to this problem, Yunus rebutted a recent British publication by declaring that the future Congress state 'will never think in terms of creating "strong lines of *defence against* these tribes", but will look to them for the *defence of* the northern gateway to our motherland.'[33] Like Ghaffar Khan, Yunus not only converts this 'gateway' from a colonial to nationalist trope but also envisages reciprocity. In return for this defence of India, the tribesmen are to be saved from their current 'hardships'. No longer will their lands be subject to aerial bombing and made the 'shooting preserve' of 'ambitious' army officers. As was characteristic of the way these thinkers held both Pashtun and Indian nationalist positions concurrently, Yunus spoke as much for the tribes as he did the anticipated nation-state. Summarising his prescription for Indian nationalists in their negotiations with these sceptical tribes, Yunus noted that '*we* can easily win them over by love'. But guarding against any deception by Congress, he also firmly reiterated that: 'Times have changed and *we* expect a fair deal for our people.'[34] Yunus proceeded to document how, in 1938, following reports of multiple kidnappings carried out in the Settled Districts by tribal raiders, Nehru all but appropriated the politics of his Pashtun colleagues by extending a hand of friendship to a group of tribesmen at an interaction in Bannu. Convinced that they were his friends, Nehru was prepared to send his only child, Indira, among them trusting that she would be met with no harm. The tribesmen, apparently overwhelmed by this gesture, 'pledged their word' to treat Indira as 'their guest and their friend, and the daughter of a friend.' If this 'was the striking result of an individual approach on a single occasion', Yunus wondered what could be achieved if this policy of 'love' were to be implemented 'on a national scale' after independence.[35] It is notable that Ghaffar Khan and Yunus sought to connect Pashtuns—whether in the Settled Districts or Tribal Areas—to the modalities of the emerging nation-state. If the rest of India is asked to reclaim its forgotten 'little province', gatekeeping did not have to be a burdensome task for colonised Pashtuns; it could embody patriotic honour and obligation in a free country. So an imperial language—with all its hierarchical connotations—has been completely repackaged to forge a national relationship

[33] Yunus, *Frontier*, p.95. Emphasis mine.
[34] Ibid, p.96. Emphasis mine.
[35] Ibid, pp.91, 97.

between equals. This idea has echoes of the Allahabad address made by Iqbal in 1930 and which we encountered in the previous chapter. While Iqbal was less interested in regional categories let alone a politics that took inspiration from Pashtunwali, he too envisaged a symbiotic relationship between a martial Muslim-majority northwest and the remainder of Hindu-dominated India. Iqbal, like the Pashtun Congressmen, claimed that the Muslims of the northwest inhabited a borderland but were firmly on its Indian side. The protection sought by the rest of India was not from them but what lay beyond. But unlike Ghaffar Khan and especially Yunus who, as we will soon discover, fused his ethical concerns with a sympathy for Soviet socialism, Iqbal was alluding to the threat posed by atheistic Russian materialism.[36]

It should already be clear that when Ghaffar Khan and Yunus spoke of 'national love' they were referring to reciprocity. Love entailed actively securing the honour of your national partner and trusting it to secure your own. It, therefore, named the acceptance of Nehru's hypothetical proposal by the tribesmen as well as the relationship Yunus envisaged between them and an Indian centre. And when Ghaffar Khan repeatedly referred to the 'bonds of love'[37] being forged between Pashtuns and Hindustanis during his visit to Bombay, these were clearly understood as additional constructions built on the foundational pact of honour and obligation that he had settled with the Congress leadership three years previously. Ultimately a man of action, Ghaffar Khan almost always located this national love in episodes of interaction between Pashtuns and other Indians as opposed to any grand theory. There were the Parsis of Bombay, the first community that 'came to our country to help us.' Recounting the efforts of Khorshed Ben, a Parsi woman who visited the Frontier and created 'a spirit among our women', Ghaffar Khan notes that 'she was twice imprisoned for the sake of the Frontier. For her, the whole of our Province has gone mad out of love.'[38] It is not accidental that the multiple visits of Nehru and Gandhi are given generous attention in the memoirs of both Ghaffar Khan and Yunus. Much like the Mahatma, the Fakhr-e-Afghan held that the implementation of an ethical politics required charismatic personalities who led by example. Political instruction, they believed, had to come from above. It was on these visits that 'bonds of friendship and understanding' were

[36] Iqbal, 'Presidential Address', pp.159-60.
[37] Khan, 'Awakened Women', p.219.
[38] Ibid, p.218.

cemented and 'lasting impressions' of these leaders were said to have been made on the people of the Frontier.[39] On an individual level, it is significant that in his memoir, Ghaffar Khan chose to recount the moral support he offered to his fellow political prisoners at Dera Ghazi Khan in 1922. Hindus and Sikhs from the Punjab, they refused to follow a prison order demanding the removal of their Gandhian caps and religious turbans.[40] These tangible moments are interesting because unlike a distant history—the great sentimental bond in so many renderings of the Indian nation—they are lived by the very people who have been tasked with fashioning this modern entity. Though Azad conjured a presentism of his own, he had no choice but to seek inspiration from history to create his Indian nation. Unlike Ghaffar Khan, the Maulana had no equivalent library of contemporary nation-making episodes to draw on. One of the two constituent units of his shared nation, his own Muslim community of Hindustan had failed to enter the nationalist movement *en masse* and had been greatly seduced by religious separatism. And while this was less of a problem for Abdullah, he was so eager to retain as much contemporary political space for his Kashmiri national community as possible, that his Indian idea was forced to rely largely on history and culture, too. Neither the Maulana nor the Sheikh could match the Fakhr-e-Afghan for an Indian national presentism who, on this score, too, had more in common with Gandhi. As Devji has shown, whether he was attempting to foster Hindu-Muslim *mitrata* (friendship) or using the principle of *seva* (service) to reconstruct relations between Caste Hindus and Dalits, the Mahatma remained fixated on the present.[41]

On 23 April 1930, scores of unarmed Khudai Khidmatgar protestors were gunned down by British soldiers at the Qissa Khwani Bazaar in Peshawar. The defining moment of the freedom struggle in the Frontier, it is often remembered for catapulting the Khudai Khidmatgar movement to fame across the country. I want to suggest that since it was easily made to encapsulate not only nonviolence but also national love, Ghaffar Khan and Yunus memorialised this event and its immediate aftermath as a great nation-making moment for their ethical India. We have already touched on how Congress overtures ultimately led to its integration of the Khudai Khidmatgars. The actions of Vithalbhai Patel, the Congress president who against the wishes of the

[39] Yunus, *Persons, Passions and Politics*, (Ghaziabad, 1980), pp.16-7.
[40] Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan*, (Delhi, 1969), pp.76-7.
[41] Devji, *Impossible Indian*, pp.71-2.

colonial state commissioned an inquiry into the massacre, made for one such overture. At a Congress meeting to mark his first death anniversary, the Fakhr-e-Afghan paid one of his many tributes to the memory of Patel:

> I am thankful to you all for having given me the opportunity of sharing the sorrow for that person, that great personality who helped our people at a time of peril. Every child, every youth and every old man of the Frontier remembers President Patel in his heart of hearts and as long as the world exists the inhabitants of the Frontier cannot forget President Patel.[42]

Fundamentally contemporary, Congress nationalism is about sharing emotions and values. Pashtuns can share in a national sorrow at the loss of an inspirational leader who had embodied ethical politics by unconditionally confronting the imperial power at a perilous moment for the sake of the embattled Pashtuns and justice for their slain Khudai Khidmatgars. Obligated to him for attempting to uphold their honour, they 'cannot forget' their deceased President; Patel had kindled love in their 'heart of hearts'. The evolution of a national relationship out of this inauspicious moment, however, had not been left to Congressmen alone. Some two decades after independence and Partition, Ghaffar Khan wrote that:

> This was also the memorable day when the Garhwali troops gave testimony of their love for their country and their people by refusing to fire at the crowd. The heroic sacrifice of so many patriots and the courage shown by the Garhwali troops will never be blotted out from the nation's memory.[43]

The Garhwali troops—whose homes were located at the other end of the Himalayan range—are made as much Peshawari as the slain Pashtuns; 'their love' had made that city 'their country' and its residents 'their people'. Despite the colonial conspiracies conjured to divide Indians and their own inherent diversity, they were gradually becoming a 'nation'. If Ghaffar Khan was only alluding to the fact that the Indian nation—even more than its Pashtun equivalent—was a fundamentally ethical and, therefore, contingent community, Yunus' account of this episode extends that idea. Attempting to explain its 'potency', he notes in *Frontier Speaks* how nonviolent 'direct action':

> …has been responsible for rousing our people from their deep slumber and emboldening them to challenge the might of the British Empire in India. Non-Violence is capable of producing sympathy in the hearts of the opponent and demoralizing the

[42] Khan, 'Tributes to Vithalbhai Patel', 22 October 1934, Bombay, *MSBK*, p.198.
[43] Khan, *Autobiography*, p.103.

> forces of evil. In this connexion the case of the Garhwali soldiers who refused to open fire on the crowds at Peshawar is most striking. …when these Garhwalis were brought in to relieve the foreign troops, they saw unarmed and peaceful crowds standing in front of them—ready to die over the blood of their comrades that had been flowing since that morning. It was a tragic sight, and these Garhwalis were touched by such scenes of heroic suffering. They refused to kill men struggling for their freedom, and thus subjected themselves to court-martial and long terms of imprisonment. Surely their conduct will go down in history and will be remembered with pride for generations to come.[44]

What must have made this case so particularly significant for Ghaffar Khan and Yunus was that it gave credence to multiple ideas. It was a successful example of courting violence on the battlefield to instigate the opponent's conversion to nonviolence and, thus, the promise of a more ethical future. But the refusal of the Garhwalis to fire on the Khudai Khidmatgars is especially interesting because the opponent also has the unusual potential to become not merely the former (but still othered) foe but a fellow compatriot. Like Ghaffar Khan, Yunus would elsewhere memorialise the 'glory' of the Garhwalis who 'refused to fire on their unarmed countrymen.'[45] However removed they may have been from the Pashtuns, the Garhwalis too were an indigenous Indian group and, therefore, were never destined to remain opponents. Like those Pashtuns who dithered over joining the Khudai Khidmatgars, the Garhwalis simply had to accept the ethical element of the nationalist equation. Now 'rous[ed]' out of 'their slumber' by nonviolence and willing to sacrifice their livelihoods for the prison cell because they loved their Pashtun 'countrymen', these British collaborators are easily made 'our people'. Both Ghaffar Khan and Yunus quickly couple Garhwali 'courage' and 'conduct' with that of the slain Pashtuns; it is their synonymous morality which gives this moment such ethico-national significance. But that is not all, for the Garhwalis, who had also been awarded the colonial status of a martial people, provided the Khudai Khidmatgars with a mirror image of themselves. Led by Chandra Singh who, in Yunus' words, 'emerged as the symbol of those gallant men',[46] the Garhwali regiment that was sent to Peshawar were warriors, too. And prompted by the 'heroic' example of the Pashtuns, they had finally decided to also split this received stereotype down the middle to retain bravery and discard violence.

[44] Yunus, *Frontier*, p.173.
[45] Yunus, *Frontier*, p.118; *Politics*, p.6.
[46] Yunus, *Politics*, p.6.

Though it has failed to retain its place in the popular imagination of India and Pakistan, in its own time the shootings at Qissa Khwani Bazaar won a status not dissimilar to that of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar in 1919.[47] Yunus celebrated the fact that Nehru, in a statement to Congress members at Wardha in January 1942, traced an Indian 'hatred and hostility' for British colonial rule that began with the 1857 Rebellion, whose intermediate point was Amritsar, and whose latest landmark were the atrocities inflicted on Khudai Khidmatgars.[48] It was of no significance, either to Yunus or Nehru, that the ancestors of the martyred Punjabis and Pashtuns had fought against the Hindustani rebels in 1857. Certainly, for Yunus, what mattered was the increasingly accepted idea that Pashtuns and the Frontier were the national equals of these other peoples and their homelands. He attempted something similar himself in his memoir. Dwelling on the Indian National Army trials of 1945-6, Yunus charts the history of rebellion in the armed forces:

> The British Government had already been alarmed by the refusal of the Garhwal Regiment to fire on an unarmed crowd at Peshawar in 1930, the large-scale uprising of the Naval ratings at Bombay in February 1946, and the signs of growing nationalism in the troops. They were frightened that an escalation of this tendency could result in open hostilities among the armed forces. This had to be avoided. So the three accused of treason were let off on 3 January 1946.[49]

How far this is an accurate retelling of India's late colonial military history is unimportant. What is significant is that in this sweeping overview of patriotic feeling among servicemen, the Peshawar massacre finds an exalted place. Just as in the Fakhr-e-Afghan's account, Peshawar is no longer a remote city inhabited by an unfamiliar people but has been converted into a place for all Indians. The love of the Garhwali soldier and the sacrifice of the Khudai Khidmatgar had made that city not only an emblem for the freedom struggle but a site for the construction of a single nationality. It was now as Indian as Bombay where the navy had revolted or the Red Fort in Delhi which hosted the trials. Indeed, for Ghaffar Khan and Yunus, the story of 1930 had national and not simply regional meaning. As the Fakhr-e-Afghan put it, it 'deserves to be recorded in the annals of the freedom movement in golden letters.'[50]

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[47] For how the wider Congress movement received the Peshawar massacre see Banerjee, *Pathan Unarmed*, p.58.
[48] Yunus, *Frontier*, pp.118-9.
[49] Yunus, *Politics*, p.53.
[50] Khan, *Autobiography*, p.103.

Parity and the Ideological State

It is interesting that though he recognised India's regional and religious diversity, Ghaffar Khan frequently imagined national unity as the coming together of two peoples: the predominately Hindu Hindustanis and the almost exclusively Muslim Pashtuns. Though he referred to 'the Hindu, the Musalman, the Parsis and the Sikhs' in his aforementioned statements at Bombay in 1934, they nevertheless emerge as a single body of 'Indians' tasked with engaging their Pashtun countrymen. Since the British had attempted to 'separate' 'you' from 'us' and 'create hatred between you and us', 'national love' is to be actuated not between multiple Indian groups but between these two blocs. In his speeches on the Frontier, Ghaffar Khan often claimed to be debunking colonial propaganda as he reassured his Muslim audiences that Congress was 'not the Jirgah of only Hindus' but included 'Musalmans, Sikhs, Jews and Christians', too; it was 'a common Jirgah of all the communities of India.'[51] But in his attempt to frame Indian nationalism as a bilateral equation in which Pashtuns made for one of two partners in a struggle for freedom, Ghaffar Khan was not averse to occasionally reducing 'the Indians' to 'the Hindus' as he did at Dab in November 1931:

> Brethren, this is also a similar tale. The English is a common enemy to both the Hindus and Afghans. The English have snatched away the country from the Hindus and Afghans. The English has made naked and hungry both Hindus and Afghans. The Hindus also wish taking back the country from the English [*sic*], they should serve their brethren and this is what we wish that we should serve our brethren. This is the story. The English is a common enemy of the Hindus and the Pakhtuns. Show me what bad thing is there in it. We have become amalgamated with our Hindu brethren, so that they may catch one of the legs of our powerful enemy and we catch him by his second one and in this way tear it into two. This is the aim. We are with no body [*sic*]. We want freedom, we want to liberate our country. The persons in India who want freedom would be against the English. They are also about to turn the English out of their country and we would be along with them because we want freedom.[52]

Almost certainly responsible for these lexical choices, it will become increasingly clear that this idea of parity was premised upon the reluctance of Muslims in the Hindu-majority provinces to join the Congress movement. To some extent, Ghaffar Khan took on the established language of their political thinkers only to radically remake it for other ends. Be that as it may, I want to suggest that, at least, here, it did not matter whether the national partners of the Pashtuns were better described as a regional or

[51] Khan, 'Turn out the Informer', 12 December 1931, Bekai, *MSBK*, p.124
[52] Khan, 'Founding of Khudai Khidmatgar', p.54.

religious grouping. What concerned the Fakhr-e-Afghan was establishing a relationship of equality with this other group since, like his own people, it 'want[s] freedom', too. This idea of equality, of course, had to disregard the strength of numbers as is underlined here by a figurative vivisection of the British imperialist. I have already mentioned how, like Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan took the supposition of Indian nationalism to be colonial servitude; this was perhaps the Fakhr-e-Afghan's most vivid elucidation of this essentially negative union of 'naked[ness] and hung[er]'. If this plight equalised 'Hindus and Afghans', their ambitions are identical, too: to 'serve' their respective 'brethren' once they have 'liberate[d]' their respective 'countr[ies]'. But like how Abdullah confusingly used these descriptors to denote his Kashmiri as well as Indian nations, Ghaffar Khan also speaks of a single 'country' that has been 'snatched away' from the Pashtuns and their 'Hindu brethren' with whom they 'have become amalgamated'.

The Fakhr-e-Afghan's commitment to a politics of honour meant that this elevation of the customarily peripheral Pashtun minority to the position of an Indian national equal was almost inevitable. In an interview from 1968, Ghaffar Khan recounts an exchange with Nehru which presumably took place soon after the Khudai Khidmatgars formally joined Congress in 1931. Since the Frontier Congress was growing considerably, Nehru suggested increasing the 'financial assistance' it received from Congress' central funds. But when Ghaffar Khan refused to accept the proposal, an 'angry' Nehru complained to M.A. Ansari about the 'arrogance' of the Frontier leader:

> I told Doctor Sahab [Ansari] that I only said that we do not want any monetary aid. This country is, indeed, yours and it is ours, too. To serve it is your duty as well as ours, so why should we take money from you! Because I did not like this idea, that's why I said this to him [Nehru]. The reality was that Panditji [Nehru] was not well-acquainted with my nature [*tabiyat*]. And when he became well-acquainted and understood me, then our relationship became deeper; our love and friendship increased.[53]

The Pashtuns of the Frontier were the equals of the Hindustanis who held the reins of Congress. Taking further 'monetary aid' from them would have amounted to an erosion of this national status, especially when Pashtuns were apparently capable of bearing their share of the financial costs incurred by the nationalist movement. Though they placed their honour in the hands of their beloved Hindustanis when they had no way of

[53] Khan, Interview, p.3.

preserving it themselves, this was no such case. Whatever the conventions of large political organisations, the implications of Nehru's proposal are unacceptable to Ghaffar Khan. It was only by contributing a fair share that the Fakhr-e-Afghan could legitimately claim that the 'country', and the 'duty' to 'serve' it, was as much Pashtun as it was Hindustani. And so, it is interesting that Ghaffar Khan chose to note that Nehru had yet to be 'acquainted' with his '*tabiyat*'; a word that connotes not merely 'nature' but also mind, disposition, and perhaps most crucially here, intrinsic quality. This unwillingness to accept anything less than an equal status was quite clearly part the Fakhr-e-Afghan's great internalisation of Pashtun mythology. And much like the national relationship envisaged for Pashtuns and Hindustanis, it is the eventual appreciation of the true character of his colleague that leads Nehru to a relationship of 'love and friendship'.

But it was not only the righteous who were to be equalised for a shared modern nationality. This obsession with establishing parity from a peripheral subject position is underscored by the way Yunus likened contemporary Pashtun tribal raiders to the marauding Sikhs and Marathas which 'used to attack the Imperial forces of Aurangzeb'. Though he condemns tribal kidnappings as 'deplor[able]', Yunus adds that little else could be expected from a people driven by the British towards a battle for mere sustenance. Dismissing prevalent charges of a '"love for loot or religious fanaticism"', he argued that Pashtun tribesmen were simply repeating an established phenomenon among Indian martial races. Innocents, he noted, had endured similar troubles in yesteryear, too.[54] Pashtun indiscretions, then, are made as immoral—or as forgivable—as those of regional groups that Yunus' countrywide readership is thought to have understood as *more* Indian than his own. If Pashtuns could be elevated to positions apparently already occupied by other Indians to establish national parity, so, too, could other Indians be demoted for the same purpose.

In his preface to Yunus' *Frontier Speaks*, Ghaffar Khan referred to 'a dual phenomenon—the complete individuality of the Pathan and yet his unity with the rest of India towards the attainment of a common goal.' Though 'the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement [had] grow[n] out of the very soil of the Frontier Province', it had nevertheless 'slowly f[ound] a place in the larger Freedom Movement of a big

[54] Yunus, *Frontier*, pp.86-7.

subcontinent.'[55] It is clear, from these two sentences alone, that Ghaffar Khan locates conventional Old World nationalism among Pashtuns and is, unlike Abdullah, uninterested in sharing its themes with other Indians. Instead, Indians exist as a 'continent[al]' and civic grouping in search of a contemporary 'goal'; a difference which persists throughout this preface:

> …while the Pathans are intensely freedom-loving and resent any kind of subjugation, most of them are beginning to understand that their freedom can well harmonize with the conception of Indian Freedom, and that is why they have joined hands with the rest of their countrymen in a common struggle, instead of favouring the scheme of breaking up India into many States. They have come to realize that the division of India will result in an all-round weakness in the modern word, where no part of it will have sufficient resources and strength to preserve its own freedom. The days of isolationism are no more. A new conception of international collaboration and co-operation is seeking to be born. The Pathans hate compulsion and dictation of any type, but out of their own free will, they are prepared to work in unity and co-operation with others in this country…. But while I share these sentiments with my people, I cannot for a moment deny them the right of self-determination. There can be no forced conversion to a doctrine, and at the proper time, each unit will automatically exercise its own discretion to decide any future, yet the desirability of India as a whole developing close relations and endeavouring to build up a powerful federation of Asiatic peoples to resist aggression from outside, cannot be ruled out and will act as the chief factor to compel the forces of separatism to think differently and establish close contacts with those they are opposing today.[56]

If Indian unity had been forged out of mutual bondage, Ghaffar Khan now added to this fundamental negativity by noting that the 'chief factor' in favour of a single independent state would be the defensive preservation of any newly won freedom. And just as the sovereign Pashtun nation had voluntarily established Indian unity to achieve that freedom, so, too, would it have to consent to joining this new state, however alluring it appeared to its leader. In his wish to both champion the cause of Indian unity and yet preserve 'the right of self-determination' for 'each unit', then, Ghaffar Khan mirrored Abdullah. But what interests me most of all here is how India emerges, not as anything organic as it did for the Sher-e-Kashmir, but as an intensely ideological union. It is an entirely 'new', 'modern', and even 'international' country of 'collaborati[ng] and co-operati[ng]' nations. Nothing underlines this claim more than Ghaffar Khan, albeit momentarily, favouring the relatively emptier descriptor 'Asiatic' over his ostensibly confused usage of 'Indian'. The latter, of course, referred both to a *new* political

[55] Khan, 'Preface', Ibid, p.xi.
[56] Ibid, pp.xi-xii.

nationality and the people and culture of an *old* Hindustan—just as 'Afghan' denoted the national identity of the citizens of Afghanistan but also the transborder community of Pashtuns. Rather than any sudden negation of his own Indianness, this choice epitomises his effort to set aside heavy historical, cultural, and even majoritarian baggage in favour of imagining India anew. To be Indian in this truly modern sense, one had to 'conver[t]' to a 'doctrine'; and while there could be no 'forced conversion', the Fakhr-e-Afghan is confident that the draw of 'a powerful federation' was so great that it would ultimately 'compel the forces of separatism to think differently'. So far, we have seen that aside from its foundational objective of independence, ethical commitments to nonviolence and trust were also part of this Indian 'doctrine'. It might be reasonable to assume that since this ideological India had to be moulded with Pashtun nationality, Ghaffar Khan, again like Abdullah, must have imagined a similarly federal polity emerging after independence. But if he propagated the national right to decide whether to join an Indian federation, it is significant that this preface made no complementary claim to its decentralised character. In fact, over the following pages I want to suggest that while Ghaffar Khan and Yunus retained an idea of regional autonomy, it was greatly informed by their commitment to the socialist nation-state.

In September 1956, Ghaffar Khan was put on trial at the High Court of West Pakistan in Lahore. He was charged with bringing the territorial integrity of Pakistan into disrepute at large public meetings organised to protest the amalgamation of its western provinces under the One-Unit scheme. In a lengthy statement to the court, the former Congressman recalled his original opposition to the creation of the state to which he had since sworn allegiance:

> In my opinion the quarrel between Hindus and Muslims was not because of religion, but it was due to economic factors; and I knew that the British Government had exploited the situation and accentuated this quarrel. I was sure that after the overthrow of the British Government when the country would be free and a national government would be formed with our own people at the helm of affairs, the whole atmosphere would change and our mutual relations would improve. But gradually even after that if strained Hindu-Muslim relations did not improve, then we could part company with the Hindus, and nothing could prevent us from doing so. The Congress had recognised the principle of provincial autonomy and the provinces had a right, if the majority in a certain province decided to secede from the Centre, to do so and become an autonomous state…. In united India the number of Muslims was ten crores, and I think such a large number could not be suppressed easily. I was of the view that no power could destroy us, and if anyone tried to enslave us, then we would secede from the federation. I was supporting the federal form of government with this consideration in

> view that if the Congress was prepared to accept our conditions and assure us that the future Government of India would be a socialist republic, the Muslims should join the proposed Indian federation, and in this lay their genuine interest. In my view the greatest attraction for the Muslims under a socialist republic form of government was that as against the Hindus, they as a community, constituted the poorer section.[57]

Ghaffar Khan repeats an important argument made by Azad in colonial times: the sheer number of Indian Muslims meant that they did not exist as a powerless minority. But more significant is the fact that Ghaffar Khan, once again, alluded to his belief that trust ought to be the foundational idea for all political relations. We have seen already that on the Hindu-Muslim question, at least, the Maulana took a similar view. As he did throughout his career, the Fakhr-e-Afghan acknowledges that his method leaves open the possibility of betrayal. Nevertheless, he was loath to prejudge Hindu behaviour inside a federal union. Muslim recourse to provincial secession was to be taken only: 'if strained Hindu-Muslim relations did not improve' or 'if anyone tried to enslave us'. Unlike Jinnah for whom trust can never replace or even supplement the idea of a legal contract, for Ghaffar Khan this was not a speculative prescription for blind faith. There are two important reasons for this. Firstly, if Ghaffar Khan formulated these opinions about a united India in the months and days prior to Partition in 1947, it followed from a sixteen-year association with Congress which he had long understood in terms of successfully maintained pledges between Hindu Hindustanis and Muslim Pashtuns. Relations between Indians within Congress had been anchored in a universalizable ethical equation of love, trust, honour, and obligation; their League compatriots, then, could similarly accept a set of 'conditions' and 'assur[ances]'. And secondly, we are asked to consider the details of these apparently reasonable concessions made by Congress. Since it 'had recognised the principle of provincial autonomy' and was promising an inclusive 'socialist' future for all Indians, it made good sense for the Muslim minority to suspend their judgement and take their Hindu compatriots at face value. And yet, it is important to recognise that this was not quite a repeat of Azad or Abdullah's suggestion that dangling a federal carrot might have tempted Jinnah to relinquish Pakistan. For unlike the late colonial schemes of his colleagues, here Ghaffar Khan refused to qualify the extent of 'provincial autonomy'. Though an earnest Congress concession, it remained a 'principle' which Ghaffar Khan crucially wedded to

[57] Khan, Statement to Court, Lahore, 6 September 1956, reprinted in D.G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle*, (Delhi, 1967), p.494.

socialism. For Ghaffar Khan and Yunus, socialism was as much a national, as it was a regional, project. This meant that though provincial rights were of value, these had to be settled alongside the demands of the Nehruvian state. Consequently, both thinkers were unwilling to sanction the more precise and inflexible definitions provided not only by the Sher-e-Kashmir but, as we saw in the previous chapter, Khan Sahib, too. That said, after serving his own time in Pakistani jails, Khan Sahib threw his lot in with the establishment. By the time his brother faced trial in Lahore for opposing the creation of West Pakistan, Khan Sahib had spent nearly a year as its first chief minister.

Interestingly, then, if socialism intensified Abdullah's search for a light constitutional relationship between Kashmir and an Indian centre, it tempered any similar tendency among two of his Pashtun allies. The context in which these political thinkers operated might begin to explain this difference. While the Khudai Khidmatgars retained their own political organisation under the Congress umbrella, its leadership nevertheless rose to the top of an anticolonial party that thought in national terms. As we saw in the previous chapter, Abdullah established a more autonomous political movement which, though friendly to Congress and not entirely cut off from the politics of British India, had to confront an indigenous, feudal, and chauvinistic ruler largely on its own. Moreover, Abdullah believed that Jammu and Kashmir was already rich and large enough to survive as a self-sufficient unit within an Indian federation. Inhabiting a deficit province, the Frontier Congressmen did not make that claim. Even Khan Sahib refused to do so.[58] When in 1937-9 and 1945-7, he claimed to run socialist governments which were incidentally met with some success,[59] he had relied significantly on subsidies from Delhi. Ghaffar Khan had long envisaged the establishment of a welfare state in the Frontier which prioritised the adequate supply of food and the construction of schools and hospitals.[60] But his statement from 1956 also alluded to how the Pashtuns—as well as other Muslim groups—might struggle to realise and sustain what was undoubtedly their 'genuine interest' without a countrywide 'socialist' government working towards that same end. Yunus was more explicit when he wrote in 1942 that,

[58] When in 1946 Khan Sahib asserted that he wanted the Frontier to be declared independent in the event of a religious partition, the Cabinet Mission shot back by asking him how it would survive without the Indian army and central subsidies. Khan Sahib could only reply that he 'would rather not say' (Meeting between CD, Wavell, and Khan Sahib, p.74).
[59] For details see Shah, *Ethnicity*.
[60] Khan, 'God Helps Those with Patience', Shinkiari, 7 November 1931, *MSBK*, p.37.

after independence, the solution to scarcity in the Frontier—especially in the Tribal Areas—would lie in the hands of other Indians. An initial supply of surplus foods would have to be requested from 'those living in the rich and fertile plains of India.' Effortlessly mixing social justice with his ethical politics of national love, Yunus asks whether other Indians, by 'ris[ing] to assist these countrymen of theirs in their fight against hunger and poverty', could 'be just where nature has been otherwise.' But such charity was no long-term solution. Taking inspiration from the Soviet Union's 'planned economy', Yunus proposed diverting central funds—which the British had 'scandalously wasted' on 'demoralising' the tribes—towards agricultural investment. Hoping to do more than alleviate the Frontier from its deficit status, Yunus argued that his policy would make the tribal districts 'not only self-sufficient, but also highly productive in a few years' time.'[61] If the Khudai Khidmatgars could pay their way during the freedom struggle and refuse aid from the Congress High Command, for this greater problem of 'hunger and poverty' they had no choice but to once again put their honour in the hands of those that loved them.

Yunus' belief that an independent India would be shaped significantly by its central government seemed to develop in the years immediately preceding the publication of *Frontier Speaks* in 1942. That he spent much of this time with Nehru is no coincidence. In his memoir, Yunus recounts his experience of shadowing Nehru as he presided over the meetings of the National Planning Committee from 1938:

> Its proceedings and the nature of discussions opened up many new vistas of thought and the habit to see things in their totality. It enabled me to understand the complexities of the socio-economic hazards facing us then, and how we could disentangle ourselves from them. It made one think of India as a single entity and its people as one large family. One realized at the very outset that whether it was to find a solution to the problem of soil preservation, flood control, literacy, health facilities, or increased industrial output, the approach had to be all-pervading. No half measures could possibly tackle the insurmountable tasks or lessen their magnitude. Those discussions provided a useful glimpse into the future and things could be seen properly in their larger context.[62]

Grounded in contemporary ethics, the ideological Indian nation required an equally modern state. And these were not mutually exclusive but rather vitally interconnected phenomena. The politics of nonviolence, trust, and love had anticipated political freedom redressing Pashtun and Indian dishonour. The 'socialist republic' was the

[61] Yunus, *Frontier*, pp.97-8.
[62] Yunus, *Politics*, p.31.

means by which to fulfil the material aspect of this project. It might be said, then, that Ghaffar Khan and Yunus struck a balance of sorts between the Gandhian and the Nehruvian.

So these two Pashtun Congressmen accepted the strong nation-state for the purposes of socialism as well as defence. But where did this leave the Fakhr-e-Afghan's commitment to 'provincial autonomy'? I want to end this section by arguing that for both thinkers the autonomous province was about ethnolinguistic authenticity and not vast political power. In late colonial times, both men anticipated reconstituting and renaming their province. Noting that the Achakzais of Baluchistan were Pashtuns not Baluchis, Yunus drew on the Congress proposal to 'reconstruct' the units of its independent state 'on a linguistic basis' to argue that parts of that neighbouring province were 'bound to become part of the Frontier Province, which may ultimately be called Pathanistan.' In 1941, Ghaffar Khan toured these territories 'to study the conditions and possibilities of this arrangement'. His findings led Yunus to report that the local nationalist party Anjuman-e-Watan (National Association), which had close links with Congress and was led by the activist Abdul Samad Khan, 'shared that view to a very great extent.'[63] This project was dealt a decisive blow by Partition as a consolidating Pakistani state pitted Muslim unity against what it took to be the menace of divisive provincialism. In March 1955, a year-and-a-half before Ghaffar Khan was tried at its High Court, the amalgamated province of West Pakistan came into existence. This was an attempt by Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad to counteract the marginal numerical majority of East Bengal. Supported by Punjabi and Muhajir political opinion, he had already dissolved an unbending Constituent Assembly the previous October.[64] It is, therefore, significant that at his trial in September 1956, Ghaffar Khan repeated his endorsement of the Congress state; a polity which he believed had struck a just balance between provincial rights and socialist development. By now, Ghaffar Khan was an established critic of an excessively centralised Pakistan which had shown little interest in either of these ideas. What is less commonly acknowledged is that he had also become an admirer of the incremental linguistic reorganisation of states in the Indian Union. That this initiative came with its own significant tensions between Delhi

[63] Yunus, *Frontier*, p.72.
[64] C. Jaffrelot, *The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience*, (London, 2015), p.114.

and various regional movements did not prevent Ghaffar Khan from arguing that his former colleagues were giving constitutional shape to an old idea. Interestingly, it reached its crescendo when the Lok Sabha passed the States Reorganisation Act just days before the Fakhr-e-Afghan made his statement to the High Court in Lahore in which he also remarked:

> In India the Britishers considered the Marathas and the Pathans to be important and dangerous martial communities, and therefore, in order to weaken them the British split them and merged them with various adjoining units. But now in India all the Marathas have been re-united, and there was no reason why Pakistan which claimed to be a Muslim democracy should not be prepared to bring together all the Pathans in one unit. Our demand is that the Pathan areas should be united…. We, the Pakhtuns, are scattered in various areas and restrictions are imposed upon our movement and free association. We resent this attitude and submit that a strong Pakistan cannot be established so long as the Pakhtuns are divided and scattered. Only by doing justice to the Pakhtuns can the solidarity of Pakistanis be assured and the ambition of Pakistan's greatness realised.[65]

Much like how the Garhwalis were usefully equalised with the Pashtuns to give credence to the warrior of love and nonviolence, or the Sikhs and Marathas demoted to downplay tribal misadventures, here Ghaffar Khan calls upon this latter group—a less beleaguered reflection of his own people—to assist an argument for ethnolinguistic recognition and unity. A year earlier in March 1955, Ghaffar Khan went beyond these stereotypes to cite the creation of Andhra State in 1953. Telling a press conference in Lahore that he 'believe[d] the existence and promotion of cultural and linguistic areas do not militate against national unity', the Fakhr-e-Afghan added that: 'We should learn [a] lesson from the experience of our neighbour, India, where the Province of Madras had to be redemarcated on linguistic basis to satisfy the demand of the Telugu-speaking people'.[66] In both these instances, and as was almost always the case, Ghaffar Khan refused to reduce his political language to parochialism and searched, instead, for a universalizable argument; this time in favour of subnational unity and applicable across a divided subcontinent. And it is important to note that, once again, Ghaffar Khan makes no reference to conventional decentralisation. Even as he criticises his Pakistani opponents for curtailing provincial rights, his argument remains that the regional unit must reflect—and allow for the continued expression of—ethnolinguistic homogeneity. Alongside the civil liberties that had apparently been denied to them, his idea of a more

[65] Khan, Statement to Court, pp.500-1.
[66] Khan in *TOI*, 27 March 1955, p.9.

acceptable Pakistan need not give generous political—but principally cultural—autonomy to Pashtuns. Though, in fact, a pan-Indian thinker who freely grappled with constitutional questions, Ghaffar Khan is too often uncritically made into a provincial figure interested only in an ethics of nonviolence. It would be easy to suggest that his ostensibly imprecise definition of 'provincial autonomy' confirms that view. However, by digging below the surface, we have excavated an intricate idea concerned as much with ethnolinguistic culture as it was tempered by socialism. Consequently, it was reducible neither to the archetypical unitary state that so many rulers of Pakistan have propagated, nor to the federalist dream imagined by Abdullah. It is interesting that when Ghaffar Khan was asked by journalists at Lahore in February 1954 to encourage the Kashmiris to join Pakistan, the Fakhr-e-Afghan refused to do so. And while his response referred to his own plight, perhaps he knew well that since Pakistan was unwilling to accommodate even moderate Pashtun demands for ethnolinguistic recognition, the Kashmiris—whose leader had long aspired for far greater political autonomy—could expect little from this new state. If the now imprisoned Abdullah was unable to work with the more cooperative Nehru at Delhi, he had no chance of success in Karachi:

> The Red Shirt leader said that in case he intervened now and told Kashmiris to fight for joining Pakistan, he might as well be asked, 'Who are you? What about yourself? How have you been treated by Pakistan that you tell us to opt for it?'[67]

Afghanistan and the Origin of India

The extent to which Ghaffar Khan and Yunus understood the modern nation to be an ideological category is demonstrated best by their views on the bordering Kingdom of Afghanistan. In January 1929, the Tajik warlord Habibullah Kalakani triggered a nine-month interregnum when he deposed its Pashtun monarch, Amanullah Khan. Recounting these events in his memoir, Ghaffar Khan noted how Indian Pashtuns 'felt the destruction of Afghanistan as if it were their own ruin.'[68] But while both he and Yunus held that the Durand Line was a false colonial construction separating a single people, they never seriously considered its revocation to evolve a political unity. And this was more than just pragmatism; it was not only that colonial India and monarchical Afghanistan were contemporary states forged by historical currents too powerful for

[67] *TOI*, 26 February 1954, p.9.
[68] Khan, *Autobiography*, pp.90-1.

the Khudai Khidmatgars to resist. Both thinkers believed that since these countries made for vastly different political arenas, they had given rise to incongruent political cultures. The modern political community or nation necessitated, not bonds of blood and soil, but shared civic values emanating from contemporary human interaction and, therefore, the political unification of the transborder Pashtuns made little sense. By 1929, foreign influence in Afghanistan had been minimised. Amanullah had spent a decade on the throne and embarked on a process of reform to extend civil liberties, the rights of women, and popular participation in politics. Meanwhile, in the Frontier, the repressive policy of the British was informed by their Great Game. According to Ghaffar Khan, his Pashtun compatriots across the Durand Line, politically 'asleep' and displaying 'gross ingratitude', had removed their benevolent king whose every effort had been 'directed towards making them prosperous.'[69] The less fortunate Pashtuns of the Frontier, however, had not been so short-sighted. They saw Amanullah's reforms as an inspirational template for their own improvement. Incidentally, this was not the first and only time that Afghanistan emerged as a model of South Asian sovereignty for Indian thinkers. During the First World War, the likes of Raja Mahendra Pratap and Ubaidullah Sindhi had fled to Kabul to establish the Provisional Government of India. Iqbal, too, took an interest in the workings of the Afghan government—especially its education reforms.[70] Once Nadir Khan captured Kabul from Kalakani and re-established the Kingdom in October, Ghaffar Khan reiterated this essential difference at a meeting in his home town of Utmanzai. The experiences of Pashtuns in Afghanistan could both inspire and deflate Indian Pashtuns for they were 'their own' people. Yet, since their political consciences were so far removed from each other, Ghaffar Khan is finally left with a language of 'they' and 'us':

> I have been told that Amanullah Khan used to call himself the revolutionary King of the Pakhtuns. And indeed it was he who inspired us with the idea of the revolution. But the Afghans did not take as much advantage of it as we did, because they were asleep and we were beginning to wake up.[71]

Yunus similarly imagined Amanullah as a tragic hero blighted as much by his conservative and backward subjects as his noble but tactless desire to modernise Afghanistan at a rapid pace. 'This only showed how undeserving his people were of a

[69] Ibid, p.90.
[70] Iqbal, 'Statement on the Proposed Afghan University', 19 October 1933, *SWSI*, pp.284-5.
[71] Khan, *Autobiography*, p.95.

future that promised glory', he wrote.[72] But despite this sympathy for Amanullah, neither Ghaffar Khan nor Yunus were comfortable with the idea of monarchical rule. Yunus begins *Frontier Speaks* by documenting and owning a long Pashtun history with no regard for the contemporary international division. But if this was 'our history',[73] modern Afghanistan is significantly only 'their country'.[74] Claiming that representative democracy was the right of all people, Yunus concludes wondering whether the Afghan monarchy might learn from the recent global history of revolution and pre-empt its inevitable defeat.[75] It is interesting that Ghaffar Khan, who was often referred to as *bacha* or *badshah* (king), disliked these titles. I have already noted how, like Gandhi, he believed that ethical politics necessitated exemplary leadership. However, Ghaffar Khan was often at pains to explain that leadership could not mean kingship when the Khudai Khidmatgars were propagating a democratic future of free and equal individuals. Independence could not amount to replacing 'the servitude of one' with 'the servitude of another' for that still retained the possibility of tyranny. Instead, Pashtuns had to favour accountability over humble submission and be prepared to democratically 'turn out' their leaders if that was in their interest. Chiding his audiences for discounting equality by elevating him to the level of a monarch, he would declare: 'Your heads are full of the thoughts of slavery.'[76] Once it became clear that the unity of India was to be forfeited in 1947, it is significant that Ghaffar Khan continued to rule out any association between the Frontier and Afghanistan. Summarising their recent conversation at Delhi in a letter to the Fakhr-e-Afghan that June, Nehru understood that his friend was unwilling to sacrifice ideology at the altar of ethnolinguistic unification: 'When you were here I asked you whether you would like the Pushtu-speaking areas of India to be joined on to Afghanistan. You said that you would strongly disapprove of this because this would mean not freedom but greater slavery than exists even now.'[77] If colonial rule made for slavery principally because of its sheer foreignness, the denial of civic virtues like democracy by indigenous powers produced the same state of bondage.

[72] Yunus, *Frontier*, pp.46-50.
[73] Ibid, p.38.
[74] Ibid, p.54.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Khan, 'Beware of Tricks', p.117.
[77] Nehru to Khan, 30 June 1947, *SWJN*, Vol.3, p.287.

Once the Frontier found its way into Pakistan, Ghaffar Khan continued to refuse monarchical authority. During his address to its Constituent Assembly at Karachi in March 1948, he was interrupted by the Punjabi Muslim Leaguer Firoz Khan Noon who feared that his demand for an enlarged Pashtun province within Pakistan would be the first step towards its ultimate merger with Afghanistan. Ghaffar Khan retorted: 'I wish to tell you frankly, that we can only join you and not Afghanistan. You have greater claim on us than Afghanistan.'[78] This prioritisation is interesting for it, too, alludes to his view that political communities had to emerge from shared circumstances which could be made to produce positive moral values. But since he and his Khudai Khidmatgars had played no role in the Pakistan movement and abhorred its communalism, Ghaffar Khan had to locate these circumstances and values elsewhere. In this address and during the early years of independence, he attempted to achieve this by seizing the great opportunity to intellectually conquer Pakistan from the League: the scripting of a fresh constitution to govern relations between the assortment of people that had been made Pakistanis. Yet to be significantly shaped, it could still be made into the foundational document of another kind of national state; his model progressive entity which conceded ethnolinguistic rights to its nationalities and served—not 'the capitalists' or 'a particular community'—but 'all its people'.[79] If it could accept provincial rights, the socialist state, and the equal treatment of religious minorities, the act of constitution-making would also allow his opponents to bury their malevolent past. Since the Khudai Khidmatgars had pledged to 'be with' their new government if it 'would work for our people',[80] Jinnah had the chance to script a pact with Pashtuns of the kind that had guided their relations with Congress for sixteen years. Pakistan had to be a country founded on 'good faith' and 'confidence' as opposed to the 'mistrust' currently governing a suspicious League.[81] Later we will see how the Partition of India proved a painful experience for the Fakhr-e-Afghan. That said, his presentist conception of the political community allowed him to soon set that event aside in favour of a new future. 'I was of the opinion that India should not be divided', Ghaffar Khan declared at Karachi. 'But now that the division has been done, the dispute is over.'[82] Reiterating that the

[78] Khan, Address to Pakistan Constituent Assembly, Karachi, 5 March 1948, reprinted in *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p.456.
[79] Ibid, p.457.
[80] Ibid, p.454.
[81] Ibid, p.457.
[82] Ibid, pp.453-4.

modern nation was about present 'construction', Ghaffar Khan suggested that he was willing to begin that process all over again:

> I repeat that I am not for [the] destruction of Pakistan. In destruction lies no good for Hindus, Muslims, the Frontier, the Punjab, Bengal or Sind. There is advantage only in construction…. If any constructive programme is before you, if you want to do something constructive for our people, not in theory but in practice, I declare before this house that I and my people are at your service.[83]

Elsewhere in this address, Ghaffar Khan claimed that if members of the League were truly committed to their faith, they ought to follow the examples of the early caliphs of Islam and establish a welfare state. Though his commitment to human agency and Pakistani minorities meant that he continued to reject the idea of a theocracy, Ghaffar Khan—in what amounted to a reaffirmation of the Indian secular that housed religion within it—noted that he would 'certainly support' his government if it was 'run on [this] Islamic principle.'[84] In his estimation it failed this test and so he soon developed a binary which became a constant feature of his postcolonial political language: his own Islamic piety on one side and the Pakistani state's fraudulent rendition of his religion on the other. There was nothing Islamic about either the feudal and capitalist society which it maintained or its crushing of regional identities in the name of Muslim unity; in fact, the state had reduced Islam to a mask for Punjabi colonialism.[85] Perhaps his most powerful exposition of this binary came at the High Court in 1956. Once again critiquing the figure of the tyrannous monarch to which he now reduced the Pakistani state, this time Ghaffar Khan drew on the tenets of Islam so as to almost snatch it away from Muslim nationalism; much like how Kabir, Abdullah, and even Kaifi Azmi prized the ethical from Hinduism to retrieve the religion of their compatriots from Hindutva and, thus, uphold Indian and human unity. Almost taunting Justice Shabir Ahmed, the Fakhr-e-Afghan said:

> It is claimed that Pakistan is a democracy based on Islamic principles: In the Hadis Sharif it is mentioned that to speak the word of truth before a despotic king, is the highest form of *jehad*. Being a most obedient follower and servant of the Prophet, I have always tried to keep in view the above motto. The object of my mentioning this Hadis Sharif before your lordship is that at the time of pronouncing judgement, you may keep it in view.[86]

[83] Ibid, p.454.
[84] Ibid, p.457.
[85] For this, see Khan, 'Speeches of Badshah Khan in Kabul', in *Autobiography*, pp.217-48.
[86] Khan, Statement to Court, p.491.

The implication is that the state is upholding not Islam but *kufr* (the denial of God). While Ghaffar Khan had reserved 'obedien[ce]' for Muhammad and, therefore, Allah, the 'despotic king' of Pakistan—by demanding compliance from its subjects—forces them to commit *shirk* (the worship of idols or anything besides God).

Interestingly, some of Ghaffar Khan's most conclusive assertions in favour of the ideological nation came during his exile in Afghanistan much after India's Partition. Addressing three consecutive annual Pakhtunistan Day meetings at Kabul between 1965 and 1967, he reminded crowds of Pashtuns that 'you are my people, my brothers, my own kith and kin.'[87] In the same addresses, he also asked them to embrace their fellow Hazara, Tajik, and Turkmen citizens. Multinational Afghanistan, he said, had to replicate the archetypical country of the New World—the United States of America:

> Take a look at the world and at the nations of the world. Take America, for example. The people who live in America are not all of the same race, originally they did not all belong to the same nation. Some have come from Germany, some were born in France, some hail from Spain. Some are negroes and some are Englishmen. But now their country is America and they all call themselves Americans. I want to tell you Pathans, that the whole territory from Margoli to River Amu is the country of the Pakhtuns and anyone who lives in this country is a Pakhtun. I want to tell you another thing, and I want you to listen carefully. Those amongst you who are trying to tell you that Hazaris, Pakhtuns or Tajiks are different people, are not your friends, but your enemies. They are selfish, they are not concerned about your interests, only about their own.[88]
>
> And this is why we are ruined. This kind of talk causes discord and weakens the nation…. Remember therefore that whatever country you were born in, you are now Afghans, and you should always call yourselves Afghans.[89]

If we consider that Ghaffar Khan was forced into exile for opposing a unitary Pakistan which he accused of attempting to crush legitimate regional identities, these might appear to be unlikely, or even contradictory, claims. But, of course, what he perceived were two different but equally problematic diversions away from the equilibrium he had prescribed for the modern national project. If the Pakistani state had veered off course towards excessive centralisation, Afghans were being threatened by divisive ethnonationalisms. It was true that Pashtuns made for an old nationality with a 'territory' and 'country' of their own, but this did not preclude their participation in multinational unions. If ethnolinguistic groups possessed separate identities, they were

[87] Khan, 'First Speech', 31 August 1965, in *Autobiography*, p.218.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Khan, 'Third Speech', 31 August 1967, Ibid, p.238.

not 'different people' in every regard. After all, we have already seen that their ethical and socio-economic 'interests' lay beyond identity. Hence, though a chequered history of colonialism, slavery, and migration had meant that Americans—unlike Afghans—no longer inhabited their original homelands, it is still significant that Ghaffar Khan references that model. For by attempting to replace human difference with political unity, it provides a solution to the crisis of modern nationality that Pashtuns—divided across an international boundary—are forced to confront. Once Yunus became the Indian ambassador to Indonesia shortly after independence, he expressed a similar distaste for excessive provincialism. In his memoir, Yunus recalls how efforts to establish a school for Indian children in Yogyakarta was plagued by Punjabis, Sindhis, and Tamils each looking out for the interests of children from their own communities. Having just sacrificed his Pashtun homeland to maintain his Indian nationality, this episode must have appeared especially poignant:

> Where, in all this, was the concept of the India I represented? I was livid. I told them it was time they forgot their narrow little entities and began to regard themselves as Indians.[90]

Since both men had accepted that the Pashtuns were a single people divided by an artificial but unsurmountable contemporary border, they could scarcely make history and geography the adhesive that bound either modern India or Afghanistan without disrupting their acceptance of these two adjoining multinational countries. To argue that the modern Indian nation was a principally historical unity would bring to the fore unanswerable questions about transborder Pashtun commonality. Their argument could never be that the Pashtuns of the Frontier shared a relationship with the Garhwalis, Parsis, or Hindustanis that was somehow more organic than their bond with the Pashtuns of Afghanistan. The theoretical options available to Ghaffar Khan and Yunus, then, were limited by default; they had little choice but to imagine India in ideological terms. Interestingly, in an early passage from *Frontier Speaks*, Yunus argues that it was not these modern states, but rather the historical and geographical 'unity that existed between India and the parts now known as Afghanistan and the Frontier Province', that was old and organic. These ancient 'bonds grew stronger till their separation during the last days of the Mughal Empire.' It was only once Ahmad Shah founded the Durrani Empire in the mid-eighteenth century that Afghanistan ceased to

[90] Yunus, *Politics*, p.87.

be ‘an important Indian province’ and ‘developed into a national state’. Aside from this political history, Yunus asks us to ‘look at the configuration of the mountain range between Kashmir, the Frontier and Afghanistan’. It made for ‘one continuous barrier, forming a lofty tableland between India and Central Asia.’ But if the division of the land had made it impossible to translate this argument into present-day nationalism, that did not necessitate the obliteration of what had been shared in the past. That is to say that though these Pashtun thinkers could not rely principally on history to be Indian, I want to illustrate that their theory did not require them to entirely cast it aside. Indeed, Yunus ends this passage noting that this shared ‘history has a profound significance for us in India, and its right understanding is bound to help solve some of our problems.’ By implication he was suggesting that it mattered less to any equivalent national project in Afghanistan. Unless, of course, that other multinational state wanted ‘to reunite’ with India. Though Yunus refuses to ‘dismiss’ this seemingly ‘fantastic’ suggestion for the future,[91] his book remains concerned with how history might serve the present Indian national question. In its introduction, Yunus notes that since it was marked by ‘so great a collaboration’, history provided another means for destroying ‘the artificial gulf dividing India and the Pathans’. His task was to ‘remind’ his Hindustani readership of ‘the humble contribution of the Pathans in the past towards the social welfare of India, and of its ultimate part in shaping the existing national structure.’[92] In this way, Yunus hoped that his book would ‘succeed in removing some of the illusions now current, and help foster friendlier relations between the different communities inhabiting this vast sub-continent of our common heritage.’[93] He traces a story which begins with the Aryan civilisation and the scripting of the Vedas; the spread of Buddhism and the rule of Ashoka whose ‘ancestors belonged to Swat’;[94] and Pashtun participation in the literary and academic life of ancient India. The medieval period sees the arrival of Pashtun rule in the lowlands; ‘these simple and virile highlanders shook India from a deep slumber, and instilled vitality and a passion for progress and unity into her people.’ But if Yunus, like Azad and Kabir, makes medieval and early modern Indian unity a Muslim concern, he is also keen to distinguish between Pashtuns and Mughals. Claiming that ‘credit’ for Indo-Islamic architecture had been falsely ascribed entirely to the Mughals, Yunus

[91] Yunus, *Frontier*, pp.11-12.
[92] Ibid, pp.xvi.
[93] Ibid, pp.xviii.
[94] Ibid, p.8.

reminds us of the 'great and initial contribution' of his ancestors.[95] This distinction remains as the Mughal Akbar makes way for the Pashtun Sher Shah Suri as the prototype Indian Muslim nationalist. Sher Shah—who forced the second Mughal, Humayun, into exile in 1540 and ruled north India for five years—is the benevolent king known not only for uniting Hindus and Muslims but also establishing the early modern Indian state: its roads, postal service, law courts, and land revenue system. Consequently, Akbar—who 'tried to subjugate the Frontier tribes' for refusing to accept Mughal rule—is at best the fortunate beneficiary of a glorious Pashtun interregnum.[96] In many ways, Yunus replicates Abdullah who similarly relegated the enlightened Akbar of Congress orthodoxy to a local villain and cast a Kashmiri figure in the role of pioneering king. And while Abdullah made the fifteenth-century Muslim monarch Zain-ul-Abideen 'the builder of genuine secularism in India',[97] he was ultimately only a regional ruler. Sher Shah was not and, therefore, provided Yunus with greater material for a similar argument.

So Yunus demonstrated not only that the Pashtuns were a 'part of the story of India',[98] but that this relationship was marked by 'the continuity of history' stretching from the ancient to the present.[99] This was clearly different from the narrative Azad put forward for Hindustan; a land of various settlers who—prompted by Muslim settlement from the medieval period—created a new Indianness. Consequently, the Azadian argument must constantly differentiate between—and define the national significance of—each period of history. This, however, was not a concern for Yunus. Islam does not provoke a departure from the old but is a new element to be synthesised into an old story of Pashtun individuality and its long relationship with India. In a short chapter in his memoir, Ghaffar Khan writes that Pashtuns had been Hindus, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians before the 'philosophy, learning, and mysticism' of Islam enveloped their homeland. Owning the pre-Islamic period as part of 'our cultural heritage',[100] there is no great historical moment which finally produces the identities of today. While the Maulana's settling Muslim shares his own and borrows from an existing culture to

[95] Ibid, pp.16-17.
[96] Ibid, pp.19-25.
[97] Abdullah, *Autobiography*, p.170.
[98] Yunus, *Frontier*, p.24.
[99] Ibid, p.xvi.
[100] Khan, *Autobiography*, pp.15-18.

concoct 'new India', Ghaffar Khan and Yunus do not speak about an ancient past to which they have no direct claim. If this separates them from Azad, it brings them closer to other colleagues; not only Nehru but also Abdullah. Arguing that Pashtuns were part of an ancient Indian cultural unity, Nehru wrote in *Discovery* that while Islam had become their religion, they, like the Kashmiris, 'could not [be] change[d] entirely' by it.[101] Islam may have been crucial to his definition of Kashmiri identity, but Abdullah also located its origins in the pre-Islamic past. Beginning his autobiography with a reference to the 'ancient civilisation' of his ancestral village, he soon jumps to the 'wise and benevolent' rule of Zain-ul-Abideen before documenting the conversion of his Brahmin ancestors to Islam during the later Afghan period.[102] Once he established the weekly *Hamdard* in partnership with Prem Nath Bazaz in 1933, Abdullah had no trouble endorsing the editorials of his co-founder which declared all Kashmiris to be the children of Kashyap Rishi—the ancient Hindu sage after whom some claim the region was named.[103] Similarly, though Yunus knew well that Pashtunwali and Islam had inspired the nonviolence of Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgars,[104] it was only a sense of Indic continuity that could have led him to speculatively comment:

> The past seems to survive, and we find how certain ancient values and philosophies appear to come to life again in the land that gave them birth many centuries ago. Those age-long edicts of Asoka cut in the various rocks of Shahbazghara and other Frontier towns find an echo in our minds today, and the people find the Buddhist teachings of non-violence and tolerance forming an outstanding feature of the nationalist movement conducted by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan throughout the province.[105]

In their separate ways, these thinkers produce Pashtun and Kashmiri narratives in which various historical periods unhesitatingly collapse into each other. By refusing to depend on the arrival of a people or religion, the national identities of these old ethnolinguistics groups are made to outlive them all.

Though Ghaffar Khan showed much less interest in historicising the relationship between Pashtuns and other Indians than his apprentice, his own rare excursions into the past broadly agreed with Yunus' narrative. I have already cited from the short chapter in which the Fakhr-e-Afghan sketched a Pashtun lineage and want to turn now

[101] Nehru, *Discovery*, pp.54, 288.
[102] Abdullah, *Autobiography*, pp.1-2.
[103] Zutshi, *Languages*, p.249.
[104] Yunus, *Frontier*, p.170.
[105] Ibid, pp.37-8.

to its most intriguing claim: that the land of the Pashtuns 'was the cradle of Aryan civilisation.' The Aryans 'first saw the light of day in this country' and 'it was on this very soil that their lofty culture first flourished'.[106] Thereafter, they ventured further afield:

> In one direction this migration took them through Iran into Europe and in the other direction into Hindustan. And thus they were divided into different nations and communities. Under different geographical conditions the fundamental national characteristics of the Aryans changed and new cultures and new languages came into existence. But when the people of the Aryan race lived in their original land 'Aryanavijo'—which is now Afghanistan and Pakhtunistan—they had a common language, which has now been given the hypothetical name of Aryan language. Pashtu is very close to this Aryan language…. It was also here that the songs of the Vedas, the holy hymns of the Hindus, were composed. Another great son of this country was Pannini, who wrote a Sanskrit grammar and thus acquainted the world with this ancient language. Pannini was a resident of what is now the tehsil of Swabi, on the bank of the Indus. It is interesting to note that the name of a river: Indus, the name of a country: Sindh, and the name of a people: Hindu, are all derived from a Pashtu word, Sind, which means river. Of the huge family of the Aryans, after many had left during the great migrations, only two branches remained, the Pakhtuns and the Baluchs. Into their hands God has given the sacred task of looking after the safety, and the progress of their country.[107]

What Ghaffar Khan achieves here is extraordinary. The Pashtuns and their homeland do not merely have a stake in the Aryan or Hindu heritage of India but are its original producers. Often overlooked or othered in Indian narratives, Pashtuns inhabit the home of Hinduism and not merely a Muslim outpost. While others had subsequently created 'new cultures and new languages', Pashtuns had apparently retained greater proximity to a shared linguistic heritage. And though they had since embraced Islam, Pashtuns are, if not greater, then at least as much inheritors of this old culture as the Hindu descendants of those who had migrated to the low country. In fact, the Pashtuns and the Baloch—two predominately Muslim peoples conscious of this ancient legacy—are made responsible heirs tasked with protecting and developing the destined homeland of their prolific ancestors by the universal God of Islam. But what is interesting here is not simply the local claim to an Aryan or Hindu lineage. Just as significant is the way Pashtun history is made to belong to Iranians, Europeans, and importantly for our purposes, Hindustanis. It is, therefore, more than just the national story of contemporary Pashtuns. Emblematic of the Fakhr-e-Afghan's unconventional way of thinking about the ethnos, in which its products both belong and are intelligible to those

[106] Khan, *Autobiography*, pp.15-16.
[107] Ibid, pp.16-17.

outside of it, Pashtuns produce a history of other 'countr[ies]', too. And perhaps it was this international or universal import which really made the history of his homeland appeal to Ghaffar Khan. 'Pakhtunistan' had produced modern Iranians, Europeans, and Hindustanis; it was the 'cradle' of Hinduism and Zoroastrianism and had embraced Buddhism and then Islam. Writing his preface to *Frontier Speaks* in 1942, Ghaffar Khan seemed to allude to this mixed legacy when he anticipated an Asian 'bloc of peace and freedom' tasked with 'ushering in a new era'. As part of a powerful Indian nation-state, the Frontier would soon return to its original internationalism:

> The Frontier Province is so situated that, as in the past, it will inevitably become the pivot and centre of all these great changes and alliances, and will begin to play an important role not only in a free India, but in free Asia.[108]

It is interesting that Nehru, in his foreword to the same book, seconded Ghaffar Khan. If Nehru had accepted the unflattering contemporary stereotype of the volatile Pashtuns, he was still prepared to transform their peripheral 'border country' into 'the epitome' of ancient Indian history. It was not only a 'centre' of domestic cultural production but had been the 'meeting place' at which India had interacted with China, Greece, and Iran. With so many links to the outside world, it would have been easy for Nehru—like many prevailing renditions of Pakistani nationalism—to cast Pashtuns as the fifth column of the forthcoming Indian federation. Instead, his own internationalist search for peace and cooperation led Nehru not to fear but embrace these connections and make them productive for this other project. Anticipating a future in which 'India will be closely associated with China, the Soviet Union and the countries of western Asia', Nehru confidentially declared that: 'Our Frontier Province will again be their meeting ground and thus history will repeat itself, but, as always, in a different way and on a different plane.'[109]

By comparing Ghaffar Khan and Yunus to Jinnah and the League, let me reemphasise that while their Indian nationalism put little stock in blood and soil it did not ignore these themes completely. Somewhat like the Qaid-e-Azam, Ghaffar Khan and Yunus believed that modern nations ought to be derived principally from political consent. The Qaid thought of a Muslim Pakistan as the coming together of a collection of peoples by the power of an idea and the Fakhr-e-Afghan imagined India in a similar

[108] Khan, 'Preface', p.xii.
[109] Nehru, 'Foreword', p.ix.

way; a secular, sovereign, and socialist nation-state whose citizens enjoyed ethnolinguistic rights and subscribed to an ethics of nonviolence and love. And yet, there was little need for Ghaffar Khan and Yunus to be fanatically concerned with eradicating the past as Jinnah was. We have already noted that since history reminded Indians of what they shared, it was an obstacle for the Qaid as he refashioned Hindus and Muslims into two entirely new and distinct nations.[110] If the idea of Pakistan went so fundamentally against the grain of history, the India that Ghaffar Khan and Yunus imagined agreed with it far better. The Durand Line had created two modern multinational countries in a historically connected region of the world. And though this meant that Pashtuns could not make history the foundational premise or differentiating factor in an argument about being either modern Indians or Afghans, it did not follow that the interregional connections within these countries were somehow antihistorical. So we find that Ghaffar Khan and Yunus were not perpetually locked in a battle with the past like Jinnah. For them, history was not a lingering ghost to be slain but, instead, appeared variously as either a convenient aide or something entirely irrelevant to their politics. But the inability of history to decisively award a modern nationality to Pashtuns because of their peculiar geopolitical location had an even more significant consequence; it meant that the real political problem for Ghaffar Khan and Yunus was not religious but explicitly national. Assured of their Muslimness in an overwhelmingly Muslim province, they easily background the communal logic which dominated late colonial politics elsewhere in India to pose a more fundamental—and truly secular—question: are Pashtuns Indians or Afghans? And since they arrive at Indian nationality in this overtly non-communal and exceptional way, they inadvertently further their argument that the supposedly remote Frontier is not the periphery but the origin and centre of inclusive Indian nationalism. Interestingly, the limitations of historical thinking for Indian Pashtuns and the essentially secular character of their problem was perhaps best illustrated—albeit somewhat unintentionally—by the loyalist politician Abdul Qaiyum Khan some time before Ghaffar Khan and Yunus engaged with it. In the Central Legislative Assembly at Delhi on 8 September 1925, Qaiyum wondered if the decision to withhold political reforms from the Frontier disclosed the British view that

[110] Devji, *Muslim Zion*, pp.97-100.

Pashtuns were not Indians but had their 'sympathies more with the Afghans'. Launching a volley of rhetorical questions at the government, he asked:

> …can the Hon'ble Members occupying the opposite Benches say that we are not Indians…that we are not part and parcel of India, that we have our sympathies more with the Afghans than with the peoples of these parts? Have we not fought against the Arabs? Have we not fought against the Turks? Have we not fought more than once against the Afghans themselves? Who defended the borders of India in 1919 and who has got the credit for it? In these circumstances will you not call me an Indian, even if I happen to oppose you? How many lives have we sacrificed for the purpose of defending the frontier of India? Are not the bones of my forefathers lying in the soil of Delhi? Are not the bones of thousand and one Pathans and other tribes lying in Delhi? Have not the Lodhis, Shershahis, Sherwanis and other tribes settled down in India? Then, why cannot a man coming from Peshawar be called an Indian if those people can be called Indians? …I claim to be an Indian, and I claim my province to be a part and parcel of India. I have submitted to all your laws including the Indian Penal Code. All that I now ask is this. Why do you not apply another act to our province which is called the Government of India Act. What is there to prevent you from applying it to our province? You call this Act the Government of India Act. Why should you not extend it and apply it to the frontier when you can apply the Indian Penal Code to us?[111]

Though he makes use of the past to disprove any suspicions and establish Pashtun loyalty to British India, it is noticeable how Qaiyum is forced to give greater weight to the present. After all, if the history of Delhi could be summoned to tie Pashtuns to other Indians, so could other historical episodes be selectively mobilised to connect them to Afghanistan. This was the admission he accidentally made by giving greater focus to a more recent—and conclusive—thesis: that the Pashtuns were law-abiding subjects who had defended the borders of India even 'against the Afghans themselves' and now deserved their just reward. A people and province that had to insist on its Indian character like no other, Qaiyum assumes that only an explicit rejection of Afghanistan could lead others to accept the Frontier Pashtuns as Indian.

In 1965 at Kabul, Ghaffar Khan lamented that the Pashtuns of Pakistan had failed 'to make the sacrifices' necessary to achieve their elusive 'common object' or 'ideal'. Concerned solely with their individual interest and liable to corruption, Pashtuns had to recover a collective idea by looking to the example of 'other countries and other nations in the world'.[112] This is significant because Ghaffar Khan had made Pashtuns and the Frontier an ethical exemplar for the rest of India in colonial times. Though he

[111] A.Q. Khan quoted in Shah, *Ethnicity*, pp.51-2.
[112] Khan, 'First Speech', pp.220-1.

admitted that his people had once lacked the political consciousness of other Indians, they nevertheless came to overtake them. As early as his visit to Bombay in 1934, Ghaffar Khan was suggesting that a draconian Frontier policy had prompted a 'sacrifice which no other province has made.' Such was their 'hunger' for freedom that Pashtuns from 'all the 513 villages' had given up any immediate personal concerns for 'the right path'. Even 'our little children' had taken to nationalism, fearlessly taunting 'any Englishman' that came into view.[113] We should not be entirely surprised by claims such as these. If they appeared rather hyperbolic, there was also an element of truth to them. Banerjee and Arbab have persuasively argued that among the participants of the Indian freedom struggle, the Khudai Khidmatgars came closest to realising the Gandhian community: a collection of autonomous and nonviolent individuals guided by their own morality. Re-energised by nonviolence, the existing self-regulating codes of Pashtunwali animated an alternative form of non-state organisation in the Frontier which significantly undermined the Raj.[114] And interestingly, the Mahatma, who often derided his own followers for failing to cultivate the nonviolent character necessary for active satyagraha,[115] recognised this. At Partition, a dejected Gandhi remarked that Ghaffar Khan was now the 'only other person in the country who has accepted non-violence as a creed'.[116] Earlier, during his visit to the Frontier in 1938, he was impressed by the extent to which the Khudai Khidmatgars had internalised this creed; its cadres told the Mahatma that they would remain wedded to nonviolence even if their leader abandoned it.[117] Gandhi often explained this unparalleled commitment by drawing on a figure that had so interested Ghaffar Khan: the martial and, therefore, brave Pashtun. Ghaffar Khan made frequent use of this endorsement. For instance, in 1968 he recounted a conversation he shared with Gandhi in the aftermath of the 1942 Quit Indian movement. Ghaffar Khan remembered being astonished by the fact that while his 'Pathan people' had not allowed agitation in the Frontier to descend into violence despite their easy access to weapons, the 'Hindustanis', though they lacked this 'equipment' and enjoyed a longer association with organised politics, had set Gandhi's teachings aside and committed acts of violence. The Fakhr-e-Afghan now sought an

[113] Khan, 'Congress', pp.211-12.
[114] Banerjee, *Pathan Unarmed*, pp.73-102; Arbab, 'Nonviolence', p.236.
[115] Devji, *Impossible Indian*, p.163.
[116] Gandhi, 'Discussion with Visitors', 17 July 1947, *CWMG*, Vol.88, p.356.
[117] Banerjee, *Pathan Unarmed*, pp.165-6.

explanation from the Mahatma who almost pitted the 'brave' (*bahadur*) Pashtun against the Hindustani 'coward' (*buzdil*):

> Gandhiji began to laugh. He said, 'Look, nonviolence is not a task for cowards but for the brave. Those Pathans were brave, that is why they did not commit violence and remained resolute in their commitment to nonviolence.'[118]

In his writings, Yunus made the most of a similar comment that he claimed Jinnah made to him 'during one of our long interviews at Bombay in February, 1942.'[119] Apparently moved by the struggles endured by the 'brave' Khudai Khidmatgars for Indian freedom,[120] Jinnah described them as a 'people whose blood is more vigorous than mine, who have suffered and are better Musalmans than others in India'. Regretting that the Muslim League had failed to 'come to your rescue during the period of your suffering' and thereby allowed Congress to 't[ake] advantage of the situation', Jinnah reiterated a vow he had made 'repeatedly' to Yunus. He would not support 'any other group on the Frontier' since this 'would mean disrupting the Musalmans.' Instead, 'his effort would be to win Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his Khudai Khidmatgars over to his side.'[121] Besides a barely veiled admiration for the independence movement, this conversation is interesting because it fits with something else that we already know about the Qaid. Demonstrating how he kept a satanic distance from the Indian Muslims he sought to represent, Devji tells us how 'disparaging' Jinnah was of them.[122] He had special contempt for what he once called the 'so-called educated and intelligentsia'; a 'class' of Muslims who were 'selfish and intellectually corrupt.'[123] Muslims, Jinnah believed, had to be more like Hindus; a group which had put aside internal differences and rallied around Gandhi.[124] Therefore, it is unsurprising if Jinnah admired the trustworthy Khudai Khidmatgars who were willing to 'suffer' for their political idea, even if they remained in the Mahatma's camp as opposed to his own. For Yunus, who predictably focused on the ethical value of Jinnah's 'pious intentions',[125] this sentiment was mutual. That, however, was until Jinnah finally broke his vow in 1943. As

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[118] Khan, Interview, pp.18-19.
[119] Yunus, *Frontier*, p.186.
[120] Yunus, *Politics*, p.74.
[121] Yunus, *Frontier*, pp.137-8, 185-6.
[122] Devji, *Muslim Zion,* p.136.
[123] Jinnah to M.A.H. Ispahani, 6 May 1945, quoted in Ibid.
[124] This idea appears frequently in *Memories of Jinnah*, (Karachi, 1990)—the memoir of his private secretary, K.H. Khurshid.
[125] Yunus, *Frontier*, p.138.

'thousands of our workers and many of the members of the Assembly were rotting in jail' for their role in the Quit India movement, Jinnah sensed an opportunity and won over a section of British loyalists to install a League ministry in the Frontier. Yunus recalls how 'this zealous championing of the cause of these henchmen of the British in the Frontier opened my eyes once and for all. I shed all illusions about one whom I had held in such esteem.' Almost referring to the Qaid's dormant Indian nationalism, Yunus recalled his own 'great astonishment' at this collusion with loyalism. But this sense of shock alluded to something else, too. Almost forty years his junior, Yunus 'had regarded Mr Jinnah as a man of principles, and altogether different from other League leaders.' Having cast his opponent in this way, Yunus was giving expression, yet again, to the Khudai Khidmatgar contention that ethical behaviour was universalizable. If Jinnah admired Pashtuns because honour was all but intrinsic to their 'more vigorous' 'blood', then he—by recognising this fact and himself being an ethical politician—was their equal. He had now, most unexpectedly, negated this universality which he had earlier affirmed. Yunus concludes by mocking the way in which Jinnah 'exulted over a success obtained while his opponents were being crushed by the third party.'[126] There was nothing honourable about gloating over hollow victories.

So Ghaffar Khan and Yunus celebrated the statements of their distinguished contemporaries for these confirmed the unlikely pre-eminence of their Khudai Khidmatgars among Indians. Just as the Frontier is the origin of ancient India and a rare place where the contemporary political debate about nationality is truly secular, it is also a model for both Gandhian nonviolence and, by extension, ideological resolve in India. At first glance, this argument about Pashtun centrality to India appears to be little more than a conceit as Ghaffar Khan and Yunus try desperately for their peripheral constituents to be accepted as Indians by their compatriots despite their extraterritorial connection with Afghanistan. It nevertheless develops a coherence of its own that makes it increasingly powerful. The Fakhr-e-Afghan extended this argument in his discussions about how to turn discord between Hindus and Muslims into unity. At Calcutta in 1934, he told a gathering of students that while more needed to be done to fully eradicate 'all suspicion and hatred', the predominately Muslim Khudai Khidmatgars—offering an inclusive politics of social justice and democratic

[126] Ibid, pp.185-6.

freedom—had managed to integrate Hindu and Sikh minorities into their organisation; they had 'brought those communities nearer' to them. Alluding to his politics of love, Ghaffar Khan ended this address by making the Frontier an exemplar for a disunited Bengal: 'I appeal to the Bengali youth to start a similar movement like Khudai Khidmatgar and unite the Hindus and the Muslims after purging their hearts clean.'[127] At Bombay a few weeks later, he made a similar claim by reiterating the significance of moral leadership. If communal relations had greatly 'improved' in the Frontier but not elsewhere, it was 'the fault of the leaders.'[128] This idea of an exemplary communal unity among Pashtuns was, perhaps somewhat strangely, heightened by the events of Partition. By providing a theatre for religious violence, it allowed the Khudai Khidmatgars to actively pursue their nonviolent politics of love. Ghaffar Khan claimed that while the rest of the country burned, Pashtuns once again rose above hatred to reaffirm their cross-communal idea just as it was being destroyed by Hindu and Sikh migrations to the Indian Union. In 1983, Ghaffar Khan recalled that:

> …Khuda'i Khidmatgari [service in the name of God] created such love and affection in the hearts of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh people and aroused such an ardent [sense of] brotherhood that those Hindus and Sikhs had to be forcefully sent to India from the Frontier Province, yet even till today they call themselves Khuda'i Khidmatgars. Every time I go to Hindustan I feel the love and affection that still lies in the hearts of these Hindus and Sikhs. See also for yourselves: when the chaos of Partition started in Hindustan the Khuda'i Khidmatgars bore a lot of hardship in order to protect the Hindus and Sikhs and their properties and belongings; the Khuda'i Khidmatgars used their bodies as shields wherever they were present.[129]

It is interesting that drawing heavily on the endorsements of Gandhi, Abdullah replicated this idea for Kashmir: an oasis of communal unity upheld by its Muslim majority and devoted to warding off irregular Pakistani jihadists in 1947.[130] This is not the first time we are encountering the idea of the nationalist Indian Muslim emerging as the exemplary Indian. It appears in the argument made by Azad and the Congress Muslims of Hindustan that bygone Muslim rulers were the conveners of an Indian national culture; an argument we have already seen Yunus and Abdullah repeat—albeit with far less complexity—for Sher Shah and Zain-ul-Abideen. And like in these

[127] Khan, 'Trust Begets Trust', Calcutta, 2 October 1934, *MSBK*, p.190.
[128] Khan, 'Awakened Women', p.221.
[129] Khan quoted in Arbab, 'Nonviolence', pp.230-1.
[130] For Abdullah, see 'Statement by PM', p.108; and 'Speech in Shahi Masjid Grounds', p.56. For Gandhi, see Devji, *Impossible Indian*, pp.180-1.

historical cases, what makes the claims of Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan to exceptional contemporary unity so memorable is that they discard their narrow, pre-given subject positions not only of minority but also of separatism. Indeed, that these demonstrations of secular nationalism appear in the immediate context of Partition and the creation of a Muslim state heighten their effect.

The End of Political Pluralism

Since his Indian nation was ideological and its membership had to be earned, prior to independence Ghaffar Khan was able to admonish the great mass of Indian Muslims for remaining aloof from it with an extraordinary indifference towards what he believed to be their self-imposed plight. This was something few other nationalists could have ever managed. Azad, the other great Congress Muslim, could never do the same simply because he held that Indian Muslims—one of two builders of an inherited 'new India'—were integral to the existence of any Indian nationality. Differentiating between his Pashtuns and the rest, the Fakhr-e-Afghan declared at Bombay in 1934 that by refusing to enter the nationalist movement:

> The Musalmans will not only keep themselves backward but [are] retarding the progress of the whole country. If they alone were left behind we would not have been so sorry, but by their falling back the whole country is falling behind.[131]

The political immaturity of Indian Muslims, who hankered after 'ordinary things' like legislative seats and job quotas, could be willingly ignored except that their obstructionism was preventing their compatriots from lifting the great 'curse' that had been cast over their enchained country.[132] If the Muslims of Hindustan preferred to remain British slaves and believe that independence risked Hindu domination, then it was almost the wish of a frustrated Ghaffar Khan that their coreligionists in the Frontier—who had apprehended the real worth of sovereignty—be able to entirely overlook them as they continued to work with their awakened Hindu countrymen to liberate India. Consequently, he alludes to a quintessentially majoritarian form of Indian democracy. Nothing ought to prevent the will of the apparently enlightened many. But the prospect of an obstructionist minority troubles him so deeply that he ends up rejecting the majoritarianism with which he began. Perhaps somewhat

[131] Khan, 'Awakened Women', p.217.
[132] Khan, 'Slavery', p.181.

ironically for figures like Ghaffar Khan who opposed the demands of the League, such was the size and strength of the Indian Muslim community that it was impossible to simply ignore it. Even though he consistently placed the burden of integration on the estranged Muslims, Ghaffar Khan has no choice but to comment that, alas, disunity was 'retarding the progress of the whole country.' Yunus agreed, noting that only after 'attain[ing] that much-sought-after unity' would India 'rise as a great and powerful country.'[133] What Ghaffar Khan seems to leave us with here is an inversion of post-Benthamite utilitarianism. Credited with founding utilitarianism in the late eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham, the majoritarian *pure et dure*, believed in fostering happiness for the greatest number. Believing Bentham had unwittingly allowed for the persecution of the innocent minority by the immoral majority, his successor John Stuart Mill introduced the Harm Principle. Simply put, a majority can exercise its power provided it does no harm to the minority. How one determines what is and what is not harmful has been debated vigorously by philosophers, some of whom argue that it is impossible to arrive at either a quantitative or qualitative conclusion.[134] Be that as is it may, what is interesting for our purposes is the way Ghaffar Khan seems to remake this idea. Unlike Mill, who is concerned with the harm being done *to* a minority, or even Azad, who is concerned with the harm that a minority *irrationally perceives* is being done to it, Ghaffar Khan's focus remains the harm that an *irrational minority* may *inflict upon* a *righteous majority*. Ultimately, therefore, the righteous majority must allay the fears—however delusional—of the irrational minority for otherwise it threatens to wreck its own fate. Ghaffar Khan and his Khudai Khidmatgars found the League's politics to be abhorrent, but they continued to support efforts to bridge the gap between Jinnah and the Congress High Command. A truce was necessary if the existing members of the ethical Indian national community were to achieve collective 'progress'. That, however, could not be some form of religious partition which soon came to be the demand of the Qaid-e-Azam. If Ghaffar Khan had laboured to convert Indian divisions into national love, this divisive scheme threatened to undo his ethical work. So, having publicly opposed the 1946 Cabinet Mission Plan for placing the Frontier in a north-western sub-federation of Muslim-majority provinces, Ghaffar Khan finally relented once it was clear that a partition was the only alternative. Confiding in Gandhi, he said:

[133] Yunus, *Frontier*, p.122.
[134] For instance, see N. Holtug, 'The Harm Principle', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 5/4 (2002).

'I can support any scheme but not the partition of India.'[135] But Partition had to be avoided for another purpose, too. The unwillingness of Indian Muslims to enter the national community also contravened the Fakhr-e-Afghan's greater mission of a united human race. Therefore, despite the frustration and even anger he directed towards Indian Muslims,[136] he was obliged to persist with his attempts to win them over. Partition meant that his prolonged failure to do so was confirmed as final. The vast mass of Indian Muslims had refused to replicate the Garhwali soldiers who, in 1930, forwent the politics of division to become members of India. Instead, they chose to render whatever existed of that nation defunct. An extract from his memoir, penned in exile in 1969, demonstrates this well. Still anticipating a future in which Pashtuns east of the Durand Line could serve 'God and humanity',[137] Ghaffar Khan was experiencing perhaps his greatest sense of alienation yet from the Pakistani state and what he understood as its divisive idea formulated in opposition to his quest for Indian and human unity:

> I am afraid I do not entertain any friendly feelings for Pakistan. Pakistan was founded on hatred. She was born not of love but of hatred and she grew up on hatred, on malice, on spite and hostility. Pakistan was created by the grace of the British in order that the Hindus and the Muslims might forever be at war and forget that they were brothers. Pakistan is unable to think in terms of peace and friendship.[138]

Staying on the subject of Partition, I want to bring this chapter to a close by examining the very different ways Ghaffar Khan and Yunus reacted to the decision to hold a referendum on the Frontier in July 1947. Despite its decisive victory in the 1945-6 provincial election, it was now clear that the Frontier Congress was being increasingly challenged by the communal appeals of the Muslim League. These became particularly effective once religious violence spread across the plains of northern India in the second half of 1946. Paying heed to this altering situation, the British suggested a popular vote to decide whether the Frontier would join the Indian Union or Pakistan. Nehru and Jinnah accepted the idea and it, therefore, found its way into Viceroy Louis

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[135] Khan, Statement after Frontier Referendum, July 1947, reprinted in *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p.447.
[136] Yunus writes that in 1969, Ghaffar Khan became 'thoroughly irritated' when the Muslims of Ahmedabad continuously addressed him as *baba*—an honorific translated variously as father or wise old man. '"You are calling me a *Baba* now," he said. "Where are those whom you followed before partition? Where are the Muslim League leaders? At that time you called me *Hindu ka bacha* [a child of a Hindu]." This remark had an immediate impact. The Muslims had gone through a nightmare as it was. Badshah Khan's blunt talk made them realize the meaning of the foul game played at their expense at the time of partition' (*Politics*, pp.174-5).
[137] Khan, *Autobiography*, p.122.
[138] Khan, *Autobiography*, pp.209-10.

Mountbatten's Partition Plan.[139] Some scholars have suggested that by calling on Pashtuns to boycott the referendum, Ghaffar Khan was attempting to prevent a bloodbath. Not only had the League finally become a genuine rival to Congress, but there also seemed to be an increasing appetite for a jihad among those tribesmen who favoured accession to Pakistan. Having devoted his career to replacing Pashtun fratricide with nonviolence, Ghaffar Khan is thought to have concluded that a closely contested referendum only threatened to undo that work.[140] But if this moral consideration crossed his mind, I want to suggest that it was nevertheless preceded by another. Without adequately interrogating its ethical significance, standard issue accounts of Partition on the Frontier never fail to mention that the Khudai Khidmatgars—after years of service to the Congress cause—believed that they had been betrayed by their leadership in Delhi. It was this initial act of betrayal, more than any subsequent consideration about Pashtun fratricide, which led Ghaffar Khan to his decision. Recalling the episode in his memoir, he writes:

> The fact that we had secured such a clear majority in [the 1945-6 provincial] election which was fought on very clear issues, and under conditions in which the [colonial] government had allied itself with the Muslim League and had used all the Muslim leaders in India and all its power against us, could only mean one thing: that the majority of people in the country were behind us. When, therefore, in spite of all this, another referendum in 1947 was forced upon us, we considered this gross injustice and refused to have anything to do with such a referendum. We decided to boycott it so that the world might learn of the gross injustice that was to be inflicted upon us. Not only was the Viceroy's order for a new referendum illogical and unreasonable but it was also discriminating and partial. If the British meant this to be their parting gift to us, we did not accept it. Whereas everywhere in India the representative Assemblies had been asked to decide whether they wanted to remain in India or go over to Pakistan, the North-West Frontier Province Assembly had not been given this right to choose. This was an insult to the whole nation of the Pashtuns, which we could not under any circumstances tolerate. I must confess that it also hurt and grieved me deeply that even the Congress Working Committee did not lift a finger to help us, as we had hoped they would. Tied hand and foot, they delivered us into the hands of our enemies…. Under these circumstances and after such treatment by the Congress, the question [of] whether I wanted to remain in India or go over to Pakistan is not only unnecessary, but improper, because the Congress, which was the representative body in India, not only deserted us but delivered us into the hands of our enemies. To meet them now is like killing all my Pathan self-respect, ethics and traditions.[141]

[139] Banerjee, *Pathan Unarmed*, p.184.
[140] Banerjee, Ibid, p.189. Shah, *Ethnicity*, p.227.
[141] Khan, *Autobiography*, pp.177-8.

Ghaffar Khan had spent the late colonial period preparing for an independent future in which Pashtuns, along with the many other peoples of India, would take their place as equal citizens regardless of religious or ethnolinguistic affiliations. With freedom on the horizon, however, this principle of equality was corroding. Despite the Frontier's integration into the Indian electoral process, its provincial assembly—unlike those elsewhere—had not been temporarily turned into a nominally sovereign body tasked with choosing between India and Pakistan. Almost condemned as unrepresentative outliers, Pashtun elected representatives were being treated differently. We have already seen that the Fakhr-e-Afghan frequently gave Pashtuns a national status to equalise them with other peoples. Once again, he draws on that language: a 'nation' in their own right, this unequal treatment was an 'insult' impossible for Pashtuns to 'tolerate'. But what had prompted it? Ghaffar Khan only alludes to an answer in this passage. By the summer of 1947, the Congress leadership had—albeit only for the practical purposes of dividing India into two dominions—finally accepted Jinnah's 'two-nation' theory. But the overwhelmingly Muslim Frontier, much to the inconvenience of those now negotiating at Delhi, had yet to succumb to it. Ghaffar Khan was persisting with a quite different logic: 'to remain in India or go over to Pakistan'. The 'right' of an assembly 'to choose' has not been transformed into a redundant acceptance of the 'two-nation' theory but is, instead, framed as a question of secession from an existing national union. And so, Ghaffar Khan directs much of his frustration at the sudden curtailing of political pluralism. That is to say, he is protesting the manner in which communalism has been allowed to wholly outmanoeuvre secularism. For as long as these two logics had existed side by side, politics on the Frontier had been a fair game. It no longer was. By issuing 'another' referendum and preventing Pashtun elected representatives from making a decision like elsewhere, the Frontier was being singled out because it was a difficult Muslim case bucking the trend. The implication of an exceptional ballot on the Frontier was to turn India from a secular into a Hindu option. It was this which was not only 'illogical and unreasonable' but, more revealingly, 'also discriminating and partial'. As Ghaffar Khan put it at Peshawar on 24 June: 'Holding a referendum in circumstances and on present issues, which are essentially communal in their nature, appears to be the result of a deep-seated conspiracy.'[142] Gandhi was even

[142] Khan, 'A Free Pathan State', Peshawar, 24 June 1947, in *Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Words of Freedom—Ideas of A Nation*, (Delhi, 2010), p.48.

more blunt when he pitied his great friend at a prayer meeting six days later. With reference to the now impending referendum, the Mahatma noted that the Khudai Khidmatgars did not relish 'being asked to choose between Pakistan and India' since these were 'being misunderstood' as communal states. 'Hindustan is Hindu and Pakistan is Muslim. The problem before Badshah Khan is how to get out of this difficulty.'[143] Having framed his politics around a secular national argument for India (as opposed to Afghanistan), Ghaffar Khan had been able to distance himself from a more widespread communal logic; it was now finally being forced upon him.

According to Ghaffar Khan, Congress was complicit in this apparent injustice. If the Congress state was a truly secular ideal, it ought to have remained as attainable for his province as it was for others. But having embraced more of Jinnah's 'two-nation' theory than they were perhaps prepared to admit, the leadership was now endorsing different rules for Hindu and Muslim accession to the new Indian Union. It was conceding that its dominion may have to limit itself to India's Hindu-majority areas and any inclusion of the predominately Muslim Frontier within it would now be deemed unusual. The commitment of the Khudai Khidmatgars to secular nationalism was such that they were always going to stand aloof from Jinnah's logic. They 'had hoped' that Congress, too, would do the same. Instead, astonishingly terminating sixteen years of ethical behaviour, they 'did not lift a finger to help us'.[144] The moral pact that had

[143] Gandhi, 'Speech at Prayer Meeting', Delhi, 30 June 1947, in *CWMG*, Vol.88, p.248.

[144] Banerjee has speculated that Nehru, 'notoriously vain and in possession of a considerable temper', had 'given up on the Frontier' after 'his ill-fated visit to the Tribal Areas' in October 1946 (Banerjee, *Pathan Unarmed*, 188). It is worth briefly examining Nehru's defence. On 8 May 1947, he told Mountbatten that though he believed in the principle that '[w]hatever was done in the N.W.F.P. should be "in the all-India context"', he simultaneously admitted that '[i]t was essential to know definitely which way the N.W.F.P. wanted to go.' (Minutes of the Tenth Miscellaneous Meeting of the Viceroy', 8 May 1947, *SWJN*, Vol.2, p.117). Interestingly, Nehru did not cite the League's increasing popularity as the only reason for a referendum and gave great weight to the factor of geography. With western Punjab certain to go to Pakistan, it had become 'difficult to oppose this proposal'. As part of the Indian Union, the Frontier would be 'physically cut off from' Delhi. Having lost its Punjabi hinterland and thus surrounded not only by Afghan but also Pakistani territory, Nehru argued that it would be difficult—though not impossible—to control the Frontier. Thus, 'in view of this new situation it would be advisable to have a referendum in the Frontier in order to determine to which Constituent Assembly the N.W.F.P. desired to belong.' However, Nehru was also clear that he wished to fight that referendum and bring the Frontier into India (Nehru, 'Note on the Situation in the N.W.F.P.', 8 June 1947, Ibid, Vol.3, pp.274-5). But, perhaps, even this contention fails to deal with Ghaffar Khan's charge of unequal treatment. By imposing a referendum on the Frontier, this fully-fledged province with its own elected legislative assembly was being treated on par with the Muslim-majority district of Sylhet in Assam and the centrally-administered province of Baluchistan. Meanwhile, eastern Bengal—which was set to face the same logistical difficulties in Pakistan as the Frontier would in India—had been asked to resolve its future on the floor of the Bengal assembly. Therefore, we cannot help but be drawn to an obvious but awkward fact: that while the elected Muslim

maintained national relations between Pashtuns and other Indians lay in tatters; they had ultimately failed to uphold mutual honour and love each other equally. Much like how his justification for joining Congress in 1931 was located in the universalizable politics of honour and obligation, his decision to break with it is also founded on these principles. Needless to say, the events of 1947 demonstrate the great weakness of this attempt to establish ethical political relations. For it to work both parties had to value ethical behaviour as much as each other; no matter how universalizable it was, this politics relied on trust to such an extent that its propagators unavoidably left themselves open to the ultimate betrayal. Jinnah's apparent volte-face in 1943, which so offended Yunus, almost portended the disappointment of his leader four years later. After all, both cases demonstrate how—in an increasingly communalised polity—Indian Muslim thinkers were struggling to retain their secular nationalist space.

Since India and Pakistan were now both 'essentially communal' options, Ghaffar Khan attempted to retain his secular and ethical politics by requesting the inclusion of a third option on the ballot paper: an independent 'Pakhtunistan'. Rather than the eccentric demand it is often made out to be, there was nothing all that peculiar about it. It had reflections elsewhere in the country and was, therefore, part of an alternative political imagination which gathered momentum during the summer of 1947. Like the Fakhr-e-Afghan, a section of its Bengal wing believed that Congress had betrayed secularism. By proposing the partition of both Bengal and the Punjab in order to secure as much territory as possible for a unitary India, Sarat Chandra Bose contended that his colleagues were making 'a violent departure from the traditions and principles of the Congress. And I am forced to say that it is the result of a defeatist mentality.'[145] Rather than solving the communal question, the Congress leadership was, according to Bose, choosing to brush it under the carpet by finally ghettoising Hindus and Muslims; this was 'no basis for a solution'.[146] Having defaulted on its project for conciliation, Bose snubbed his High Command's call for a unified front. Instead, he, along with Kiran Shankar Roy, unilaterally proposed a 'United Bengal' which came to enjoy the support of both Jinnah and the Muslim League prime minister of Bengal, Huseyn Shaheed

representatives of eastern Bengal were sure to vote for Pakistan, the opposite would have been true if a vote had taken place in the Frontier assembly.

[145] S.C. Bose in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 19 March 1947, quoted in J. Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-47*, (Cambridge, 1994), p.259.

[146] Bose in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 15 March 1947, quoted in Ibid.

Suhrawardy. Sovereign and socialist, this state was to elect its parliamentarians via a joint electorate based on an adult franchise. While the Muslims would retain their marginal statutory majority in its assembly, the Hindu minority was to be given near parity in the executive.[147] Though he was reprimanded by both the High Command and the Bengal Congress, Bose still refused to toe the party line. In a sharp letter to Vallabhbhai Patel on 27 May, he exclaimed:

> I entirely agree with you that we should take a united stand; but I shall say at the same time that the united stand should be for a united Bengal and a united India. Future generations will, I am afraid, condemn us for conceding the division of India and partition of Bengal and the Punjab.[148]

Congress had betrayed not only Bengalis and Punjabis, but the Indians of tomorrow. Its noble cause had been forsaken meaning that those who remained committed to it had no choice but to seek the creation of new theatres for a secular nationalism shared by Hindus, Muslims, and other religious communities. Like Pakhtunistan, United Bengal was one such attempt. Though there was less talk about keeping the Punjab united, its recently deposed Unionist prime minister, Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, touted a 'Free Punjab' when pushed on the subject in a private meeting with Mountbatten on 3 May. Khizar suggested that this sovereign state, which would enter into 'an agreement or agreements with Hindustan and Pakistan about Defence', could be made one of several options in a referendum. It might consist of two provinces: one dominated by the Muslims in the west and another by a Hindu-Sikh majority in the east. A complete 'vivisection' of the Punjab, however, had to be avoided for that 'would be disastrous and indeed it would be suicidal to split it up'. Khizar 'went on to say that the Punjab for the Punjabis used to be the cry and that he was still in favour of it.'[149]

With the countrywide compulsions of the two national parties threatening to drive Bengal and the Punjab towards 'suicid[e]' and religious consolidation, Khizar and Bose—who were by now generals without armies—sought desperate alternatives at the eleventh hour. And though Ghaffar Khan remained the most popular leader of a province whose own territorial integrity was not being threatened, Khizar and Bose had much in common with him. Dissatisfied with the proposal to create two majoritarian

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[147] For the full terms of this scheme, see Bose, *Wither Two Bengals*, (Calcutta, 1970), pp.5-6.
[148] Bose to Patel, 27 May 1947, in D. Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50*, Vol.4, (10 vols, Ahmedabad, 1971-4), pp.45-6.
[149] Meeting between Mountbatten and K.H.K Tiwana, 3 May 1947, *TP*, Vol.10, pp.589-90.

dominions out of a shared India, they, like the Fakhr-e-Afghan, sought to convert provinces into nation-states so as to avoid the imposition of a communal logic in their inclusive homelands. Therefore, once again, Ghaffar Khan's politics finds meaning beyond its immediate context. If his ethics was universalizable, his political projects were repeatable. And just as the grand multinational union—whether Indian, Pakistani, or Afghan—was permissible if internal communities consented to a shared ideology, so was the independent ethnolinguistic state acceptable if such agreement was impossible. Often thought about as peculiar to the Pashtuns, his ideas were anything but isolated phenomena. For the record, the suggestions of Khizar and Bose were easily ignored as more significant voices at Delhi agreed to partition their respective provinces in the name of centralised authority. Already smarting over a truncated Pakistan in the northwest, Jinnah refused to entertain the idea of Pakhtunistan. The eventual India-Pakistan referendum—which promised to be a close contest in normal circumstances—turned out to be a sham. The Khudai Khidmatgars went ahead with their boycott. And while official records suggest that just over half of the electorate (seven percent of the total population) voted, plenty of bogus votes were cast in favour of Pakistan.[150]

It is interesting to note that if a sovereign Pakhtunistan had become an ethical necessity, it was perhaps only a temporary one. According to Gandhi[151] and Nehru,[152] Ghaffar Khan was contemplating reattaching it to Delhi but only once the constitution of the Indian Union had been framed. This is important not because it questions the way he penned his memory of the referendum, but since it points to how a seemingly broken national relationship with the rest of India might be renewed. By essentially predicating renewal on the realisation of a favourable Indian constitution, that currently hypothetical document is converted into a fresh social contract. What the Fakhr-e-Afghan was claiming was this: if Congress revoked its descent into communalism by pledging to uphold their original principles in as binding a document as its own constitution, Pashtuns could yet forgive their friends and resume their national relationship. Significant here is the stress placed on the future actions of Congress leaders. Since it was they who had forgone Pashtun trust, it was their responsibility to retrieve it. Nehru contended that the reintegration of an independent Frontier would

[150] Jansson, *Pakhtunistan*, p.243.
[151] Gandhi to Mountbatten, 28/29 June 1947, *TP*, Vol.11, pp.732-3.
[152] Nehru to Khan, pp.287-9.

have been inevitable; such a small state, he argued, would be unable to 'look after defence or external affairs; nor could it have a high standard of living and development without help.'[153] Of course, Ghaffar Khan would scarcely have disagreed; we have already seen that he understood the perils of inhabiting a deficit province. But beyond these pragmatic reasons for any reunification, it is the possibility of forgiveness and repairing broken human relationships which is most interesting here; ideas which Ghaffar Khan often chose to locate in Pashtunwali and Islam[154] but also clearly agreed with his grandest endeavour: 'universal brotherhood'. While he was unable to forget the betrayal of 1947, the Fakhr-e-Afghan's broader vision did not allow him to convert it into an irrevocable rejection; he refused to let it erode his love for his Congress friends and the people of divided India.[155] Indeed, it is interesting that he continued to argue that Indian Muslims should have trusted Congress. And, at times, he even seemed to imply that it was this initial lack of faith which had ultimately pushed Congress to 'accept' a 'partition and false referendum' scripted by their foes.[156]

Not every Khudai Khidmatgar was prepared to follow Ghaffar Khan and boycott the referendum. Though it may have been unwarranted and even unfair, some still called for an energetic campaign to push the Frontier into India.[157] Among them was Yunus. He refused to believe that a communal referendum had rendered divided India, at least at present, an impossible option for Muslim Pashtuns. A boycott meant accepting rather than challenging the imposition of this new logic. In fact, he was unwilling to attach any great culpability to Nehru and the High Command. Accusing them only of 'panic' in the face of 'British scheming' and 'the unbridled ambition of Muslim communalism', Yunus suggested that Pashtuns ought to have fought for 'the unity of India' even if they were now its only remaining advocates. The 'unholy alliance being worked out' between these three forces could not dictate the meaning of Indianness; they alone had no right to decide who would remain an Indian or not.

[153] Ibid, p.289.
[154] I have already referred to *nanawati*, but for an example of how Ghaffar Khan located forgiveness in Islam see his description of Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, in: Address to Pakistan Constituent Assembly, p.457.
[155] Khan, 'I Have Come to Serve You', Delhi, October 1969, in R. Mukherjee (ed.), *The Great Speeches of Modern India* (Noida, 2011), pp.303-4.
[156] Khan, Interview, p.3.
[157] Shah, *Ethnicity*, p.227.

Ghaffar Khan's decision to boycott the referendum, and thereby effectively surrender to Pakistan against his will, was a 'wrong' one:

> I was not in tune with Badshah Khan over this issue. To me the very concept of Pakistan was anathema and there was no question of accepting it or the dominance of the communal leadership it entailed. I believed in the unity of India. Since this was on the point of being destroyed, I strongly felt that we should revolt…[158]

There was no 'revolt' and, therefore, to retain an Indian nationality only one option remained. In a remarkable validation of the view that the modern national community was more about ideology and consent than an inherited culture and geography, Yunus left his homeland for Delhi. Though they interpreted the events of 1947 differently, both Ghaffar Khan's decision to break with a disloyal Congress and Yunus' subsequent migration and distinguished diplomatic career in Nehruvian India, provide two equally legitimate endorsements of that original belief. Yunus was not the only lieutenant of the Khan brothers that made the journey to Delhi; there was also the lesser-known Jan Mohammad Khan. On leaving the Frontier, Jan Mohammad is said to have somewhat dramatically declared to Jinnah: 'I was born in Hindustan. I fought for the freedom of Hindustan. I will live in free Hindustan, and it is in Hindustan where I will breathe my last.'[159] As we saw earlier, for the Khudai Khidmatgars there were two Hindustans. The first named the geography and cultural world of the Gangetic plain which they saw as distinctly different from their Frontier; and the second an Indian whole whose idea they had made their own. This second Hindustan could, at different times, be located in different places. When Jan Mohammad spoke of being 'born in Hindustan', he almost certainly referred to taking birth in a place where its idea had held sway rather than on a specified patch of land. While Hindustan could for some time be found in Torkham—the town on the Durand Line where he was born—this was no longer the case. In this imagination India, or Hindustan, is not a conventional place with a precise location; it is simply an idea. If it emerged victorious on the battlefield of ideas, it had the power to transcend geography. In defeat, of course, this lack of rootedness made it fragile and vulnerable. Nonetheless, this conception of India made it possible

[158] Yunus, *Politics*, p.68.
[159] As retold by Nandita Das in NDTV, 'A Nation in Solidarity for 26/11 Martyrs', 29 November 2009, www.ndtv.com/video/player/ndtv-special-ndtv-24x7/nation-in-solidarity-for-26-11-martyrs/116078 (3 June 2016).

for Jan Mohammad to contend that he was both born—and destined to die—in the same Hindustan without ever worrying to differentiate between Torkham and Delhi.

If his migration symbolised the ultimate triumph of an ideological nationality for Yunus, he was nevertheless haunted by the loss—but also the lingering temptation of—his Pashtun origins. His memoir, published in 1980, speaks movingly about the family and friends that he left behind in Pakistan. Yunus adds, however, that he ultimately opted to severe these bonds entirely. Familial 'pain', it seems, was better than national ambivalence:

> So I took on this self-imposed exile and left Peshawar in July 1947. It was difficult to reconcile myself to an unpleasant reality. I have not been there since, nor written to any of my friends or relations. It was a painful decision. But I have not regretted it.[160] I had looked to the future then and look to it even now with greater faith and confidence. Those with whom I decided to live proved how correct was my choice.[161]

Similarly, it is interesting to note the manner in which Yunus records his brief meeting with Ghaffar Khan in Jalalabad after a gap of eighteen years in May 1965. Yunus must have experienced countless emotions meeting a paternal figure who was also a distant relative. And yet, he opts to record only the political and ideological significance of this meeting:

> Immediately the many years spent in a common struggle came into focus. I was emotionally moved by a man who had guided us for so long and sacrificed so much for ideals, aged a lot, but who was still confident of ushering in a new era. It was too dramatic a situation, and as I sat listening to him, I said to myself, "I am fortunate to be representing a free country, but he is still languishing and suffering the indignities of a hostile government."[162]

Perhaps more telling than either of these disclosures was Yunus' decision to reject Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's offer to serve as India's ambassador to Afghanistan in early 1971. Yunus tells us that this decision was motivated simply by his longing for a less frantic life in India after over two decades as a diplomat.[163] However, one cannot help but wonder if he resisted this proposal, at least in part, because he realised that

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[160] By 1986, Yunus seems to have changed his view almost by accident. A chance meeting with his brother, Yahya Jan, in Bahrain in 1982 renewed his relations with his family in Peshawar. Thereafter, 'several' of his nephews and nieces visited him in Delhi. After years of deliberate—but seemingly suffocating—denial, Yunus was now attempting to reconcile his international family with his Indian nationality (Yunus, *Letters from Prison*, Hameed (trans.), (Delhi, 1986), p.191).
[161] Yunus, *Politics*, p.69.
[162] Ibid, p.157.
[163] Ibid, p.183.

the prolonged temptation provided by the cultural world of that country could well prove destructive for his conception of modern nationalism. Strangely, then, Yunus had much in common with the loyal Muhajir in Pakistan who, though longing for India, ultimately takes refuge in the great sacrifice she had made for the separatist cause. Partition meant that Yunus, too, had to avoid the very real connections provided by family, culture, history, and geography if he was to attach himself fully to the abstraction that was India.

Conclusion

In December 1947, Jinnah convened a session of the Muslim League at Karachi to divide it into two independent Indian and Pakistani parties. Holding that the former would be important for the protection of Muslim minority interests, the Qaid-e-Azam criticised colleagues like Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy for following Azad's lead and demanding the dissolution of communal parties and the creation of a secular interest-based politics in both dominions.[1] 'There must be a Muslim League in Hindustan. If you are thinking of anything else, you are finished', Jinnah declared. 'Azad and others are trying to break the identity of Muslims in India. Do not allow it. Do not do it.'[2] Ultimately, Azad used the moment of Partition and dissension among League leaders to successfully strip his coreligionists of their exclusive political party in most parts of the Indian Union. Before concluding this thesis with a summary of its main findings, I want to briefly explore this endeavour, demonstrate how it was consistent with the Maulana's idea of the shared nation, and note the significance of Abdullah and Ghaffar Khan responding to it at different times and in different ways.

Often remembered as a call to halt migrations to Pakistan and retain the Muslim element within the Indian nation, Azad's *khutba* at Delhi's Jama Masjid in October 1947 might also be read as his own farewell speech. For having finally been presented the political leadership of the Indian Muslims on a platter by a departing Jinnah, Azad refused it. Since Partition had provided a final—if imperfect—solution to the communal problem, 'Indian politics', Azad noted, had 'taken a new direction.' If 'there was no place in it for the Muslim League', there was also no question of him appropriating the role it had left behind for him.[3] Though mindful that communal prejudices had been given a new lease of life by the rhetoric and violence of Partition, Azad still insisted that political salvation for Muslims—just like other Indians—lay in the socialist policies of the secular Nehruvian government. At Calcutta in January 1949, Azad was clear that the Nehru government was 'determined to crush all communal elements'. He added that

[1] Though it goes beyond the scope of this thesis, I want to note that League leaders like Suhrawardy, Hasrat Mohani, and Begum Aizaz Rasool—some of whom had always been reluctant converts to the Pakistan demand—believed that the future of Indian Muslims now depended on their abandoning the 'two-nation' theory and rejoining the Indian nationalist fold to strengthen the Nehruvian project. An unexplored subject in need of research, documents pertaining to this intellectual recalibration can be found in *MOI*, pp.34-111.
[2] Jinnah in 'All-India Muslim League Splits', Karachi, 14-5 December 1947, Ibid, p.56.
[3] Azad, 'Speech Delivered at Jama Masjid', p.83.

since India was 'a democratic secular state where every citizen, whether he is a Hindu, a Muslim or Sikh, has equal rights and privileges', it was time for his coreligionists to abandon any misplaced fears of Hindu domination and embrace the logic of changing majorities and minorities conceived along socio-economic lines.[4] Muslims may have lost much of the nationwide strength that had once led Azad to dismiss the League's minoritarian politics, but he was still unwilling to claim any of it for himself. At Lucknow in December 1947, he argued that communal organisation—and the demands for separate electorates, weighted representation, and reservations which came with it—offered no way of rebuilding intercommunnal trust and would, instead, prove 'dangerous' for a harmonious future. Muslims had no choice but to dissolve their exclusive political organisations, join Congress or other secular parties, and organise communally only for religious activities.[5] By essentially claiming that a weakened Muslim minority could only integrate into the new nation by placing their faith in Nehruvianism and, in turn, winning back the trust of their Hindu countrymen, Azad was once again demonstrating the importance he attached not simply to secular political organisation but to social—as opposed to constitutional or legal—matters.

Whatever its merits, there is an incredible clarity of thought that pervades Azad's statements immediately following Partition; religion remains an integral part of Indian life but is made to stand unequivocally outside the political. But this uncompromising call for political secularism marked a shift of sorts. For as we saw at the beginning of chapter one, until 1947, Azad had been willing to concede generous terms to a delusional but sufficiently representative Muslim League so as to fully integrate the Muslim minority into the nationalist movement and, thus, save his nationalist theory of shared cultural and autonomous religious domains occupying a single, secular India. This had been despite his own belief that ninety-five million Muslims ought to trust their capacity to avoid minoritisation in an Indian federation without resorting to Jinnah's supposedly empowering notion of religious nationality. But since Partition had destroyed Indian unity, Azad chose to react differently to a changed context but in a way that could still claim to be prioritising the preservation of

[4] Azad, 'Maulana Azad Calls Upon Muslims to Organise for Social and Religious Activities and Not for Politics', Calcutta, 28 January 1949, *MOI*, p.76.
[5] Azad, 'Maulana Azad Calls on Indian Muslims to Dissolve the Muslim League and Join the Congress', Lucknow, 27 December 1947, Ibid, p.63.

as much of this theory as was now possible. Indeed, these were not inconsistent as much as reactive responses to different situations. Put simply, in the contexts that Azad found himself, trust and compromise emerged as two alternative ways of saving the shared Indian nation; they were ultimately means to a more important end. And it is this fundamentally reactive nature that is interesting for it illustrates a failure (or refusal) to produce an original politics for Indian Muslims as *Muslims* and not simply as *Indians*. It would be fair to say, then, that though Azadian thought produced a creative idea of the secular nation which has left a rich legacy not just for Muslims but other South Asians, too, it nevertheless failed the crucial test of (communal) politics. It is part of its own political context but only by way of reaction. The significance of this failure is underlined by the simple fact that the independent Indian state—though secular in principle—had to nevertheless emerge not only from a bloody Partition but out of a long colonial inheritance of institutionalised communal division. Perhaps Jinnah's decision not to heed Suhrawardy's advice and admit non-Muslims into the Pakistan Muslim League in the immediate aftermath of Partition is further evidence of the view that the politics of minority needed to be kept alive in these two new states. Just as there 'must be a Muslim League in Hindustan', perhaps Jinnah realised that the pervasive nature of communal prejudice was such that Hindus and other minorities could not afford to simply sink their own political voices into an assimilative Pakistani national one.

Like Azad, Ghaffar Khan similarly advised Indian Muslims to trust in Congress. His own betrayal notwithstanding, the Fakhr-e-Afghan was sure that figures like Nehru and Rajendra Prasad were 'principle[d]' enough to safeguard the interests of those Muslims now under their jurisdiction. In February 1948, he told the press at Karachi that Indian Muslims 'have nothing to fear. Their condition will not worsen.'[6] Interestingly, then, it was not Azad or Ghaffar Khan, but Abdullah who reopened the question of Indian Muslim political representation albeit two decades after the Maulana's successful campaign had forced the Indian Union Muslim League to restrict itself to the regional politics of India's southern most states. In colonial times, Abdullah was clear that nationwide Muslim solidarity could never be allowed to encroach on the

[6] Khan in P. Nayyar, *A Pilgrimage for Peace: Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi among N.W.F. Pathans*, (Ahmedabad, 1950), p.178.

Kashmiri ambition for self-rule and the same was true after independence; the concerns of Muslims elsewhere in the subcontinent had no role to play in his state deciding its future by way of a referendum.[7] But that did not mean that Abdullah was uninterested in what he now took to be the increasing marginalisation of his coreligionists in the Indian Union. Stressing the need for them to unite and 'forget' their internal 'differences', Abdullah noted towards the end of his interview to the *Shabistan Urdu Digest* in 1968 that Indian Muslims would subsequently 'have to seriously consider whether they should form a strong single party of their own or join hands with some other political party.' Since he had only recently been released from prison and was still to accurately 'diagnose the disease', he could not yet recommend one course over the other and 'suggest a remedy.' But 'a common platform' was a must; Muslims had 'to stand on their own feet—not depend upon the support' of others.[8] Writing five years later in *The Indian Express*, the Sher-e-Kashmir would better define '[t]he legitimate grievances of the Muslims of India [that] cry for redress': low representation in legislatures and public services; the inability—or even reluctance—of state forces to 'prevent and contain' the 'threat to the lives and property of Muslims' during communal riots; the 'mischievous' communalisation of school textbooks; and 'discrimination' in admission to universities and colleges. By this point he was also proposing a 'remedy'. Muslims had 'to organize themselves' to 'combat these wrongs' but in a manner that would 'improve' and 'not worsen' Hindu-Muslim relations. This meant resisting the politics of 'exclusiveness' and uniting with other marginalised or sympathetic sections of India's 'free plural society'—especially Dalits. There could be no other solution to communal 'injustice' which simultaneously upheld 'the ideals of democracy, secularism, and socialism.'[9] By calling for an organisation that balanced its attention to Muslim interests with an inclusive politics, what Abdullah anticipated was different to what Jinnah had in 1947. Still, this was nevertheless a departure from the positions Azad and Ghaffar Khan had taken then. And, in a way, it is unsurprising that of our three principal figures it was Abdullah who came to these conclusions even if they were formulated—not as proposals for a people inhabiting a new democracy—but as responses to over twenty years of independent rule. For if Abdullah shared a desire to establish Hindu-

[7] For this, see Abdullah, 'Speech to the Muslims', Deoband, January 1968, *Reflections*, pp.45-6.
[8] Abdullah, '*Shabistan*', p.144.
[9] Abdullah, 'A Word to Indian Muslims', *The Indian Express*, 10 August 1973, *MOI*, pp.163-4.

Muslim parity at the level of Indian socio-cultural interaction with Azad and Ghaffar Khan, he had never shown any inclination to replace constitutional guarantees and the politics of minority protection with an idea of trust. The most sceptical of the three, he had, after all, wanted to make the regional units of postcolonial India the real foci of independent power precisely because he believed that to be a vital safeguard against the marginalisation of (if not all then at least many significant) identity groups.

After independence, Ambedkar was able to safeguard the interests of Dalits by making reservations to government services, legislatures, and educational institutions constitutionally mandatory in the Indian Union. In so doing, he received public acknowledgement of the fact that while the Indian nation existed, the historical and contemporary reality of caste discrimination meant that it consisted of significant internal divisions. Because Jinnah accepted the Partition of India and the Azadian vision won out in the Indian Union, Muslims there were unable to challenge prejudice with an equivalent identitarian politics let alone achieve anything remotely analogous to affirmative action. The legacy of voluntarily destroying the one political organisation whose raison d'être had been to safeguard the interests of the Indian Muslim minority has only been amplified today by the unprecedent dominance of Hindu nationalism. Relentlessly hounded by the right so that it can consolidate its own national majority, India's almost voiceless Muslims are largely at the mercy of centre-left parties whose calculations dictate whether their interests are to be defended publicly or not. Indeed, it is because of the absence of a nationwide Muslim organisation that a figure like Asaduddin Owaisi—who is determined to articulate concerns not dissimilar to those listed out by Abdullah in 1973—matters to contemporary Indian political debate even though he represents nobody apart from his constituents in the old city of Hyderabad. So today—perhaps more than ever before since 1947—it is this problem of political silence and disorganisation that confronts this community of two-hundred million Indian citizens—the second largest concentration of Muslims anywhere in the world.

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This thesis has illustrated that from the late colonial period Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan conceived of a third way to nationalism in India which had till now been neglected by historians. Drawing confidence from the nationwide strength of the Muslim community and/or presence of their overwhelmingly Muslim regional homelands,

these thinker-politicians abjured the separatism of Jinnah and embraced an Indian national movement for the establishment of a secular republic. However, since they were concurrently eager to avoid being reduced to a subordinate role within the Indian nation from the subject position of Muslim minority, they insisted on imagining it in terms of parity between Hindus and Muslims; this separated them from other nationalist figures like Nehru who had little need to concern themselves with the prospect of minoritisation. That said, by refusing to make religion a determinant of nationality but nevertheless retaining it within the public space, the thought of these three figures must be understood as part of India's broader secular nationalist tradition.

This shared intellectual endeavour did not preclude substantial differences between Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan whose ideas were significantly informed by their contrasting regional inheritances. In chapter one, we found that Azad—as well as Kabir, Mahmud, Husain, and a handful of Urdu poets—thought of India as a historical nation defined by the profane culture collectively produced by Hindus and Muslims on the plains of northern India from the medieval period. This idea of parity was extended to encompass a recurring story of Central Asian migration to a hospitable country. In their debates with religious nationalists, the Congress Muslims formulated conceptions of universal cultural interaction and historical truth to argue that a shared culture was simply a cold fact of Indian life. This had two important consequences: it shaped a supplementary argument about how sectarian enmity was just as responsible for the creation of nationality as friendship; and led these figures to attach an unusual degree of historical veracity to their claims. Convinced that their reading of the past was 'true', these thinkers almost looked upon the professional historian as their ally. However, they saw little intrinsic value in exhaustive histories. Fundamentally concerned with their cultural inheritance, these future-oriented thinkers resurrected the past only to produce an account of present possession and reaffirm their Indian nation. Therefore, the long political history of Indian monarchy, while never ignored, was subordinated to this focus on culture and society.

But if Indians had transcended their separate religious identities to create the secular nation and had been changed forever by mutual interaction, this process had not destroyed but maintained their communal individualities. In this national imagination, then, religious majoritarianism is avoided in two ways. Made possible by

the presence of its two religio-cultural influences, the profane national culture of India—a separate entity in its own right and characterised by a perfect equilibrium—avoids the assimilation or absorption of one by the other. But that is not all. For by establishing notions of accommodation and adjustment, it also confirms the equal right of Hinduism and Islam to autonomy and free development. In chapter two, we saw how this idea—like shared secular culture—was similarly historicised; it was found in medieval and early modern Muslim kingship but also in ancient Indian philosophy. Kabir's recourse to the ancient past was significant since it allowed him to avoid restricting the shared nation to a merely Muslim necessity without succumbing to Hindu majoritarianism. For, after all, it was the perceived rejection of majoritarianism in ancient philosophy that he found so appealing. Deemed essential to Indian coexistence, Azad, Kabir, and the poet Jan Nisar Akhtar nevertheless recognised that by refusing homogeneity in favour of retaining religious pluralism, Indian nationality was marked with a certain fragility; an imperfection which required Indians to be doubly vigilant of those who wished to use it to destroy the nation. Though forever concerned about upholding the integrity of India's religions, we also found that Azad and his associates drew on the universality of Islam to encourage a theological dialogue with Hinduism in the hope of establishing a monotheistic meeting point; something which also interested Ghaffar Khan and, increasingly over time, Abdullah. And while the irreligious Progressive poets who shared their urban Urdu-speaking milieus with the Congress Muslims had no interest in this project, they secularised religion for nationalism in a way that did not dilute the original content of these two traditions.

In chapter three, we found that Abdullah imagined Kashmir to be an ethnolinguistic nation of its own; his political objective was to find ways of maintaining an equilibrium between its distinction from, and unity with, the rest of India. Bringing Abdullah into dialogue with the émigré pair of Iqbal and Nehru, I showed how he formulated a notion of natural purity out of the celebrated Kashmiri landscape; an idea that was astonishingly unreliant on others to effectively render Kashmiri distinction due to its metaphorical power and significant disconnection from (past and present) human endeavour. Iqbal has seldom been understood as a Kashmiri thinker, but we discovered that he, like Abdullah, imagined a distinct nationality for Kashmiris which relied as much on a localised Perso-Islamic culture as contemporary exploitation by the Dogras. While Iqbal was uninterested in historicising this tale of exploitation, Abdullah

hardened the idea of a Kashmiri collective by charting a history of persecution at the hands of Mughals, Afghans, and Sikhs. But if these groups were 'foreign' rulers in the context of Kashmir, they were also partners in an Indian nation similarly connected by history and geography. An organic country of equally autonomous religio-regional groups, India's final destiny was the creation of a decentralised independent state; a vision reinforced by Abdullah's claim that the various peoples of Jammu and Kashmir had independently imagined their own socialist future. Partition destroyed the idea of an organic aggregation of Indian peoples and, thus, Abdullah looked beyond it to argue that Kashmiris had to collectively decide—via a referendum—whether or not to opt for a new political relationship with other South Asians on the basis of civic values. I ended chapter three by noting that Abdullah also considered the institution of the Hindu monarch from Jammu as a way of bringing regional and religious groups together within a democratic Jammu and Kashmir housing both Kashmiri and Muslim majorities. In fact, as a thinker who could go beyond communal particularity to imagine the princely state as a site for constitutional monarchy and a genuinely federal Indian future, Abdullah and his party shared intellectual commonality—not simply with other Indian nationalists—but also the democratising royal government of Travancore. Abdullah mobilised multiple categories—religion, history, geography, socialism, and monarchy—which conventionally appear disparate. However, deep engagement with his ideas reveals that they represented different approaches to solving the same problem of Indian diversity.

At the beginning of chapter four, I demonstrated how Ghaffar Khan reinvented the customary figure of the Muslim Pashtun warrior but only after splitting it into two detachable characteristics: bravery and violence. By retaining bravery and discarding violence, Ghaffar Khan not only made his reconstructed warrior the harbinger of an ethical freedom. Significantly for his Indian nationalist project, it also allowed him to confront the principally negative image of this figure as an untameable savage in the wider Indian imagination. Universalising a reciprocal politics of honour and obligation derived from Pashtunwali, Ghaffar Khan made it the foundation for a national relationship of equals between Muslim Pashtuns and Hindu Hindustanis—two groups committed to establishing an independent India. If Pashtun 'gate-keepers' could reinvent a colonial trope to vow to protect the rest of India, so could other Congressmen show similar resolve by coming to the aid of the Khudai Khidmatgars in the aftermath

of the Peshawar massacre in 1930. Socialism intensified Abdullah's search for decentralisation in India but for Ghaffar Khan and his understudy Yunus, who both embraced the Nehruvian state, it tempered a similar tendency. And so, more than any long narrative of shared history, the India they imagined was forged out of contemporary commitments. This was partly because the past was unable to decisively award modern Indian nationality to Pashtuns. They made for the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and, therefore, history could be used as easily to connect Indian Pashtuns to a transborder national community as the ancient Aryan chronicles of Indian nationalism. But that did not prevent Ghaffar Khan and Yunus from joining Nehru and indulging in that tale themselves. In fact, they took it to extremes. Unconnected to the *ashraf* story that was so crucial to Azad, Ghaffar Khan and Yunus—like Abdullah—had no qualms about situating the origins of India in an ancient history to which they and their homelands claimed a direct lineage. Having found a regional home for contemporary Islam in India, they were unconcerned about the prospect of being minoritised by history. So, if Pashtuns provided the greatest manifestation of contemporary intercommunal harmony, Gandhian nonviolence, and, therefore, ideological fortitude in India, their Frontier was also the birthplace of its ancient civilisation. This idea that their homeland was the origin and centre of inclusive Indian nationalism was partly about having Pashtuns accepted as Indians by their sceptical compatriots despite extraterritorial affiliations with Afghanistan and a peripheral geographical location. Nevertheless, by making their principal question a choice between India and Afghanistan, Ghaffar Khan and Yunus framed their politics not in religious but explicitly national terms and, thus, separated themselves from the communal logic which dominated late colonial politics elsewhere; consequently, they inadvertently reinforced their argument that the Frontier was not the periphery but at the heart of secular India. According to Ghaffar Khan, the decision of the Congress leadership to accept a referendum in the Frontier at Partition wrecked both this secular exceptionalism and the pact of honour and obligation that he had struck with them. But for Yunus, Partition simply meant that he had to take the ideological nature of his Indian nationalism to a previously unexpected—but now logical—conclusion by migrating to Delhi.

Increasingly marginalised by populist right-wing governments, today north Indian Muslims, Kashmiris, and Pashtuns all make for groups of citizens that are

nonessential to prevailing national visions of India and Pakistan. It goes without saying that the forgotten ideas that I have excavated in this thesis have the potential to be imaginatively reintegrated into our present for they clearly speak to the contemporary problems of these populations—many of which have been directly inherited from the mid-twentieth century. But what is particularly important about the thought of Azad, Abdullah, and Ghaffar Khan is that it refuses parochialism and is decisively integrationist; this makes it valuable to us not least because it is impossible to imagine a future for their respective constituencies that is not tied to that of other South Asians. And this ambitious, wider orientation also means that these ideas are not the inheritance of these Muslim groups alone. Their legacy belongs to all those in India and Pakistan, and even beyond, who wish to think about how best to accommodate and celebrate—but also unite—human diversity.

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