

→ Critically evaluate the evolution of Muslim separate identity in the Subcontinent.

The distinct Muslim identity in the Subcontinent took shape through an evolutionary process. Although the process began in the 8th century, with the advent of Islam in the Subcontinent, the Muslim identity further transformed into a nationalist movement in the early 20th century due to the 'Two Nation Theory'.

The consciousness of a separate identity among Muslims began in 712 AD, with the advent of Islam in the Subcontinent. As Muhammad Ali Jinnah said,

"Pakistan came into being the day when the first Hindu converted to Islam."

With predominantly Muslim rulers, Muslims enjoyed numerous privileges. Meanwhile, the rise of the Sikhs and Marhattas forced the Muslim rulers to adopt conciliatory policies toward them, blurring

the distinctions of being a Muslim. However indifference to the Quran and Shariah, intermarriages of the Hindus and Muslims, and irregularities like Deen-i-Ilahi, became more prominent in society. It led to the elimination of the essence and spirit of an Islamic community. Consequently, the threat of Hindus demographic dominance slowly engulfing the budding flower of Islam and the Muslims' desire to preserve their religion invoked a strong response that gave birth to a separate Muslim identity.

Various religious movements in sub-continent proved helpful in creating a separate Muslim identity.

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi is one of the greatest saints who devoted his life for the preservation of the Islamic values in the sub-continent. He contributed significantly towards the protection of Muslim society from atheist values.

During his long three-year stay at Mughal Court, he not only convinced Jahangir to abandon the policies of Akbar, but also succeeded in

purifying the religious ideas of many nobles. Against the doctrine of Wahdat-ul-Wajud, he proposed the doctrine of Wahdat-ul-Shakud. He negated the dogmas of ~~Blakti~~ Bhakti Movement and Din-i-Ilahi. He preached that mysticism without shariat was misleading and un-Islamic.

Moreover, Shah Waliullah started his movement intending to unite socially and politically scattered Muslims under the banner of Islam. After his father's death, he took charge of Madrissah Rahimiya. After 1757, he decided to revive past glory of Muslims in ^{the} sub-continent. He persuaded the Afghan King Ahmed Shah Abdali to come to the help of the Indian Muslims. It led to the defeat of Marathas in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761. Thus the Mughal emperor got a new life for a few more years to come. Though the religious movements were only partially successful, they did the work of giving Islam a strong foothold in the subcontinent.

The political ordeal for the Muslims of sub-continent after the war of Independence in 1857, led to their social, political, religious, and economic degradation. Muslims were denied important government jobs. It led to the establishment of the Aligarh Movement. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan devoted his whole life for the renaissance of his coreligionists and succeeded in pulling them out of the depths of ignorance and backwardness. Realizing the importance of education, he established many educational institutes which include, two Madrasahs in Muradabad (1858) and Ghazabad (1862), Scientific Society (1864), M.A.O High School Aligarh (1875), and M.A.O College and University (1920). Furthermore, he established Muhammadan Educational Conference in 1886 in order to bring political awareness among the Muslims. In its Dhaka session, All-India Muslim League was founded in 1906. It was for the representation of separate Muslim identity against Hindus who were being represented by Congress.

Sir Syed Ahmed's political services include the pamphlet entitled "Risala-i-Ashabi-Baghawat-i-Hind", in which he explained to the British that the Muslims were not only force behind the Caste-trope of 1857. Furthermore, he was the first Muslim leader of the sub-continent who used the word nation (qawm) for the Muslims. He pronounced that the Hindus and the Muslims were two different communities with different interests. After the Hindi-Urdu controversy, he reached the conclusion that both the communities could not work together. Hence, he proposed separate electorates for Muslims. The Partition of Bengal which took effect in the year 1905 was another landmark in the political history of the sub-continent. This partition went in favor of the Muslims of Bengal, but Hindus protested vehemently against it. On 12th December, 1911 the British government announced the annulment of the partition. The Muslims of sub-continent felt betrayed.

The political awakening among the Muslims of the sub-continent found its first meaningful and effective expression on October 1, 1906 when a delegation consisting of 35 Muslim leaders met Lord Minto to present the demands of their community. They demanded for a separate electorate's to choose their representatives.

Moreover, Khilafat Movement (1919-1923) served as an important event that made Muslims realized of their separate identity. It exposed the anti-Muslim designs of the Hindus as Gandhiji betrayed Muslims.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah played an essential role in the formation of separate identity of Muslims in sub-continent. In response to Nehru Report (1928), Jinnah put forward his fourteen points in 1929. These points formed the minimum Muslim demands to be incorporated in the future constitution of India. It basically consisted of four Delhi proposals, the three Calcutta amendments and demands for continuation of separate electorates and

reservation of seats for Muslims in government services and self governing bodies. Allama Iqbal's Allahabad address (1930) is an essential event in the evolution of separate Muslim identity in Sub-Continent. In his address, he proposed the idea of a separate Muslim state. He said,

"I would like to see the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sindh and Balochistan, amalgamated into a single state."

Under the Act of 1935, the elections to Provincial Assemblies were held in 1937. The Indian National Congress emerged as power in all provinces except for Bengal, Punjab and Sindh. The All-India Muslim League failed to form any government in provinces. However, Congress ministries resigned in 1939, in protest against Viceroy Lord Linlithgow's action of declaring India to be a belligerent in World War II without consulting the Indian people. Consequently, the pioneers of a separate electorate and safeguards for the Indian Muslims changed their demands to a separate homeland, resulting in Lahore Resolution.

Muslim League held its 27th annual session in March 1940 in Minto Park Lahore. In this historic session the League passed Lahore Resolution on 23rd March in which it was demanded that the Muslim Majority areas in North Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute independent states. In the General Elections of 1945-46, Muslim League won almost all the Muslim seats and Congress won the non-Muslim seats.

Finally, in 1947 Lord Mountbatten was given the task of effecting the transfer of power to the Indians. Hence according to the 3rd June Plan, India partitioned into two independent states.

The two-nation theory is ultimate expression of a separate Muslim identity, with the state of Pakistan as its embodiment. The definition of a separate Muslim identity took multiple religious, social, and political movements expanding over five centuries; however, its assertion was relatively swift. The

need for a separate Muslim identity arose with mounting anomalies in Islam under the influence of predominantly Hinduism and Buddhism. Later, Muslims were hard-pressed to look for their survival in India. In response, the Muslim vehemently strived to save themselves and their religion. The evolution of a separate Muslim identity is the result of that struggle. To sum up, a sense of separatism among the Indian Muslims evolved with various religio-political struggles fixated on the survival of Islam in the sub-continent. It started with the acting on the true injunctions of Islam and spiralled into the establishment of an Islamic state based on the Quranic injunctions. Then, after the failure of the war of Independence, Muslims deprived of any social, political, economic standing, again found themselves under the improper influence of others, pushing them to strive for a separate Muslim identity. Under different hostile environments, the Muslims responded

with same zeal. Hence, their idea of an independent nation proved successful in winning them security and a separate homeland.

