

# PAKISTAN AFFAIRS

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## Question #08

Critically evaluate the evolution of Muslim Separate identity in the sub-continent.

### Introduction:

In the vast tapestry of south Asian history, the evolution of muslim separate identity weaves a complex and captivating narrative. Traversing through the centuries of conquests, colonial rule, and political upheavals, the muslim communities of the Indian Sub-continent grappled with questions of social cohesion, religious consciousness, and political representation. From the rise of the muslim rulers to their encounters with Hindu counterparts, the interplay of historical events shaped the contours of Muslim identity, leaving indelible imprints on the region's communal dynamics.

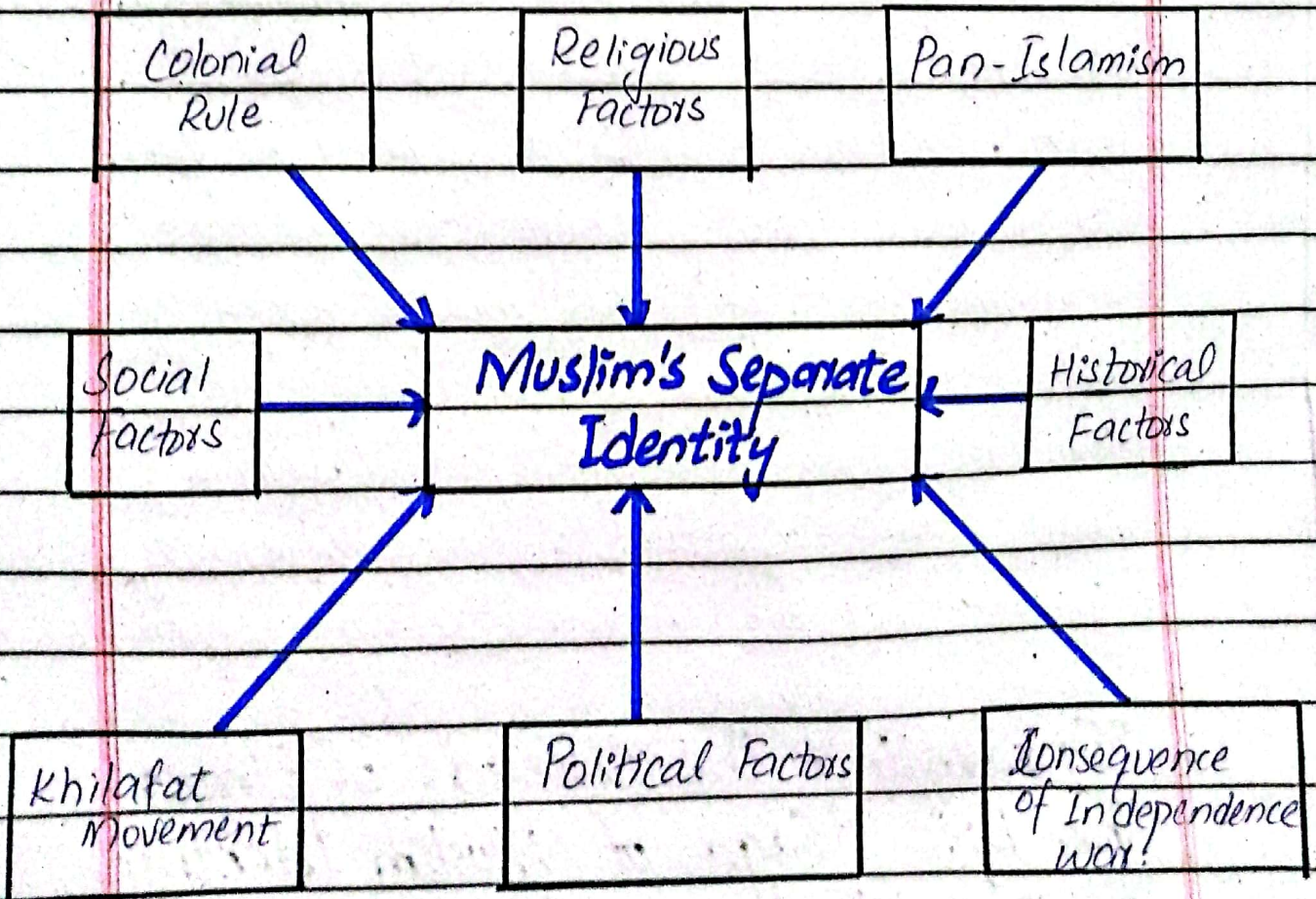
↳ **"Unraveling the threads of time:  
The Epic Saga of Muslim Identity  
in the Indian Subcontinent"**

Through the advent of Islam



established muslim society in the sub-continent, the sense of separatism evolved through social, religious and political movements expanding over a millennium.

Reprimanding of Deen-i-Elahi by Mujadid **Alif Sani** on religious grounds to muslim's political renaissance by **Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan** gave the Indian sub-continent muslims a separate identity, which resulted in **Pakistan** eventually.





"Success is not final, Failure is not Fatal:  
it is the courage to continue that  
counts" - **Winston Churchill**

This statement clearly appreciates <sup>all</sup> the  
hurdles muslims faced in sub-continent.

Evolution of Muslims Identity in the  
subcontinent is full of hurdles, blood-  
shed, ideological conflicts and the worse  
conditions of muslims. It is described in  
following steps:-

1 → From Conquests to communalism:  
**Tracing the Roots of Muslim Identity  
in the sub continent**

The history of muslim rule in  
India played a significant role in shaping  
Muslims identity. The arrival of M. Bin Qasim  
in 8th century and muslim conquerors from  
central Asia and the establishment of the  
**Delhi Sultanate** in 13th century, marked the  
beginning of Muslim political power in  
the subcontinent. They created a ruling elite  
that asserted ethnic and cultural identity  
over the diverse Muslim communities in  
the region. Meanwhile the risk of



the Sikh and Marhattas forced the Muslim Rulers to adopt conciliatory policies toward them; blurring the distinctions and honours of being a Muslim. Hence, indifference to the Quran and Shariah; intermarriages of the Hindus and Muslims; and irregularities like Deen-e-Elahi became more pronounced in society, marring 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.

## 2- Pan-Islamism and Reformist movements:

### The crucial shift in muslim Identity formation

Many rulers of sub-continent often invoke religious sentiments when fighting against Hindus but suppressed them when Shariah hindered their absolute rule. Therefore, many revivalist movements, such as the Jihad and Faraizi movements, sought to purify Islam from



perceived Hindu influence and revive religious consciousness among Muslims. <sup>As</sup> Ayesha Jalal explained the concept of Jihad in South Asia and its impacts on political movements and Muslims. Identity in her book named "**Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia.**" Many Muslim reformists came including Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Shah Waliullah and many more to revive Islam in its true spirit, which further consolidates the Muslims' separate identity.

### 3- Beyond Borders: How colonial Rule shaped Muslim Identity formations

Next came the political ordeal for the Indian Muslims after the war of Independence in 1857, where they were deprived of social, religious, economic and political rights. With their British accomplices, the Hindus concerned their language, literature, culture, and Religion. Hardly are there a field where Muslims not thrived. In the disadvantaged backdrop, the Muslim leaders realised



the gravity of situation and worked on Muslims' religious and modern education because they knew it was the only way to rival the Hindus well-entrenched in the then social structure. The M.A.O

college and Nadwa-tul-Ulema gave birth to the visionary leadership, who initiated the political movement refining the concept of a separate Muslim identity to convince the whole world. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan had a big role in it.

#### 4 → Divide we stand: The legacy of Muslim separate identity in India and Pakistan's movement.

During the century-long political struggle, various events heralding the Hindus' nefarious aims strengthened the Muslim leadership's resolve. Overtime, though the strategies and methods varied, the ultimate objective of acquiring safeguards for the Muslims and Islam in the subcontinent persisted.

The establishment of the Muslim League, a counterpart to the Indian National Congress, in 1906 proved to be a watershed



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moment in the political struggle, giving a legitimate face to the Muslims' insecurities in India. **S.S. Ali** in his book "**Muslim separatism in India: A political History**" analyzes the socio-political dynamics that fueled separatist movements. He also wrote that the back-stabbing of the Khilafat Movement and open refutation of giving the Indian Muslims their due in electoral assemblies and later **1937-39** congress rule overly detrimental to the existence of Islam in India convinced Muslims to look for another alternative to assert their separate identity.

Consequently, the pioneers of a separate electorate and safeguards for the Muslims changed their demands to a separate homeland, resulting in the **Lahore Resolution**.

**S- Pakistan: The culmination of evolution of Muslim separate identity in the sub-continent**

The movement that started with the dusting of the Hindu influence



over the Islamic community culminated in the demand for a separate homeland, for a distinct nation, Pakistan, under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam.

Therefore, the **two-Nations Theory** is the ultimate expression of a separate Muslim identity, with the state of Pakistan as its embodiment.

### → Critical Analysis:

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 Muslims vehemently strived to save themselves and their religion. The revolution of a separate Muslim identity is the result of that struggle.



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## Conclusions:-

To sum up, a sense of separatism among the Indian Muslims evolved with the various religiopolitical struggles fixated on the survival of Islam in the subcontinent. After the war of the independence, under the different hostile environments, the Muslims responded with the same <sup>spiritful</sup> zeal. However, their idea of an independent nation proved successful in winning them security earlier and a separate homeland later with the evolution of their separate identity.