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**PARTITION AND BEYOND: THE LASTING IMPACT OF
MUSLIM HISTORY ON MODERN INDIA AND PAKISTAN**

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Abstract

This article examines the profound and enduring effects of Muslim history on the contemporary socio-political landscapes of India and Pakistan, with a specific focus on the pivotal event of Partition in 1947. This historical division not only redefined geographical boundaries but also left a lasting imprint on the identities, politics, and communal relationships in both nations. The analysis begins by contextualizing the rich legacy of Muslim rule in the subcontinent, which set the stage for the complexities of modern nationhood and identity. The study delves into the direct consequences of Partition, such as mass migrations, communal riots, and the reconfiguration of political and social structures in the newly formed states. It explores how these events have perpetuated communal tensions and shaped the political discourse in both countries, influencing their domestic policies and bilateral relations. The role of religion in public life, as redefined by the Partition, is also scrutinized, highlighting the differing paths India and Pakistan have taken in terms of secularism and theocracy. Further, the paper discusses the cultural and psychological impact of Partition, which manifests in literature, art, and collective memory, continuing to influence relations between different community groups and the state policies toward minorities. The long-term economic impacts on both nations, particularly in border regions, are assessed to understand the broader implications of Partition. In conclusion, "Partition and Beyond: The Lasting Impact of Muslim History on Modern India and Pakistan"

provides a comprehensive overview of how historical events rooted in the era of Muslim rule have continued to affect the development and interactions of India and Pakistan, suggesting that the legacies of the past are integral to understanding the contemporary challenges and dynamics of the region.

Keywords: *Partition, India, Pakistan, Muslim history, communal relations, national identity, socio-political impact, legacy, cultural memory, bilateral relations.*

Introduction

Significant historical events intricately intertwine with personal biographies, and they also play a crucial role in shaping national identities. This relationship is particularly pronounced in the evolving context of modern South Asia. It is important to understand that this issue extends beyond present-day considerations; the power dynamics of the 21st century are deeply influenced by historical narratives that have defined our societies. Arguments advocating for the forgetfulness of key events from the 14th to the 20th centuries may seem to promote an optimistic vision of peace at first glance (Bose & Jalal, 2022). However, they are ultimately misguided, existing within a complex landscape of ethno-religious geopolitics. This perspective is particularly relevant today, as access to historical knowledge has become more widespread and is not limited to the colonial West. Consequently, the narrative space is no longer dominated by a single "Grand Narrator," but has evolved into a rich, multifaceted discourse informed by a variety of viewpoints and experiences.

Today, eight decades after history began to be written very much by the participants of its lived crucible, self-described Muslims in India and Pakistan are heirs to narratives of a predominantly shared past. This is not to say that those narratives are not subject to contestation, revision, and are diverse in geography and in their respective diasporas. But these two states have woven together national narratives born quite instinctively out of the histories of Islam, Persia, and adjacent territories (Khan, 2021). This essay examines these narratives of the heartlands, turns primarily to the Muslim historical presence and, in doing so, examines the foundational personalities upon whose lives the Indian and Pakistani states have sought citizenship, legitimation, and understandings of their neighbors. A brief outline of independent

narrative histories of Muslims of the subcontinent is followed by cursory references to the impact of colonial India upon the Indian Muslim. It should be noted that these do not represent the entirety of Muslim history or the experiences of those of Muslim descent. However, they do represent the dominant mainstream embedded in the national politics and must be understood if it is assumed that these are the representative memories of 'a Muslim' in the lands of the Indus and the Gangetic plains.

Historical Overview

One of the most powerful and influential empires of the fifteenth-century world was established by Islamic emperors who hailed from the diverse region of Central Asia, in the largely Hindu, multi-religious and culturally rich land of India. Over the course of the next several centuries, through a complex combination of strategic dynastic alliances and significant military victories, these remarkable sultans and emperors succeeded in setting up a variety of Islamic centralized governments. These administrations stretched impressively from the majestic Himalayas in the north all the way to the scenic Arabian Sea in the south, with only a loose and often tenuous affiliation with the hubs and main centers of their expansive empires. Additionally, in the Deccan Plateau, which is located in the southern part of the Indian subcontinent, a further Muslim-led administrative system was established in the fourteenth century and intriguingly continued to function until the eighteenth century, reflecting the enduring legacy of Islamic governance in the region (Akram and Ishaq2023).

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the zenith of the Mughal Empire in terms of territory, political authority, and wealth. Even as this polity fragmented, it left its mark on the region in cultural and religious terms, with the Persian language, Indo-Persian literature, Mughal courtly arts, and Indo-Saracenic architecture still active in the public spheres of pre-partition India and Pakistan. One of the Mughals' greatest albeit reluctant legacies was their administrative system, which the British would largely adopt and adapt when they began to formally take the reins of power at the cusp of the eighteenth century. Over time, references to Mughals as ethnic or religious outsiders in the context of contemporary Indian and Pakistani politics disguise the extent to

which intellectually they are Indian (Vanina, 2023). Indeed, there has been a reciprocal influence of primarily Islamic culture on other Indian religions, especially in the context of regional syncretic Islamic culture of Punjab, Sindh, Kashmir, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala, which took a while to make its mark in the world dominated by normative Sufi Islam and later Wahhabism as an emblem of "true Islam".

Partition of India

The partition of India and the subsequent establishment of Pakistan in August 1947 are seen as one of the most transformative and significant events of the twentieth century. This monumental change not only resulted in the largest and most abrupt migration in human history but also led to the tragic massacre of thousands of people on both sides of the newly drawn border. The deeply rooted rivalry between the Hindu and Muslim communities was continuously exploited and manipulated by various political leaders and groups in order to maintain their dominance and influence over the population (Bandyopadhyay2022). In 1940, the All India Muslim League, under the charismatic leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, passed what is famously known as the Pakistan Resolution. This pivotal document called for the creation of a separate nation specifically for Indian Muslims, highlighting their unique identity and aspirations. In the context of South Asia, it is important to note that nearly 80% of the total Indian Muslims have settled in this region, primarily in India and Pakistan. Following the partition, many of the descendants of these migrants continue to reside in countries such as the United Kingdom and the Middle East. Original migrants, many of whom initially arrived in search of economic opportunities and jobs, chose to remain in their new surroundings, along with their families, even after the partition, thus contributing to a complex demographic and cultural landscape that persists to this day (Ramagiri and Khan2023).

The partition of India always comes up alongside two names: Mahatma Gandhi and M.A. Jinnah – whose ways of expressing their emotions for the British rulers of South Asia were in complete contrast with each other. The Muslim League, for its part, aggravated the bitterness by contending that Muslims would

become a permanent minority under a Hindu majority. In other words, religion was seen to be an insuperable barrier to democratic politics. In these ever-more militarized conditions, thousands of villagers fled their homes. Muslims headed for Pakistan, while Hindus and Sikhs headed for India (Gauchet, 2021). As the violence worsened, many started to make their way across the newly drawn border by road, by boat, and on foot. Shortly after, Jinnah joined the Muslim League and played a critical role in the politics of the independence movement – demanding a separate nation. Legal lines, which millions of families would have to live with, were hastily sketched out, making East Bengali Muslims the largest producer of Muslims in the world. This partition created a loss not only of land and homes but also a sense of belonging and a way of life. The sheer number of those who migrated – some seven to ten million – is striking. The human cost of partition was enormous. Social status and the value given to roots tempt the curiosity of human beings over time. The first-person accounts of each individual's experience are elucidating, and the diversity among them speaks to the reasons behind the mass movement. This includes those who lost property, life, family, and loved ones. It should be noted that these people also worked to begin afresh. Literature in India has seen a profusion of work that deals with partition through timeless narratives (Shabbir et al.2022). What the stories have in common is their explanation of the impact of infertility, both on the psyche of individuals and the communal psyche. This is how India begins to view Pakistan, with memories of fragmentation and disruption.

Creation of Pakistan

Pakistan came into being on August 14, 1947, marking a significant milestone in the history of South Asia. The demand for a separate state for Muslims in the Indian subcontinent was a deep-rooted issue, stemming from concerns and aspirations that had existed long before 1947. Various factors contributed to this pivotal historical development. The creation of Pakistan in the 20th century was not merely the culmination of historical forces; rather, it was significantly influenced by ideological motivations that drew upon the rich history and evolution of Indian Muslims over the centuries. These motivations reflected a profound desire for

identity, autonomy, and the preservation of cultural and religious heritage (Khurshed & Ullah, 2022).

The evolution of the concept of Pakistan was gradually shaped during the turmoil of the first half of the twentieth century. The All-India Muslim League played a decisive role in formulating a separate Muslim identity and an ideology that ultimately led to the creation of Pakistan. The Muslim leadership formulated the two-nation theory after facing a series of problems. The division of Bengal, the Khilafat Movement, the failure of the Nehru Report, communal riots, and the Muslim struggle for the protection of the rights of the minorities in a Hindu-majority United India had strengthened the Two-Nation Theory and the demand for a separate nation for Muslims. The All-India Muslim League passed the Lahore Resolution on March 23, 1940 (Mazumder, 2022). The resolution became the ideological basis of Pakistan and helped reinforce the demand for a separate Muslim state.

Jinnah, a secular leader and a constitutionalist, developed a strong commitment to the new nation-state. Jinnah emphasized that Pakistan would be neither a theocratic state nor a secular state, but an ideological state based on the principle of social justice. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the great poet-philosopher, was the first to visualize the idea of Pakistan. He presented the idea to the Indian Muslims in his presidential address to the Allahabad session of the All-India Muslim League in 1930. He pointed out that a separate Muslim state was the only solution to safeguard the rights of the Muslims. He warned them that if they did not demand this, they would lose their identity and enter a world that may not be better from the point of view of their nationality as well as their religion. In his address, he presented the ideology and the blueprint for a separate Muslim state. In a similar address to the General Session of the Muslim League at Lahore in 1940, he declared the Muslims as a separate nation from the rest of India and demanded the separate Muslim state as the only solution to safeguard the rights of the Muslims (Asaf, 2022).

Post-Partition Developments

In 1947, around 40-50% of the Indian subcontinent's Muslims renounced their South Asian affiliations and migrated to the newly carved state of Pakistan, which they had been demanding for

decades. The bulk of these migrants were Urdu-speaking refugees from what became India's Hindi-speaking heartland. More than 10 million people crossed from one country to another in what was then the largest human migration across borders in history. About 0.75 million people died in the process (Bandyopadhyay2022).After the initial panic, both India and Pakistan, their newly populated prime cities overwhelmed by the influx of migrants, absorbed the migration process, thanks largely to the latter's performance. Pakistan's birth was marred by religious violence that claimed over a million lives.

In post-Partition India, the Hindu-Muslim relationship became the major focus of attention, rather than a theater for repeated majoritarian onslaughts, and substantial development of the subcontinent's main minority. Muslims today are significant political, economic, and social actors in a decreasingly Hindu-dominated India. In their turn, they have not abandoned their traditional Indian patriotism.

- **Economic and Political Changes**

For many centuries, the intricate economies of northern India and the Central Asian region situated to the north maintained a significant degree of integration and interdependence. However, everything changed when the center of power in India shifted dramatically to the south, a transition that lasted for more than two centuries. During this prolonged period, there were only sporadic military or state-building influences emanating from the north. Once the economy started to decline and weakened considerably, alongside a pronounced shortage of investment funds that became increasingly acute after the year 1900, the lengthy situation began to reverse itself. The Asian area, which previously thrived on a milieu of collaboration, could no longer rely on the many Central Asian financial intermediaries and investors that had characterized such a classic period of partnership (Hussain & Ali Naqvi, 2024). A variety of factors at that critical juncture thwarted any potential for such collaboration to sustain itself, resulting in the unfortunate outcome that the internal surplus of resources could only be tapped with great difficulty. This was largely due to a chronic lack of viable

investment opportunities that were essential for fostering economic growth and revitalization in the region.

That shortage was partly caused by the many significant social and political changes that were taking place during that time. The landed class, which was primarily responsible for the financing and guiding of the economy during this temporary period of internal surplus, found itself increasingly split. On one hand, it was forced by the internal circumstances to display some competitive behavior in the economy; on the other hand, new elements in the body politic arose as the spokesmen for various groups that had gained considerable economic and social power, disrupting the traditional balance and leading to further complications within the system.

- **Social and Cultural Transformations**

Muslim conquests in the name of religion caused significant social and cultural transformations in the vast and diverse land of India. When the Muslims burst upon the region, Indian society was already intricately divided into hierarchically ordered groups, civilizations, and communities, to which were attached certain religious, legal, social, and political rights and obligations that defined the very fabric of everyday life. At the top of the pyramid of the Indian castes and social creatures were the revered Brahmins, the valiant Kshatriyas, and the nobles or men of royalty, who held substantial influence and authority. Underneath them followed a complex and endless series of Vaishyas, which comprised military tribes, merchants, and financiers, as well as agriculturists and fishermen who tended the lands and waters. Craftsmen and skilled indigenous artisans also occupied pivotal roles in this tiered society (Khair et al.2024). At the bottom of the social pyramid lay the pariahs or untouchables, who performed the less desirable tasks such as the funeral and burial of dead animals, the laborious work involving leather and wood, and the procreation of equivocal and impure forms of life, often facing societal scorn and exclusion. These social dynamics began to shift dramatically with the arrival of Muslim rule, leading to new cultural exchanges and transformations across the entire landscape of India.

The arrival of the Muslims caused enormous agitation in the traditional Hindu social and religious structure of India and

provoked significant changes in the communal life of the Indians. Their incursions caused inhabitants to move from one area to another, kinship bonds to be loosened, ethnic and religious particularity to be surmounted, and local and national unities to be established (Jones, 2022). Furthermore, it greatly stimulated a religious philosophy of change and marginal social ranking outside the caste of the conquered. The traffic of these Indians seems to have inspired some expansion of the inter-community and inter-regional commerce. The socio-cultural confrontation between Muslims and Hindus will then bring about a series of problems, especially related to the relations between classes and those who professed different beliefs; these problems would be long felt and will constitute considerable difficulties for the coexistence and world integration between the two ethnic religious communities.

Comparative Analysis

- **Governance Model**

India and Pakistan experienced colonization and rule by the British for well over three centuries, a significant period that shaped both nations' histories. However, following their independence and subsequent partition, the divergent paths of the two nations emerged clearly. While India made the crucial choice to embrace a system of democracy and secularism, Pakistan has, unfortunately, been under the influence of its military, which has exercised control either directly or indirectly throughout most of its history. Even in contemporary times, despite the presence of a civilian government in Pakistan, the army continues to maintain a substantial grip on power and decision-making processes (Sohal, 2023). This ongoing military dominance is arguably the primary factor contributing to Pakistan's sluggish economic development and pronounced inequalities when compared to India. In stark contrast, India's commitment to a democratic governance framework has enabled it to achieve impressive economic growth and it has ultimately emerged as the fastest-growing economy in the world today, showcasing the benefits of its democratic values and institutions.

- **Economic Policies**

Though initially, during the early years after partition, Pakistan's economy exhibited a growth rate that was faster than that of

India's, the state policies that were implemented to help generate a higher rate of industrial growth in Pakistan ultimately did little to alleviate poverty or develop human resources effectively. In stark contrast to this approach, in India, Jawaharlal Nehru's priorities for developmental programs were distinctly different from those framed in Pakistan. The democratic pattern of governance that emerged in India significantly influenced the framing of its policies, leading Nehru to take a keen interest in aspects of human development. His development plans prominently included a focused attention on improving primary and secondary education, enhancing public health services, and initiating substantial land reforms aimed at distributing income more equitably and reducing poverty levels as effectively as possible. This comprehensive focus on human development and social welfare appears to be less prioritized in Pakistan's national agenda, as a greater proportion of national resources has instead been channeled towards military and defense expenditures (Singh, 2023). During the first thirty years following independence, both countries adopted six interregional variants of economic models characterized by varying approaches and strategies. A significant portion of the available resources and financial allocations was spent on subsidies for the public sector. However, fresh thinking and progressive policies initiated since the early 1990s have enabled India to achieve an impressive average growth rate of nearly 8% per annum. In sharp contrast to India's growth trajectory, Pakistan's economic growth rate has remained stubbornly less than 5%, highlighting the divergences in policy priorities and their impact on economic and social development.

- **Minorities/Secularism**

Democracies and dictatorships in both countries have resulted in varying outcomes, particularly regarding multicultural policies. In the case of Pakistan, it is primarily regarded as a nation-state that primarily serves the interests of Muslims. On the other hand, India is officially recognized as a secular state (Shah & Khan, 2023). However, within this framework, there is a strong inclination to portray India as fundamentally a Hindu nation. The conception of India is often tied to the idea of it being the heartland of Hindu civilization, with Muslims and other minority communities being

granted a place within this identity mainly due to their acceptance or conformity to prevailing Hindu cultural norms. Recently, a segment of academia and media has increasingly advocated for a reevaluation and reinterpretation of Indian history. This has been framed as a response to the perceived necessity for Hindu appeasement, which is compellingly positioned under the banner of establishing a Hindu Rashtra. This discourse is not just an academic exercise but has potential ramifications for how multiculturalism is practiced and understood in contemporary India.

Religious and Ethnic Dynamics

In 1947, colonial India was partitioned into two new successor states, India and Pakistan. The two new dominions were officially states for Muslims and Hindus, respectively. The division of the subcontinent centered on the 'two-nation' theory which, broadly speaking, declared Islam and Hinduism to be the defining ethnic characteristics of the region's two largest communities. But Partition was a chaotic event, partially due to the fact that India and Pakistan lacked clear ethnic boundaries in the middle of the 20th century (Fitzpatrick, 2024). Many people of both religions lived in places that became minority zones in the new countries. Muslims who stayed on in India and Hindus and Sikhs who inhabited the Pakistani half of the Punjab and Bengal were particularly stuck. Meanwhile, the newly created Hindu ruler in Jammu and Kashmir, whose princely state had an overwhelmingly Muslim majority, chose to join India rather than Pakistan. These historically contingent events color the perceptions that Muslims of South Asian descent have of India and Pakistan today. They have also colored interfaith dialogue in the region.

Muslims are the second largest religious group in India. There are places in the country where adherents of Islam form a majority of the population. In much of what used to be the central and western territories of British India, however, Muslims are a minority. These areas are hot spots of inter-ethnic tension and communal unrest. Hindu nationalists and the Indian state frequently exclude non-Hindus from political power by all but reserving the district magistracy and military bureaucracy for Hindutva candidates. Conventional wisdom makes extraterritorial rights an important

security question in Indo-Pakistan relations, particularly where they concern Kashmir, where they have assumed the form of an ethno-national liberation struggle. Overall, the relationship between religious and ethnic inequalities has critical implications for peace and conflict in South Asia (Khan & Lutful, 2021). The causes of current communal conflict between Muslims and Hindus in certain parts of India are often sought in the same factors that created a demand for Pakistan.

- **Muslim-Hindu Relations**

Muslims and Hindus share a long and complex history on the Indian subcontinent and in Pakistan. For over a thousand years, Muslims have lived among their Hindu neighbors, outside the realms of distant empires or outsiders. Over the centuries, Hindu and Muslim communities sometimes fought each other, but they also shared religious, economic, and political interactions. Their relationships have been shaped by collective experiences of colonialism and independence, as well as divergent narratives of nation-building. The ways in which Muslims and Hindus interact with each other today are shaped by this historical context as well as by contemporary local, national, and international events and forces (Kurien, 2021). A short summary can only offer glimpses of a very complex socio-political reality. Nevertheless, a historical perspective can be useful for understanding social and political dynamics, particularly in the light of the integration and cooperation among various Muslim and Hindu communities in everyday life. Communal violence between Muslims and Hindus has occurred in both the colonial and post-colonial periods. Yet, coexistence was a prominent element of communal relations and continues to exist today. During the colonial period, the local elite built on religious differences and turned them into religious communities in order to redefine political identities and mobilize their followers. The ideology of Pakistan was based on the belief that Hindus and Muslims were two separate and mutually hostile nations. It was believed that the two communities could never work together and that a separate homeland for Muslims would be the only guarantee for the protection of their rights. These negative stereotypes continue to play a detrimental role in perpetuating difference and mistrust (Ali et al., 2024).

In recent years, growing incidents of inter-communal violence, negative portrayal of Hindus and Muslims by the media as well as politicians, and increasing support for nationalist philosophies within India have further fueled suspicion and animosity. At the same time, both India and Pakistan have minorities, including Muslims and Hindus respectively, who have often tried to build ties between the two communities. Many people peacefully coexist and interact in their neighborhood, work, and common social venues. There is potential for coexistence. Only time will tell whether and to what extent these reservoirs of goodwill and trust can be utilized and expanded to make a meaningful contribution in bridging the Muslim and Hindu communities as well as in working towards a cooperative India and Pakistan.

- **Muslim Minority in India**

Muslims have remained an important and principal minority in contemporary India, playing a crucial role in the nation's social and cultural fabric. A vast majority of them lived in conditions of poverty, often found in backward areas, and many have suffered longstanding marginalization related to economic and educational opportunities. These communities are often referred to as the so-called double minorities, particularly in certain inter-state borders and in various parts of the states where they find themselves as a local minority. In India today, Muslims live with a constant sense of apprehension and concern about their status and rights. Their leaders, in their quest for identity and recognition, have often projected them as a separate nation seeking to achieve another homeland (Choudhary, 2021). However, the establishment of India in the subcontinent has brought about a somewhat linked destiny for both communities, at least in terms of the areas that are contiguous to one another. Members of both communities have established their presence and coexist in all the countries within the subcontinent.

By December, the strength of Muslims had gone up to 13.40 crores, which is 13.4 percent of the total population of the country. The issues associated with them are to be devoted to separate sub-heads which include: Dynamics of Being a Minority, Economic, Educational, Constitutional and Political Status of Muslims, Cultural Contribution and Inherent Diaspora, Economic-structural

Process, Majority Ethnic Group and Minority Status of Muslims, Plight of the Muslims in India, and their survival in political democracy. India has more Muslims than combined. It is in the backdrop of this that the work of the Muslims today in India has to be seen. In political vocabulary, Muslims are described as 'vote bank.' We are told that any party which has the Muslims on its side will succeed in the elections (Mukhopadhyay & Sarkar, 2023). The Muslim influence is assessed not by the lawyers, teachers, or business sum but by the number of votes polled by them. It is in this context that it was said that no Indian political movement can be successful if counted only by numbers, because at least in the Indian 'hive of population,' the British are negligible in number, and the Muslims could play a very important part in deciding who should win in Indian elections.

Conclusion

As India and Pakistan both joyously celebrate nearly 75 years of their respective independence, it becomes paramount to acknowledge the profound and enduring impact that Muslim history has on contemporary life, culture, and society in both of these nations. The partition of 1947 stands as a particularly complex and multifaceted event in history. It was not merely a straightforward choice made by Muslims to leave their homes or for Hindus to expel them indiscriminately. Instead, the direction, motivations, and forces behind this monumental event, as well as its far-reaching consequences, continue to intricately shape the distinct cultures and identities of both nations to this very day. Patriotism, along with a sense of national pride, in each country grows in part from a collective and unified ownership of their shared, yet complicated, history. However, this intricate and intertwined narrative still engages each segment of society in markedly different ways. It is a history rich with significance that not only forms a powerful self-image for each nation but also determines the nature and dynamics of their relations with one another. The legacies of this shared past resonate deeply, influencing contemporary discourse and interactions as both countries navigate their identities in the modern world.

Millions of refugees fled the communal violence that mars that optimistic picture of independence in the grand narratives of each

nation. The immediate post-independence years witnessed horrific, state-sanctioned massacres, riots, and rapes. Their stories continue to pass down through oral traditions and are mobilized by national governments to marginalize or exclude those identified as other than pure Indian or pure Pakistani. National self-understandings convey ideas about economic development, social identity, and representations of inter-community relations. These institutional narratives have consequences. They degrade inter-community relations and pose challenges for religious and ethnic minorities who persist, even after so many years of conflict, to live across India and Pakistan. Hence, today, ongoing hostilities in Kashmir or the Acts passed by the regime in India illustrate the different narratives which, almost three quarters of a century after this intense period of communal mobilization for the mass violence that flowed from it, still animate-through different interpretations and with different emotions-the relations between Hindus and Muslims in North and South Asia.

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