

**MUSLIM NATIONALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY
IN SOUTH ASIA: AN APOLOGETIC
APPROACH FOR MUSLIM IDENTITY**

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Abstract

Arab Muslims invaded Sindh in 711 AD and established their rule after ousting and killing Raja Dahar, a ruler of Hindu Shahi dynasty. After Arabs, numerous Muslim dynasties and their associates originating from distinct parts of Muslim dominated world—i.e. the Middle East, Central Asia, Persia and Afghanistan—asserted and extended their political and military control over local Indians by launching expeditions on Hindu principalities, eventually annexing and consolidating them under the Delhi Sultanate and then the Mughul Empire. Muslim rule in India finally declined at the hands of the East India Company in 1857. Their rule lasted almost a period of millennium, during which they were confronted with myriad social, cultural, religious, political, administrative and economic challenges, and attempted to reform the pertinent structures in accordance with their own worldview. This, however, was in the time of British Raj in India when their historical existence and political rule became immensely controversial. The Orientalist historians, who were said to be the promoters of the political and economic interests of the East India Company and then the British Raj, portrayed the Muslims in their historical narratives as foreign invaders, imperialists and tyrants. The propagation of such type of image coupled with their political decline frustrated and threatened the Indian Muslims and consequently the Muslim historians representing their

community's interests responded to the allegations made by the Orientalist historians against Muslim rulers. This paper gives an evaluation of the Muslim nationalist historians' frustration and protest within their response to such negative portrayal. The second major focus of the discussion, remains on exploring and assessing how Muslim historians responded to Orientalist historians, Orientalist historiographical allegations challenging the legitimacy of the Muslim rule and nature of their association with the land and culture of India. By drawing inferences from the Muslim nationalist historiographical writings, the paper argues and underscores that these Muslim historians started revisiting Orientalist and other non-Muslims' charges towards their identity and existence in India in an apologetic manner, but their discourse gradually sharpened with scholarly contributions containing more authoritative historical facts, rationalist interpretations and methodological skill.

Keywords: Historiography, Orientalism, Muslim Nationalism, Identity Formation, Muslim Rule, Medieval India, Despotism and Imperialism.

Writing history is not always an innocent task. Histories are the reflection of historians' predilections, priorities about social life, ideological orientations, politico-religious inclinations as well as economic and professional constraints. The intellectual priorities and bias expressed by historians in their undertakings are rightly explained by the theory of social constructivism. Being influenced by their inward (psychological) and outward (socio-political) conflicts, the historians come up with new ideas, perspectives and narratives, by exploring, explaining and endorsing certain facts on the one hand, and by concealing, ignoring, manipulating, or distorting them, on the other. Apart from this psycho-analysis of historians' personal choices, there is one natural constraint which hinders production of objective history, and that is their inability of paying attentions to all minute details of their subject matter. Historians are an integral part of social communities—either professional, or political, or religious, or ethnic, or nationality based, or any other—with which they associate their interests and become their promoters. Not only does the postmodernist perspective expose the truth of these myriad historical narratives, but it justifies all of them by stating that 'the only absolute truth is that there is no absolute truth.'¹ The communities' interests with which historians associate themselves lead them to make use and misuse of history defending and serving them. The multiplicity of historical narratives of Indian history is the story of this very situation.

Muslim nationalist historiography, the subject matter of this paper, is rightly said to have emerged as an antithetical perspective of the

Orientalist historiographical perspective, defending the political and social status of Muslims in India. In the late eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth century, Orientalism appeared as literary tradition established by British scholars, administrators, policymakers and politicians for studying the languages, culture, religions, laws and art of the countries they colonized. The Orientalist scholars produced their works in French, English, and German languages, by studying cultural contents of the European colonies ranging from the North African Mediterranean to East and Southeast Asia.² The Orientalist studies in India were conducted initially in late 18th and early 19th century carried out by the administrators and bureaucrats of the East India Company who followed the administrative policy of the Anglicists who urged them to rule India in accordance with British laws and institutions. Alfred Lyall, who was the Governor of North Western Province of British India, wrote in 1872 that Orientalist meant to be “one of those Anglo-Indian advocates of state support for ‘Oriental Learning’—the study of Arabic Persian and Sanskrit” according to the traditions established by Warren Hasting and Sir William Jones who denounced the Anglicists headed by Lord Macaulay in 1835.³ Later on, under the influence of scholarly perspectives Post-Structuralism and Post-Colonialism, the connotation of the term Orientalism acquired peculiar meaning in connection with power and production of knowledge, as is popularized by American Palestinian author Edward Said by writing groundbreaking narrative *Orientalism* in 1978.⁴ The term, hence, is used for the scholarship or knowledge production serving the political and economic agenda of imperialist powers.

Orientalism, according to M. Sioh, refers to “the style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ [the East] and ‘the Occident’ [the West] in which an essential image of typical Orient is represented as culturally and ultimately biologically inferior.”⁵

This study helps understand the rationale of Muslim nationalist historiography, the political situation and challenges to which the Muslim historians responded, putting its main focus on reaction of Muslim historians towards allegations posed by the European historians, mainly that the Muslims living in India were mainly foreigners and invaders, and that their rule over India was based on unjustified principles and oppressive policies. Such an allegation had far-reaching implications, as it was an attempt at maligning the Muslim rulers and the presence of Muslim community in India on the one hand, and giving an impression that the British who overthrew Muslim rule are saviors of the oppressed Hindu

community. This very allegation dubbing the Muslim as alien in India later on was borrowed by the Hindu extremist organization which adheres to an ideology of Hindutva, i.e. an ideology which propagates that India belongs to those who are born in India and profess Hinduism as their religion. These rightist parties included, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a paramilitary organization founded by K. B. Hegewar in 1925, Baharatiya Jana Sang (BJS) founded by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951 and Bhartiya Janata party (BJP) founded in 1980 by Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L. K. Advani. Thus, the question of Indian Muslim's identity, acquiring skeptical expression by orientalist scholarship, has still a pivotal relevance in contemporary times.

This paper, by discussing the Muslim historians' undertakings in their chronological order, attempts at establishing, explaining and highlighting that their response to above mentioned charges during colonial period was apologetic and often fraught with sentimental parlance, yet it later on grew with apt scholarly expressions, more significant historical evidences and their dispassionate interpretations to explain their existence in South Asia.

The methodology employed in constructing this discourse is eclectic, i.e. exploratory, descriptive, comparative, analytical and normative. The historical phenomenon of British imperialism in India and Orientalist scholarship serving the imperialist agenda is reflected upon by exploring factual data and discussing in descriptive-cum-analytical manner. Muslim response to the orientalist historiography is explained by surveying the literature of Muslim nationalist historians coming from eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, recounting that how they found the historical accounts produced by the European scholars presenting distorted image of Muslim rule in India which not only alienated Hindus and Muslim communities but caused enhanced hostility between them. In the last segment of this paper, the revisionist response of the Muslim historians by giving normative-academic evaluation is classified in three historiographical genres: first, the novice attempts of writing history by the professionally untrained historians; second, historical accounts produced by the western educated and professionally trained historians but lacking sufficient knowledge of historical evidence to defend their position; thirdly and lastly, the historical treatise produced since the last decade of twentieth century, enriched with more convincing and authoritative argumentations as well as dexterous analysis of historical facts based on growing human knowledge of social, cultural and economic history, especially of the ancient past.

Historical Background: Raison d'être and Genesis of Muslim Nationalist Historiography in South Asia

The East India Company, that established trading and commercial links with India during the Mughul era, gradually entered the political arena and started gaining political dominancy by virtue of its intelligent politico-economic maneuvering and well-disciplined army. The Mughul Empire was slowly moving towards its decline and it ultimately ceased to exist after the so called Mutiny or War of Independence of 1857 and the British Crown directly took over India's political affairs in its hand by declaring India a dominion of the British Empire. The Muslim population of India resultantly faced an intense predicament and plight in all political, institutional, economic and social avenues. On the other hand, the orientalist historians, some of whom were directly associated with the administration of the Company, while writing histories of India distorted the historical role of Muslims by blatantly showing them as foreign invaders and despotic rulers in India. Therefore, they claimed, British rule in India was meant to liberate Indians from that tyranny. Such a historiographical perspective enhanced the gulf between Hindus and Muslims and impaired their mutual relations. Muslim ideologues and historians responded by providing revisionist and apologetic versions.

The earliest Muslim ideologues who responded to the Western historians' allegations were Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (b. 1817 — d. 1898) and Syed Amir Ali (b. 1849 — d. 1828). As the Orientalist discourse was not merely confined to criticizing Muslim rule in India, they extended their criticism to Muslims' religious beliefs and the Prophet of Islam: hence, Khan wrote *Khuṭbāt-e Ahmadiyya* [Ahmadiyya Sermons] (1870) and Ali, *The Spirit of Islam* (1891)⁶ so as to counter the allegations of the European historians such as Sir William Muir who wrote *Life of Mahomet: From Original Sources* (1878).⁷

The British, during the period of their occupation of India, introduced various modern political, administrative, infrastructural, and institutional reforms, which brought about revolution in the thinking of Indian masses. They were imbued with the ideas of nationalism and democratic politics, and they gradually launched a political struggle to defend their rights and communal interests. This gave raise to different nationalisms in India, three of which were dominant, i.e. Indian, Muslim and Hindu. To achieve their political goals, they strived to develop the political and historical consciousness of the common people and produced pertinent ideological literature accordingly. The Muslim nationalist scholars and historians appeared to produce a narrative which revisited the Orientalist and Hindu-

nationalist perspectives, defending and glorifying their political existence in India. Since the Muslim historians, scholars, thinkers and politicians were increasingly anxious of the historical accounts produced by the non-Muslim historians as these were conspicuous reflection of blatant bias, prejudice and lack of an appropriate historical and cultural understanding of the political systems introduced and carried out by the Muslim rulers in India, they responded by providing certain clarification against such allegations and charges, and presented their own version of the history of South Asia. It, therefore, would not be fallacious to assume that the Muslim nationalist historiographical perspective originated as an apologetic stance intending to justify the policies and deeds of the Muslim rulers and the course of political developments under their rule.

The accusations which Muslim nationalist ideologues considered unacceptable and offensive towards their existence and historical role in India include: the Muslim rulers in India were foreigners and oppressors; Muslim rulers and ulama were religious fanatics and disrespectful of Indian religions and cultures; the policies of Muslim rulers in India enhanced gross inequalities and social alienation in the society; Muslim rulers exploited India's wealth and drained it to their ancestral homelands. They opined that the Muslim rule in India was depicted by European and Hindu historians as darkest chapter of political history of India. Confronting their allegations, Muslim nationalist historians, thence, provided the contrary perspective, underscoring the facts reinforcing the notion that the Muslims not only had close relations with India before the Arab conquest of Sindh, but by settling in India they indigenized themselves and immensely contributed to reforming Indian society, culture, economy and political structure. S. M. Jaffar, for instance, elaborates:

[The Muslim Kings] made mighty contribution to almost every department of Indian life and thought—so mighty in fact that during the millennium of their rule in India they worked a complete revolution in the life and thought of her people. If the prosperity of the people of all classes and creeds and progress of learning universal toleration in the widest sense of the word, maintenance of law and order and even-handed distribution of justice without fear or favour, encouragement of arts and crafts, industries and commerce, unstrained appreciation of virtue and worth, irrespective of the rank, race or religion of those possessing them, and complete identification with the interest of the country are a true index

of the intellectual and cultural advancement of a people and a correct criterion of the national character of a government....⁸

Likewise, while writing from the Muslim nationalist perspective, I. H. Qureshi, although acknowledging Muslim contribution to Indian culture and traditions, expressed that the Muslims were never completely assimilated into the Indian environment and had evolved their own distinctive traditions.⁹

Muslim Nationalist Historians' Expression of Anxiety over Orientalists' Portrayal of History of South Asian Muslims

During the period of British Raj in India, the historians representing Muslim community of India felt that one of the basic reasons of their increasing predicament was biased and distorted image projected by the western scholars and historians through their writings. They consequently reacted to the situation expressing their pain, grief and anxiety over it.

Abdul Haleem Sharar (b. 1860 — d. 1926)¹⁰, a renowned writer who produced a classical Urdu fictional literature in the form of historical novels, but is lesser known as historian, wrote a book titled as *Tārīkh-i-Sindh* [History of Sindh] (1911; and Ed. 2nd, 2011). The factor which intensified his urge to write the book was his observation that the historical literature on Muslim rule in India written in Arabic and Persian language caused a huge difference in interpretations of the facts. Further, he pointed out that since the sources in English language were drawn mostly from the Persian sources, they failed to give just treatment to Arab rule in Sind.¹¹ These narratives, therefore, were deficient in providing Arab viewpoint and a careful portrayal of their rule in India.

A celebrated Muslim theologian and historian, Syed Suleman Nadavi (b. 1884 — d. 1953) delivered a series of lectures in Hindustani Academy, Allahabad in 1929, discussing Arab-Indian relations in the context of the conquest of Sindh. These were published posthumously, under the title *'Arab-o Hind kay Ta'alluqāt* [Arab-India Relations] (n.d.). Editorial Notes were written by Muhammad Shabir Qamar expressing the Muslim community's anxiety over orientalist historiography of India mentions that owing to certain political constraints, the European historians depicted Muslim rulers of India as foreign invaders with the sole purpose to plunder India. They grabbed its wealth and remained indifferent towards its wellbeing and betterment. Putting forward various historical evidences, Nadavi in his addresses attempts at proving that the relationship between

Arabs and Indians had been established long before Arab invasion of Sindh.¹² His lectures project the Muslim historians and intellectuals' frustration and fears in the wake of hatred against them propagated by orientalist and Hindu nationalist historiographical discourse. These lectures demonstrate how the Muslim intellectuals, then, were conscious of defending their existence in India as the loyal and devoted inhabitants of the land.

Among the early Indian Muslim nationalist historians who were professionally trained in Western education system, one was S. M. Jaffar who authored various books and research articles defending Muslim standpoint on the political history of Muslim rule in India. His *Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India* (1939; Ed. 2nd, 1950) makes the observation on the contemporary historiographical trends stating that, "Enduring contribution of Islam to the cultural heritage of India and constitutive works done by Muslim Kings in this country [India] are subjects seldom spoken of and rarely referred to in the existing historical literature on Muslim period of Indian history."¹³ Expressing his disappointment over the Orientalist and non-Muslim historians' allegedly rotting, offensive and putrid attitude towards history of the Muslims in South Asia, he mournfully states:

Almost in all available books on Indian history, the period of Muslim rule in India is depicted in the darkest possible colours and Muslim rulers are almost invariably described as tyrants and blood thirsty monsters, whose unrestrained autocracy, it is alleged, found its full expression in fanaticism—in the forcible propagation of Islam, in the persecution of Hindus, in the destruction of their temples and in suppression of their genius. No avenue is left unexplored and no piece of evidence is left unexploited to show that while Muslim rulers rolled in luxuries, the ruled groaned under gross inequalities and servile conditions.

He calls the descriptions acquiring such tones and expressions as 'grotesque distortion or disfigurement of history,' and such allegations as 'false and funny charges' to which his book responds.¹⁴ Jaffar's undertakings responding to orientalist discourse were quite significant, since he then was one of few historians who had been trained in western educational tradition of the discipline of history. Nonetheless, it was obvious that his voice needed more vocal companions, not available then.

In the same vein, I. H. Qureshi (1903-1981) in his book *The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli* (1942) has given a very small review of modern English historiographical literature on administrative structure in Sultanate period. Here, having combined with admiration for certain features of that literature, he has criticized it for 'partial criticism,' exclusivity of issues of discussion, and outdated analysis based on few or specific sources. Regarding that, the historians he has mentioned are W. H. Moreland (b. 1868 — d. 1838),¹⁵ Stanley Lane-Poole (b. 1854 — d. 1931),¹⁶ and Henry Miers Eliot (b. 1808 — d. 1853) and John Dowson (b. 1820 — d. 1881).¹⁷ Not merely the secondary sources in the English language, but the translations of original sources from Persian and Arabic into English languages, to him, cannot be relied on altogether, and he considers that English translations need solid editing.¹⁸

Authored by Mufti Shaukat Ali Fehmi, *Hindustān Par Islami Hukūmat* [Muslim Rule in India] is a book written between 1947 and 1948, but the collection of its source material and evolving of its idea, according to the author, took twenty years. Explaining the reason to write this book, he expressed his intense annoyance at the histories of India written by the European historians and stated that such kind of historical literature was produced in pursuit of colonial interests in India. Orientalist historiography, hence, to him, is but a partial execution of the British policy of "Divide and Rule," in India, enhancing distrust, misconceptions and conflicts between both, the Hindus and Muslims. He contends that European historians used historiography as a tool to malign the image of Islam and Muslim rulers, and that consequently ignited and intensified the hostility between two major communities of India, i.e. the Hindus and Muslims.¹⁹

S. M. Ikram (b. 1908 - d. 1973) is one of those Muslim nationalist historians who wrote many books on Indian history vigorously advocating the political culture that Muslim rule established in India. In his *A History of Muslim Civilization in India and Pakistan: A Political and Cultural Profile* (1961), the Preface and preliminary note i.e. "A Note on Historiography of Muslim India" manifest the author's growing disenchantment with the historical accounts produced by the European historians. He, thus, brings their works as subject of his trenchant criticism, among whom include Mountstuart Elphinstone (b. 1779 - d. 1859), Stanley Lane-Poole, Laurence Binyon (b. 1867 - d. 1943), Wilfred Cantwell Smith (b. 1916 - d. 2000), Sir Henry Elliot, Professor John Dowson and Vincent Arthur Smith (b. 1843 - d. 1920). He deplorably exposes the defects, which their accounts demonstrate while explaining Indian history. His enterprise further explains how their writings negatively affected the

future historians' perceptions about Indian history and their reflections upon it.²⁰

Some of the Muslim nationalist historians raised strong objections to criticism on the techniques and terminologies introduced and employed by the European historians. For instance, Muhammad Aziz Ahmad's *Political History and Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi 1206-1290 AD* (1971)²¹ opens with his criticism on the terms used for the period during which early Turkish Empire ruled over India, from 1206 to 1290 AD. He shows that the terms such as 'Slave Dynasty', or 'Pathan Dynasty,' or 'Afghan Dynasty' had never been used by contemporary historians or even afterwards, until the British colonization of India. He holds the European historians responsible for introducing these misnomers and elaborates how these are wrong and misleading as to developing the cognizance and perceptions about the nature of Muslim rule in India during the period addressed.²²

Since the religion remained a main concern of the proponents of Muslim nationalism, they demonstrated their intense disappointment and anguish over the treatment that the Orientalist had given to Islam, its Prophet (*Sal Allah-u-'alaihe wa sallam*) and his followers. Muhammad Aslam Syed²³ offered *Muslim Response to the West: Muslim Historiography 1857-1947* (1988) which provides more detailed and articulated study taking account of the factors of the Muslim nationalist historiography produced in India from 1857 to 1947. He contends that Muslim nationalist historiographical discourse was originated and popularized in the wake of political and social developments carried out after the War of Independence 1857. This discourse was an outcome of the strain and stress Indian Muslims went through at the time.²⁴ The long-lasting impact that War of Independence 1857 made on Indian Muslim community was twofold: first, it brought about institutional decay reducing them into a political minority; secondly, an epoch of 'the hostile treatment of their history and religion by British administrator-historians' set out.²⁵ Aslam Syed brings out the prejudice and bias of the British historians against Islam, the Prophet of Islam (*Sal Allah-u-'alaihe wa sallam*), and history of Muslims under discussion, and describes how the Muslim historians responded them with an apologetic manner.²⁶

An Apologetic Response to the Question of Indian Muslims' Identity

The Orientalists, following political and economic agenda of East

Indian Company and British imperialist design, wanted Indians to believe that they were the liberators of Indian masses, and for that very reason they portrayed Muslims of India as the foreigners, invaders, conquerors, imperialists, and oppressors.²⁷ Later on, the Hindu nationalist historians also popularized this historiographical trend, intending to advance Hindu nationalist sentiments and to consolidate Hindu community for gaining political dominance over their political and religious rivals, the Muslims. Owing to these developments, the Muslims, on the other hand, found themselves into severe crisis of legitimate political recognition in India. Consequently, the Muslim nationalist historians and intellectuals responded by emphasizing on the facts reinforcing their claim that the Muslims' relation with the land of India got established long before Arab conquest of Sindh and acquiring political might in India. They attempted at authenticating that they made India their permanent homeland, they reconciled and harmonized themselves with indigenous people and cultures, and genuinely contributed in bringing peace and prosperity in the land. Responding to the question of Muslims' association with the land of India, theologian-historian Syed Suleman Nadavi constructs a politico-religious argument stating that, "Aryans might have arrived and dwelt into India few millenniums ago, but Muslim are associated with this land since the times of Adam's fall from heaven."²⁸ He propounds that Prophet Adam (*'Alaih As-salām*) who acquired in his forehead the illuminance of Prophet Muhammad (حَضْرَتِ مُحَمَّدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّينَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى (صَلَّمَ) was sent by Allah Almighty from heaven on earth and the land where he arrived then was India. So India, to him, is the first ever place on the planet earth where illuminance of Prophet Muhammad (حَضْرَتِ مُحَمَّدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّينَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى (صَلَّمَ) appeared. Nadavi, by providing various other historical and demographic details, attempts to explain his viewpoint that it is fallacious to assume that the Muslims settled in India after Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi invaded it. He, thus, attempts at popularizing the notion that India is believed and revered by the Muslims to be their 'paternal homeland.'²⁹

In his *Tārīkh-i- Sindh* [History of Sindh] (1907), Abdul Haleem Sharar discusses the geography and the demography of Sindh, giving an impression that Sindh due to its landscape, environment, and River Indus is just like Arab countries, more appropriately like Egypt. It was because of massive migrations of Muslims from Middle East and Central Asia to this region that the majority population of this vast land, until the British occupation, was that of Muslims, and its culture was no more different

from what Arab countries had. Sharar demonstrating his sympathetic concern for the Arab migrants to Sindh and their contribution regarding the development of India or Sindh narrates:

In the entire India, this [Sindh] is the country which the zealous and ambitious nation, i.e., Arabs preferred to live in and made it their homeland as well as a capital [of their Empire]. This is the land where the highly virtuous Arab Muslims after receiving the official announcement of the Caliph migrated to and settled in, and where their generations intermingled with other nations. Highly respected and noble Arab families came to be settled in Sindh. This is unfortunate and because of the peoples' ignorance that they have now lost their glory and appropriate recognition.³⁰

In a metaphoric and poetic expression, he explains and reminds the Muslims their glorious past, and develops their sensitivity about the crisis that they were facing then, saying it:

کن ڈالیوں کے تھے تم ثمر؟ ٹوٹ کر آئے کہاں؟ اور
بکے آکر کہاں؟

Kin daliyun kay thay tum thamar? Tūt kar āye kahan? Aur bikkay aa kar kahan?

(Do you know the branches of which you once were the fruits? Do you know where you arrived at after being plucked off? Do you know where you were sold?)

Sharar is not convinced that majority of the Indian Muslims were converts. Nonetheless, he holds the historians, including the Muslim historians, responsible for promoting this misconception. He dubs the Muslim historians as 'the misguided advocates,' who reached the conclusion that they all were newly converted Muslims. This, to him, is but their sheer ignorance of the history of Indian Muslims. In a tone of severe grief and agony, he complains that in winning the glory of the Indian land one can hear a lot about the contribution of numerous people belonging to myriad regions of the globe, but those who are forgotten are Arabs.³¹

Arguing against allegation that Muslim rulers of India were foreigner invaders and oppressors, S. M. Jaffar in his book *The Mughal Empire:*

From Babar to Aurangzeb (1936) and *Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India* (1939)³² states that Muslims were as much foreigners for India as the Aryans were, or as much as the King William who conquered England was foreigner and unacceptable to the English people. There is no denying in that the Muslim rulers conquered India, but they and their upcoming generations made it their homeland. They happily married the daughters of Rajputs who were revered as the pride of India. They always endeavoured with their entire energies and capacities to bring prosperity at home for their fellow countrymen. They strived for enhancing India's immunity against foreign invasions, and they, along with Hindus, even fought against the Muslims. Highlighting solidarity and cooperation of the Muslims with other religious and ethnic communities of India, Jaffar puts it: "The Hindus and the Muslims, the Rajputs and the Mughuls, all sank their sectarian differences and strived to serve the larger and nobler cause of a common Empire, a common Motherland and common Welfare..."³³

Mohammad Yasin, a lecturer of History in Lucknow University, in his *Social History of Islamic India* (1958), while addressing the stereotypes about social history of the Mughul era, writes that Sayyids of Bar'ha who originally were Arabs, played a decisive role in politics of India. They were virtual rulers and *de facto* sovereigns, having hegemonic power of making and unmaking the emperors. They used to regard themselves Indians, as 'they had no foreign sympathies and looked askance at fresh arrivals from Iran and Turan, whom they regarded as foreigners. Their predecessors had entered in the country simultaneously with the conquest of Islam and had become naturalized citizens of India.'³⁴ Despite recognizing such internal differences and pertinent prejudices among the Indian Muslims, Yasin is convinced that Indian Muslim community is a nation because of the universal characteristics of the faith they profess, i.e. Islam. He, hence, states:

Islam has been since its start a more powerful nation-making agency than perhaps Hinduism and Christianity in the Middle-Ages. The Arabs and the Berber, the Iranian and Turanian, the Indo-Aryan Afghan and the Greco-Roman Albanian people, were all reborn as nations under the impact of Islam. This is because Islam offers a mighty steel-frame, political, religious, social and cultural to backward peoples, and furnishes a rallying point to mutually repellent tribal elements.... Islam galvanized the conquered communities into nations no

doubt; but these revitalized nations, particularly those with an older civilization rose in revolt not against Islam but against Arabicism.... They [the Muslim community of India] did form a nation distinct from Indian nationality in the days of their sway over this sub-continent, each of the component ethnic and racial groups betraying too much proud self-consciousness to be moulded into a compact homogeneous whole.³⁵

Written by Muhammad Taher, *Muslims in India: Recent Contributions to Literature on Religion, Philosophy, History and Social Aspects* (1993), is a book on bibliography of the subject matters mentioned in the title. Raf'at Durdana Jalaluddin has written its introductory chapter titled "Advent of Islam in India." This piece of writing expresses an apologetic approach of the Muslim scholars contemporarily living in India towards the Muslim rule in India. She views the partition of India critically based upon 'Two Nations Theory' and accounts for its repercussions for the Muslims of the subcontinent. Yet, she defends the Indian Muslims of the medieval era, by highlighting the progressive and constructive developments the Muslim rulers introduced for the wellbeing of Indian people. Expressing her views on the question of Indian Muslims' identity and on the charge that they are not the sons of the soil, she reiterates:

The Perso-Turks decided to make India their home. Turko-Persian administrative institutions were introduced into India which later became the basis of the administrative set up of the Delhi Sultanate and still later in some degree of the Mughal Empire. It was only then that 'a new culture, a new way of life, a new religion, a new view of art and architecture was grafted into this country.' Since then, the Perso-Turks, the Mughals and others professing Islam, who founded dynasties in different parts of the country, had made India their homeland. They became the sons of the soil like the Dravidians and the Aryans of the remote past.³⁶

Discussing the issue with a new approach, Suleman Zubair's undertaking *History of Invasion of Indus Valley and its Aftermath* (2004) is quite significant. Its main thesis is that the people from Middle East and Central Asia are those who ventured foremost invasions in India and gradually made migrations and settlements there. It describes

that the first ever invasion of India took place, around 8000 BC, by the people of prehistoric Mesopotamian Civilization who had umbilical relations with it.³⁷ Extending his argument, he further states that the pre-Indus Mehargarh Civilization, thus, existed as a part of an appendix to the civilization, stretching from Mesopotamia up to Mehargarh. It came into existence either by invasion or through passive migration, from the desolate and inhospitable areas South of Mesopotamia and Southern Iranian Plateau. Zubair calls this invasion as ‘Sumerian Semitic invasion’ of Mehargarh.³⁸ The slaves of Aryans in Indus Valley, so to say the *Dasas* or the *Dasis*, in fact were Sumerians living there for about 7000 years.³⁹ By offering this argument, he negates and counters the preposition that Arab Muslims who invaded Sindh in 711 AD were foreigners, or illegitimate rulers of India.

Similarly, Zubair defends Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi (b. 971 — d. 1030) who invaded India seventeen times (between the period from 1000 to 1027 AD) and Sultan Mu‘izzuddin Ghuri (b. 1149 — d. 1206) who invaded India in 1191, arguing that they both were from Central Asia, a region said to be Aryana, where the Aryans came from to attack Indus Valley in second millennium BC. The history of Aryana and the Indus Valley, he propounds, should be treated together, as its territory remained integrated for the period, from 900 BC to 1850 AD. The only event which disintegrates the region during this period is the establishment of Nation State of Afghanistan in 1774 AD.⁴⁰ By putting these arguments forward, Zubair attempts at proving and establishing that the Muslims who invaded, conquered and ruled India from 711 to 1850s cannot be considered foreigners, as they called India their ancestral homeland, long before embracing Islam.

Critical Appraisal and Concluding Remarks

The above discussion shows that Muslim nationalist historiography during the colonial period was mainly a response to Orientalist depiction of the history of Muslims in South Asia. Therefore, Muslim nationalist historiographical narratives dominantly offer political history of India and intend to respond to the alleged misconceptions about Muslim rule in India, which were propagated by western historians, more specifically the historians associated with East India Company. The foremost purpose of these historical enterprises is defending, justifying and glorifying Muslim rule in India, underlining that it brought about various positive changes in Indian society, which were overall beneficial and contributory to Indian

society and culture in disregard of religious and racial discriminations. The administrative system that the Muslim rulers gave, liberal social policies they introduced, judicial and socio-political morals they set forth, all were unprecedentedly virtuous and beneficial for Indian masses, including Hindus whom the European authors mainly declared as the oppressed masses. Muslim nationalist historians argue that Muslim ruling classes had always been defensive in the situations of troubles between the Hindus and Muslims. This was because the Muslim community in India was in minority and was, therefore, threatened by Hindus who made a majority part of India's population. They felt that the Orientalist historiographical narrative, which was produced to serve imperialist designs of the Europeans in India, ignited the tensions between Indian masses, mainly the Hindus and Muslims. This narrative corresponds to the alleged British policy of "divide and rule."

One of the major allegations posed by the Orientalists which stirred the severe criticism of the Muslim nationalist historians was that the Muslims came to India with imperialist designs. They were foreigners, invaders and despots, who grabbed Indian sources and treated the indigenous people as second class subjects. Hence, the debate of difference between high born (*ashrāf*) and low born (*ajlāf*) has continued throughout the period of Muslim rule in India. Responding to this serious charge, the Muslim Indian historians, scholars and theologians attempted to justify how they had deeper sentimental connections and true sincerities with the land of India, and worked for progress and prosperity of its people without being biased towards race, ethnicity, culture, creed and religion.

This can also be inferred by the above discussion and extracts from the undertakings of the Muslim nationalist historians that though their purpose of writing history before these historians was similar, i.e. responding to misconceptions of Muslim rule in India, yet it, as to the nature of discourse these historians presented, can be divided into three categories. First, there are some historians who were not professionally trained historians and they offered sentimental, semi-theological and semi-historical discourse and descriptions of historical events. The theologian Syed Suleman Nadavi's logic to defend Muslims' political identity and status in India is semi-historical and semi-theological. The historicity of the Nadavi's argumentation is grounded in *Abrahamic* or Semitic religions — i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and is acceptable for only those who believe in them. Others find no appeal in it. The descriptions given in the work of novelist and historian Abdul Haleem Sharar is

descriptive and in story-telling manner, deficient of thematic and analytical content. His criticism over the Orientalist discourse, nonetheless, is quite appropriate while recounting the cognizance of the sources and the languages such as Persian and Arabic, but his response towards allegations is put forward in quite emotional tone.

The second cadre of Muslim nationalist historians is that of western educated and professionally trained historians like S. M. Jaffar, I. H. Qureshi, S.M. Ikram and Aziz Ahmad who responded by developing a discourse which was more rationalist and methodologically and technically attuned to western scholarship. Muhammad Aslam Syed's work is historiographical, and it therefore provides much systematic analysis and critique on both the Orientalist and Muslim nationalist historiography.

The third type of historians among Muslim nationalists are those who produced their works in the last decade of the twentieth century and whose response appears to be relatively more robust logically as well as historically. For instance, Indian historian Rafat Durdana Jalauddin and Pakistani historian Suleman Zubair who go into the ethnic, racial and historical connections of Indian Muslim with the land of India, whom the Orientalists recognized and propagated as foreigners and illegitimate rulers of India.

Another noticeable point as to Muslim nationalist historiography is that it is divided on the issues of partition of India. Pakistani historians justifying 'Two Nations Theory' put overwhelming emphasis on religious and cultural differences between the Hindu and Muslim communities and justify the creation of Pakistan, whereas the Muslim historians living in post-colonial India primarily evoke pluralism and multi-culturalism between both communities. Consequently, both factions of Muslim nationalist historiographical school of thought evolve their dispositions, reasoning and perspectives of history in the light of their peculiar situations.

Notes and References

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2. Megan C. Thomas, "Orientalism: Cultural Field of Study" *Britannica*, at: <https://www.britannica.com/science/Orientalism-cultural-field-of-study> (dated: June 1, 2021).
3. Alfred Lyall, "Islam in India" *Asiatic Studies, Religious, Social* (London, 1882) 252, in Alexander Morison, "Applied Orientalism and British India and Tsarist Tristan Turkestan," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (July 2009), 619.

4. See, Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).
5. M. Soih, "Postcolonialism and Natural 'Other'" *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography 2009*, at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/orientalism> (dated: May 30, 2021).
6. Syed Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam*, (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1891).
7. Sir William Muir, *Life of Mahomet: From Original Sources*, (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1878).
8. S. M. Jaffar, *Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India*, (Peshawar: S. Muhammad Sadiq Khan Publishers, 1950), 2.
9. I. H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947): A Brief Historical Analysis* (Karachi: Ma'aref, 1977, first published 1962).
10. Normally, Muslim historians associate history of Indian Muslims with Muslim World, i.e. Middle East and Central Asia, disconnecting or ignoring the racial, ethnic and regional roots of the convert Muslims in ancient India, the period before Arab invasion of Sindh. Sharar's approach, thus, is different in this regards and he pays equal attention to both, ancient history of India as well as the Muslim world. So far as fiction works are concerned, his novels are regarded to be propagation of Islamic romanticism. He differs from the writers like Deputy Nazeer Ahmad whose aim was merely to preach moralities and character building of the people belonging to the Muslim community. Abdul Haleem Sharar, *Tareekh-e Sind*, (Karachi: City Book Point, 2011).
11. Abdul Haleem Sharar, *Tareekh-i Sind*, (Karachi: City Book Point, 2011), 9.
12. Syed Suleman Nadavi, *Arab-o Hind Kay Ta'alluqat*, (Lahore: Asad Printers, N.D), 15-6.
13. See the prefaces of both editions (1939 and 1950) in S. M. Jaffar, *Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India*, (Peshawar: S. Muhammad Sadiq Khan Publishers, 1950).
14. S. M. Jaffar, *Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India*, 1.
15. William Harrison Moreland was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1898. He studied at Clifton College, Somerset (1881-1886) and also studied at Trinity College, Cambridge and completed LL.B. in 1889. Then, he went to India and joined the Indian Civil Services. He served as assistant commissioner (1894), Joint Magistrate (1897), Magistrate and Collector (1899) and became Director of Land Records and Agriculture in the United Provinces in 1899. He wrote several books on history of India, most renowned of which included: *Agriculture of United Provinces: An Introduction for the Landholders and Officials*, (Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2015, First Edition, 1904); *India at the Death of Akbar: An Economic Study* (London: Macmillan, 1920); *Agrarian System of Moslem India*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2011, First Published, 1929), *From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A Study in Economic History* (London: Macmillan, 1923); *A Short History of India*, Ed., 4th (London: Longmans, 1954, First published, 1936).
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- Cosimo Classics, 2008, First published, 1906); *Rulers of India 1618-1707* (Read Books, 2006, First published, 1893).
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 18. I. H. Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1958). 20-21
 19. Mufti Shaukat Ali Fahmi, *Hindustan Par Islami Hakumat*, (Karachi: City Book Point, 2012), 5-10.
 20. S. M. Ikram, *A History of Muslim Civilization in Pakistan and India*, (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1997), i-xxvi.
 21. This book is based on the author's PhD dissertation which he submitted in Muslim University Aligarh. This PhD dissertation was evaluated by celebrated historians, Sir E. Denison Ross and Dr. Tara Chand. The foreword of the book was written by Muhammad Habib in 1949.
 22. For details, see Muhammad Aziz Ahmad, *Political History & Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi 1206-1290*, (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1972).
 23. Muhammad Aslam Syed is educated from University of the Punjab and Columbia University, and taught history at Pennsylvania University, Harvard University and Quaid-i-Azam University.
 24. Muhammad Aslam Syed, *Muslim Response to the West: Muslim Historiography 1857-1947*, (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1988), 131.
 25. Syed, *Muslim Response to the West*, 15.
 26. Syed, *Muslim Response to the West*, 1-14.
 27. Muhammad Abrar Zahoor, "Muslim Identity Construction in Colonial Punjab: Investigating the Role of Muslim Communal Organizations," (PhD Dissertation, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad, 2019), 126-132. See also Ali Usman Qasmi and Megan Eaton Robb (eds.), *Muslims against the Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
 28. Syed Suleman Nadavi, *Arab-o Hind Kay Ta'alluqat*, Muhammad Shabir Qamar (ed.), (Lahore: Asad Nayar Publishers, ND), 19.
 29. For details see: Syed Suleman Nadavi, *Arab-o Hind Kay Ta'alluqat*, 19-26.
 30. Sharar, *Tarikh-e Sindh*, 18.
 31. Abdul Haleem Sharar, *Tareekh-i Sindh*, (Karachi: City Book Point, 2011), 18.
 32. S. M. Jaffar, *The Mughal Empire: From Babar to Aurangzeb*, (Peshawar: S. M. Sadiq Publisher, 1936), 387-9; *Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India*, (Peshawar: S. M. Sadiq Publisher, 1951), 238-42.
 33. S. M. Jaffar, *Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India*, 241, 222.
 34. Mohammad Yasin, *A Social History of Islamic India*, (Lahore: Book Traders, 1958), 16.
 35. Yasin, *A Social History of Islamic India*, 2-3.
 36. Raf'at Durdana Jalaluddin, "The Advent of Islam in India," in Mohammad Taher, *Muslims in India: Recent Contributions to Literature on Religion, Philosophy, History, & Social Aspects* (New Delhi, Anmol Publications, 1993), 1.
 37. Suleman Zubair, *History of Invasions of Indus Valley and their Aftermath*, (Lahore: Benzey Publications, 2004), 9-10.

38. The evidences he discusses to support his argument are archaeological. The burial habits, embryonic and straight positions of graves, female figurines, decorations and patterns of the pottery and agricultural activities, all these things found in Mehargarh, he thinks, indicate Middle Eastern links. Zubair, *History of Invasions of Indus Valley and Their Aftermath*, 10-12, 27.
39. Zubair, *History of Invasions of Indus Valley and Their Aftermath*, 30.
40. Zubair, *History of Invasions of Indus Valley and Their Aftermath*, 98.