INTRODUCTION

Pan-Islamism is nothing more and nothing less than Islam itself, the supernational Sangathan of Muslims in five continents.

—Mohamed Ali.

The repercussions of what might be considered a moment of substantive plurality in the history of the Indian subcontinent that led, eventually, to the formation of three separate nations and the unprecedented and massive relocation of an estimated seventeen million peoples are yet to be fully gauged. The dust has been sifted over and again, and writers have recovered diverse objects in their endeavours. By and large, however, we continue to remember this moment not as plural but as “partition,” denoting a violent sundering of a unified people. Our failure to conceptualize this moment in a critical idiom is symbolized by the way even “secular” scholars continue to uphold, in an unproblematic manner, India’s “rich and varied heritage,” as if “partition” was an unnecessary, though costly, deviation. In the same breath, we also applaud India’s abiding feature of “unity in diversity,” thereby denying any real political significance to notions of diversity and difference.

While celebrating a unity, that effectively “contains” all our diversity, we tend to forget its many slippages. In terms of lived reality, the singular nation we imagine, pledge our allegiance to and inhabit, and the plurality of our cultural practices are not always complementary. The case of Islam in India particularly highlights the inhibiting nature of this singular plurality and my

1 “In Defence of Gandhiji’s Leadership,” in Select Writings and Speeches of Maulana Mohamed Ali, ed. Afzal Iqbal (Lahore: Shaïkh Mohammad Ashraf, 1944) 389; hereafter, Select. All emphases in this chapter, unless mentioned otherwise, are as in source.

dissertation will attempt to examine the fissures within our national longings as much as our
diverse cultural belongings with particular reference to Islam.

I

The orthodox historical overview of the Indian subcontinent, also enshrined in school textbooks,
posits the arrival of the Muslims in the twelfth century. In KM Panikkar’s *A Survey of Indian
History*, which was published in the year India achieved independence and ran into five
impressions in that year itself, we read “In AD 731, Junaid’s successor Tamim decided to enter
the Deccan . . . with a large army. . . . The Gujerat king Nagabhata defeated them. . . . This
victory *saved India* for over 275 years” (124-125; emphasis added). In Panikkar’s historical
pursuit, this event is only a prelude to the successive invasions of the like of Mahmud of Ghazni
and Mohammed Ghouri. Panikkar is conscious of the significance of history, for

ever since India became conscious of her nationhood there has been a growing
demand for a history of India which would try and reconstruct the past in a way
that would give us an idea of our heritage. Brought up on text books written by
foreigners whose one object would seem to have been to prove that there was no
such thing as ‘India,’ we had to ‘discover’ India for ourselves. (x)

In his journey of historical discovery, which he characterizes as “a spiritual adventure” (x), he
asserts: “It is necessary . . . to emphasise that India as a concept comes into existence only with
the development of Hindu civilization” (3). Attributing to Hinduism the honour of “making”
India, he, however, points out:

1 See, Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). The Southern experience of Islam was largely of a different order, and will be considered when I deal with the
1836-1921 Malabar Mappila uprisings in the third chapter.

Before the nineteenth century Islam was not separately organized. The Hindus and Muslims lived together, professing their different religions. The political power of Islam was sufficient guarantee for the religious faith and the necessity for the Muslims to organize separately was never felt. The Muslim officers freely entered the service of the Hindu rulers, and even at Paniput where the Maratha forces met the Afghans, the Hindu side had numerous Muslim soldiers and captains. . . . In the same way, when Babar invaded India, the Afghans allied themselves with the Hindus to resist the invader. But in the nineteenth century, the position took a sudden and disastrous turn for the Mussalmans. They found themselves deprived of all power and authority in the country. Their downfall was so sudden and so marked that it was impossible for anyone to overlook it.

(248)

According to Panikkar, Hindu society was divided horizontally before the thirteenth century. But, after the twelfth century, "Islam . . . split Indian society into two sections from top to bottom and what has now come to be known in the phraseology of today as two separate nations came into being from the beginning" (143-144).

Despite efforts by a few historians, 6 this general impression set up by nationalist historiography has not undergone any significant change, as can be gathered from a recent example, where we come across "factual" statements such as:

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6 Brajadalal Chattopadhyaya’s Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eighth to Fourteenth Century) (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998) and DN Jha’s Holy Cow: Beef in Indian Dietary Traditions (New Delhi: Matrix Books, 2001) are two recent examples of detailed examinations of established notions in the light of traditional sources.
The most significant development in the subcontinent, prior to the arrival of Muslims in the twelfth century, was the gradual replacement of Buddhism by Hinduism that had matured and become the primary religion of India, providing the country a unifying ethos.

Muslim invasions, and the subsequent establishment of Muslim kingdoms and the Mughal empire, introduced a radically new element into the subcontinent. Islam, a strong, militant religion, was wholly opposed to everything Hinduism represented.\(^7\)

We read on, “there was no possibility of there ever being a true meeting of the minds between Muslims and Hindus” (15), and that the “Muslims, who had accepted the fact that they could not convert the Hindus, allowed the Hindus to continue to live . . . [as] second-class citizens of the empire” (15-16). The parallels between the colonial and the nationalist framework of historiography becomes clear if we juxtapose Max Muller’s (1823-1900)\(^6\) comments on India:

My interest lies altogether with the people of India, when left to themselves, and historically I should like to draw a line after the year one thousand after Christ. When you read the atrocities committed by the Mohammeden conquerors of India from that time to the time when England stepped in and, whatever may be said by her envious critics, made, at all events, the broad principles of our common humanity respected once more in India, the wonder, to my mind, is how any nation could have survived an Inferno, without being turned into devils themselves. (50)

The manner in which Muller, in a seemingly natural way, collapses India into Hindu is all the more evident when he deals with “the truthful character of the Hindus.”

Now it is quite true that during the two thousand years that precede the time of Mahmud of Gazni, India had had but few foreign visitors, and few foreign critics; still it is surely strange that whenever, either in Greek, or in Chinese, or in Persian, or in Arab writings, we meet with any attempts at describing the distinguishing national character of the Indians, regard for truth and justice should always be mentioned first. (50; emphasis added)

For Muller, despite the atrocities committed by Muslims that would have transformed any other people into “devils,” the national character, as defined by Hinduism, was one that had utmost regard for truth and justice and England has only stepped in to reinforce “the broad principles of our common humanity.”

Against the grain of such nationalist and colonial historical narratives, I look at the Muslim in India with the intention of unpacking some of these “accepted” interpretations. This retake on India and Islam will critically engage with the residual memory of our history and the history of our memories. Ranajit Guha has remarked that “[t]he remembrance of things past in a people’s life and the urge for a people’s own historiography have, of course, one thing in common. Both are informed by a notion of the Other.” His analysis of the ideological underpinnings of Indian historiography brings out the many slippages between the British and the Muslim, which I would argue is, more accurately, a result of a slippage between the Mughal and the Muslim, in the nineteenth century historiography in/on India. In addition to being narrativized as foreign, as Sudipta Kaviraj has commented, there remained a “puzzling and generally unexplained problem”

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... that Hindus saw Islam as a political, but not an intellectual threat.10 This has resulted in a national amnesia regarding religious interactions in the subcontinent and a monolithic image of Islam is constructed by those within and without the community. As a corollary, Indian Muslims are forced to confront, and come to terms with, among other things, an imposed and essentialized Islamicity, regardless of the fact that Muslims in India, as elsewhere (and indeed as any other religious/cultural group anywhere) have hardly ever been homogeneous. The classic exposition of this issue of representation and of the imbrications of politics and knowledge is Edward Said's Orientalism.11 He observes that

India itself never provided an indigenous threat to Europe. Rather it was because native authority crumbled there and opened the land to inter-European rivalry and to outright European political control that the Indian Orient could be treated by Europe with such proprietary hauteur—never with the sense of danger reserved for Islam. (75)

In Covering Islam,12 Said notes:

“Islam” can now have only two possible general meanings, both of them unacceptable and impoverishing. To Westerners and Americans, “Islam” represents a resurgent atavism, which suggests not only the threat of a return to the Middle Ages but the destruction of what is regularly referred to as the democratic order in the Western world. For a great many Muslims, on the other hand, “Islam” stands for a reactive counterresponse to this first image of Islam as a threat. (51)

As Said remarks, "for almost every Muslim, the mere assertion of an Islamic identity becomes an act of nearly cosmic defiance and a necessity for survival. War seems an extremely logical outcome" (72). Given the particular intensity and sensitivity of issues faced by the Muslim minorities in India, the only move immediately available seems to be backward, to think and feel themselves into a corner. What Derrida talks about, in a different context, as a triple dissociation (55) in the three departments of the nation-state—community, country and republic—seems to be at work here. By virtue of nationalist aggressions or "monoculturalist homo-hegemony" (64) a Muslim in India is "thrown into absolute translation, a translation without a pole of reference, without an originary language, and without a source language" (61).

Language is a major issue, especially since Persian, the language of the Muslim elites in India, was replaced by Urdu in 1835. Decreed illiterate, Muslims adopted Urdu, only to find it increasingly being "treated" as a "foreign" language and systematically displaced by a more and more sankritized Hindi.

The problems that have cropped up in relation to nationalist historiography reverberate in a personal memory. This event takes place in the 70s in a southern state of India, and shows how nationalist historiography has pre-determined our perception of who is a true Indian. The scene is a history classroom, the principal of the school is holding forth on the numerous encounters between the Mughal and the Maratha dynasties. The principal, who happens to be also a (prominent Syrian Christian) priest, has very powerful oratorical skills: during his recounting of


14 As early as 1912, Mohamed Ali had argued that "neither in the matter of language nor in that of script can the Muslims afford to concede more than what they have already done in adopting Urdu as their only vernacular or their second vernacular, and retaining the script that is practically common to the Islamic world. But unless we take practical steps to safeguard the language and the script, both are endangered by the narrow and exclusive 'Nationalism' which is growing more and more militant everyday;" "The Lingua Franca of India," in Select, 43.
the life of Samson, the collective hair of the class used to perpetually stand on end. As usual, he represents Aurangzeb as a bearded demonic figure and Shivaji with his flowing and graceful beard comes out as quite the hero. He then narrates particular incidents where Shivaji tricks and defeats the villain with his cleverness and valour, the superior Mughal force notwithstanding. Anyone familiar with these stories will recognize parallels with the Robin Hood story. Before the eyes of the class, Shivaji’s battles to maintain his Maratha empire were represented as nationalist struggles, while, given the Manichaean proportions of that narrative and its classical antagonists, Aurangzeb became an evil lackey of the British. None of these nuances troubled me then; in fact, I, the only Muslim in the class, whole-heartedly hoped for the destruction of the villain—I had already privately disavowed him, though the public act, indeed, was not to be so easy. Nonetheless, the eyes of the teacher returned again and again, to rivet on me. It was not that he was assuring himself that his spell was working (it undoubtedly was); no, his accusatory eyes bore into me, marking me out to myself and to the others as the spy in the class. The persistence and ferocity of his gaze, its compulsive return, made me acutely uneasy, I remember. I wondered what he wanted of me—did he want me to declare my allegiance to Shivaji and therefore to the Indian nation, or did he want me to confess my crimes and disavow Islam? Such everyday occurrences are rarely material for serious analysis. Apart from establishing the trajectory of my own "Muslimness," the intention behind the personal account was also to point towards the possibility that such commonplace "events" reveal a deeply embedded and structural problem that pre-determines nationalist perception of Indian culture. Since I engage with this aspect in terms of its many institutionalized forms in this dissertation, I end this section by juxtaposing two interesting instances. The first is from Gandhi:

Consider for one moment what can happen if the British were to withdraw all of a sudden and there was no foreign usurper to rule. It may be said that the Punjabis, be they Muslims, Sikhs or others, will overrun India... Thus if
anybody has cause to keep the British rule for protection from the stronger element. It is the Congressmen and those Hindus and others who are represented by the Congress.\textsuperscript{15}

Comments like "[t]he Mussulmans . . . do not yet regard India as their home of which they should be proud" and "the Mussulman as a rule is a bully and the Hindu as a rule is a coward\textsuperscript{16}" can easily be gleamed from Gandhi's oeuvre. The second is a literary passage:

Rajan sat down on the door-step and asked, "And who is this Akbar Ali?"

"He is a nice Mohammedan, belongs to our class."

"In the Board High School?" There was just a suspicion of a sneer in his tone. Swaminathan preferred to ignore this question and continued, "He has a bicycle. He is a very fine Mohammedan, calls Mohammed of Gazni and Aurangzeb rascals."\textsuperscript{17}

\section{II}

Imagining the time and space of the nation as homogeneous is utopian, as Partha Chatterjee (drawing on Foucault) has pointed out, since the real time-space of modern life is characterized by heterotopia.\textsuperscript{18} There is an urgent need to open out the time and space of our nation since the moves to systematically "erase" or exorcise difference have left their mark on the Indian imaginary. Slogans that exhort Indians to send Muslims to Pakistan or kabristan (graveyard) and to drive out all Babur's progeny with slippers have persisted through "riots" right from the 1920s

\textsuperscript{15} MK Gandhi. \textit{The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi} (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1976) vol. 70, 269. Aware that his statements could be misquoted, Gandhi acknowledged that his "language is aphoristic, it lacks precision. It is therefore open to several interpretations," \textit{Collected Works}, vol. 53, appendix iii, 485.


\textsuperscript{17} RK Narayan, \textit{The Magic of Malgudi}, Omnibus edition of \textit{Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts} and \textit{The Vendor of Sweets} (New Delhi: Viking, 2000) 82.
to the present. The genocidal attack on Muslims in Gujarat during February-May 2002, in which according to official sources around a thousand people have died, is the latest in this series. Muslims are the source of a deep-seated anxiety for secular nationalism and the targets of a resurgent Hindutva in that they expose the fault-lines of a demographically, geographically and culturally unified nation. It is my contention that an uncritical insistence of unity has led to the notion of differences as a threat to the nation. In this context, my endeavour is to engage with, not the fissures, but the interstices of the nation. Whereas “fissure” denotes a crack, split or breach, “interstice” marks an in-between space or interval of time within a formation that is also an integral part, even connects other parts—anatomically speaking it is the fine connecting tissue between cells of other tissue—of the whole.

An important move to open out the time-space of the nation would be to ask a simple question: How many “Indias” do all of us “Indians” actually inhabit/imagine? Though the question has far-reaching resonance, I will limit it, in this instance, to a question of an undivided India, in terms of our independence, for that was what formed an India in the first place. But wherever we go, whether in academic, political or personal exchanges, we hear of an India that was partitioned in 1947. Isn’t the pre-partition “India” demographically, culturally and geographically different from “our” India? If so, why have most of us chosen to be blind to this historical fact? We talk as if an India with a “rich and varied heritage” attained independence and from that country a geographical and cultural section was partitioned off later. Let us get our facts in place: Pakistan and India attained independence, and in that order, on the same night. What was an Indian subcontinent became two, and later three, independent nations. Is this repeated aporetic moment a serious case of forgetfulness or, rather, a simple instance of

18 Partha Chatterjee, “The Nation in Heterogeneous Time,” unpublished typescript; another version of the same paper
remembering? And how has this reiterated interplay of forgetting and remembering inflected actual lived experiences in India? The Iron Man, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s ultimatum to Muslims of free India: “I want to tell them frankly that mere declaration of loyalty to [the] Indian Union will not help them at this juncture. They must give proof of their declaration”\(^{19}\) seems to be insistently relived in the everyday and “commonplace” demand for a disowning of Islam as a prerequisite to becoming a patriotic Indian. Whereas a person’s allegiance to Hinduism is still taken as undeniable proof of their innate Indianness, especially so among diasporas who live in other coordinates, a Muslim’s faith even in a regional Indian location is construed as a threat. For a Muslim, the effect of such demands for public disavowal of Islam is either a defiant reconsolidation of an irreducible Islamic identity or an uneasy denial of a significant paring of one’s identity. Both these responses rule out serious engagement with Islam, within or without.

The memory generated by nationalist historiography continues to mark, indelibly, all aspects of contemporary existence, whether it be institutions or everyday interactions. It is not as if by re-writing history in a purely secular vein the contradictions graining into the contemporary Indian scenario can be resolved, for the conflicts pervade every arena of secular-modern life. I will illustrate this by examining another, albeit personal, event. I was watching the live television relay of the cricket match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka on 10 April 1995 in the company of a young man and his father, belonging to the Brahmin community in Hyderabad. The match was a crucial one, for India’s chances of reaching the final (if Sri Lanka defeated Pakistan, India would enter the finals) depended on the outcome of this match. While the match was in progress the enthusiasm of the older man rooting for Sri Lanka was largely shared by me, though I could not

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share the violence of his (mostly half-articulate) utterances, especially, when the camera repeatedly picked out bodies visibly marked as Muslim in the audience. The young man in our company, on the other hand, was embarrassed by the older man’s reactions. Contrary to what I would have expected of myself, I felt more disturbed by the young man’s embarrassment than by his father’s obvious prejudice. I realized that it was the young man’s secular-modern outlook that frames the older man as prejudiced and intolerant. But I can easily picture the same scene in my absence, and I am sure that the younger man would have joined in the “fun” without any serious qualms. It is my Muslim-ness (a lack manifesting as an extra notation on the body, pointer to the “fact” that a Muslim cannot be completely “secularized”) that gives the lie to the young man’s broad-mindedness, and this upsets him and makes me uneasy.

What I particularly want to draw out is the spectre of the older man in the younger one, which easily escapes detection for it is cleverly disguised as “secular” and sophisticated. While the older man might have taken me for granted as Indian, or in the heat of the moment forgotten my Muslim presence, the younger one was uncomfortably conscious of my “Muslimness” in the very senses that his father was assuming, and that consequently my “Indianness” was somehow compromised. That is, by virtue of being born a Muslim in India, my primary loyalty would naturally be to Islam and by extension to the Islamic neighbour-nation.

It seems to me that increasingly over the last two decades, this fundamental anxiety of the nation is being mapped onto Muslims—as individuals, as a group—especially in the context of a sport that is seen as the playground, or rather a battle-field, for asserting national pride and patriotism. The Muslim is widely represented, as a dangerous individual, under the sway of an irrational frenzy. In other words, s/he is regarded as a fanatic, guilty unless proved otherwise, and the onus is always on the Muslim to proclaim and prove his/her loyalty, especially in India. To underline
this I need only recall the paradoxical expression “nationalist Mussalman” current during the latter phase of India’s freedom struggle. Whereas a nationalist Muslim should be the one who owed allegiance to a nation of his/her own, the recourse to an oxymoron to formulate the possibility of a Muslim owing allegiance to “India” points to the problem underlying nationalist aspiration in the subcontinent. Islam, thus, seems to be, in the past as well as in the present, a source of crisis in the sense that it underlines the failure of an Indian nationalism in its avowal of a secular creed. As formulated by nationalist thought, Muslims represent the other, communal, side of the nation: an “other,” poised between “nationalism” and “communalism,” and hemmed in by representations that delimit available options.

The nationalist interpretation of history and constitution of a citizen-hood emptied of subjectivity and coinciding with nationhood has created unevenness across various communities. For one, as Vivek Dhareshwar has pointed out, it has “exclud[ed] and delegitimiz[ed] other idioms and agencies” thereby leading to a “devaluation of the communitarian subject—the one tainted either with religion or caste”; the inequality involved is “reassigned as difference.” While this stubborn difference that inscribes the Muslim and Dalit identity/community resists secularization and endangers the nation by its otherness, the universalized citizen moves towards a reconstitution as “Indian citizen-Hindu” in a move that attempts “to compensate for the excess of universality” (406).

In the light of a resurgent Hindutva and the post-Babri Masjid communal violence, especially the February-May 2002 Gujarat “riots,” there is an urgent need to rethink categories and concepts that play a determining role in nation-formation. A central concept among them is that of
secularism, which has its defenders and detractors. In the debate around secular-modernity, it is possible to categorize two major positions taken by various thinkers. Under the first category, which covers a majority of writers, secularism and modernity are still viable, even desirable goals. Writers in this group continue to think of modernity as a singular world-event whose ideals have filtered into various societies in different ways. The solution to the impasse in contemporary thought, they argue, can be overcome by a more critical and even stringent application of the ideals of secular-modernity. In their view, the problem is that secularism was never fully realized, thereby making its failure a methodological, rather than a conceptual, problem. However, the unsatisfactory nature of this explanation comes out when we turn to the Hindutva argument. Hindutva intellectuals also claim that the state erred in its avowed secularist creed. They label the prevalent practice as “pseudo-secularism,” and, as Chatterjee has pointed out, would argue that while the state machinery intervened in issues of Hindu religion and advocated reforms in order to homogenize Hindu practices, other religious and caste entities were allowed, even provided, protection, to preserve their differences; appeasing them, in fact, for their votes. The advocates of secularism fail to understand that what Hindutva forces are clamouring for is the stringent enforcement of secularism, whereby the state should espouse the majoritarian religion while according some provisions for minorities. However, the multiculturalist debate raging in American academic circles should give us a clue to the problems inherent in this vision.

Others have argued that instead of being the solution, secularism was and is the problem, and identify it as the root cause of the crisis facing the nation. Writers belonging to this group argue that the concept was alien in the first place and was also imposed on Indian culture. They advocate a return to Indian sources in order to develop institutions and practices in tune with Indian reality. Apart from the issues raised by this valorized nativism, the problems in this view emerge when we concentrate on Gandhi, the Mahatma. Recent studies have drawn attention to the contradictory results of Gandhian politics, a theme that pervades this dissertation as well. However, there is an important variant among those belonging to this group. Instead of rejecting secular-modernity altogether, writers belonging to this persuasion, exemplified by Partha Chatterjee, tend to reject “the modernist understanding or interpretation of modernity” (Dhareshwar, 410). They identify the main task as one of studying the hegemonic project of secular-modern nation-state in relation to the “fragmented resistance to that normalizing project.”

III

Positioned at such a dis-juncture, this dissertation is, in the final analysis, an attempt to come to terms with the complex reality of contemporary lives in India with particular reference to Islam. Even radical scholarship, as Aamir R Mufti has pointed out, “assumes an essential continuity of ‘Indian’ polity from pre- to post-Partition times—an indefensible premise and point of departure.” As a result, the Muslim, as “person and problematic,” continues to be placed at the margins of a nation which figures as a pre-given category that can be problematized but not

probated or proscribed. Mufti argues that “the Muslim ‘problem’ of the Indian state cannot be
thought, let alone solved, without reference to Pakistani (and Bangladeshi) state and society”
(120). Though it is an instructive and inspiring idea, the scope of this dissertation is, however,
limited to an examination of the processes of nation-formation in India with reference to Muslim
minority, with the proviso that events before 1947 belong to the historical repertoire of Pakistan,
India and Bangladesh.

One would have thought that with the birth of Pakistan, the Muslim problem in India would have
lost valency since the “excess had been excised” (Mufti, 117). On the contrary, Muslims
continue to figure as more than a minority in contemporary nationalist discourses in India,
despite the fact that they compose only 12 percent of our present population. They are
represented as repositories of irrationality since they may owe their allegiance to Pakistan or a
world-community of Islam. Hence, a central question this dissertation tries to address is that of
Islamic identity in India and its interplay with the sense of community, local as well as pan-
Islamic. My attempt has been to identify certain nodes, for example, autobiography, rebellion
and historical as well as literary narratives, in order to construct an archive that would enable me
to pose as well as probe the question of Islamic identity in India.

The notion of an archive (here I draw on Foucault’s26 notion of “genealogy”) is central to my
study since the question of Islam is one that is articulated across lines that divide the popular and
the academic and across “disciplinary” boundaries. Foucault’s move away from the
“archaeology” (where discourses are legitimized by other discourses and whereby the discursive
establishes the relation between the discursive and the non-discursive) to the “genealogical”
(where discursive formations are legitimized by the non-discursive and where the discursive is a form of this legitimization) is instructive. In every historical formation, as Deleuze glosses, an archaeologist will find different series and rules, without any apparent reason for a new formation to emerge with new rules and series. In order to understand such shifts (for example, why did capitalism arise at a particular time when many factors could have made it equally possible at another time and place?), an archaeologist will have to construct a genealogical diagram of the formation. Such a diagram would be like superimposing different maps one over the other and would include, besides the points which it connects, "certain relatively free or unbound points . . . and it is perhaps with these that we ought to begin in order to understand the whole picture" (Deleuze, 44).

Such an archive will make legible what is often invisible in a conventional map. The archive I put together cuts across disciplines, so that the question of Islam and the moorings of our national be-longingness can be analyzed in a more productive manner. The texts I study, apart from belonging to diverse genres, also belong to different periods in history. This is an additional advantage in that they bring into play tensions belonging to disparate historical situations and enrich the archive. Thus, for example, autobiographies, articles, letters and historical records pertaining to four Muslim educational institutions are used in order to understand Muslim engagement with modernity, nationalism and communitarian identity. Such an approach is also far more responsive to the problem since it enables one to pit texts and genres against each other and attempt juxtaposed readings of texts separated by centuries, like those of William Logan and K Madhavan Nair or O Chandumenon and NS Madhavan.

26 Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in The Foucault Reader, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth:
The archive I draw enables me to grapple with the question of Muslim identity in the elite as well as peasant communities across the North/South and local/national axes. For that purpose I chose to focus on the Khilafat movement of 1920s, a complex movement in a complicated period of Indian history. Factors that led to the espousal of the Khilafat cause by Muslims as well as the Congress leadership and its effects among the North Indian Muslim elite and the Mappila community are examined in the course of this dissertation. Since my interest was not in the movement as such but in its implications for Indian Muslims in the 1920s, I chose to read key texts with, so to speak, an ear-to-the-ground so that in-depth, often against the grain, analyses of these key texts are juxtaposed with other texts from other genres. One of the primary tasks was to examine narratives so as to come to terms with a national imaginary that is structured to suspect Muslims of holding “separatist” tendencies. Read in the political context of their articulation, these texts reveal themselves as far more complex than retrospective readings hitherto, especially after the “partition” of the subcontinent, seem to have “found” them.

For example, Mohamed Ali’s autobiographical fragment in English is examined for its engagement with the interface of the personal and the political. As against other Muslim texts, Mohamed Ali’s text is singular in that, more than a recounting of events and impressions, it tries to thematize difference. Mohamed Ali is read as a figure that enables us to question areas in contemporary life that exceed our assumptions. Thus, Mohamed Ali also points towards other possibilities of the present. I chose to study Mohamed Ali, rather than Mohammad Ali Jinnah or

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26 A recent study around this theme is Ayesha Jalal’s *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), though her focus is restricted to the politics of the North-Western provinces, particularly Punjab.
27 Because of such a preoccupation, issues of gender and caste have been sidelined, though I have tried to touch upon them when I deal with the 1921 Malabar rebellion.
Abul Kalam Azad, for two reasons. For one, unlike Jinnah, Mohamed Ali was a firm believer whose vision of India and Islam developed out of Muslim engagement with modernity. For another, unlike Azad's autobiography that is a retrospective after the formation of the nation-states of Pakistan and India, Mohamed Ali's work captures the spirit of the 1920s. Furthermore, Mohamed Ali's fragment of an autobiography involves a minoritarian reworking of the majoritarian genre, producing a dissonance in nationalist self-narration, disturbing its sedentary nature and questioning its point of saturation. Read in the context of well-made and fully realized autobiographies by Gandhi and Nehru, it throws into relief an undetected unevenness in the mode of modern individuation, which, in turn, is the pre-requisite for the coincidence of the national and the communitarian. As I see it, Mohamed Ali embodies a critical-subject position by virtue of belonging to a minor community, and consequently experiencing the realm of the personal as being deeply inflected by the political. Consequently, when alertly read, his autobiographical fragment provides a precipitate critique of the majoritarian genre and sets up a tension in the realm of the national. Mohamed Ali seems to gesture towards a refashioning of individuals as integrated into communities, while, in canonical criticism the communitarian moorings of individuals are consistently dismissed as irrelevant, since fully developed individuals were to coincide with the (national) citizen.

Mohamed Ali's "unfinished" autobiography (incomplete in terms of the genres of self, nation and text) is the only text by a Muslim, elite or otherwise, that I examine in some detail—with the exception of the 1841 warola (pamphlet) left behind by the Mappila insurgents. In the case of the warola, there is no pretension of resurrecting voices from and against History. Though Mohamed Ali/Mappila voices and contemporary concerns may to some extent be set in different keys, what I have tried to do is to present them as instances that can open out History as
representation and make it available for re-interpretations. More than trying to pull out and place other voices against History, what I have concentrated on is to examine other voices as they were embedded within normative (historical as well as literary) representations. Hence, my attempt to read Mohamed Ali's "autobiography" in terms of overtly nationalist autobiographies and place Mohamed Ali in the context of early institutional initiatives by Muslim communities in India so as to frame my discussions of the representations of the Mappila revolts.

It is interesting to note that the major Mappila insurgents of the 1921 Malabar rebellion—significant among its causes are agrarian grievances, caste and religious prejudices, Non-cooperation, Tenancy and Khilafat movements—were actually awaiting the outcome of Mohamed Ali's 1921 Karachi trial. Since he was sure to be convicted, as indeed he was, the insurgents hoped, in vain, that it would lead to rebellions all over the Indian subcontinent. Though I have tried to draw out the parallels among the Muslim elite and peasant preoccupations of that time, the differences are more fundamental. While Mohamed Ali's turn to religion was decried as "communal," the Mappila insurgents were, I argue, decreed as "fanatics." Hence, my examination of the 1921 Malabar rebellion begins with an analysis of the figure of the "fanatic" as it evolved through various colonial and nationalist discourses. I use Logan's text, administrative and judicial records, political and personal correspondences by and with Gandhi, reports submitted by police officials and memoirs by local Hindu Congress leaders of the 1921 rebellion to counterpoint the voice of History. Resources of a different nature are largely unavailable, and interviews with survivors (the last survivor died years ago) and descendants of

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31 The point has been made in "Minority Histories" by Dipesh Chakrabarty in Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).
participants belong to a different kind of project that perhaps is too late to be undertaken. Moreover, recent efforts by scholars have found “evidences” that, properly speaking, are products of nationalist projects. One such researcher pointed out that for most people she interviewed a popular Malayalam movie on the rebellion made by IV Sasi seems to be the source of their memory.

My analysis of literary narratives turns on the concept of representation. Drawing on Derrida’s illuminating essay on representation, I focus on texts belonging to “high” literature in Malayalam and a popular novel in English written by a subaltern posted in Malabar to quell the rebellion. I have not looked into texts by Mappilas, since, by and large, they are configured as a sub-genre of Malayalam literature, and have been so far studied as ethnographical curiosities. An examination of such oral and written “evidence” is yet to be undertaken, but is beyond the scope of the present work. Moreover, even those texts by Muslims that figure as literature are already-always marked by statist versions of nationalist and literary aspirations that always-already erase questions of any other nature. Hence, I have chosen to study “high” literary texts by people other than Muslims in order to read off from their texts the problematic of Islam and its representation.

One of the major objections that can be raised is that Mohamed Ali cannot be taken as representative of the Muslim elite of pre-independent Indian subcontinent and, as a result, my examination of the question of communitarian identity is not exhaustive. Such an objection would be, however, missing the woods for the trees. My primary assumption was that, unlike

name a few, are governed by established imperatives of History and Ethnography that religion and “fanaticism” are deployed as self-evident in terms of the secular modern nation formation.

33 I am thankful to Shamshad Hussain for sharing some of the results of her fieldwork in connection with her ongoing doctoral thesis on oral narratives in Malabar.
Jinnah or Azad, Mohamed Ali brings out, in all its complexity, the tensions and contradictions within the nationalist ideology and represents the contradictory pulls of a Muslim identity in a nascent and unresolved form. As regards the Malabar rebellion of 1921, it can be pointed out with justification that I do not engage with contemporary Mappila politics, especially the demand for a “Moplastan” in a newly formed (1957) Kerala state. However, the scope of this thesis does not allow for such an extensive enquiry, especially since my aim was to engage with both the local as well as the national contours of the Muslim question in India, rather than concentrating on the Malabar question in Kerala. The very same answer would cover my almost total neglect of the widely documented and studied “partition narratives.”

IV

There have been consistent attempts by Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, both individually and as a community, to engage (with) modernity. The foundation of the three Islamic universities in the wake of the post-1857 repression is a case in point. However, nationalist historiography has characterized such initiatives more often than not as communalist or separatist, especially since the Gandhian chapter in the history of the subcontinent foreclosed the possibilities opened up by these initiatives. Contradictions within nationalist thought were brought to a head during the mass mobilization campaign and the Congress-League’s Khilafat movement of 1920s. Events following this crucial phase culminated in the formation of two nation-states. However, Islam continued and continues to haunt the nation that is given to valourize unity over diversity. In the words of Derrida, haunting implies a habitation, and Islam’s critical charge in contemporary India is that of being the “spectral truth” of the nation.

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34 See, for instance, Roland E Miller, Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study of Islamic Trends (Hyderabad: Orient
The first chapter, ""Two Circles of Equal Size': Muslim Response in Modern India,"" tries to trace the trajectory of elite Muslim attempts to engage with modernity. In order to highlight this, I contrast Mohamed Ali's autobiographical writing (a fragment) with better-known full-length autobiographies by Gandhi and Nehru. In striking contrast to Gandhi's seamless narrative of self, region and nation and Nehru's taking for granted that he is addressing others like himself (including foreigners), Mohamed Ali's autobiographical fragment is confronted with the task of articulating a critical-subject position. It is as if the genre of autobiography does not lend itself to a minority life. Mohamed Ali's autobiographical fragment also points to the "unfinished" nature of Islam in India. I also focus on the typescript of Mohamed Ali's address to the jury during his trial at Karachi in 1921 to bring out the significance of his point that the question of a Muslim's allegiances are far more complex since they are a threatened minority in a nation increasingly being mirrored in a Hindu idiom. For Muslims, Islam and India are circles of equal size, neither of which they can abandon. It is in this context that Mohamed Ali proposed the possibility of a Federation of Faiths. I also examine Muslim engagement (with) modernity through the establishment of the Darul Ulum of Deoband (in 1867), the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU; of which Mohamed Ali was a product, in 1877), the Darul Ulum Nadwatul (in 1898) and Jamia Millia Islamia (of which Mohamed Ali was one of the founding members, in 1920). My analysis of the political imbroglio that these educational establishments were caught in concludes by pointing towards the possibility of more than a nascent similarity of the Muslim response vis-à-vis the Dalit one.

The second chapter, ""An Impossible Factor': Muslim as a Critical-Subject Position,"" reviews major writers on Islam in India as well as engages with the re-conceptualization of community as

a category that critically engages with our secular-nation formation. The first two sections deal with the problem of working with the secular-modern frame as exemplified in the writings of Akeel Bilgrami and Javeed Alam. The third section engages with the important work by Ayesha Jalal, who has taken note of the possibility that the teleology of separatism could be the byproduct of a methodological confusion regarding the notions of state and nation. Drawing on her critique of the Subaltern School for its scant attention to the interconnections between the subaltern peasant and elite domains, I postulate that Partha Chatterjee’s formulation of the moments of departure/manoeuvre/arrival of the Indian nation needs to be further amplified in that the Muslim response to post-Enlightenment thought was to re-cognize itself in terms of a moment of arrival (an arrival at modernity; viz. Syed Ahmad Khan) a moment of manoeuvre (mobilization; Ali brothers) and a moment of departure (out of the Indian nation; Jinnah). In the light of my review, I place my contention that though the communities of Islam have different orientations, they are all marked by a particular experience of modernity, secularism and nationalism. This section ends with a review of Francis Robinson and Rafiudin Ahmed who have worked on Muslim communities, respectively, in UP and Bengal. Their work is symptomatic of existing scholarship on Islam which, by and large, misses the larger picture wherein communities, regardless of their majoritarian or minoritarian status within the local setting, are linked together across the Indian subcontinent by a minoritarian experience forged through the structural position of Islam. The last section tries to come to terms with the impasse and sense of crisis evoked by Islam in contemporary India. I try to re-conceptualize the Muslim as a critical-subject who provides a window on secular-modern nation-state especially since Islam is in the position of being the nationalist other’s other in the sense that nationalist itself is the other of European modernity.
The third chapter, "'The Fanatical Mappilas': Accounts of Malabar Uprisings, 1836-1922," examines the Mappila peasant community in Malabar and their uprisings against British overlords and Hindu landlords in the light of the critical engagements with modern secular-nationalism from the perspective of "community." I trace the genealogy of the figure of the "fanatic," coming into existence alongside, if not at the inception of, History in Malabar, through colonial and nationalist discourses, often reading texts against their grain and juxtaposing texts against each other.

In the fourth chapter, "'Re-pre-senting Islam': Malabar in the Processes of Nation-Translation," I focus on Islam as an other in the processes of nation-translation, by which I mean the whole complex of imagining and imaging a nation that has to be continuously repeated and re-affirmed. Drawing on Derrida’s critique of representation, I examine in detail mainly three literary representations of the proper noun "Malabar," as a shorthand notation for the Muslim communality in literature. I examine the machinations of the aesthetic in NS Madhavan's short story "Higuita," where a Muslim becomes the villain and trace its genealogy to O Chandumenon's Indulekha, written almost a century ago, in which a nameless and nation-less villain becomes a Muslim. As against these representations, I examine Donald Sinderby’s The Jewel of Malabar, a popular novel, in which the Muslim-villain is represented as an other that is at the same time the self-same, the double of the western subject.