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ESSAYING THE MUSLIMS : SOME ISSUES IN THE INDIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND AFTER

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Making Sense of History : Society, Culture and Politics,
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I

Mushirul Hasan has since the late 1970s been an articulate scholar especially of the Muslim-related aspects of India's freedom movement. This volume brings together mainly some of his newspaper writings. There are more than 125 articles in the book, some of them on issues of more immediate contemporary relevance which he seeks to understand through the historical lens. The style of many of the articles is languorous, involved and often indirect and tangential. Though not perhaps classifiable as essays in history, they are interesting for the historical political imagery that is invoked and sought to be presented by an Indian academician writing at the turn of the century.

The book concludes with some writings related to the Gujarat killings of 2002. The killings which followed nearly a decade after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya raise questions about the future of Indian society and the nature of its polity. Hasan correctly observes that "a secular polity is the sole guarantor of our survival as a community and the nation" (p.478).

Hindutva and its ramifications are themes which run through this collection of articles. Hasan points out that "for decades" the Hindu nationalists "waited on the margins of political life to establish the illegitimacy of the Congress-led movements against colonialism." (pp 231-232). Exactly so. This was and is the thrust of Hindutva's historical technique and propaganda along these lines is drummed in day in and day out by organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) into the minds of the Indian people. In this seemingly obvious but little appreciated insight lurks some of the value of Hasan's book. It is for the same reason that the present reviewer has often emphasised the need for current scholarship to be as fair to the Congress-led movements as it may be to other movements. There has

been a tendency especially in the last thirty years or so to focus a critique on the pre-independence Congress, to the neglect of other players. This tendency, fuelled largely by Anglocentricism*, has somewhat skewed Indian historiography.

There is also a need, of which the reviewer is all too conscious, to cultivate a distinction between references critical or otherwise to pre-independence political parties or groups and present-day parties functioning under the same or similar names. One may, for example, accept the current politics of the Communist Left and yet reject much, if not all, of its historiography. Contrariwise, one may accept the historiography of the Socialist Left but reject the current politics of a section of it. Historical debates cannot readily be translated into or superimposed on current politics; nor can they be completely separated. All that one may legitimately do is to state the need to bear in mind the distinction.

II

1919, as Hasan recognises (p.83), was a turning point in modern Indian history. The hartal against the Rowlatt legislation was the first such protest at an all-India scale on a democratic rights issue. It deserved greater attention from historians than it has received. Nor did this experience serve sufficiently to caution post-independence legislators against conferring excessive police powers or against providing for preventive detention without adequate safeguards or against certain summary trial procedures.

The protest against the Rowlatt legislation was followed by military violence in Punjab and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Though the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of April 1919 epitomises the violence at the time, the military action was not limited to this. It was on a much wider scale. This was the time when aeroplanes were used for bombing villages in the area extending from Gujranwala and beyond. This aerial bombing took place perhaps for the first time in Asia. It was in some ways a precursor of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Vietnam and Iraq. It was such incidents that imparted a mass character to the national movement, drawing in all communities. The lessons of 1919 resonate even today as a warning to foolhardy policy makers in places like New Delhi, London, Washington and elsewhere. Yet even before the 1919 story has been fully explored, let alone told,

some writers have appeared to brush it aside, perhaps as yet another instance of nationalist myth making. 1919 had led, among other things, to a comprehensive Report with an exposition on citizens' rights, backed by voluminous evidence. It was prepared by a subcommittee of the Congress.

In his book Hasan, includes an article on a deceased historian of what is now increasingly but inaptly termed the "Rowlatt Satyagraha". In this article, Hasan seems rightly to share the concern against myth-making. There is, however, another concern that needs to be stated. How far is the effort to expose so-called nationalist mythologies discouraging research on subjects inconvenient to imperialism? Is the cause of scholarship advanced if Indian and other students are not fully informed about what the Indian people faced in 1919 and at other times?

The redressal of the "Punjab wrongs" became one of the elements of the non-cooperation movement which followed from 1920 and of which the other two elements were the demand for swaraj and the Khilafat-related grievances.

Hasan believes that the Khilafat movement "had led to Hindu-Muslim antipathies" (p.118). Most of the material in the historical literature to substantiate this, however, is of the "post hoc ergo propter hoc" variety – after this, therefore because of this. As a consequence, other possible causes have not been adequately explored. What, for instance, was the colonial role in fomenting riots at the time? We do know from some of the literature that the colonial rulers were wary of the prospect of Hindu-Muslim unity. Rajendra Prasad visited Multan in Punjab along with Hakim Ajmal Khan and Madan Mohan Malaviya after the riots there in 1922. Prasad tells us of a British Deputy Commissioner in Multan who was believed by some to have fomented trouble between Hindus and Muslims in 1922. Later, in the 1930s, this official held office as Home Secretary of the Government of India. Syed Mahmud, who was in touch with affairs in southern India and had toured the South with Bi Amman, wrote that the Moplah uprising was "engineered".[1] In recent years such themes appear to have receded and have been left inadequately unexplored. The focus has largely been on pinning responsibility on the movement itself. Although it is normal to explore the role of the state in relation to communal killings after independence, as in 1984, 1987

and 2002, for some reason it was considered passe to investigate the role of the colonial state in relation to pre-independence inter-communal violence. The snuffing out of or de-emphasising of such themes has in fact perfectly suited Hindutva organisations like the RSS which continue to utilise a rather unifocal portrayal of the 1919-22 events as grist in their contemporary propaganda against the Congress. [This propaganda is largely oral but for a ready-to-hand instance of the RSS's reduction of the Khilafat movement to "the cause of the Khalifa in Turkey" one may refer to the statement by the RSS spokesman reproduced in *The Hindu* of December 20, 2002 in which the movement is held responsible also for "fierce atrocities on hapless Hindus".]

Gandhi had an interesting point about the inter–communal troubles at this time, especially in north India, which needs fuller investigation. He wrote on May 29, 1924: "The seat of the trouble, however, is in the Punjab. The Mussalmans complain that the Hindus have raised a storm of protest on Mr Fazal Hussain trying very timidly to give a fair proportion of Government employment to Mussalmans".[2] [The reference is to Fazl–i-Hussain, or 'Fazli' as he was popularly known, who had assumed ministerial responsibilities in Punjab]. Gandhi records this; it is noteworthy that he does not criticise, and in fact appears sympathetic to, Fazli's attempt to, as Gandhi puts it, "rearrange the distribution of posts in the education department consistently with the number of Mussalmans in the Punjab". Considering our contemporary knowledge of how much tension can be caused by the question of "reservations" in public employment, this is surely a matter worth further investigation in India and in Pakistan.

There appears to have been a subtle shift after the early 1970s in the portrayals of Non-cooperation and Khilafat. Interestingly, the same movements are referred to in the 1940s' documents of a section of the Left, for example, as the "memorable days of 1919-22" and "the glorious unity of 1920-22". As a result of the later shift, Indian students of history have generally failed to explore the full extent of this powerful anti-imperialist impulse. Instead, the upsurge has largely been reduced to Chauri Chaura, the moment of the calling off of civil disobedience. In historical terms the movement has met the same fate as 1919. The living generation which could and should have

been tapped for more information has virtually vanished before our eyes. Yet contemporary events, as in Iraq, impress the 1919-22 events upon us even without the full assistance of historians. Perhaps the time has come for a history of Indian historiography so that its own twists and turns, its silences and its projects are more fully understood.

Khilafat has often been reduced, erroneously, to the matter of the retention of the Caliphate in Turkey. In fact there were multiple causes for the ferment that came to be grouped together under the rubric of "Khilafat". One major demand, repeatedly articulated, was that Indian soldiers ought not to be used to crush peoples against whom Indians had no animosity. Use of Indian troops in Mesopotamia (present day Iraq) was opposed by Gandhi who wrote in *Young India* on 29 September 1921: "For, has not the Sepoy been used to hold India under subjection, has he not been used to murder innocent people at Jallianwala Bagh, has he not been used to drive away innocent men, women and children during that dreadful night at Chandpur, has he not been used to subjugate the proud Arab of Mesopotamia, has he not been utilized to crush the Egyptian? How can any Indian having a spark of humanity in him and any Mussalman having any pride in his religion feel otherwise than as the Ali Brothers have done?"[3]

Similarly, use of these troops to crush the Turks and others was opposed by Indian nationalists. Thus civilians and soldiers were urged by them to leave government service[4]. This dimension of the anti-imperialist character of the Khilafat movement has been neglected in scholarship. Whatever the reasons for this, these omissions are gaping holes both in historiography and in the current popular understanding of Khilafat which has been happily used by the RSS and other Hindutva organisations. Khilafat has now become a major element in Hindutva's propaganda blast to urge the "illegitimacy" of pre-independence Congress-led movements.

However, one lives in the present. It is this that rules our judgement. And interestingly, despite his largely negative depiction of Khilafat and pan-Islamism, Hasan sees the contemporary international "Muslim rage" [at the cusp of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries] as being " mostly secular in spirit" (p. 449) Surely it should

not be difficult then to understand why even Muslims not belonging to the *ulema*, such as M.A. Ansari, T.A.K. Sherwani, S.A. Brelvi, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Syed Mahmud and Asaf Ali , for example, could legitimately and with greater reason have felt the same way during 1919-22.

III

How does Hasan view Muslims, their aspirations and their politics in the first half of the 20th century? At page 62 he tells us: "Most scholars and politicians readily endorsed the colonial view that the Muslims were historically separate and distinct from the other communities and, for that reason, required special concessions. So that the political language within which the Congress sought accommodation with Muslim political activists rested largely on British perceptions and political calculations. The energy derived from recognizing Muslims as a distinct religious and political unity implied that the basic terms of reference precluded any lasting solution to the communal tangle." The multiple identities of Muslims, as of Hindus, Sikhs and others, are emphasised at page 171.

On the other hand, Syed Ahmad Khan's position as the "architect of Muslim separatism", while not sought directly to be denied, is made light of as "stereotypical" (p.114), and perhaps attributable to the influence of Thomas Beck who had become Principal of Aligarh College in 1884 (pp 118-119). The common explanation regarding Sir Syed's use of the word 'qaum' to denote "nation/community" is also noted and it is suggested that when he used it in 1884 "he meant both Hindus and Muslims". Perhaps. But his early statements are not really in question. His letter dated 24 January 1888 addressed to Badruddin Tyabji is in English and speaks for itself: "I object to every Congress in any shape or form whatever – which regards India as one nation on account of its being based on wrong principles, viz. that it regards the whole of India as one nation".[5] Hasan does not appear to be quite correct in suggesting that separatism has been attributed to Sir Syed merely on account of his not conforming to majoritarian nationalism. Indian nationalism as such and majoritarian nationalism are not identical categories. If it is maintained that they *are* it may amount to suggesting that striving for secularism within the framework of Indian nationalism is futile. In fact Hasan himself

repeatedly falls back on Indian nationalism in the countering of Hindutva (see, for example, p. 76, pp-229-230, p.315).

More to the point is Hasan's plea that Sir Syed's reformist and educational contributions ought to be recognised. Maulana Azad, Indian patriot, freedom fighter and statesman, was a critic of Sir Syed's political role. He believed that Sir Syed's lead was largely responsible for the "political inertia of the Indian Muslims", saying : "His achievements in the field of education and social reform could not, however blind me to the wrong lead he gave to the Indian Muslims in the field of politics." [6] Yet Azad expressed "the highest admiration" for Syed Ahmad Khan's educational and social contribution.

Continuing with the theme of monolithic and unitary versus multiple identities of Muslims, at p. 236 Hasan seems to endorse, with reference to the 1940s, precisely the demands based on the assumption of Muslims being a distinct religious and political entity.

The articles are not free of flip-flop. For in the face of such endorsement, we have at p 219 the following: "We know how, during the 1930s and 1940s, the 'Nationalist Muslims' were sidelined to buy peace with rank communalists." At page 305 Gandhi is described as being mistaken in treating Muslims as a "distinct pan-Indian entity" and for "approaching them as a monolithic religious group" instead of turning to "regional Muslim communities". But on pages 320-321 the Congress position on a coalition with the Muslim League in the United Provinces in 1937 is described as one of "truculence". Hasan seems to miss some of the complexities here. Could the Congess have achieved a coalition with the Muslim League in UP and simultaneously with other (non-League) Muslim groups in provinces elsewhere? A more valid criticism of the Congress might have been that it appeared to have fallen between two stools. Should it have chosen, say, the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal or the Muslim League in UP? Could it have made a clear choice in favour of coalitions with non-League Muslim parties to the exclusion of the Muslim League?

IV

Hasan has been associated for some years with the theory that there were powerful and numerous people in the Congress who did not

wish Muslims to come into it or wield influence in it in a significant way. This theory has arisen largely from Hasan's work on the Muslim Mass Contact campaign launched by the Congress in 1937. The theory is more or less repeated in the present collection of articles at pages 208-211 and intermittently enters into Hasan's view of the pre-independence Congress. This reviewer has had some doubts about the correctness of the theory and the way Hasan usually presents it. We will set out in this Part (Part IV) a few issues that require consideration in the context of the Muslim Mass Contact programme.

Hasan maintains that: "People like G.B. Pant, J B Kripalani and Morarji Desai girded themselves to resist the campaign that threatened their political dominance and raised the chances of Nehru's Muslim and Communist allies dominating the Congress. Part of their strategy was to starve mass contact committees of funds, to fill them with rank communalists, and to ensure that Muslims were eased out of Congress committees." (p.211).

This point has been suggested earlier by Hasan in his paper "The Muslim Mass Contacts Campaign: Analysis of a Strategy of Political Mobilization" (hereinafter the MMC Paper).[7] In the MMC paper it was also suggested that certain printed materials "could not be distributed for lack of funds". The MMC Paper had an appreciable circulation and appears to have influenced and reinforced Hasan's own subsequent view of the pre-independence Congress.

The MMC paper is based to a large extent on the All India Congress Committee (AICC)'s own files, that is, on correspondence with or complaints made to the AICC. Often the correspondence and complaints are made so as to seek redress. How far it is possible to dwell on these materials without also going into the redress that was made from the AICC headquarters is a question that need not detain us, though it remains relevant. The reviewer will confine himself mainly to the extent to which the findings in the MMC paper are reflected in the book under review.

Pant's position was, as Hasan himself accepts in the MMC paper, that mass contact ought to be general and not limited to one community. This incidentally was also the position of the Communist-inclined B.P.L Bedi in an article in *Congress Socialist* (June 1937) published

under a title that does not quite reflect the argument: “Communalism Enters The Congress”. But the “communalism” Bedi refers to in the article is the idea of a “Muslim Mass Contact Programme” itself. Pant may have been a “right winger” in the Congress but that is surely not sufficient to discredit him in the context of the Muslim Mass Contact Programme.

J B Kripalani was the General Secretary of the Congress, based at the headquarters in Allahabad. What was his position? Did he want to ease out Muslims from the Congress and its committees? There is evidence to the contrary. The MMC paper refers to Kripalani’s irritation with the Muslim Mass Contact Committees in January 1939. But this was after a considerable period of experience with their working and opportunity for evaluation of the results. The reasons for this need examination. The question is whether there was a valid basis for Kripalani’s irritation or whether it stemmed from the reasons attributed to him by Hasan. It is significant that just a few weeks earlier, on December 24, 1938, Kripalani in a circular addressed to all Pradesh Congress Committees wrote: “I hope that the minorities, specially the Muslims, get a fair deal in Congress elections. But if for any reason you find that they are not adequately represented you will make such statutory provision in your constitution for their adequate representation as would leave no cause for complaint. In the meantime you will give effect to the suggestion in the resolution that you will create necessary conventions to ensure the adequate representation of the Muslims.”[8]

In the working of the Muslim Mass Contact Programme, complaints began to be made of a type which are not referred to by Hasan. These complaints were from Muslims who had been associated with the Congress and its struggles since the 1920s. Earlier Zakir Husain, in a letter to Gandhi in 1937, had suggested a ‘test’ or preferred attribute: “The Muslim workers of Congress should enjoy the confidence of general Muslims. In an otherwise case they would be dismissed as nominal Muslims bent upon obliterating the special characteristics, beliefs and traditions of their community.” Zakir Husain wrote: “I do appreciate the rationale and wisdom behind the Muslim Mass Contact Programme. Nonetheless I disagree sharply on its method and strategy.” [9] Some of the Muslim Mass Contact Programme Committees, to which several communists seem to have gravitated,

tended, if one applies the Zakir Husain test, to have a politically and socially sectarian approach. There is some evidence of this. For example, on August 3, 1937 Shams-ul-Huda, Secretary, Muslim Mass Contact Sub-committee of the Bara Bazar Congress Committee, Calcutta writes to the Mass Contact Department set up in the Congress headquarters to ask for literature. This department was being looked after by K M Ashraf. In his letter Huda refers to the "communalists of Khilafat" and alleges that the latter had been opposing the Muslim Mass Contact Sub-committee and had styled it "Muslim-Cutter Committee".[10] The obvious question is: Why so? Most Khilafatists at this time were in the Congress and enjoyed great respect as freedom fighters who had spent several years in prison.

It seems Zakir Husain's early apprehension had been vindicated. The Mass Contact Committees were providing berths to many persons whose roots and sympathies lay outside the Congress and outside the Congress-led movements. This is a problem which any organisation with an open membership faces in its dealings with organisations with a cadre-based secret membership. As an organisation man, Kripalani's concern can perhaps be understood.

Morarji Desai was Secretary of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee. He was circumspect and in some respects prescient. In his letter dated June 26, 1937 to K M Ashraf, Desai pleads that in Gujarat "there are no Muslim workers through whom the work can be done". Desai apprehends that: "If non-Muslims take up the work of propaganda among the Muslims, it will meet with no response and will perhaps give rise to a dangerous counter propaganda …".[11] This is well before the counter reaction to the Congress programme actually occurred. Hasan himself concedes in the MMC Paper that: "The Muslim Leaguers saw in the Congress campaign a threat to their very existence and felt that, unless they organized like Congress and won over the Muslim masses, they might find that Congress had walked away with their flock"[12].

Desai goes on in this letter to say that the elected Muslim members of the Ahmedabad municipality were working in cooperation with the Congress and efforts were being made to interest them in Congress work. He says further that some Muslim members in the legislature

were soon expected to join the Congress and it was expected that mass contact work would then be taken up.

The suggestion that the Muslim Mass Contact Programme was starved of funds and perhaps also of printed materials is difficult to follow, particularly when this is presented in a conspiracy rubric. The Congress was not an organisation flush with funds. All its committees, not the Muslim Mass Contact Committees alone, had limited resources and materials. Even these had been repeatedly ravaged by the colonial government in the Civil Disobedience movements of the 1930s and the Congress had yet to fully recover from its travails. The MMC Paper presents no analysis of Congress spending patterns. In that paper Hasan observes that "A.K. Azad's pamphlet *Congress and Mussalmans* could not be distributed for lack of funds"[13]. The MMC Paper relies in this connection on a letter dated 5 August 1937 in the AICC Papers from Abdul Bari, the Joint Honorary Secretary of the Muslim Mass Contact Committee of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee.[14]

Bari asks the Secretary, Muslim Mass Contacts Department, at the Congress Central office, then in Allahabad, to "supply us in pamphlet form the very instructive and inspiring articles written in Urdu by Maulana Azad on 'Congress and Mussalmans'". Bari concludes: "Please let me know by return of post if you can comply with our request for a free supply of say one to two thousand copies in pamphlet form of the said article." The unexceptionable reply is dated five days later. The copy in the source does not bear a signature. But it was presumably by K M Ashraf himself as it is from a file containing his correspondence and it is Ashraf who was then looking after this work at the AICC office. Bari is informed in reply: "I am afraid we could not undertake to supply you any of our publications in such large numbers. The particular articles of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad you refer to have been widely published in the newspapers and I would personally like to have a regular brochure by the Maulana for our purposes. This however might take time. I am sending you five copies each of the various publications we have so far issued."

From materials of this type it does not seem possible to arrive at the drastic conclusions to which Hasan comes. The suggestion that the Muslim Mass Contact Programme was deliberately starved of funds is

difficult to follow also because Hasan is particularly well aware of how and with what difficulties some of those associated with the Congress had helped keep Jamia Millia Islamia going.

Certain facts about the Muslim Mass Contact Programme and subsequent events need further attention in understanding what happened.

First, the Mass Contact programme suffered from rivalry between the Muslims associated with the pre-independence CPI and the ordinary Congress Muslim.

Second, many of the former category of Muslims, eg K M Ashraf, Mian Iftikharuddin and Sajjad Zaheer, rose within a short time to prominent or key positions within the Congress. It would be unnatural if this were not to be a cause of resentment among others – Hindu, Muslim or whatever – within the Congress who had suffered and sacrificed for many years in the Congress-led struggles. This had to do not with such persons being Muslims but with some of them being seen, fairly or otherwise, as climbers who moreover seemed also to have a chip on their shoulder on account of their claims to intellectualism. Generally the socialists within the Congress were more sensitive than the "communist Congressmen" were to the matter of how to conduct themselves within the Congress towards those who had themselves suffered a great deal in the anti-imperial struggle. Many of those who resented the "communist Congressmen" at this time were as loyal to Nehru as anyone else in the Congress. In fact it was this loyalty that often enhanced the resentment because they felt that Nehru was being taken for a ride by people whose commitment was not to the Congress. (The late Jagan Prasad Rawat, a prominent 'Rafian'—as followers of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai were known in UP --, had in this context made some sardonic comments to this reviewer in May 1980).

An early warning against the quick rise in the 1940s of Iftikharuddin as President of the Punjab PCC, for example, was given by the Socialist Puran Chand Azad.[15] Iftikharuddin later left to join the Muslim League. These trajectories and events are not sufficiently explained by simply defining a group consisting of "Muslims", "Communists", "socialists" and holding Congressmen outside these categories as being responsible for things not going according to a

real or imaginary plan that may be more in accord with certain current academic preferences. The Muslims were no monolith, as Hasan himself argues in the book under review (p. 305). The pre-independence "Communists" cannot without serious qualification be described as "allies" of Jawaharlal Nehru, as Hasan seeks to describe them. They certainly basked for a while in the warmth which Nehru offered many of them. But it is ultimately Gandhi, Maulana Azad and Nehru who stood together in support of non-denominational Indian nationhood and in enabling, establishing and supporting the possibility of a composite and secular India.

Finally, it is often overlooked that the British with their considerable resources also appear to have lost no opportunity to harass or act against mass contact activists. Members of the Muslim Mass Contact Committees would often have to make public speeches in the course of their work. This meant explaining why Muslims should prefer the Congress to other political groups. But explaining this meant explaining issues which could entail prosecution for sedition. For example, such action was threatened in July 1937 against Abdul Wahab, Member of the Muslim Mass Contact Committee, Berar and notices actually served.

V

What are the conceptions of secularism, liberalism, progressivism and nation, for an academician like Hasan?

He writes at page 217: "To a region that has experienced the trauma of partition the life of (Maulana) Azad shows how during the freedom struggle there were Muslims who worked for the highest secular ideals." On the same page he quotes Francis Robinson: "To a region increasingly beset by communalism the life of (M.A.) Ansari shows how during the freedom movement there were Muslims who worked for the highest secular ideals."

Hasan reminds us at page 261 that "we must not ignore the role of those Muslims who championed secular nationalism and rejected Jinnah's Pakistan demand." At page 244 he agrees that the " activism of the Jamiyat al-ulama, the Momin Conference, the Khudai Khidmatgar and the Shia Political Conference enriched the secular content of the nationalist movement."

These positions on Ansari, Azad and other individual Muslims and groups reflect, in the opinion of this reviewer, the correct understanding of secularism. Properly speaking, such positions ought to bring Hasan into conflict with the approach often reflected in academic writings in the last three decades in which secularism is equated reductionistically with mere non-religiosity and is even denuded of a humanistic and composite culture element. In the Anglocentric definition one may be entirely sectarian but one is secular if one is non-religious. Thus Hitler and the Nazi movement may, in the Anglocentric definition, be depicted as secular in the sense that they were not focused on religious devotion. The reduction of secularism to bare non-religiosity was interrogated in India where secularism was given its non-reductionist meaning which emphasised the humanist origin of secularism. In the non-reductionist meaning a positive value was therefore placed on cultural compositeness and a negative value on the perspective which judged good or bad from the supposed point of view of one religious community alone. The Indian secular compact required the non-religiosity of the state to be constructed on the humanism of society, whether or not religious. The norms applied to the state were however legitimately extended to candidates for political office in their campaigns which were required to be free from hate and from exploitation of religion for electoral purposes. A further requirement against the spreading of hate was also imposed by criminal law on citizens at large. These features together may be described as the Gandhi-Nehru consensus on which Indian secularism has been conceptually based. Hasan agrees that it is what the leaders of the Indian freedom movement, including Gandhi and Nehru, described as the composite culture that “formed the bedrock of secular nationalism, the essential feature of the Indian Constitution, and the basis of the secular Republic”.(p 30, p.94, and p.230) As Hasan observes, the focus in Indian secularism was on ensuring “that its essence – the impartiality and neutrality of the state in its relations with the religious institutions and practices of different communities – was not lost on the people.” (p.273).

Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, freedom fighter and one-time Congress Acting President who was later an active Muslim League participant in the Pakistan movement is quoted by Hasan as having said that the two-nation theory “proved positively injurious to the Muslims of India, and on a long-term basis, for Muslims everywhere”. (p. 246).

Hasan pertinently wants to know why those like Khaliquzzaman, who agitated for Pakistan did not give "serious thought to the fate of Muslims who were going to be left in India"

Hasan notices that large sections of Muslims repudiated the two-nation idea. As he puts it at pages 243-244, it "made no sense to the rank and file of Punjab's Unionist Party, Bengal's Krishak Praja Party, or the dominant Muslim party in Sind. It was, moreover, vigorously opposed by a number of Muslim groups and organizations. They spurned religious slogans, rebuffed Jinnah's initiatives, and emphasized that India's Muslims had deep roots in Indian society and were natural inhabitants of an Indian world."

In fact at one point Hasan goes still further, saying at page 249: "Indeed, most Muslims neither understood nor approved of Pakistan, except as a remote place where they will go, as on a pilgrimage." At page 291 we have the following: "Basically, the movement for Pakistan rested on ill-founded assumptions. Yet, the Pakistan movement was, in the 1940s, and not earlier, a massive, popular movement for separation." And at page 201 he asks: "One wonders why the Congress did not press for a referendum on the Pakistan issue? Had they done so, the Muslims may well have voted against Partition. Who knows?"

Hasan perhaps knows why there was no referendum. For at p.237 he writes, in the context of the League's Direct Action Day of August 16, 1946: "What remains unexplained is how this decision, besides leading to the Great Calcutta killing, sounded the death-knell of a united India. If the resignation of the Congress ministries allowed Jinnah to jump the queue and gain proximity to the colonial government , direct action confirmed his capacity to call the shots and create, with the aid of his allies in Bengal particularly, the conditions for civil strife on a continental scale."

Humayun Kabir, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan are seen as having made "powerful expositions and defence of the composite culture" in the 1940s (p.269 and p.271).

Yet partition is largely seen by Hasan as the result of "a triangular game plan worked out by the British, the Congress, and the League." (p.246 and p.249). Such a "triangular game" formulation could easily be made by the RSS or any other Hindutva organisation. In fact these quarters often advance such formulations.

Not adequately considered in the triangular frame is the place of the Hindu Mahasabha, which, speaking through V.D. Savarkar, had propounded the two-nation theory since the late thirties. And on August 15, 1943 Savarkar had expressly stated**: "I have no quarrel with Mr Jinnah's two-nation theory. We Hindus are a nation by ourselves and it is a historical fact that Hindus and Muslims are two nations."** [16] Later Hasan seeks to introduce some element of a corrective to his political geometry and at pp 476-477 the need to have considered the Hindu Mahasabha as an independent player appears to get some recognition. However, there are three chief reasons why the polygonal "game" is sometimes reduced in current scholarship to a triangular one. First, the League vs Congress or *vice versa* was undoubtedly the preferred colonial way of looking at it and this paradigm continued to influence scholarship emerging especially in the latter part of the 20th century from England and other associated centres. Second, apart from the colonial view, it suited certain historiographical players erroneously to collapse the Congress (or interchangeably its so-called "right-wing") with the Mahasabha; in furtherance of this category mistake, the Congress resistance to the Mahasabha was often ignored. The consequences of this colonial approach reflected in Anglocentric scholarship were serious at all times but became grotesque in respect of the period after 1937 when effective control over the Mahasabha had passed from Madan Mohan Malaviya to V.D. Savarkar. Third, the line adopted by the pre-independence Communist Party of India (CPI) in the nineteen-forties was not directly considered in the triangularly-confined historiography. This party had itself claimed to have been a major factor in India and P C Joshi in his correspondence with Gandhi in the 1940s had made some large claims about its following and influence on the peasantry. If its claim to be a major force is taken as being correct and at its face value, it follows that the historical responsibility of this major force for the events leading eventually to partition ought to be examined. Yet these are frequently ignored largely in the interests of "tactical historiography". In the

process there is also collateral damage as the many voices on the Left that were questioning the official line of the pre-independence CPI also tend to get silenced. The laws of history, however, must apply to all, and in being so applied, would add to the credibility of the historical narrative. This matter is in a way touched upon in Hasan's interview in Scotland with V.G. Kiernan (pp 150-153). Kiernan, a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, was based in Lahore and was in the subcontinent from 1938 to 1946. Hasan reports Kiernan's words: "The Hindus and Muslims were not separate 'nations'. Certainly not in Punjab where the cross-communal networks were strong"; and further: "My comrades in the Communist Party had no idea what the partition movement was all about. They erred in their judgement then and later, though some amongst them realized their mistakes later on. P.C. Joshi was more open to criticism. B.T.Randive (sic) was dogmatic" (p. 152). Actually Ranadive had made a strong self-critique of the party position on this matter at the Second Congress of the CPI held in Calcutta in February-March 1948.

Oddly enough the vital historical question, mentioned above, that Hasan correctly directs at persons like Choudhry Khaliquzzaman --- 'what of Muslims who were going to be left behind?' --- was seldom seriously considered by the supposedly more intellectual theoreticians of the pre-independence CPI whose documents hardly fail to talk down to others. Indeed these documents talk down even to other Left traditions.

It is, however, a tribute to the pre-independence Congress that in spite of Hasan's "triangular game" formulation on partition referred to earlier, his expectations on the curbing of partition violence are primarily and perhaps only from Gandhi and the Congress (p.234).

Some thought deserves to be bestowed also on minorities "left behind" in what became Pakistan, both West and East, particularly as national boundaries are looked upon increasingly as "shadow lines" (page 264). As one would expect, Hasan does speak up for Pakistan's "dwindling minorities" (p.415). This is consistent with the voice he raises on behalf of the Kashmiri Pandits who lost their homes as a result of the crisis in the on-going conflict in Jammu & Kashmir (p. 78).

Sardar Patel is seen by Hasan as having "acted from the lofty heights of majoritarianism" (p 216). Yet Hasan fairly admits, quoting portions of Patel's speech in the Constituent Assembly (pp.267-8), that he did have a broad view of nationality.

Coming to contemporary times, Hasan pointedly questions the BJP's discourse in which secularism "was regarded as a euphemism for the policy of Muslim appeasement." (p.205). A Hindutva-oriented commentator is deservedly rebuked at page 209 for comparing Maulana Azad, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai with the BJP's Naqvi and the now deceased Sikandar Bakht. Such anserine comparisons are sometimes unthinkingly made and Hasan's indignation is justified. Standing with a freedom movement and suffering for it can hardly be compared with being member of a political party, ruling or yearning to rule in an independent country and to sharing the loaves and fishes of office.

VI

Urdu is seen by Hasan as a victim of Hindi chauvinism (p. 156). That it probably is. But a recognition is also required that both Urdu and the movement in support of Hindustani, based on a Hindi-Urdu mix or synthesis, were victims, even if unjustly, of the movement for the establishment of Pakistan.

Some tough words are directed by Hasan at Nehru and the "wise men" around him for the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in August 1953 (p.77). The "wise men" included Maulana Azad and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. Hasan's point is perhaps well taken to the extent that the situation was mishandled. But there is no acknowledgement of the Sheikh's volatile nature, reluctance to hold fast to the July 1952 agreement with Nehru and propensity to play up to various quarters evincing interest in Kashmir at the time. The Anglo-American powers were apparently keen on destroying the Abdullah-Nehru agreement of July 1952 as they feared that, given the Sheikh's popularity, it would have implications for the Pakistan-held part of Jammu & Kashmir. The Anglo-American Press had worked itself up into a frenzy. There is material to indicate that in the breaking of the Delhi Agreement of July 1952 culpability does not rest primarily with Nehru. The Sheikh himself bears some responsibility. His motivations

were complex. He had, for one thing, been provoked by the activities of forces represented by Syama Prasad Mookerjee. At the same time he also took advantage of these activities. By the time Mookerjee himself changed tack and came round to supporting the Delhi agreement (which Mookerjee had earlier opposed), it may have been too late.[17] The Americans had also got into the act and with time appeared to have offered some direct and indirect assurances to the Sheikh. Adlai Stevenson visited the valley in April - May 1953 and his agenda, as appearing from his statements, was clearly not in sympathy with the Delhi Agreement.[18] It has also been argued that in the 1952 –53 period the Sheikh took advantage of only those aspects of the Delhi Agreement which strengthened his own position with respect to the Sadar-i-Riyasat.

VII Conclusion

There are minor errors some of which carry over from Hasan's earlier work. Khurshed Lal was chairman of the Dehradun municipal board, not Khushi Lal as mentioned (page 211). At p.252 it is said that north Bihar "had a common frontier with East Pakistan". The reviewer was inclined to disbelieve this statement until he examined atlases of the period. At places in West Bengal like Jalpaiguri and Malda the border with East Bengal ran quite close to Bihar. It is indeed possible that there were certain enclaves in West Bengal that may have more or less touched the Bihar border. However the reviewer was not able to find any cartographic material in support of this.

The essays are noteworthy for an increasingly critical view of pre-independence Muslim sectarianism, a view not prominently reflected in Hasan's earlier work. This is welcome because such a critique enhances rather than diminishes one's capacity to counter Hindutva.

Thus at page 321 Hasan writes: "It was right to ... expose the League's predominantly feudal character, its links with government and with the conservative social classes".

The League's Direct Action call for 16 August 1946 leading to the Calcutta killings is criticised, if mildly, at page 237 as "ill-advised".

But at page 118 Hasan is forthright : "The Pakistan movement, despite what historians ranging from I.H. Qureshi to Akbar Ahmad

might say, polarized Indian society along religious lines for the first time in its history and destroyed, once and for all, the unity and continuity of a rich and vibrant Indo-Muslim civilization."

In the struggle against Hindutva we often need to concern ourselves with the past especially because historical propaganda is a major element in Hindutva's political technique. Both in order effectively to counter this and also in the context of increased possibilities for South Asian dialogue the focus in India and Pakistan needs increasingly to shift to the voices of the pre-independence non-League Muslims. But these need to be heard for what they were without making an attempt to fit them into a framework set by Anglocentricism, the Muslim League and the pre-independence CPI. Critiquing the pre-independence Congress is one thing; rejecting its foundational principles does not beyond a point seem consistent with countering Hindutva. A wider recognition of this may necessitate a significant shift from the kind of scholarship that has been predominant especially in the last quarter century or so. Hasan's writings have evolved, albeit randomly, over the years and will help if they contribute to the opening up of this urgent theme.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

* Anglocentricism is used here to depict tendencies and writings representing British colonial or imperial interests and points of view whether contemporaneously or currently and regardless of whether these are represented by British or by other writers.

[1] Rajendra Prasad, *At The Feet Of Mahatma Gandhi*, Hind Kitabs, Bombay, 1955, p.139. For Syed Mahmud's comments see his article "Looking Back" in "1921 Movement: Reminiscences" published by the Publications Division, Government of India 1971, p.150. This publication was brought out to mark the 50th anniversary of the non-cooperation movement.

[2] *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, (CWMG), Publications Division, Government of India, Vol 24, New Delhi, 1967, p138; see also p. 188

[3] *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, (CWMG), Publications Division, Government of India, Vol 21, New Delhi,1966, pp 221-222 .

[4] CWMG, Vol 21, Ibid., pp 274-277.

[5] Reproduced in A.G. Noorani's book, *Badruddin Tyabji*, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1969, pp 175-176.

[6] *Speeches of Maulana Azad*, Publications Division, Government of India, Delhi, 1956 pp 75-76.

[7] Reproduced in Mushirul Hasan (ed), *India's Partition: Process, Strategy And Mobilization*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993 pp 133-159. See in particular pages 154 and 156.

[8] Nehru Memorial Museum and Library,(NMML), New Delhi, AICC Papers File No P-1/ 138, p.13.

[9] See Ziaul Hasan Faruqi, *Zakir Hussain: Quest For Truth*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1999, p. 193.

[10] NMML, New Delhi, AICC Papers, File Number 48/1937, p.73. Why were the Khilafatists being referred to as "communalists" by a vital functionary—the secretary—of a Muslim Mass Contact Committee set up by the Congress? Who was this functionary and what was his assurance that in a letter addressed to the

Mass Contact Department in the Congress headquarters he could get away by referring to Khilafatists, without due qualification, as "communalists"? We get a clue from another letter dated October 16, 1937 in a connected file in which Huda addresses K M Ashraf as "Comrade Ashraf" and signs off "with fraternal greetings", a common mode of address and signing off among the Communist Left. The unstated ideological link that seemingly united the writer and the addressee in a common linguistic understanding tended to overlook and exclude also the fact of many stalwarts of the communist movement itself who had participated in the great Indian movements of the 1920s. For the letter dated October 16, 1937 from Shams ul Huda to K M Ashraf see File No 49/1937, p.17.

[11] NMML, AICC Papers, File No 49/1937 pp 129-131.

[12] Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition : Process, Strategy And Mobilization*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, pp 147-8

[13] Hasan (ed.), Ibid., p. 155n

[14] NMML, AICC Papers, File No 11/1937, p. 65

[15] See K.L. Johar, *Unsung Torchbearers: Punjab Congress Socialists in Freedom Struggle*, Harman Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991, p. 262

[16] **Indian Annual Register, 1943, Vol II, P.10**

[17] See Balraj Puri, "When Nehru-Abdullah-Mukerjee Agreed on J&K Formula", *Janata*, Mumbai, (Vol. 58, No 27) July 27, 2003. (Puri appears to spell Mookerjee with greater phonetic accuracy though with historical inaccuracy).The Praja Parishad movement was started, as Puri points out, on November 17, 1952 "precisely against the July agreement (of 1952)". It was supported by the Jana Sangh. Later, according to Puri , S. P. Mookerjee wrote to Nehru on February 17, 1953, setting out conditions for withdrawal of the Praja Parishad agitation. One of these conditions was that "implementation of July agreement … will be made at the next session of Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly". Puri writes: "I am not aware of the precise channels through which information reached Mukerjee that Abdullah had started wavering on the issue of accession and wanted an excuse to wriggle out of his commitment on Delhi agreement; which the Parishad agitation might provide. But as a patriot he did an about turn to avert a big tragedy that followed." In the resolution of the Kashmir crisis, which needed statesmen and not just patriots, the need for the Delhi Pact was obvious to Nehru but not until much later to Mookerjee. Puri notes that after Mookerjee's death (in June the same year), the Jana Sangh on instructions from the RSS headquarters in Nagpur did not stick to Mookerjee's commitments. For a general background of events in 1952-53 see also Chapter 9 of Puri's *Jammu & Kashmir: Triumph And Tragedy of Indian Federalisation*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1981. In the book Puri argues at page 115 that although Mookerjee climbed down, Nehru did not give him any face-saving device.

[18] See Ghulam Mohammad Mir Rajpori and Manohar Nath Kaul, *Conspiracy in Kashmir*, Social & Political Group, Amirakadal, Srinagar, 1954, pages 56-58. For a more readily accessible, though somewhat speculative, discussion of Stevenson's visit and the change in the Sheikh's attitude, see an old news report of August 19, 1953 reprinted fifty years later in *The Hindu*, Chennai, "This Day That Age", August 19, 2003.