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Historical roots of anti-blasphemy violence in Pakistan: Formation of self, community and the state

In the old city of Lahore, at the Miani Sahib graveyard—one of the oldest in the region—lies a shrine adorned in white marble and dressed in embroidered sheets and flower petals. Every year, thousands of devotees visit the shrine to pay their respects to the person buried there. The archway leading to the shrine reads: ‘The passionate lover of the Prophet, Ghazi Ilmuddin Shaheed’. It is the final resting place of the highly revered Ghazi Ilmuddin Shaheed, successful warrior and martyr. Ilmuddin was a 19-year-old Muslim man who was executed by the British government in 1929 for killing a Hindu publisher, Mahashe Rajpal, who had published an allegedly derogatory book about the Prophet Muhammad (Khan 2011: 60). The book, titled *Rangila Rasul (Colourful Prophet)*, was published in 1924, leading to widespread protests by Muslims for its portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad’s ‘sexual dalliance’ (Stephens 2014: 45). In 1927, after Rajpal had been tried for hate speech—after complaints by Muslims—and acquitted by the British courts, as many as 70,000 Muslims gathered in Delhi to protest the acquittal (Nair 2013: 323), raising slogans of ‘death for defamation of the Prophet’, which eventually led to the killing of Rajpal by Ilmuddin. After his trial and then execution by the British courts, Ilmuddin was turned into a Muslim hero, ‘who had the courage to avenge the disrespect for [the] Prophet Muhammad’ by meting out ‘the punishment which the British colonial government could not award’ (Rumi 2018: 323). His act of defending the

honour of the Prophet by killing Rajpal was lauded by prominent religious leaders of the time and the founding fathers of Pakistan (Rumi 2018). In present-day Pakistan, Ilmuddin is revered as a saint and a national hero; the anniversary of his death attracts enormous crowds of devotees, is celebrated in textbooks and popular cinema, and there are government buildings named after him (Rumi 2018: 322–23).

In an apparent act of history repeating itself, Mumtaz Qadri—the young man who killed the Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, on allegations of blasphemy in 2011—was hailed as the ‘Ilmuddin of our time’ by his supporters. Much like Ilmuddin, Qadri also earned a shrine and hordes of devotees after his execution by the state for murder in 2016. His funeral was also attended by masses and his life and personality have since been similarly valorised in a multitude of ways. Farhat Haq, in her recent (2019) book on blasphemy politics in Pakistan, calls the entanglement of Ilmuddin’s and Qadri’s stories ‘a tale of two saints’. The similarity between the two tales of veneration suggests that anti-blasphemy violence in present-day Pakistan has deeper historical roots than the introduction of the current anti-blasphemy legislation by General Zia-ul-Haq—the event from which most scholars trace the origins of anti-blasphemy violence (see, for example, Dobras 2009; Hayee 2012; Hoffman 2014; Saiya 2016; Siddique and Hayat 2008). However, as Haq (2019: 17) rightfully reminds us, there are some significant contextual differences between the acts of the two assassin-saints: Ilmuddin killed a Hindu publisher who had deliberately mocked the Prophet Muhammad amid the rising insecurities of Muslim-minority colonial India; Qadri killed a Muslim politician who had publicly proclaimed his faith and his love for the Prophet while criticising the procedural inadequacies of the anti-blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority Pakistan.¹ These differences suggest that, while the symbolic significance of love for the Prophet and the act of protecting his honour remain central to both stories, the perception of what constitutes an attack on the Prophet and Islam has evolved. This chapter traces the continuities and discontinuities in the individual and collective consciousness underlying the veneration of the two saints,

1 Farhat Haq, in her remarkable work on the political history of Pakistan’s blasphemy problem, provides a detailed account of political rivalries, parliamentary debates and historical developments that got us to this point, where ‘the so-called blasphemy laws’ have become sacralised to an extent that ‘criticising them could make one a target for murder’ (2019: 17). I leave most of these details out and instead focus on the development of individual and collective consciousness concerning identity. I encourage readers to consult Haq’s book for further historical and political context of the current anti-blasphemy legislation in Pakistan.

Ilmuddin and Qadri, almost a century apart. I demonstrate how anti-blasphemy attitudes and violence in contemporary Pakistan—aggravated and intensified since Ilmuddin’s case—have evolved over time.

Anti-blasphemy sentiments in contemporary Pakistan must be understood within the context of the wider religious and political sensibilities of Pakistani Muslims—specifically, their anxieties concerning individual, communal and national identities. These anxieties have taken shape through the wider processes of modernisation, colonisation, nationalism and neocolonialism over the past two centuries. I focus on four key historical developments that I believe are crucial to understanding anti-blasphemy attitudes in contemporary Pakistan: 1) the development of a morally anxious modern Muslim self under the influence of colonial-era reform movements on the Subcontinent; 2) apprehensions related to the self-contradictory religious and national identity harboured by the Pakistan Movement; 3) anxieties about difference and dissent inculcated by state policies to achieve a uniform and homogeneous national identity after the creation of Pakistan; and 4) widespread concerns about Pakistan’s and Islam’s place and reputation in the neocolonial world order, particularly in the context of 9/11 and the subsequent rise of Islamophobia. While Ilmuddin’s case was influenced by the first point—the politicisation of modern individual and collective Muslim identity under colonial rule—the subsequent developments are crucial to understanding the making of Qadri a century later. The following discussion will demonstrate how these interlinked processes bear on the contemporary lives of Pakistani Muslims at individual, communal and national levels and shape the deep-rooted understandings of blasphemy and its punishment.

Modernity, reform movements and transformation of the self

Modernity—an era commonly understood to have started in seventeenth-century Europe—is seen by anthropologists, sociologists and critical theorists as comprising specific social processes, attitudes, discourses and economic conditions. Some of the widely recognised markers of modernity include industrialisation, the rise of capitalism and the market economy and the development of nation-states (Berman 2010: 16–30; Giddens 1991: 6). The underlying features of modern institutions include standardisation, centralisation and all-encompassing control of human

life, on the one hand, and individualism, liberation, emphasis on free will and loss of certainty on the other (see, for example, Bauman 1990, 2000; Giddens 1991). Similarly, modernity has been characterised by both emancipation from religion and religious revival (Hervieu-Léger 1990; Lambert 1999). While these characteristics of modernity are considered to be universal, as is the transition to modernity itself, the specificity of modernity to different local contexts—multiple modernities—has also been acknowledged (Delanty 2007; Eisenstadt 2000).

British colonisation of the Subcontinent in the eighteenth century is largely seen as the trigger for the onset of modernity in South Asia. However, some of the changes in the Subcontinent's political sphere *prior* to the arrival of the British were also headed in the general direction of modernity—for example, consolidation of the Mughal Empire under the rule of the last Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), whose policies tended towards standardisation of laws and governance (Malik 2008: 189–95). There were also general reformist tendencies influenced by Muslim scholars such as Sirhindi, who aimed to revive Islamic practices in society (Malik 2008: 179–80).

Nevertheless, despite the unifying efforts of the Mughal emperors and the reformist tendencies of some Muslim scholars, the internal diversity of Muslim society prevented centralisation from being fully implemented (Malik 2008: 209). Under Mughal rule, Indian Muslims socially identified themselves according to their lineage and regional ties rather than their 'Muslim' identity. In the Mughal courts, the Muslim elite identified themselves as Persians or Turks; among the general populace, family history (kinship ties), language, locality and ethnicity were sources of identification and even divisions (Robinson 1998: 271–72). In most instances, the lower castes of Hindus and Muslims identified more closely with each other due to shared exigencies of their everyday lives (Malik 2008: 172).² While religion had its role in the empire and in the lives of the elite Muslim scholars, it was not the primary basis of categorisation in society. In fact, religion as such did not exist as a category separate from other spheres of life.

2 The presence of caste among South Asian Muslims was documented from as early as the thirteenth century (Malik 2008: 157). I will discuss caste in the context of purity, hierarchy, transgressions and blasphemy accusations in Chapter 3.

The colonisation of the Subcontinent by the British completely transformed the sociopolitical institutions and life-worlds of the Indian population. Several historians have attributed the reification of Muslim identity—as well as the religious identities of other South Asian communities—to circumstances created by British colonial policies aimed at modernising and secularising the Subcontinent (see, for example, Metcalf 1982; Zaman 2002). The British brought Western conceptions of modernity with categorisations such as religious/secular and private/public at the heart of their policies. Thus, the forced categorisation of political, legal, religious and cultural as distinct from each other was essentially a modern phenomenon with an imperialist aim to govern and control colonial subjects (Zaman 1999: 297). On the one hand, the colonial rulers made religion the prime identifier of their subjects, differentiating between Hindus, Muslims and other religious communities at the official level. On the other hand, they aimed to push the religious aspects of people's lives out of the public sphere (van der Veer 2002: 179). These apparently contradictory moves were driven by the political project of secularisation—a normative concept rooted in British religious history.³ The consequence was the simultaneous reification of religious identity and forced elimination of religion from public life. It was only a matter of time before the reified religious identities would return to the public sphere with a renewed and intensified political spirit.

British policies of educational and legal reform are of particular relevance to my argument. Under Mughal rule, the *madrasahs* (educational institutes) were spaces of comprehensive learning where religious education was integrated with training in law, mathematics, philosophy and many other subjects. These *madrasahs* produced elite religious scholars, *muftis*, who were incorporated into the courts of the empire as official interpreters of Islamic law. Colonial policies altered this arrangement significantly; while the educational reforms eliminated religious

3 It must be noted that the political project of 'secularisation', as Talal Asad (2003) has argued in his book *Formations of the Secular*, is a historically specific development. Asad problematised the simplistic understanding of secularism as separation of religion and politics and assumptions about its neutrality or opposition to religion. He also questioned the uniformity and singularity of the notion of secularism. He instead demonstrated that *secularisms* as practised in modern Western states today are products of specific historical developments within Christianity and Western philosophy. The secularism that the British were trying to implement was also a particular political system with its roots in British religious history. It was not based on the separation of the church and the state; rather, the two were intricately linked. In fact, the Church of England established several dioceses in India during colonial rule. Peter van der Veer's (2001, 2002) work also shows how the specific religious agenda of the British was pushed in the guise of secularity and neutrality towards religion.

education from school curriculums,⁴ the legal reforms removed *muftis* from the courts (Zaman 1999, 2002). Colonial governance effectively reduced the role and influence of traditional Muslim scholars to private religious education and Muslim personal law—matters of marriage, divorce, children and inheritance.⁵ The British policies thus challenged the authority of Muslim scholars and left them feeling alienated from the political and administrative spheres.

The Muslim scholars, feeling disenfranchised and threatened, then took it on themselves to preserve Muslim culture and religion, partly to carve out a new space for themselves in the changing society. They emerged as the custodians of a newly developed concept of a private *religious sphere* and its role in public life. After losing their place in the religious and administrative setup, the religious scholars left the big cities and moved to smaller towns and villages, where they started their efforts for the revival of Islam (Metcalfe 1982: 85). They attributed the decline of Muslim political power to Muslims' failure to adhere to *true Islam*. Their campaigns aimed to:

restore the perceived pristine glory of Islam, both politically and religiously, by way of cleansing its prevalent modes of practices and sets of beliefs from what were felt to be later-day accretions [*bid'at*]. (Qasmi 2011: 32)

The past glory of Islam—the golden era—was imagined as a 'political and social utopia' that the reformists aspired to re-create (Malik 2008: 200).

Reform movements are nothing new in the history of Muslim societies as, 'from the beginning of the Islamic era, Muslim societies have experienced periods of renewal' (Robinson 2008: 259). In fact, as already noted, there were reform movements during the Mughal era as well. However, the conditions created by British colonisation—imposed modernisation and secularisation—of the Indian Subcontinent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were unique and gave rise to a host of reform movements not only among Muslims, but also among Hindus and

4 Despite claims of secularisation of the education system, much of the British education system was 'in the hands of Christian missionaries', whose explicit aim was to convert the local population to Christianity rather than provide religiously neutral education (van der Veer 2001: 98).

5 In modernising the law, the British introduced distinctly secular and personal laws. The latter were community-specific laws—based on religious affiliations—that would regulate personal matters such as marriage, divorce, children and inheritance.

other religious communities (van der Veer 2001: 110).⁶ It was within this context that the reform movements that arose among South Asian Muslims under colonial rule were often defined by their ‘opposition to Western cultural and political hegemony’ (Robinson 2008: 261). The aims of these movements can therefore be described as both religious revival *and* anticolonial resistance.

Despite their anticolonial spirit, these movements employed uniquely modern ways of thinking and incorporated Western knowledge and technologies where appropriate (Robinson 2008). Their use of print media, for example, helped religious scholars reach the masses. They even published in vernacular languages and used simplified writing styles to address ordinary people as opposed to their specialised religious writings for traditional audiences within the scholarly community. Previously, ‘the referential works of the scholars of the past, Quranic commentaries and Hadith collection could not be mass-produced and widely disseminated’ (Qasmi 2011: 31). The print medium and the use of simplified language made the message of religious scholars accessible to a much wider audience.

There were various reform movements that began at different points in the modern history of the Subcontinent, each with slightly different goals and motivations. They all used—deliberately or otherwise—modern technologies and tools of thinking to varying degrees. Historians have described the Islamic reform movements variously—as *Islamic modernism*, adapting Islam according to modern times; *Islamic fundamentalism*, rejecting modern/Western knowledge and technologies and returning to the perceived fundamental elements of Islam; and many variations in between (see, for example, Qasmi 2011: 240; Robinson 2008: 260). These variations are best seen as a spectrum, with different configurations of modernity and what was thought to be tradition at their heart. Regardless of which configuration was adopted, all of these movements were essentially modern in their nature since they took religion as a distinct, reified category and aimed to rationalise it in the modern world. Some of the common characteristics that pervade these reform movements include: rejection of past authority, the rise of independent reasoning, an emphasis on human will and individual responsibility, and rationalisation

6 The strengthening of Hindu identity and the Muslim reform movements went hand in hand and were both the cause and the effect of each other (in a dialectic relationship).

of religious knowledge (Metcalf 1982: 12; Robinson 2008: 261). Francis Robinson (2008: 279–80) describes these processes in South Asian Islamic reform movements:

Islamic reform destroyed much of the authority of the past, making possible a more creative engagement with the present. It emphasised human will, preparing the way for the modern understanding of undiluted human instrumentality in the world. It set off transformations of the self that we associate with modernity, the emergence of an internal landscape and the affirmation of the ordinary things of life. It helped set off a rationalisation and reification of Islam, which, amongst other things, prepared Muslims to engage with a broad-based political identity and conceive of their faith as an entity, even a system. And finally, it set going processes that offered both a disenchanted world and one in which paradoxically the transcendent was reasserted, indeed, the world itself was re-enchanted.

The changes of the self, which Robinson calls *transformations of the self*, are of crucial significance to my argument in this book. There was a notable shift towards personal and individual moral reform as the religious scholars turned to the masses to regain their influence in society. Since they had the private religious sphere—separate from the secular public sphere—available to them, the religious scholars directed their focus to reforming the private moral lives of individuals. They aimed to inculcate a renewed sense of piety and virtue among individuals through various methods of proselytising. They preached to ordinary people on the higher standards of faith and morality based on the reformed religious ideals. The individual moral life was thus subjected to much greater scrutiny and regulation. Even the *fatwas* (religious verdicts) of that time demonstrated a move away from matters of governance to matters of individual morality and piety (Qasmi 2011: 38).

Through their preaching and publications, the religious scholars disseminated ideals of *authentic* Islam widely among ordinary Muslims. This led to an enhanced burden of responsibility falling on the shoulders of individuals as:

it was the individual human conscience, working with this knowledge, which now had sole responsibility to ensure rightly guided behaviour. Thus, reformed Islam was a willed faith, a 'protestant' faith, a faith of conscience and conviction. (Robinson 2008: 269)

Preoccupied with ‘the individual and its subjectivity’, the reformist tendencies are thus:

a process of self-making, which may include the reinterpretation of religious traditions, and in which the self seeks its completion in particular social and political acts that express its authenticity. (Verkaaik 2004: 45)

The modern Muslim self was, therefore, defined by an increased focus on individuality and authenticity (Roy 1994). The enhanced focus on human will and individual responsibility, along with the increased expectations of adherence to Islam to be a proper Muslim, gave rise to newer technologies of the self in which the self was constructed primarily as a sinner in need of purification. This transformation also led to a greater emphasis on the bodily practices involved in the purification of the self. Technologies of the self, as defined by Foucault (1988: 18),⁷ are techniques:

which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.

The modern reformist movements’ emphasis on individual piety and moral goodness prompted an inward turn and a reflective approach to being a Muslim, such that ‘Muslims had to ask themselves regularly if they had done all in their power to submit to God and to carry out His will in the world’ (Robinson 2008: 272). They had to constantly measure themselves against the perfection and purity they were supposed to achieve. This inward turn was nothing new as there have been ascetic and reflective tendencies within Muslim societies throughout history. What was new, however, was the essentialising of the self as lacking and in need of correction. Hence:

7 Foucault explained his concept of technologies of the self in a 1982 lecture in which he compared the hermeneutics of self in the Greco-Roman philosophy of the early Roman Empire (the first two centuries CE) with the Christianity of the late Roman Empire (fourth and fifth centuries). He noted that the technologies of the self in the classical period consisted primarily of the ‘care of the self’ by subjecting the soul to questions of truth and morality. By the late Roman Empire, the technologies of the self had transformed to an emphasis on bodily discipline—renunciation—and a disclosure of the sinful self. At the end of the lecture, Foucault briefly referred to a further break in the technologies of the self in the modern era whereby the self is constituted positively—without renunciation—through scientific knowledge. It can be argued that the technologies of the self emerging in modern colonial India were a combination of the sinful self in need of purification and the modern self subjected to positivist, scientific/rational modes of knowledge.

while in the past, the reflective believer, the mystic, might have meditated on the signs of God, the new type of reflective believer reflected on the self and the shortcomings of the self. (Robinson 2008: 273)

The newer self was thus constructed through constant purification and expulsion of impurities.

At the heart of this development was the tension between the lived life and one's ideals. As Gilmartin (2014: xxxvii) indicates, such a tension had always existed, emanating from 'the interactions between the particular and the universal within Islamic civilisation'. The universal ideals of Islam and its strong ties to the land of its origin, Arabia, were never completely synchronised with the local lives of South Asian Muslims, who constructed a composite culture. However, these tensions were exacerbated by the colonial interventions and modern categorisation of religion as a distinct system—which was then perceived to be at odds with local life. The newly created 'tensions between ideals and worldly realities' were 'layered onto the older tensions between core Islamic civilizational ideals and lived realities' (Gilmartin 2014: xxxii). The underlying tension between the *universal* and the *particular*, the *ideal* and the *lived* persisted and aggravated the moral anxieties of ordinary Muslims. Muslims were increasingly conscious not only of the shortcomings of their selves with respect to the ideal Muslim self, but also of the deviations of society from the idealised essence of Islam.⁸ Thus, the inner or reflexive turn was also inherently political—eventually culminating in movements for wider social change.

Driven by similar anxieties and with similar aims at their heart, the reform movements developed in various—often conflicting—directions. Three of the most important reformist groups—still relevant to Pakistan—that emerged among the Sunni Muslims of South Asia were Deobandis, Ahl-e-Hadith and Barelwis. Each emphasises returning and adhering to the original sources of Islam—the Quran and the *Sunnah* (the prophetic traditions). However, they also have their own specific trajectories of development and ideas of reform. For example, Ahl-e-Hadith do not deem it necessary to follow any school of law or *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), while Deobandis and Barelwis continue to follow the established schools of jurisprudence

8 Joel Robbins's (2004) book, *Becoming Sinners*, presents a similar account of 'moral torment' among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea in the face of tension between local tradition and changes brought about by the ideals of Christianity.

within Sunni Islam⁹—the Hanafi school being the most popular among them (Behuria 2008: 59). Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadith, however, do not accept ‘local cultural and custom-based practices’ and other shrine-related rituals (Qasmi 2011: 34–35). Barelwis, on the other hand:

accept customary practices of mediation closely associated with the *pirs* [spiritual guides] of the shrines and the evocation of the supernatural powers and blessings of other revered figures from the Muslim past. (Qasmi 2011: 34–35)

Thus, as argued by Osella and Osella (2008), there is no uniform reformism, but a period of renewal was experienced by almost all sections of Muslim society despite their internal differences.

One of the major points of contestation between different reformist groups was the nature and place of the Prophet Muhammad in *true Islam*. The increased emphasis on the personality of the Prophet and his significance to Muslims’ faith have also been described as a new development within the colonial context. Muslims became increasingly conscious of the image of the Prophet due to encounters with Christian missionaries and other politicised reformist religious groups within South Asia, such as certain factions of Hindus (Qasmi 2011: 39). In an increasingly hostile environment and in the wake of interaction with Western powers who challenged the status of the Prophet Muhammad, this became the pivotal point of contestation between different reformist groups. They ardently debated the minutest of details related to the life and personality of the Prophet, as they aimed to come up with a model personality for Muslims to follow. They argued over issues such as the bodily appearance of the Prophet (clothing, length of facial hair, and so on), his method of praying (the positions and postures) and the details of his everyday life. Such an emphasis on the person of the Prophet has also been linked to modernity’s emphasis on the individual self, as Qasmi argues:

This growing emphasis on the person of the Prophet as the exemplar of human perfection and presentation ... can also be attributed to an enhanced focus on the individual self—a colonial/capital by-product. The Prophet’s ‘new’ image, thus constructed, emphasised a wide array of his human virtues and projected him as beloved, charitable, frugal, a lover of children, steadfast, successful

9 There are four widely recognised schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i and Hanbali (Coulson 1964: 86). These schools were consolidated in the ninth and tenth centuries and have been sources of guidance, debate and authority for Muslims since then (Melchert 1997: 1).

and so on. This can be taken as an expression of the growing sense of the self amid a newly emerging middle-class Muslim world forced to fall back upon, and coming to terms with, its inner resources. (Qasmi 2011: 39)

Malik (2008: 202) describes this shift in the modes of attachment to the Prophet as a transformation from ‘mystical piety’ into ‘prophetic’ or ‘action piety’, in line with the newer technologies of self, discussed earlier. Within the context of these developments, the scholars of Islam engaged in renewed studies of the prophetic tradition (*hadith*)—the transmitted knowledge of the Prophet. These new studies shortened the chain of narrators, making a quick and effective attachment with the Prophet possible. This form of attachment focused on imitating the everyday life of the Prophet—what Malik (2008) calls ‘imitatio muhammadi’. Thus, the Prophet’s *sunna*—his way of being in this world—became the pivotal point of social and political reform, resulting in the ‘Sunnatisation’ of Muslims’ life-worlds (Malik 2008).

The Barelwis—followers of Ahmed Raza Khan Barelwi (1856–1921)—are often seen as the least radical of the reformers as they did not call for complete eradication of local customs. Instead, their movement was deeply embedded in the South Asian culture of shrines and reverence for holy personalities and objects. Nevertheless, they were the ones who were most vocal in denouncing others as disrespectful and inappropriate Muslims when it came to the issue of the personality of Muhammad and the appropriate means of attachment to him. The Barelwi leader issued *fatwas* against other religious leaders deemed disrespectful of the Prophet (Qasmi 2011: 40). These *fatwas* focused on improper ways of speaking about the Prophet, inappropriate understanding of the ‘true nature’ of the Prophet and inadequate modes of attachment to the Prophet.

Debates on the nature and place of the Prophet in Muslim society led to polemics concerning respecting him as early as the nineteenth century. These concerns were manifested not only in the personal, but also in the political, domain as they later developed into several emotionally charged mass movements to protect Islam’s holy symbols—the Quran, mosques, the Prophet—in early twentieth-century colonial India.¹⁰ Gilmartin

10 This development, however, was not exclusive to Muslims, as other religious communities in South Asia, such as Sikhs and Hindus, also displayed passionate attachment to their religious symbols—for example, through the cow protection movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Brass 1991: 77–80). The central place of emotion in South Asian public life has been recognised and described as the ‘moral outrage’ that has characterised popular mobilisations on the Subcontinent for a long time (Blom and Jaoul 2008: 1–2).

(1991), in his essay on colonial Muslim politics, wrote about the rise of Muslim emotionalism in the political sphere in twentieth-century pre-Partition India. He argued that the emergence of Muslim publics and community identity in colonial India was rooted in rational self-control of the individual as well as the autonomous realm of the individual heart and emotion (Gilmartin 1991: 131).¹¹ Autonomous individuals driven by emotions and engaged in self-making came to form the new Muslim community. It was manifested in the symbolic action in the movements in the 1920s and 1930s for the protection of *Khilafat* (the Ottoman caliphate),¹² the Prophet and mosques. In these movements, the discourse of personal and emotional identification with Islamic symbols was translated from the press into public action (Gilmartin 1991: 133).

The *Rangila Rasul* publication controversy of the 1920s—discussed at the beginning of this chapter—was turned into ‘a symbolic test of “love” of the Prophet’ (Gilmartin 1991: 134). It was:

the *public* display of the heart in the active protection of the honour of the Prophet that defined the real existence of a Muslim community during the Rangila Rasul crisis. (Gilmartin 1991: 134; italics in original)

The glorification of Ilmuddin’s killing of Rajpal established ‘action in the name of the heart as the most telling validator of Muslim identity’ (Gilmartin 1991: 135). By 1935, one of the most powerful movements for the defence of holy symbols had emerged in Lahore, Punjab, to protect the Shahidgunj mosque from demolition by Sikhs. Gilmartin (2014: xxxiii) argues that this movement ‘drew on the mosque as a symbol of a transcendent, universalising morality’, which was enabled by ‘new forms of direct individual attachment to the ineffable core of civilisation’. Thus, it was the modern Muslim self, conscious of their individual responsibility and with the urge to achieve personal and societal purification, who

11 The shift of emotion into the public sphere was also facilitated through Urdu poetry. Poets such as Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Muhammad Iqbal brought the long-established literary idioms of inner emotions and desires into the realm of public debate through political poetry and publishing. The emotions in Urdu poetry were sometimes seen as ‘irrational’, and sometimes as intuitive, giving access to inner Sufi knowledge. However, with the politicisation of poetry, emotion was also politicised, leading up to the ‘movement of the inner world directly onto the political stage’ (Gilmartin 1991: 132).

12 The Khilafat Movement (1919–24) was led by South Asian Muslims against the sanctions placed on the Ottoman caliphate after World War I. The aim of the movement was to restore the caliph of the Ottoman Empire, who was considered a leader of the Muslim world and an upholder of the Islamic system of governance in the modern world.

participated in the emotional politics. The centrality of emotions and passionate attachments to the public life of Muslims in twentieth-century South Asia should not be seen in opposition to reason and rationality, as it was through the modern techniques and language of reason that the emotional attachments were articulated in the public sphere. Muslims were not only driven by their modern sensibilities but also engaged with the language of rights and ‘the logic of secular regimes of law’ to express their emotional grievances on the political stage (Stephens 2014: 46–47). While they glorified an act of nonstate killing, they also demanded the state change its legal structure to acknowledge the killing of Rajpal as legitimate—the introduction of clause 295-A in the penal code being a response to this demand (Stephens 2014). Reason and passion, therefore, were components of the same popular consciousness.

The development of the religious sensibilities of Muslims concerning certain holy symbols should therefore be seen within the context of modernity, reformation and transformation of the self, giving rise to a newer consciousness of religious identity not only at the individual but also at the collective level. The development of the new religious identity was also a direct result of colonisation and forced secularisation. The increased consciousness of religious identity, however, does not automatically and necessarily lead to nationalism, and even less so to a specific separatist nationalist movement—the Pakistan Movement, in this case. In the next section, I explain how the heightened sense of religious identity led to the specific outcome of a separate nation-state for Muslims: Pakistan.

Nationalism, religious identity and the Pakistan Movement

Nationalism, like modernity, has been described as a global phenomenon. There is a small group of scholars—usually referred to as ‘primordialists’—who see nationalism as an inherent tendency of human beings, who have formed social groupings and attachments since the beginning of time (Coakley 2018: 327–29). However, most theorists of nationalism—such as Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Paul Brass and Eric J. Hobsbawm—see it as a distinctly modern development dating back to the French Revolution, and qualitatively different from all previous forms of social

groupings. Ernest Gellner (1983: 1) defined nationalism as ‘primarily a political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent’. Gellner’s theory of nationalism postulates that:

nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality, and in general an inescapable one. (Gellner 1983: 48–49)

The modern world, therefore, has been characterised by the emergence of nation-states—political entities claiming sovereignty based on ideas of shared culture.

Following a modern global trend of nationalism, the Indian Subcontinent also saw the rise of numerous nationalist movements in the twentieth century. These movements drew on many of the universally identified characteristics of nationalism such as imagined communities, linguistic standardisation and cultural homogeneity. Modern nations are described as ‘imagined communities’ because the members of these nations do not personally know all other members, and will never meet them, but have a shared notion of their communion (Anderson 1991: 5–7). Many of the Muslim nationalist movements that arose on the Subcontinent also imagined a community of all Muslims of South Asia and beyond. The imagined community was brought together by cultural elites through standardisation of Urdu as the language of Muslims through the print medium and a supposed sameness of the community. Other features of modern nation-states, such as the ‘invention of tradition’ (Hobsbawm 1983) and manipulation of ‘cultural symbols’ (Brass 1991), which I discuss in more detail later, were also present in the nationalist movements of the Subcontinent.

While espousing some of the general characteristics, the nationalist movements of the Subcontinent were at the same time culturally and regionally specific. Partha Chatterjee (1993) discussed the emergence of postcolonial nations and how their nationalisms are both specific to their local contexts and products of the universal move towards nationalism. He objects to Anderson’s argument that the colonial world copied Euro-American models of nationalism. Chatterjee instead contends that the colonised people had their own imagined communities and their nationalisms emerged out of their specific imaginations

(1993: 5). He argues, in the context of India, that the colonial subjects resisted and developed their own sense of nationalism by developing an ‘inner’ spiritual domain, which they held as sovereign, and refused interventions by colonial powers in this inner domain. While colonialism transformed the outer (material) world of administration, laws, policies, statecraft, science, economics and infrastructure—which led to apparent imitation of Western nationalism—the local nationalist movements developed a distinct spiritual sphere that was specific to their imagined community. According to Chatterjee (1993: 6), the spiritual is the ‘inner’ domain bearing ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity. Within this spiritual domain, ‘nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a “modern” national culture that is nevertheless not Western’ (Chatterjee 1993: 7). Muslim nationalist movements on the Subcontinent were also rooted in this ‘inner’ domain.

In the previous section, I demonstrated the construction of a peculiarly modern inner sphere for Muslims that was then politicised and brought into the public sphere. It was this *inner* sphere that was crucial to the establishment of certain cultural symbols as central to Indian Muslims’ nationalist imaginations. While nationalist movements everywhere relied on some central symbols defined by the cultural elite for their collective imaginings, the particularly spiritual and religious nature of symbolism in India is of significance. Thus, as Paul Brass (1991: 76) argues:

Muslim separatism was not pre-ordained, but resulted from the conscious manipulation of selected symbols of Muslim identity by Muslim elite groups in economic and political competition with each other and with elite groups among Hindus.

Of course, manipulation of certain symbols by elite groups is possible because people have certain meanings attached to those symbols in the first place. However, those meanings are not fixed in time and are also a product of historical circumstances. As we have already seen, the centrality of the Prophet Muhammad’s personality and the attachment to certain symbols such as mosques were outcomes of specific developments within the individual as well as the collective lives of Muslims in India. The politicisation of religious symbols through appeal to popular meanings of those symbols is what gave rise to Muslim nationalism.

Muslim separatism—culminating in the creation of Pakistan—is seen as one of the most powerful nationalist movements to emerge in British India. In a recent book, Qasmi and Robb (2017) trace the trajectory of Muslim

nationalism on the pre-Partition Indian Subcontinent. They argue that the sharpening of Muslim identity did not automatically lead to the idea of a separate nation-state (Qasmi and Robb 2017: 9). The Muslims of South Asia were transformed first into a community, then a minority and then a nation. Their heightened consciousness of religious identity led them to see themselves as a community who then demanded their rights as a minority community within the undivided India. It was much later that the idea of attaining sovereignty based on their collective identity as Muslims became popular. Even so, this trajectory did not lead to a single, uniform Muslim nation. Instead, there were several, often conflicting, theories of Muslim nationalism prevalent in pre-Partition colonial India. The idea of Pakistan, peddled by the political elite of the All India Muslim League (AIML), was a specific, albeit triumphant, outcome of *one among many* notions of Muslim nationalism prevalent in twentieth-century India (Qasmi and Robb 2017).

The major trends in the imagining of a nation by Muslims on the Subcontinent ranged from a pan-Islamic community of Muslims (*ummah*) to regional communities held together by language and culture rather than religion. Tanweer Fazal (2015), in his detailed account of the subject, recounts a range of competing ideas of Muslim nationalism. Pan-Islamism—the concept that Muslims from around the world form a spiritual community regardless of their regional, territorial, ethnic and other affiliations—was supported by several prominent religious leaders and reformers (such as Abul A'la Maududi) as well as the ideological founder of Pakistan, philosopher and poet Muhammad Iqbal. These ideologues saw the Western concept of territorial nationalism as materially based, compared with their notion of spiritual Islamic universalism (Fazal 2015: 64–65). Another noteworthy trend was that of ‘composite nationhood’, championed by the likes of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a congressional leader, and Islamic scholar Husayn Ahmad Madani, who was the head of a Deoband seminary and president of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, a prime collective of Indian *ulema* (religious scholars). They advocated for a common nationality for Hindus and Muslims based on their shared cultural and historical ties. Like the pan-Islamists, the composite nationalists also referenced the Quran and other religious sources to prove that their theory was in line with the Islamic concept of nationalism (Fazal

2015: 66–68).¹³ The third-most important, and eventually triumphant, take on Muslim nationalism was based on the Western concept of a territorial nation-state, which was championed by the Western-educated elite leadership of the AIML when they proposed a separate nation-state for the Muslims of India in 1940. However, they modified this idea to suit their own purposes. They argued for the shared history, geography and language of Muslims as the basis for their nationality but at the same time suggested that religious identity should supersede all other affiliations. The idea of a separate state for Muslims thus proposed was not entirely Western but a compromise attempt between a territorial nation-state and a universal Islamic community. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the principal leader of AIML and the founder of Pakistan, based his argument for such a state on French philosopher Ernest Renan's conceptualisation of subjective nation formation based on a collective 'moral consciousness' and 'will of the aggregate' (Fazal 2015: 73).

Many religious leaders (Deobandis, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind) were suspicious of the Westernised leadership of the AIML and opposed the demand for Pakistan. Despite the antagonism, the AIML succeeded in materialising the idea of Pakistan within just seven years. This was made possible by several factors, including the lack of other feasible options, manipulation of religious symbolism and formation of strategic alliances. On a practical level, as Qasmi and Robb (2017: 4) argue, it was the sheer lack of viable alternatives offered by their opponents that worked in favour of the AIML during the political negotiations. On a more strategic level, the leadership of the AIML manipulated the symbols of Muslim identity to gain political influence over the masses. For example, as Fazal (2015: 75) notes, many 'prominent Leaguers took to praying in public to establish their commitment to their faith'. They also appealed to the heart and emotions of the 'autonomous individual Muslim voter' by using 'deeply rooted language of religious commitment' (Qasmi and Robb 2017: 26). Another strategic move was AIML's courting of Barelwis, particularly the landowning *pirs* (spiritual leaders) who had significant influence over their local populations. Barelwis had a longstanding rivalry with the Deobandis and they supported the idea of Pakistan to counter

13 Contestations of the ideas of *ummah*, *qoum* and *millat* (three different words referring to community) were at the heart of these formulations. For example, while *ummah* referred to the spiritual community of all Muslims, *qoum* meant a regional community for some but a political religious community for others. These three words have varying meanings that have also overlapped and shifted.

the position of the Deobandis on Muslim nationalism. They formed a significant population in the provinces Jinnah was demanding for Pakistan but supported the AIML only on the condition of making the new state an Islamic one (Qasmi and Robb 2017: 73–75).

Furthermore, while campaigning for Pakistan, its proponents employed a ‘two-nation theory’, which held that Muslims were qualitatively different from Hindus (Cohen 2004: 28). The theory postulated that Muslims and Hindus had different cultures, different religious traditions, different customs and norms, and hence could not live together. Some validation and political currency were provided to this theory by competitive mobilisation by Hindu nationalists, who used Hindu symbols to lay exclusive claims to Indian territory (Fazal 2015: 72–73). Prominent historians of Pakistan such as Ayesha Jalal and Barbara Metcalf argued that the Pakistan Movement was concerned with the power-sharing arrangements between the Muslims and the Hindus of India due to the minority status of the Muslims. Metcalf (2004: 1) wrote:

The Pakistan movement should not be considered ‘Islamic’: it was a movement for a secular, liberal democracy, although once the country was established there certainly were voices that sought to create an Islamically ordered state.

According to Jalal (2014: 40):

Religion is often thought to have been the main impetus behind the creation of Pakistan. The historical evidence militates against such certitude. The demand for Pakistan was intended to get an equitable, if not equal, share of power for Indian Muslims in an independent India.

However, the two-nation theory, in constructing a distinct Muslim identity, went far beyond the discourse of the economic and political rights of Muslims as a minority in a united India. As already mentioned, the use of religious symbolism and the politicisation of religious identity were crucial to the success of the Pakistan Movement. Jalal and Metcalf also agree that ‘Muslim identity’ was the rallying point for the movement. The leaders of the movement constructed the Muslims of India as ‘a homogenous category’ while disregarding their regional, ethnic, linguistic and class differences (Jalal 2014: 8).

The two-nation theory as the basis for a separate nation-state was inherently contradictory, as it was anti-territorial (in creating a pan-Indian Muslim identity) and territorial (demanding a separate geographical territory) at the same time. The relationship between the proposed unifying Muslim identity and the demand for territorial sovereignty remained uncertain even for the chief architect of Pakistan, Jinnah. While propagating the idea that the Muslims of India were one nation, the leaders of the Pakistan Movement did not demonstrate any concerns about the Muslims living in Hindu-majority areas of India when they demanded the chunk of India with Muslim-majority areas be designated as a separate nation-state for Muslims (Jalal 2014: 51). Hence, Jalal (2014: 10) contends, ‘reconciling the imperatives of citizenship in a territorial nation-state with the supra-territorial claims of Islamic universalism based on affinity to a worldwide Muslim community was a challenging proposition’. The inherent contradictions in the idea of Pakistan imply a conflation of religious, territorial and national identities.

Faisal Devji’s (2013) noteworthy work on the concept of Pakistan as ‘a political idea’ combines the modern, religious and nationalist elements at play in the creation of Pakistan without reducing the motives behind its creation to either religious or secular. He compares Muslim nationalism in South Asia to Zionism in Europe and draws parallels between ‘the political ideas’ of Pakistan and those of Israel (Devji 2013: 3). What this political idea essentially means is a territorial nation-state claimed on the basis of a universal (anti-geographical) idea of a nation, bringing together all Muslims of India and severing their regional, ethnic and linguistic ties. Devji describes both Pakistan and Israel as exceptions to the norm of nation-states around the world due to their juxtaposition of territorial and universal claims. The underlying contradictions of the political idea of Pakistan become clearer when he notes:

As early as 1948, in a speech made at a mammoth meeting in Dacca, the Governor-General of a recently created Pakistan made it clear that his new nation would have to repudiate not simply its colonial and more generally Indian past, but even the regional identities of its own Muslim majority, which fearfully compared to nations in waiting. It was as if Jinnah’s own ‘two-nation theory’ had returned to haunt Pakistan with the spectre of more partitions to come, leading him to recommend a politics of unity that was, in appearance, at least, difficult to differentiate from that which characterised his rivals in the Indian National Congress. What

distinguished Pakistan's unity from that of its giant neighbour's, however, was the elimination of everything that its people had inherited from their past. (Devji 2013: 10)

The exceptional 'politics of unity' thus formed the foundation of the state of Pakistan from the very beginning. Islam was not only the most important rallying cry for the Pakistan Movement, but also the only unifying and binding factor for the nascent state of Pakistan (Qasmi 2011: 239). Religious identity was imagined and promoted as the sole basis of unity among the residents of Pakistan, while historical and geographical ties were actively downplayed. Official history was written to inculcate a strong religious and nationalist ideology among the people. Despite all these efforts, the fears of Jinnah of which Devji speaks in the excerpt quoted above materialised only two decades later in 1971 when East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) separated from West Pakistan (now Pakistan) due to ethnic and linguistic differences, despite a common Muslim identity. Hence, the viability and adequacy of religion as the sole basis of national unity were not only questioned but also strongly refuted by the separation of Bangladesh.

Regardless of whether the leadership of the AIML had wanted a secular or a theocratic state, it is important to understand *how* the idea of Pakistan was sold to ordinary Muslims—already living with moral anxieties under colonial rule—and what it meant for their imaginations, aspirations and expectations. The self-contradictory idea of the territorial nation-state of Pakistan based on religious identity rather than cultural, historical and geographical ties left Pakistanis with a deep sense of *identity crisis*. This crisis was worsened by the separation of Bangladesh, which questioned the very basis of the idea of Pakistan. I argue that the moral anxieties of Muslims triggered by modernity, colonisation and forced secularisation were compounded by the anxieties related to their national identity after the creation of Pakistan. The underlying tensions of the ideal versus the lived, the imagined versus the real and the universal versus the local persisted and continued to haunt the post-Partition lives of Pakistanis as individuals as well as a community. In the next section, I will discuss how the state of Pakistan has tried to deal with these anxieties by creating a religious and national ideology that aims to suppress differences to achieve uniformity and homogeneity.

Construction of homogeneous national subjects and the passion for exclusivity

The people of the newly created state of Pakistan included those who had supported the idea of Pakistan and those who were against it. Even among those who supported the idea, there were variations in their understanding of what it entailed and their expectations of it (Jalal 2000: 538). There were many who were indifferent, if not hostile, to the idea. Nevertheless, in the process of Partition, supporters and non-supporters alike suffered great losses. Millions migrated across the newly drawn borders to be part of the new state of Pakistan (Brass 2003a: 75), but not all migration was voluntary as many were forced to leave India due to intercommunal violence that accompanied Partition. A major section of the population of Pakistan suffered immense losses—of homes, property, loved ones and livelihoods—in the process (Pandey 2003: 14). Having to rebuild their lives from scratch, they needed a strong sense of purpose to justify their losses. Since religious identity had been sold as the fundamental basis for the creation of Pakistan, and due to a lack of common historical and geographical ties to define the newly formed nation, Islam became the refuge, the motivation and the purpose for a majority of Pakistanis. Discourses of sacrifice were invoked, glorifying the losses incurred during Partition, to achieve communal solidarity (Pandey 2003: 176). The idea that Muslims sacrificed everything for an Islamic state in which to practise their religion in peace became a common public narrative. However, there was no consensus as to what that Islamic state meant. If anything, the Muslims of Pakistan aspired to a diversity and multiplicity of Islamic practices.

Moreover, Pakistan was formed out of regions that were ethnically and linguistically diverse. These regions had their own organisational structures, customs and even local religious practices. The religiously and ethnically diverse population of the new country was unsure what the nature of the new state would be. The inherent contradictions of the idea of Pakistan were a source of fear and anxiety concerning religious and national identity. These fears were exacerbated by doubts about Pakistan's ability to survive. There were both real and imagined threats to the security of Pakistan. India's belief that the idea of Pakistan was bound to fail instilled further fear and anxiety among the populace (Jalal 2014: 51–52). The state of Pakistan did not have enough resources to run the country and there were massive material and political challenges to the survival of

the state (Jalal 2014). These challenges, in addition to the contradictions and uncertainties inherent in the idea of Pakistan, left people with deep anxiety concerning their national identity.

There was therefore a need for a coherent and unifying policy to control and appease the population in the process of state-making. Interestingly, many prominent protagonists of the reform movements—such as Mawdudi of Jamaat-e-Islami—who had previously opposed the Pakistan Movement, formed their own pressure groups and political parties to mould the policies of the new state according to their own religious ideals (Jalal 2014: 56–57). Meanwhile, the leadership of the Pakistan Movement—those who formed the first Government of Pakistan—wanted ‘Islamic modernism’ as the principle of the state’s formation. An ‘Islamic state’, for them, meant a democratic state that ensured equality and justice for its populace (Jalal 2014: 56; Qasmi 2011: 239–40). The religious ideologues—often contradicting each other—had their own ideals for the state. The clash of ideals thus began soon after the creation of Pakistan. It was no longer just a matter of individuals trying to live up to the ideals of *good Muslims*; it was now also a matter of whose ideal would define the *ideal Islamic state* that had just been created. Hence, the question for the political leaders of Pakistan at its creation was not whether or not Islam would have a role in the state, but ‘the *kind* of Islam’ that would form the basis of the state’s policies (Qasmi 2011: 239; emphasis added). This led to vehement ‘politics of Islam’ becoming a critical force in state-making.

Given that Pakistan was founded on a unifying nationalist ideology based on religious identity, with a homogeneous conception of Islam and Muslims at its heart, religious exclusivity was inherent to the idea. This unifying narrative was built on the absolute dismissal of Hindus as inferior *others* by ignoring their shared cultural, social, linguistic and historical similarities. Such an emphasis on *exclusivity* and *unity* at the same time came to define the state-making of Pakistan. The diverse groups of Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of Pakistan were supposed to be unified under the banner of Islam while ignoring their differences. Instead of acknowledging the differences, the state aimed to suppress them through construction of one nation, one language¹⁴ and one religion. Unity, singularity and homogeneity became the emphases of the nationalist

14 The imposition of Urdu as the national language on linguistically diverse populations was one of the major reasons for the rise of the separatist movement in East Pakistan, culminating in the creation of Bangladesh.

project whereas internal differences came to be regarded as ‘undesirable’, ‘unacceptable’ and ‘un-Islamic’ (Nelson 2009: 604). Homogenised social identities of citizen subjects became crucial to the making of the state in Pakistan (Ali 2008: 8).

National television, textbooks, public history books and all other possible media were used for the propagation of the principles of exclusivity and unity (Jalal 2014: 51–52). The writing of history thus employed what Hobsbawm (1983: 14) called the ‘invention of tradition’—a technique modern nations use to construct national history. The invented tradition can be:

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. (Hobsbawm 1983: 1)

Pakistan’s national history thus fashioned was replete with ideas of continuity, unity, oneness and homogeneity. Nosheen Ali, in her study of textbook representations of religious differences in Gilgit, described the state of Pakistan as an assemblage of contested discourses and micropractices of discipline and power. As she succinctly puts it, ‘such discursive practices embody “politically organised subjection” and “moral regulation” through which the social identities of citizen-subjects are cultivated, and state rule accomplished’ (Ali 2008: 2). These discursive practices of subjection and control of differences are a common feature of modern nation-states and have been extensively theorised—for example, Bourdieu (1973) called them mechanisms of cultural reproduction and Althusser (1971) called them ideological state apparatuses. Contemporary nation-states have been known to exercise ‘taxonomical control over difference’ by domesticating it, curbing it and exploiting it for their interests (Appadurai 1990: 304).

The attempt to domesticate differences also led to the creation of newer forms of selfhood. As Bauman (2000: 106) argued:

[T]he more effective the drive to homogeneity and the efforts to eliminate the difference, the more difficult it is to feel at home in the face of strangers, the more threatening the difference appears and the deeper and more intense is the anxiety it breeds.

In the case of Pakistan, the new anxious self of Pakistani Muslims was constructed around the elimination of religious differences, as noted by Iqtidar (2012: 1023):

The majority that is being created out of the diverse classes, ethnicities and other divisions within Pakistan remains elusive. But the possibility of that uniform, homogenous majority animates a specific kind of selfhood—one that is impatient with the idea of doctrinal difference even as it is increasingly confronted with the practice of it, of more choices given the proliferation of religious groups in contemporary Pakistan.

State-making in Pakistan, however, was not a one-way project involving imposition of exclusivist policies and indoctrination from top to bottom. It went hand in hand with the modernist self-making processes that had been initiated much earlier, as I have argued. Imposing a unifying narrative was in the interests of the state, but it was also at times a response to public demands. This was because the exclusivist tendencies had already been popularised through various movements of Muslim nationalism in the pre-Partition era. Thus, having separated themselves from the Hindu *others*, Pakistani Muslims turned to look for *lesser others* among themselves to continue their exclusivist project. Soon after the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the question of ‘Who is a Muslim?’ was raised as authorities deliberated about the state-sanctioned definition of ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslims’, which was also in line with what many people wanted. In 1953, there were widespread protests by religious groups and citizens demanding the official declaration of Ahmadis, who claim to be Muslims, as ‘non-Muslims’ (The Punjab Disturbances Court of Inquiry 1954). Three years later, in 1956, Pakistan was declared an Islamic republic, reaffirming its Islamic identity and leaving open in popular consciousness the questions of legitimacy and authority as to what is Islamic and who is a Muslim.

The following decades saw the religious and nationalist passion for exclusivity metastasise into fully fledged sectarian conflicts, with widespread communal violence between different sects of Muslims. In addition to the government, the religious groups and the common people, another player—probably the strongest—was the Pakistan Army, which contributed to the country’s exclusivist tendencies. The decades of the 1970s and 1980s were particularly significant in the aggravation of sectarian tensions, further enabling the spread of violence against religious minorities. Three major political events during these years have been described as the cause of worsening sectarian tensions: Zia-ul-Haq’s

military rule (1977–88), the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the Afghan war (1979–92). Zia-ul-Haq came to power in a military coup in 1977 and used popular Islamic symbols to legitimise his rule (Ahmad 1998: 14). Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation was seen as a form of Sunni Islamism in response to Iran's Shia Islamism that culminated in the Iranian revolution (Nasr 2000a: 175). Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation project was supported by the mainstream Sunni political parties, such as Jamaat-e-Islami, for various reasons, including Zia-ul-Haq's appeal as a good Muslim and as an 'embodiment of their concept of a true Islamic ruler' (Ahmad 1998: 13). He was also supported by Saudi Arabia to promote Salafi/Deobandi—a reformist sect of Sunnis—ideology in Pakistan (through heavy funding of *madrasahs*), mainly because they wanted to erect a 'Sunni wall' around Iran (Nasr 2000a: 178) to protect their political and ideological interests in the region.

These developments coincided with the Afghan war during which the Pakistan military provided training and resources to Deobandi seminary students (Taliban) and other Sunni militant organisations such as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Harkat-ul-Ansar (Nasr 2000a: 178). These Sunni militants—supported, trained and indoctrinated through the collaboration of the United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan—fought as *mujaheddin* (wagers of holy war) against the Soviet Union (Nasr 2000a: 179). The collaboration of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to create militant Islamists to counter the growing Soviet influence in Afghanistan, along with heavy funding for the ideological training of *mujaheddin* from the Gulf region, worsened sectarian tensions (Toor 2011: 153–54). The inflow of weapons and funds during the Afghan war militarised sectarian outfits and contributed to the violence against Shias in the years to come (Ahmad 1998: 28). In addition to the sectarian violence, the military was also involved in the ethnic conflicts across the country. The biggest tragedy in terms of ethnic conflict was Bangladesh's independence war in which the Pakistan military played a huge role. There have been other ethnic conflicts—such as in Baluchistan—where no *war* was declared but the military has been involved in curbing what they call separatist movements. Moreover, as Ali (2008: 12–13) shows in her study of violence against Shias in Gilgit, there have been occasions when political dissent has been portrayed as sectarian conflict to depoliticise it and suppress dissident voices.

Thus, the process of state-making in Pakistan has been a constant struggle between civil governments, military leaders, religious groups and ordinary citizens. Some groups with leftist, progressive, civil and human rights agendas have existed throughout the history of Pakistan, but they have been on the fringe and have often been persecuted in the religious and political spheres. Some political parties—for example, the Pakistan Peoples Party—claim to have left-leaning manifestos but have used religious symbolism and alliances with religious groups whenever it served their political interests.

Appadurai's (1990) formulation of 'the nation and the state' as 'another's projects' is a useful concept to understand the processes of state-making in Pakistan. He writes: '[N]ations (or more properly groups with ideas about nationhood) seek to capture or co-opt states and state power, states simultaneously seek to capture and monopolise ideas about nationhood' (Appadurai 1990: 303). He describes it as a 'disjunctive relationship between the nation and the state', which argues is a characteristic of most states in the era of a global political economy (Appadurai 1990: 304). In Pakistan's case, both the nation and the state are incomplete, and are constantly being made. However, I argue that, through a convergence of the focus of all the major players in this process on religious exclusivity and national unity, the possibility of differences has come to be a threat at individual, communal and national levels. The consequence is that various groups and individuals with their own ideas of Islam and of Pakistan seek to eliminate the differences to legitimise and consolidate their religious and national identity.

Neocolonialism, globalisation and the state of present-day Pakistani Muslims

The processes of self-making, community-making and state-making discussed so far have led to the present condition of Pakistani Muslims: experiencing deeply embedded anxieties related to their religious and national identities, and constantly striving to become *good Muslims* by purging impurities within themselves and their imagined collective identity. Naveeda Khan (2012) highlighted 'scepticism' (of the self and the other) and 'aspiration' (to become a good Muslim) as central features of the everyday lives of Pakistani Muslims in her groundbreaking ethnography. Other scholars have noted similar trends—for example,

Jalal (2014: 5–6) contends that Pakistan is ‘a visibly perturbed’ nation, ‘pondering the reasons for their country’s perilous condition and seeking a reprieve from violence and uncertainty’. I also found religious and nationalistic anxieties prevalent among most of the Pakistani Muslims I met during my time in Pakistan—both as a researcher and as a part of the community. In addition to their concerns about the different and the deviant within their imagined national and religious communities, they harbour deep-seated apprehensions about ‘the West’: the powerful, anti-Islam and anti-Pakistan nations of the world threatening the existence of Islam and Pakistan.

‘The West’ has been associated with godlessness and moral corruption in South Asian consciousness for a long time—and particularly since the colonial era. Colonialism was also seen as a direct attack on Islam and Muslim identity, as discussed earlier. Present-day Pakistani Muslims’ apprehensions and concerns, however, are rooted more specifically in neocolonialism, globalisation and the rise of Islamophobia in the post-9/11 world. Despite the end of direct colonial rule on the Subcontinent in 1947, Western nations have continued their involvement in Pakistan through direct or indirect political intervention, development and humanitarian aid and other economic impositions. This involvement is often imperialist in nature and has left Pakistanis feeling threatened and powerless in the face of a new hegemonic global order. The political and economic hegemony of the West is augmented by cultural imperialism through various media—a softer but much more effective instrument of alienation. This neocolonial subjugation is further exacerbated by the rise of Islamophobic tendencies across the globe since the 9/11 attacks. Pakistani Muslims, even if they have never travelled abroad, are acutely aware of these tendencies and see them as a threat to their already fragile religious and nationalistic identities. Globalisation, particularly through new forms of media, has positioned Pakistani Muslims on an international stage where they must constantly defend their religious-national image from broad-stroke associations with terrorism. Therefore, a majority of Pakistani Muslims feel under attack and threatened by the West and its influence on local ways of life, and are on the lookout for the enemy within.

The threat from the West in the wake of neocolonialism, Islamophobia and globalisation is layered on top of the threats already felt from Pakistan’s rivalry with India—and from ethnic and religious differences within Pakistan. There are multiple identities that Pakistani Muslims

navigate in their everyday lives: the pan-Islamic identity, the national identity and sectarian and ethnic identities. Some of these identities conflict with others—for example, a Sunni Muslim likely feels strongly Sunni in relation to Shias or other minority sects, but feels strongly Muslim in relation to the rest of the world in the context of the global image of Islam. The shifting identities of Pakistani Muslims, however, are a cause of the uncertainty and anxiety that characterise their individual and collective lives.

The religious and nationalistic moral anxieties of modern Pakistani Muslims directly contribute to accusations of blasphemy and subsequent violence. I will demonstrate this with a particular example. Altaf is a Sunni Barelwi Muslim man from Lahore aged in his mid-thirties. He accused a Muslim woman from his neighbourhood, who used to teach his children, of having insulted the Prophet Muhammad. The woman allegedly told his children that ‘the prophetic traditions are not as reliable as the Quran itself’. I met Altaf in the Lahore Sessions Court, where his case was being heard. I attended several court hearings with him and talked to him before and after those hearings. One morning, as we were having tea while waiting for the hearing, he said to me:

Pakistan—despite being created for the rightful practice of Islam—is inundated by a flood of sins these days. The horrendous number of blasphemy cases in today’s Pakistan is evidence of that. Our society has been corrupted—corrupted by the filth of blasphemous thoughts and practices all around us. What else is to be expected with the rise of Western influence in [the] media, in our schools and colleges, and everywhere else? It is up to each one of us to fight this filth, and to purify our society, to achieve the ideal Islamic land for which our ancestors sacrificed their lives.

Altaf, like many other accusers to whom I spoke about blasphemy cases, referred to the moral decline of society, the influence of the West seeping into society and the unfulfilled ideals of an imagined collective national identity. While most blasphemy accusations are made within hierarchical interpersonal relationships and are triggered by a range of dynamics within those relationships (as will be shown in later chapters), they occur in the context of widespread moral anxieties among Pakistani Muslims. Even if these moral anxieties are not the immediate triggers of such accusations in most cases, they provide legitimation and justification to accusers and enable violent exclusion of the accused from society.

Conclusion

Blasphemy accusations and related violence in present-day Pakistan must be understood within the context of the uncertainty and anxiety that pervade the individual, communal and national lives of Pakistanis. These anxieties are not entirely unique to Pakistanis, as issues of sameness and difference, the particular and the universal, the lived and the ideal are common to all societies. Especially in the modern globalised world, 'the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular' pose a pertinent challenge for all societies, and the struggle between sameness and difference is 'the central feature of global culture today' (Appadurai 1990: 308). What makes the state of present-day Pakistani Muslims peculiar is the historically specific amalgamation of various anxieties concerning their individual and collective identities. The reformist emphasis on the purification of the self under the influence of modernity, and in response to British colonisation, gave rise to moral anxieties that were exacerbated by the inherent contradictions of the idea of Pakistan and its national identity. Neocolonialism, globalisation and the rise of Islamophobia in the post-9/11 world have further contributed to these anxieties. Such religious and nationalistic moral anxieties are inherently related to the gap between reality and the ideal, the lived and the imagined and aspiration and achievement. It is the sense of lack and inadequacy that defines Pakistanis' struggles for religious and national identities. Sidel (2006: 137) aptly captures this sense in the context of his study of 'religious violence' in Indonesia:

At the core of any 'identity' is always a constitutive sense of lack, of inadequacy, or of a 'theft' that can be imputed to an Other who deprives 'us' of the full enjoyment of those material, discursive, and social practices, which, we imagine, [would] allow 'us' to be fully 'ourselves'.

The 'politics of Islam' as exercised by various players involved in the state-making of Pakistan created the conditions for violent expression of these anxieties by promoting an exclusivist national ideology. It is not certainty about that identity but doubt, not uniformity of religious and national ideals but a multiplicity of them, that enable the violent exclusion of others.

Blasphemy accusations and subsequent violence form but one manifestation of the uncertainties and anxieties about religious and national identities in present-day Pakistan.

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