

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Nation Without Nationalism: A Study on the Critique of Nationalism by Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938)

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ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates the critique of nationalism in India by the South Asian philosopher, Muhammad Iqbal, focusing on his famous Allahabad address in 1930. There is an inescapable tension animated in his political thought presented in this speech. Although he rejects the idea of nationalism as a Western construct, he accepts it practically when he suggests a territorial solution for the Muslim minority question in India. In this study, we approach this contradiction in light of the recent development of the nationalism debate in India and argue that this confusion is untenable from the subaltern perspective of nationalist debate. Iqbal views the “Muslim nation” as a cultural unit based on religious solidarity,

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liberating it from the clutches of the centralizing or homogenizing tendencies of the state. This study recovers his distinctive political philosophy from the debris of polemics and illustrates thoroughly how a Muslim intellectual did interact with the ideas and institutions of Western modernity in a particular time in South Asia.

Keywords: Muslim nation, nationalism, Indian state, subaltern studies

INTRODUCTION

Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) was an influential intellectual figure from South Asia. He was a doyen of Urdu poetry and a seminal philosopher of his time. However, he was also a “controversial” politician in India and a “true” patriot in Pakistan for a specific reason. It was that his idea of a “Muslim nation” was almost certainly the real motivation for the formation of Pakistan. In this study, we analyze this cause by examining it in light of his critique of nationalism. This study perceptively engages with his political visions for an ideal nation; and thereby, recovers his distinctive political philosophy from the debris of polemics and illustrates thoroughly how a Muslim intellectual did interact with the ideas and institutions of Western modernity during a particular time period in South Asia.

Here, we specifically examine Iqbal’s views on nationalism based on his famous presidential address delivered at the annual session of the All-India Muslim League on December 29, 1930 (also known as The Allahabad Address, henceforth in this name), published in *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal* compiled by Latif Ahmad Sherwani.¹ In this speech, he outlined a political vision for an independent nation of Muslim-majority provinces in the northwestern frontier of India. This speech was deliberately chosen to elaborate his critique of nationalism because this speech is often referenced in public and academic debates in India to explicate Iqbal’s “communal” political thought, which made him the first public intellectual to articulate what would become known as the “two-nation theory” and thus the progenitor of the idea of Pakistan. Re-reading the overused material with that purpose in mind demands a different engagement with the text, recuperating his thoughts through a new conceptual framework and locating his convictions within the intellectual matrix of the time. This article is, in some sense, an attempt to accomplish this goal.

Colonial Modernity and Indian Nationalism

It is a general historical fact that the Indian political nation, as we see it today, did not exist before establishing British rule in India. However, regarding the source and evolution of nationalism, whether it is embedded in pre-modern solidarity or how these local solidarities were consolidated, is a matter of debate among the scholars in India. There is little disagreement that the Indian nationalism that confronted British imperialism, which led ultimately to the formation of the Indian state in 1947, is a historical product of colonial

1 Latif Ahmad Sherwani, ed. *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers, 2006).

modernity.² In other words, Indian nationalism, developed through anti-colonial movements like Indian National Congress (INC), was a new phenomenon that was shaped by the structure of the modern state administered by the British empire. However, how did Indians “imagine” themselves is a much-contested terrain among scholars.

Early nationalist scholars focused primarily on the supremacy of nationalist ideology and building national consciousness to which all other consciousnesses were merged and subordinated. The emergence of nationalism, in this sense, was formed through shared antipathy toward the British rule in India. In contrast to this political explanation, the early Marxist school analyzed the nationalist movement in terms of economic development during the colonial time, such as the rise of industrial capitalism and market society.³ However, these scholarships leave little space for the inner conflicts within this ideology. Therefore, by engaging critically with these grand narratives, different school of thoughts emerged, unearthing different strands in Indian nationalism. These schools can be divided broadly into the neo-traditionalist, neo-Marxist, and subaltern categories.

Neo-traditionalist and neo-Marxist scholars brought a new interpretation to the nationalism debate. Unlike classical scholars, they focused more on the internal contradiction within nationalist thought. Since India has always been a plural society, it is difficult to reduce all to a single authentic nationalist thought. Different groups imagined the nation in a variety of ways, and there was a conflict of interest in those imaginations. A new group of scholars, usually identified as the “Cambridge School” that emerged from the neo-traditionalist school, questioned the very ontology of a unified nationalist movement and traced instead a series of localized movements that built into national identity. For instance, by tracing the origins of nationalism in India, Bayly argued that it emerged from the pre-existing sense of territoriality based on the patriotic sense of the land and indigenous ideas of public morality.⁴

Scholars from these schools have given enormous attention to the “politicization of society” by encountering colonial modernity along the lines of traditional forms such as caste, region, religion, language, and so on. They identified two key triggers of this change: the introduction of Western education and political representation. As a result of this, a new status group of Western-educated elites emerged from the existing privileged indigenous groups. Marxist scholars explain this phenomenon in terms of middle-class formations and see this educated elite as the “traditional intellectual” in Gramscian terms, which operates as ideological bearers of nationalism; Iqbal belonged to this elite group.

Another and the most influential intervention in this debate comes from subaltern thinkers. This group was represented mainly by Ranajit Guha and his interlocutors. In their approach, a “structural dichotomy” between the domains of elite politics and subalterns had existed in Indian social life as two completely autonomous forms of

2 Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition and After: The History of Modern India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007).

3 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947*; Sekhar, *From Plassey to Partition*.

4 Christopher Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

consciousness. Guha argues that the bourgeois leadership failed to establish its hegemony on the language of subordinated groups or subalterns through persuasion or coercion.⁵ They had a different idiom of mobilization and action, which is separated from elite politics. The establishment of the nation-state in India, in his view, was just a “dominance without hegemony.”⁶ This new historiographical approach has undergone a considerable shift, with the focus moving from class to community, from material analysis to privileging of culture, mind, and identity.⁷ This new shift was also associated with the shift of focus from actual subaltern to “intellectual subaltern” that includes elite and dominant groups as well. Scholars like Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Gyan Prakash, and others began to trace intellectual colonization and recover the internal strand of nationalism.

In his famous essay with the captivating title “Whose Imagined Community?”, Partha Chatterjee challenged the Western modal of nationalism and argued that the nationalism that emerged in India was a “different” but a “derivative discourse” from the West.⁸ It is a “derivative discourse” because the idea of politics based on a territorial nation-state was already established and had become a part of the social imaginary. At the same time, there was an alternative vision that could unite India at the social level, if not the political level. For this reason, he argued that the history of nationalism in India is essentially constituted by two different histories: the history of the spiritual domain and that of the material domain. While colonized people were able to imagine themselves as a nation, materially, they had no choice but to choose the forms of politics given to them through colonialism. By deepening this critique to another level, Gyan Prakash argues that these inner and outer spheres are untenable because the latter is an extension of the former.⁹ Therefore, the adaption of the nation-state by the political elite was not a mere emulation of the Western modal; instead, it was critiqued and redefined in terms of the spiritual or traditional domain. Hence, this political thought is not a Western import, but rather shaped through encountering one another.

Situating Iqbal in Muslim Political Thought

From the above discussion, it can be discerned that nationalism is a site of political contestation in India. This political contestation and the differences, however, were limited to not only the inter-community level but the intra-community level as well. There was considerable diversity within the Muslim community regarding the approach toward the British government in India. The Muslim intellectual tradition in India was developed by engaging with colonial modernity. This engagement ended up with multiple voices for and against the acceptance of new political ideas and institutions brought about by the British

5 Guha Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

6 Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony*.

7 Sekhar, *From Plassey to Partition*.

8 Chatterjee Partha, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993).

9 Prakash Gyan, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999).

administration. This period was also characterized by the extensive adoption of print technologies and the emergence of new educational centers, both religious and secular, within the Muslim community. As a result of this, a rich political discourse of Islam developed in which thinkers like Iqbal was born within the community.

The decline of the Mughal dynasty and its replacement by British authority led Muslim politics into an utter decay in India. British rule introduced a new political culture into India, which was radically different from what Indians had experienced before. This new form of politics was established along with the transformation of imperial power from Company to Crown in 1857. Confronted by this modified political context, Muslim intellectuals and traditional scholars engaged in fierce debate over the adaptation and repudiation of modern political ideas and institutions. Regarding the contestation of politics, three voices emerged predominantly within the Muslim community. Modernist reformists represented the first strand in this category. A typical example of this category was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, a self-conscious modernist who started the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, which was converted later to Aligarh Muslim University, a center of “Islamic modernism” during this time. He proposed a rationalist interpretation of Islam which reconciled with the modern sciences. He urged the Muslim community to adopt modern and English education and saw a solution for the Muslim plight in it. Scholars from this group understood the utility of the colonial government and therefore did not see any issue of incompatibility between Islam and modern politics.¹⁰

The second category was the strand of traditional ‘ulamā, whose vision could be called neo-traditionalist. This included revivalist movements like Deobandi (established in 1867), Barelwi movement, Ahl-i-Hadith, Ahmadiyya, and others. Scholars from this group largely remained indifferent to the question of politics, even though they were part of the anti-colonial nationalist movements in many ways. Regarding the Deobandi movement, Metcalf argued that ‘ulamās generally kept away from the question of politics and focused more on developing the ethical qualities of the believers. Through their madrasa system, they bolstered Islamic education and sought the creation of a moral community that observed Islamic law appropriately.¹¹ Similarly, Sanyal argues that the Barelwi movement was to renew the strict allegiance of Muslim communities to sharia.¹² They believed that Muslims’ loss of political power was due to the moral weaknesses in the Muslim community; therefore, an ethical return is inevitable. It is important, however, to note that there were considerable differences between these movements regarding the theology of everyday life, and these groups had contested against each other for the social authority within the community. What is interesting is that this group took the current form of politics for granted without seeing any contradiction in associating with it.

10 Mohammad Adnan Rehman, “Nation as a Neo-Idol: Muslim Political Theology and the Critique of Secular Nationalism in Modern South Asia,” *Religions* 9, no. 11 (2018): 355.

11 Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860–1900* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

12 Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, 1870–1920* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

A third category is a group that comes in between these two groups considering their stand on politics in India. It supported reformism and called for re-interpreting Islamic ideals within the new circumstances. They found Islam as a source of current social, political, and economic crises in India. This group of scholars was represented by the Western-educated elites concerned about Muslim identity and politics in such a turbulent time. They were predominantly professionals and not traditionally trained scholars; therefore, the neo-traditional 'ulamā questioned their authority over Islamic knowledge. Scholars like Abul A'la Maududi, Muhammad Iqbal, and Abul Kalam Azad can be classified under this category. Even though they had their own different interpretations of Islam and politics, they were deeply engaged with the question of politics in modern times.

Breaking this compartmentalization, scholars—especially traditional scholars—had come to the question of politics in the later period. For instance, the Khilafat movement, which started in India for demanding the re-establishment of the Caliphate for the Muslim world, brought many 'ulamā to the political stage who were indifferent to the issues concerning politics earlier. *Jamiat Ulema-ei-Hind* (Association of Islamic Scholars of India), which was established in 1919, was at the forefront in providing leadership for the Muslim community in Northern India during this time. They criticized the 'separatist' politics of the Muslim League and questioned their claim of Muslim representation.¹³ One of the eminent scholars in this front was Maulana Husayn Madani (1879–1957), a leading Deobandi scholar. Madani was directly involved in the debate with Iqbal regarding the question of nationalism. On the political front, Madani supported the INC like Maulana Azad. Following Azad, he developed a political theology in his famous work, "Composite Nationalism" (*mutahida qaumiyyat*). Madani argued that nationalism based on a territory is compatible with Islam and is even justified in the Islamic tradition. He criticized Iqbal's idea of nationalism by pointing out that the idea of a nation based on territorial solidarity has a history in Islamic tradition. The Arabic word *qaum* in Islamic tradition can be translated to denote "nation" today. The treaty of Medina was an earlier form of "composite nationalism," he argued. By agreeing with Madani's concept of *qaum* broadly, Iqbal refuted composite nationalism on the basis of *millat/umma*, the two legitimate concepts for community in Islam, and argues that the basis of a Muslim *qaum* cannot be other than their *millat* (religion).¹⁴

Iqbal's Views on Nationalism

In his famous Allahabad address (1930), Iqbal outlined his vision of politics that would ensure the complete development of India's Muslim culture. At the outset, he declared that Islam and nationalism were incompatible ideologies. The term "nationalism," according to him, refers to the making of a secular community based on territorial solidarity. Iqbal observed that the ultimate result of this process was to relegate religion to the private

13 Yohanan Friedmann, "The Attitude of the Jam'iyyat-i-Ulama-i-Hind to the Indian National Movement and the Establishment of Pakistan," in *The 'Ulama' in Modern History*, ed. Gabriel Baer (Jerusalem: Annul of Israel Oriental Society, 1971), 157-83.

14 Rehman, "Nation as a Neo-Idol," 355.

sphere, which was impossible to think of in the case of Islam.¹⁵ Scholars have argued that the political philosophy of Iqbal was based on his perception of Islam as a complete system that could offer solutions for social, political, and economic crises of the time.¹⁶ Hence, he posed Islam as a counter-ideology to Western civilization and Marxism. Confronting the models of politics derived from these ideologies, he sought a new form of politics that was based on Islam in which Muslims would have complete cultural autonomy for their holistic development.

For the sake of analysis, this article examines this long speech after dividing it into two parts. In the first part, Iqbal discusses his theoretical engagement with the idea of nationalism or the nation-state in general from the perspective of Islam. In his view, Islam comprises of ethical and political dimensions of a social life. The political dimension includes a social structure regulated by a legal system and animated by a specific ethical ideal.¹⁷ Therefore, it is developed into a well-defined community, possessing a moral universe of its own. In other words, Islam constitutes a moral community that is political in nature. These communitarian forms of life, however, is shaped by the contours of different cultural landscapes. Iqbal argues that this political community is under attack owing to the influx of cultural and political ideas from the West. He laments that “our young men” have accepted this without any critical appreciation.

Iqbal figured that the political structure based on territorial-based nationhood had emerged in the West owing to some specific historical circumstances. Therefore, he argued that this notion of territory as the only principle of political solidarity was adaptable to the Christian tradition because, in Europe, Christianity was understood purely as a monastic order that gradually developed into a church organization. Politics, in this sense, is not integral to Christianity; thus, it has bifurcated the already spiritual domain from the material. For this reason, it is not contradictory to adopt a national system of ethics and polity instead of the universal ethics of Jesus. The Protestant revolt against the established church authority was successful because Luther’s protest was not directed against any system of politics associated with Christianity. However, the peculiar political condition in which this occurred resulted in a complete separation of religion from the political authority. The ultimate result of this transformation was the domestication of religion, i.e., Christianity, into private life, which, in this sense, was a natural development.

15 Regarding Iqbal’s categorical view of nationalism as secular and secularism as privatization of religion, both views are contested and criticized as simplistic by a vast majority of scholars today. It is obvious from his writing that the Western political experience was his primary reference to develop his argument. However, there are considerable diversities within the “Western” political experiences with regard to nation-state formation and secularization processes. See, for instance, Casanova, José. 2011. “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms.” In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Craig J. Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 54–74. Oxford, N.Y: Oxford University Press.

16 Javed Majeed, introduction to *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, by Muhammad Iqbal, Saeed Sheikh, ed. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012); Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal: Islam and Nationalism in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

17 Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements*.

This is not possible in the case of Islam, Iqbal argues. He emphatically states that “a Luther in the world of Islam, however, is an impossible phenomenon”¹⁸ as Islam does not bifurcate the world of spirit and matter in the first place. He further explains that “the nature of the Prophet’s religious experience, as disclosed in the Quran, however, is wholly different. It is not a mere experience in the sense of a purely biological event, happening inside the experiment and necessitating no reactions on its social environment. It is individual experience creative of a social order.” The immediate outcome of revelation in Islam was to form a social and political order. The social order was, therefore, integral to the life of Islam; however, it was disrupted by the Western imported form of politics. Iqbal identifies nationalism as a political project to unify the community on a secular ground, which is destructive to the idea of the Muslim community in Islam. He says, “At the present moment, the national idea is racializing the outlook of Muslims and thus materially counteracting the humanizing work of Islam.”¹⁹

In the second part of his speech, Iqbal deals with the Muslim minority question in India. This question is germane when Muslims happen to be a minority and marginalized within the anti-colonial nationalist movement represented by the INC. This issue had animated well in the political discourses of the time. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) turned away from these nationalist politics proposed by INC and began to address Muslim questions separately. Iqbal’s association with IUML was well-known, and he had held various posts in its organization.²⁰ However, the politics of IUML was depicted as “communal” and therefore considered as anti-national. By tracing the early historical formations of Indian secularism, Tejani argues that secularism in India had less to do with creating ethics of tolerance than the formulation of nationalism which is often defined in opposition to the “communal” politics of the Muslim League in the early twentieth century.²¹ Therefore, the politics of IUML was framed as separatist, communal, and anti-secular; and Iqbal addresses this “othering” well in this speech.

Iqbal proposes a territorial solution for this crisis through a religious line. What he was seeking ultimately was a politics in which “Islam is itself destiny and will not suffer a destiny.”²² In this address, he calls for a “Muslim India within India,” situating it geographically in the Muslim-populated northwestern frontier of united India, including Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind, and Balochistan. For him, this divide would benefit the development of Muslims and non-Muslims in India because this state was based on cultural autonomy. He then addresses the allegation of “communalism” and argues that “community, which is inspired by feelings of ill-will toward other communities

18 Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements*, 5.

19 Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements*, 6.

20 Sevea, *The Political Philosophy*.

21 Shabnum Tejani, *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History, 1890-1950* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007).

22 Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements*, 6.

is low and ignoble”; otherwise, it is “indispensable to the formation of a harmonious whole in a country like India.”²³

There are a number of issues with Iqbal’s idea of the nation. It is not clear from his speech what would be the status of the non-Muslim minority in such politics. Interestingly, he ignored the plight of Muslims consciously or unconsciously in other regions of India, especially in South India. What interests me the most is the outward contradiction in his position, which is animated in the same speech. Although he rejects the idea of nationalism as inherently inimical to Islam, he accepts it as a solution to the Muslim question in India. At no point in his speech does Iqbal address this contradiction adequately, probably because he might not have felt this as a contradiction as we do today. In this situation, it is important to examine what exactly did he mean by a “Muslim nation.” Considering his critique of nationalism illustrated in the first part, it is difficult to assume that he was thinking about a separate modern nation. Instead, he was reimagining a different form of politics, similar to a nation without nationalism.

This confusion is most likely a product of a specific conception of nationalism. Typically, nationalism has been understood as a territorially based claim of a community. Anderson argues that nationalism is “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”²⁴ When he writes “inherently limited,” he refers to the territorial character of nationalism as essential to the very existence of the idea. What is more at stake here is the sovereign aspect of it within a territory that is in the making. In his vision of “nation,” it is possible to argue that Iqbal contests this sovereign aspect of the territorial authority than the territoriality of the state itself because “territory” had become the basis of reorganization of nations by that time.

Chatterjee argues that nationalism in India is imagined in two spheres, spiritual and material.²⁵ Intellectuals in India imagined indigenous or communal nationhood spiritually; however, politically they had no choice other than to comply with the political sovereignty of the colonial state. The Muslim discourse of nationalism, therefore, must be understood within this context. In this sense, Iqbal’s idea of a “Muslim nation” could be viewed as an attempt to form a different form of polity where the political aspects of Islam would not be curtailed. This is legitimate because, as Ayesha Jalal pointed out, Pakistan as a separate state became a realistic option for the Muslim elite only after 1946;²⁶ therefore, Iqbal’s aspiration to form a Muslim nation has to be understood within an open-ended context of a spectrum of political possibilities. Nevertheless, it should not be considered as a “derivative discourse,” rather a different mode of politics itself as Prakash rightly observed.²⁷ Thus, a mutual transformation or hybridity, to quote Bhabha, is to be imagined in the form of politics in which Western and Muslim traditions change and are adapted

23 Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements*, 6–10.

24 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), 23.

25 Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*.

26 Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

27 Prakash, *Another Reason*.

together.²⁸ However, Iqbal was also aware of the dominance of the nation-state discourse in this encounter when he says, “I do not know what will be the final fate of the national idea in the world of Islam. Whether Islam will assimilate and transform it, as it has assimilated and transformed many ideas expressive of a different spirit before, or allow a radical transformation of its own structure by the force of this idea, is hard to predict.”²⁹ In any case, he provided a different imagination to politics, although it was not developed through the formation of Pakistan.

As noted, the territorial aspect of a nation-state was not as problematic to him as the sovereignty of the state because nationalism is a political project to make a community, regulating the conduct of the subject in a desirable way. As Taylor observed, nationalism and secularism are deeply intertwined so that the modern nation-state can function as the moral authority.³⁰ According to him, such a form of politics is predicated upon two features, horizontal solidarity and secular homogenous time. Interestingly, Iqbal sensed some deeper structures of the modern nation-state and its homogenizing or centralizing tendencies ahead of others in his time. What is at stake here is the intrusive power of the secular modern-state to form its subjects, regulating and defining the space or religion for the sake of the national community.³¹ Iqbal could sense this power of the modern state, if not wholly, while critiquing nationalism.

CONCLUSION

This paper examines Muhammad Iqbal’s critique of nationalism articulated in his famous Allahabad address in 1930 in light of the recent development of the nationalism debate in India. By problematizing an inescapable tension animated in this speech regarding the acceptance of the idea of nationalism, this paper calls for a different approach to understand his political thought within the intellectual context that blossomed under British colonialism. We approach this contradiction through the prism of subaltern critique of nationalism and argue that this confusion is untenable if approached through this perspective. Iqbal visualized the “Muslim nation” as a cultural unit based on religious solidarity, not on the territorial solidarity that is integral to the modern nation-state. Although the territory is an essential component in understanding nationalism in its mainstream sense, his critique of nationalism was not against the very idea of territory; rather it was against a territory-based state’s homogenizing tendencies, which is secularizing in his view. Moreover, his call for a Muslim nation has to be understood within an open-ended context of a spectrum of political possibilities.³² Therefore, his idea

28 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

29 Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements*, 6.

30 Charles Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

31 Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*; Mahmood, *Religious Difference in Secular Age: A Minority Report*.

32 The central argument of this essay aligns with a similar argument (drawing on a different theoretical

of a “Muslim nation” cannot be reduced to the idea of Pakistan that developed later because it has fallen into a political format of a homogenizing modern-state structure, which Iqbal never aspired to.

framework) that Sevea and others have proposed. However, this essay problematizes Iqbal’s speech, arguing that his speech itself is riddled with contradictions that demand a different perspective to approach it. This study tries to perceive the speech through a perspective drawn from the subaltern critique of nationalism.

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