IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

MASTER THESIS

DISCURSIVE TRADITION(S) AS ICONOCLASM: THE FALSIFICATION OF HISTORY AND THE EMERGENCE OF OPPOSITIONAL MUSLIMS IN INDIA

SAIYID ASHRAF HUSAIN JAFRI

THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ALEV ERKILET

ISTANBUL, 2023

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by
SAIYID ASHRAF HUSAIN JAFRI

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology

THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ALEV ERKILET

ISTANBUL, 2023

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of master of arts in Sociology.

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This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname: Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri

Signature:

ÖZ

İKONOKLASTLAR OLARAK SÖYLEMSEL GELENEKLER: TARİHİN TAHRİF EDİLMESİ VE MUHALİF MÜSLÜMANLARIN ORTAYA ÇIKIŞI

Jafri, Saiyid Ashraf Husain
Sosyoloji Yüksek Lisans Programı
Öğrenci Numarası: 214021009
Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-0002-8868-5328
Ulusal Tez Merkezi Referans Numarası:10554244

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Alev Erkilet
Ekim 2023, 109 Sayfa

Bu tez, tarihin (yeniden) inşasının ulusal 'ruhun' oluşumunda nasıl önemli bir rol oynadığına dayanmaktadır. Tarihin (yeniden) yaratılması, ortak bir ilksel değişkenin kavramsallaştırılmasında önemli bir rol oynamakta, bu da modern ulus-devlette manevi otoritenin kaybını meşrulaştırmaya veya telafi etmeye yardımcı olmaktadır. Bu (yeniden) yaratım, hemen hemen her modern ulus-devlette var olan, endişe verici derecede yaygın bir olgudur; yerel çatışmaların belirli örnekleri, bir ulusun tarihsel sürekliliğini tanımlamak için kanıt olarak ele alınır. Bu süreç, bu tür tarihsel olayların epistemolojisini göz ardı eder ve daha sonra bunları bir ulusun tarihinin salon süresine çerçeveler, bu da aynı şeyin ilksel varlığını haklı çıkarmaya yardımcı olur. Ulus-devletin oluşumunda yer alan bu homojen bakış açısı, 'biz' ancak bir 'onlar' tanımlandıktan sonra tanımlanabileceği için dışlayıcı hale gelmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu tez, İngiliz sömürgeci tarih yazımı nedeniyle 'onlar' kategorisine yerleştirilen Hintli-Müslümanlarla ilgili meseleyi tartışmaktadır. Halihazırda Hintli-Müslümanlar, İslami metinlerle farklı tarihsel hermenötik etkileşimler nedeniyle ortaya çıkan çeşitli Söylemsel Gelenek(ler)e bölünmüştür. Buna ek olarak, bu durum Hintli-Müslümanlar arasında hermenötik-heterojenliğe yol açmakta, sonuç olarak İslami gelenekler büyük ölçüde tabakalı kalmaktadır. Bu tez, söz konusu iki İslami geleneğe odaklanmaktadır: Ehl-i Sünnet ve Deobandi hareketi. 'Hint-Hindular' arasında aşırı düzeyde bir dini coşkunun varlığı, Müslümanları doğaları gereği ikonoklast olarak sunmaya çalışan İngiliz sömürge tarih yazımının bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Yirmi bir katılımcının yer aldığı etnografik bir çalışmadan elde edilen ampirik verileri kullanarak, genç Hint-Müslümanlar arasında pijama giyen Protestanlar ve "Muhalif Müslümanlar" gibi bazı yeni olguların ortaya çıktığını savunuyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Giyen Protestanlar, Hint-Müslümanlar, Hint-Hindular, Manevi Otorite, Muhalif Müslümanlar, Pijama, Ulus-Devlet.

ABSTRACT

DISCURSIVE TRADITION(S) AS ICONOCLASM: THE FALSIFICATION OF HISTORY AND THE EMERGENCE OF OPPOSITIONAL MUSLIMS IN INDIA

Jafri, Saiyid Ashraf Husain

MA in Sociology

Student ID: 214021009

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-0002-8868-5328

National Thesis Centre Reference Number: 10554244

Thesis/Project Supervisor: Prof. Alev Erkilet

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This thesis is based on how the (re)construction of history plays a significant role in the formation of the national 'spirit'. The (re)creation of history plays an essential role in the conceptualisation of a common primordial variable, which further helps in justifying or making up for the loss of spiritual authority in the modern nation-state. This (re)creation is an alarmingly common phenomenon in almost every modern nation-state, wherein certain instances of indigenous conflicts are taken up as proof to define a nation's historical continuity. This process ignores the epistemology of such historical events. Then, it frames them into the longue durée of a nation's history, which helps justify the primordial existence of the same.

History's homogeneous (re)construction serves as the foundation of the modern nation-state building process, as the nation-state finds it incumbent to identify the 'them' to crystalise the 'us'. This thesis discusses this issue about the Indian Muslims, who, due to the British colonial histography, have been placed into the 'them' category. Presently, Indian Indian-Muslims are divided into various Islamic traditions that have come into existence due to diverse historical hermeneutical engagements with Islamic texts. In addition, this leads to a hermeneutical heterogeneity among them, and as a result, the Islamic traditions remain largely stratified. This thesis focuses on two such

Islamic traditions: Ahl-e Sunnat and the Deobandi movement. The rising *Hindutva* (Hindu nationalism) among the Indian Hindus greatly consolidates and justifies itself through British colonial historiography, which has always presented Muslims as being inherently iconoclastic. Employing the empirical data obtained from an ethnographic study involving 21 participants, I argue that several new phenomena have emerged among young Indian-Muslims, including what we call the *Pajāma* -wearing Protestants and "oppositional Muslims."

Keywords: Indian-Muslims, Indian-Hindus, Nation-State, Oppositional Muslims, *Pajāma*-wearing Protestants, (Re)creation of History, Spiritual Authority.

DEDICATION

هرگز نمیرد آنکه دلش زنده شد به عشق

ثبت است در جریدهٔ عالم دوام ما

He whose heart is brought to life through love never dies.

Our perpetuity is recorded in the pages of the cosmic book (Nasr 1987, 271).

Hafiz Shirazi (d.1390)

Dr. Syed Naqi Husain Jafri (D.2007)- Who, despite his love for literature, would have overlooked his nephews' grammatical gaucheries.

Akhtar Jafri (D.2013)- Who would have taken an interest in this thesis, which sits so opposed to her passion for numbers.

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بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah – the most compassionate, most merciful.

The Holy Quran (1:1)

بود که لطف ازل رهنمون شود حافظ

وگرنه تا به ابد شرمسار خود باشم

May the pre-eternal (*azal*) grace be the guide of Hafiz

Otherwise, I will be ashamed of myself forever (Nasr, 1989, 213).

Hafiz Shirazi (d.1390)

At the outset, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Prof. Alev Erkilet, who has been an anchor of support during my stay at Ibn Haldun University. She has sat through my incoherent ramblings on disordered hypotheses and, through her intellectual wisdom, steered them in the right direction. Learning under her tutelage has been a pleasure, and to quote Mirza Ghalib (d.1869) in a very literalist manner, that might resonate with a few of my Muslim brothers' possessing anthropomorphic leanings: "Having become the King's companion, he walks struttingly; otherwise, what other prestige does Ghalib have in the city?"[1]. I would also like to express my gratitude to Prof. Ramazan Aras, who displayed confidence in my writing abilities and, knowingly or unknowingly, encouraged me to finish the thesis in the stipulated time period. Prof. Irfan Ahmad, due to his familiarity with the spatiality of the topic, provided me with immense guidance during the last leg of the writing stage and suggested possible corrections and readings, which enormously helped refine the overall coherence of the text. I want to acknowledge the Sociology Department for awarding me the Departmental Travel Grant, which greatly assisted me during my fieldwork.

[1] "Hua hai Shah kā musāhib phire hai itrāta / wagarna shehr mein Ghalib ki ābro kya hai". See for reference. Aijaz Ahmed, W.S Merwin, Adrienne Rich, William Stafford, David Ray, Thomas Fitzsimmons, Mark Strand, William Hunt. *Ghazals of Ghalib*. Delhi, India; Oxford University Press. 1994, pp 141, https://www.rekhta.org/couplets/huaa-hai-shah-kaa-musaahib-phire-hai-itraataa-mirza-ghalib-couplets or https://ranasafvi.com/bana-hai-shah-ka-musahib-phirey-hai-itraata-legendary-rivalry-between-ghalib-and-zauq/

As with my academic journey, this thesis also has the imprint of two cities: Istanbul and Aligarh. The fieldwork was conducted in Aligarh, India, while the written draft was prepared in Istanbul, Turkey. Firstly, I would like to thank the students of Aligarh Muslim University, who were highly receptive and took a keen interest in my topic. They volunteered to sit for lengthy interviews and were very forthcoming in narrating their personal experiences to a 'stranger'.

Furthermore, the fieldwork at Aligarh would not have been possible without the unwavering support of my friends at Aligarh from my undergraduate days, whom I hold in the highest regard and who, despite their academic preoccupations, helped me locate interlocutors for the fieldwork. Moreover, akin to almost every research project that has an imprint of Aligarh, my research could not have been possible without Abid *bhai*, Sheru, and Khalid, the proprietors of small tea shops, who provided me with food at odd hours, without expecting any immediate monetary relief.

In Istanbul, I would like to thank The Writing Centre staff for their assistance in reviewing the initial chapters and providing feedback. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr Usman Masood, who, due to several transnational commonalities, was overzealous in discussing René Guénon and offered his insights. I would also like to thank my roommates, who were a daily source of inspiration and whose friendship and sincere advice helped me navigate the administrative Kafkaesque that surrounded the late stages of my thesis. During the writing process, the conversations with my colleagues gave me invaluable insights and perceptiveness. While some have strived to check my rising Puritan spirit and have brought me back to my *Sulh e-Kuli* roots, others have, due to a (joy)ous conversational ease, kept me sane during the writing process. The frequent discussions that challenged my hypotheses made it possible to reformulate my subjectivities and mend the argumentative loopholes.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my parents, Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri and Tayyaba Jafri, who have been my pillars of support throughout this journey. Furthermore, I would like to thank my siblings, Saiyed Naseer Husain Jafri and Haleema Jafri, who, due to sharing a similar habitus and a consanguineal bond, have understood me better when others could not.

Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri

ISTANBUL, 2023

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a recent political controversy, an Indian minister celebrated his birthday by cutting a "temple-shaped" cake with a portrait of one of the principal Hindu deities.[2] The slicing of cakes is undoubtedly a sign of Westernization, and the shapes, sizes, colours, and even pictures printed onto cakes result from the increasing demand for them. The intricately detailed frosting has the same fate as all products produced for conspicuous consumption: it is designed to be consumed and is, therefore, ephemeral. Typically, a baker does not assert that his products have inherent animistic qualities; instead, he views them as a means to an end. The controversy was political but lacked substance since it converted an act of conformist consumption into *iconoclasm* (used as a synonym for Islam), mediatised as it was, in a rushed – and depthless – television media news cycle. However, the case that we would like to tread on is the invocation of a historical incident in order to criticise the act. The cake-cutting allegedly reminded another member of the ruling Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) of Mahmud of Ghazni (d. 1030 CE). This narrative presents itself in the newspaper headline and draws its continuity from colonial roots (Van Dijk, 1987). Mahmud of Ghazni was "a favourite of the British historians," who used him as an example to justify their colonial rule over the sub-continent populace (Metcalf, 2009). Colonial apparatuses wanted to present themselves as the emancipators of the 'indigenous' population who had been, until now, under the 'tyranny' of the Turkish 'invaders'.

The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians, first published in 1849 by Sir Henry M. Elliot, tried to present the British officers as delivering the 'subjects' from the oppressive 'Muslim rule'. In the presentation and furthering of this narrative, Mahmud of Ghazni was used as an antagonist who had participated in an imagined destruction of the "Hindu civilisation," and he did so due to the supposedly

[2] https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/general-news/kamal-nath-reminds-me-of-muhammad-ghori-narottam-mishra-on-temple-cake-controversy-articleshow.html

iconoclastic nature of Islam. This view was further promoted by British historians and their Hindu sycophants (Dhar 30, 1987; in Ahmad 483, 2012). The ‘imagined destruction’ of a civilisation by the ‘other’ is a prevalent Mythomoteur (Smith, 1986), in which the ‘idealised’ civilisation is claimed to be allegedly destroyed by the ‘other’. The ‘other’ varies from civilisation to civilisation; it could be the Persians for the Greeks, the Goths for the Romans, the Arabs for the Sassanids, or the Turks for the Hindus. In the case of India, the Muslims are seen as the ‘other’ who, through ‘deceit’ and a lack of tact amongst ‘Hindu’ kingdoms, were able to destroy the ‘idealised civilisation’ of Hindus. As seen in the case of colonial rule, the (re)creation of history is done to justify one’s political authority. Though this method of establishing a sense of authority is based on creating the ‘other’, medieval traditional authority had little to do with the ‘other’ and more to do with ruling classes.

The secular nature of the modern nation-state enterprise necessitates its separation from the spiritual realm, wherein "God" is regarded as an “optional-extra” that is attached to the state and may be utilised as needed (Billig 77, 1995). René Guénon (2001) talks quite convincingly in his book on the separation between spiritual authority and temporal power, which in the past acted as “two indispensable aspects” and were bound in a cohesive unity. The prevailing temporal ‘power’ over the spiritual authority has resulted in a secularisation of the ruling authority. Having lost the right of the king (Ius), the emperor/leader of the new world leads the life of a Promethean man (Nasr 1989), who is looked upon as an equal or, in some cases, even as a public ‘servant’. The new age leaders are not viewed as pontifex (maker of the road) who served as a bridge between the temporal and spiritual worlds but rather as replaceable-temporal beings. The pontifical nature of the emperor created a balance between the functioning of the state and religious authority, and the rule was supported by a ‘tradition’. When we refer to tradition, we do so in the same sense that Guénon (2014) did, namely, the ultimate truths of society, which were essential components of spirituality and mysticism. The lack of tradition or pontifical nature is not limited only to the medieval emperors; the lack of ‘Tradition’ here also defines a person who does not have any ‘higher’ principle guiding his discourse.

The loss of man's traditional understanding results in a profane nature of reasoning that disregards the true forms of life and restricts knowledge to its most fundamental

level (Guénon 2004, 16). This happens when the "spiritual universe is looked upon as abandoned by God and given over as prey to accident and chance" (Hegel 2005, 13). As a result of society's detachment from a 'higher' spiritual purpose, society now drags the truth down to its level, and the absence of any objective morality compels modern man to engage in ceaseless disputes. Man does not look upon himself as being created in 'God's own image' (Genesis 1:27) or strive towards becoming the "perfect man" (*al-insān al-kāmil*) but instead focuses on the immediate singular primordial attachment in order to form his kingdom. His difficulty lies merely in selecting one of these primordial attachments, which can include language, territory, religion, or culture, to justify one's dominance over others. Having abandoned spiritual authority, or the *Ius* (right of king), the state is compelled to devise discursive means of appropriating the right of kings. As shown in the preceding examples, the state does so through a (re)creation of history that revolves around an idealised civilisation and its subsequent destruction by a 'rogue' ethnicity. In this view, forming a nation-state is viewed as 'natural,' and it is assumed that people who share a language, religion, or culture should unite to form a separate nation-state (Eagleton, 1991; in Billig 1995, 15). However, the primordial variable is not fixed; for some nation-states, it may be language, while for others, it may be religion. If a nation-state chooses religion as its fundamental variable, it must (re)create its history with religion as the central factor. Here, an 'other' religion acts as the 'destructive' force that eventually destroys the 'ideal civilisation'; hence, the primordial variable acts as the sole possible unifier of the nation. Returning to the discussion of India, we observe through the colonial historical sources that religion has been selected as the fundamental primordial variable in the Indian context. Islam is looked upon as the 'other', which is supposedly responsible for the destruction of the 'Hindu civilisation'. Thus, the Islamic tradition(s) are perpetually viewed with suspicion.

India's Islamic discursive tradition(s) can be generally divided into three main categories: the Deobandis, the Ahl-e Sunnat, and the Ahl-i Hadith. The Deobandis and the Ahl-e Sunnat constitute the majority of the population in the northern parts of India. At the same time, the Ahl-i Hadith are a vocal yet numerically significant minority. The Deobandi and Ahl-e Sunnat are adherents of the Hanafi jurisprudence (fiqh), named after Imam Abu Hanifa (d. 767/150). The Deoband Seminary was founded in 1867 in a small town called Deoband, which is located in India's Uttar Pradesh

province. The school's foundation was laid in the aftermath of the 1857 Revolt, which was the final nail in the coffin for the already waning Muslim political power in North India, and the Deoband movement was an effort to revive Islam and renew the Muslim faith. Concerning the Ahlus Sunnah wa'l Jama'at movement, the central figure was Ahmad Raza Khan (d.1922) of Bareilly. Due to a linguistic distortion, the movement is popularly known as the 'Barelvi' movement, though many followers view it as pejorative.

The theological differences between the two groups revolve around issues related to the prophets' knowledge of the unseen and their omnipresence and omniscience (Masud 2000, xlvii). This has led to several debates between the scholars of the two groups, with even the 'central figure' of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement calling for a fatwa (scholarly opinion) against the other group (Tareen 310, 2020). The Deobandis emphasise the importance of the individual, who is expected to stand apart from society in order to transform it, abandoning some of the cultural practices that have become associated with Islam. This opinion that is held by the Deobandis went against the forms of "practised Islam" (Waardenburg 30, 2007; in Ahmad 254, 2015), which were much defended by Ahmad Raza Khan. However, this defence of 'practised Islam' by Khan cannot lead us to place the debates between the two in a simple reformist/anti-reformist dichotomy, as Khan himself was against the frivolous spending in organising Muslim weddings and, although he disagreed with the Deobandi insistence on banning the celebrations of Mawlid, he nonetheless criticised popular customs attached to festivities (Ahmad 2020, 293-6). Therefore, although limited, a convergence of ideas can be seen between the Ahl-e Sunnah and the Deobandi movements. Khan's reciprocity with the Deobandi movement was based on his attempts to identify the boundaries of Islam in response to the loss of Muslim political autonomy, which had, in his view, made Muslims more susceptible to losing their Islamic identity.

Robinson (2000) provides a detailed account of the conditions in Delhi and Lucknow after the Revolt of 1857 and how the leading figures of Deoband witnessed the disaster that befell the Muslim centres of power (143–50). These scholars, having witnessed the destruction, felt the need to dissociate themselves from the British colonial power and moved to the quaint *qasbahs* (Arabic; Fortress, or 'Walled town') of Deoband, Saharanpur, Kandhlah, and Gangoh, where they sought to manifest a new form of

"inward-looking" gaze that was primarily concerned with the lives of individuals (Metcalf 2014, 85–6). This reaction was not only limited to the Deoband ulema. Khan also criticised the Muslim leaders who were involved in the Khilafat Movement because of their proximity to Gandhi. He believed that Muslims should preserve their "public markers of Muslim distinction (*shā'ir-i Islam*)" (Tareen 2020, 290). What we see in both of these cases is a distrust for one another and also an attempt towards a non-conformist attitude in both groups. Until now, what we have established is that despite the various theological contentions that arrest both schools of thought, they still converge on several points. They do not fall into diametrically opposed categories of orthodox/mystical, reformist/anti-reformist, or urban/rural; instead, these categories are not mutually exclusive in their case. Ashraf Ali Thanvi (d. 1943), a prominent Deobandi scholar, while differentiating between the Ahl-e Sunnat and the Ahl-I Hadith, remarks that "the Barelvi's are like members of one's own household who have gone astray," while he describes the latter as not being "part of the household to begin with" (Tareen 2020, 241). Hence, the Deobandi do not outright consider the Ahl-e Sunnat to be completely misguided. Another example that we find in Thanvi's life is his visit to Gajner, which is located in the district of Kanpur, wherein he met the "Naw-Muslim" ("new Muslim", i.e., newly converted), whose Muslim identity was only limited to the official governmental registers. They did not accept food that was given to them by Thanvi, and they still indulged in Hindu customs like *phere* (a purificatory rite involving making seven rounds around a fire) and even having a '*choti'* (leaving a lock of hair untrimmed while the rest of the head is shaven). The only proof that they were Muslims was the *Taziya* (replicas of the tombs of Hazrat Husayn, which are carried during the Muharram processions). Here, Thanvi, despite the immediate disapproval of his companions, advised the villagers to continue keeping the *Taziya* and even recommended they hold the Milad congregations, both of which are considered Bid'a (innovation) by the Deobandi's (Masud 2000, Iv). This means that when faced with an immediate 'threat' (the Arya Samaj[3] missionaries in

[3] The Arya Samaj movement was founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-83) in 1875, with branches in Ahmedabad and Rajkot (located in modern-day Indian state of Gujrat). It started to gain popularity "only at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century", this came due to the "apprehensions" regarding the number of Hindus who were being converted into Christianity. Therefore, there was a call to 'reclaim' those lost to Christianity through the Hindu notion of *Shuddhi* (purification) (Hardiman 2007, 4). This movement later on became more ambitious in its pursuits and strived towards the 'purification' of Muslims, with the first documented case of the 'cleansing' of ones' 'Muslimness' being reported in 1877, wherein Dayanand Saraswati performed a 'purification' of a Muslim man belonging to Dehra Dun (a small town in northern India) (Sikand 1997, 68). As Yoginder

this case), the theological 'scope' of Islam finds new flexibility. Keeping in mind our previous discussion on the fabrication of history, we can also argue that this 'othering' might also force an increased level of social cohesion between the members of the two groups. Hence, our ethnographic research was based on studying the contemporary Muslim reaction to Hindu nationalism. Does the existence of such an "external threat" necessitate a change in the inter-sectarian dealings of the Indian Muslims?

The theory will only take us this far. To test this hypothesis, I travelled to the northern-Indian seat of Muslim social capital, Aligarh. Aligarh is a small city located some 125 kilometres east of Delhi, the capital of India. Due to the existence of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh is considered the "largest citadel of educated [Indian] Muslims in the world," which has influenced generations of Indian Muslims and helped in the subsequent formation of their socio-political identity (Wajihuddin 2021, 14). Due to the existence of the Aligarh Muslim University, "the way Aligarh thinks, the way Aligarh works, largely determine the place Muslims occupy in the pattern of Indian life" (Ali 1991, 204; in Varshney 2002, 156). Being at the centre of almost all contemporary issues pertaining to Muslims, the students of Aligarh Muslim University seemed to be ideal candidates to test our hypotheses. Our interlocutors neither disappointed us nor disproved our initial hypotheses; instead, they compelled us to reconsider the importance we had unwittingly accorded to the "orthodoxy" of Islam. We have classified them as 'Pajāma-wearing Protestants' in order to properly encapsulate their criticism of Muslim 'orthodoxy' without imposing a purely Christian label on an indigenous phenomenon. The second feature that we found during our fieldwork was the appearance of an 'oppositional Muslim' (Geertz 1971, 65). These oppositional Muslims are not Muslims due to the ascribed circumstances that they are born into, but rather, as a matter of opposition to the antagonism that they face due to their ascribed identity. Owing to the rising hostility that they face from Hindu nationalism; this antagonism transmutes into an identity-preserving phenomenon among these oppositional Muslims.

S. Sikand (1997) puts it, "since Hindu missionary activity as well as Hindu religious nationalism… built up on the foundation of a profound antipathy of Islam and its adherents, it has tremendous consequences of *Muslim public behaviour in South Asia*" (80-1). Therefore, one of the consequences was an 'awakening' of a revivalist conscience among the South-Asian Muslims, which transcended the distinction between the Ulema and the common people (Sikand 1997, 81), and according to our own understanding, also transcended the Islamic traditions.

The second chapter that deals with the literature review is divided into two parts: (i) Tradition and False History and (ii) Discursive tradition(s). Both sections critically review the existing literature and the existing arguments pertaining to the two topics. The third chapter is based on the methodology section, which showcases and defends the internal empirical questions and themes that present themselves during the data collection. This chapter examines in depth the theoretical discourse surrounding the positionality of the ethnographer. Furthermore, a reflexive approach has been taken in order to understand the interviewing process.

Chapter Four is based on the Perennialist school's understanding of 'Tradition' and how the lack of the same results in the creation of a false history. Attempts have been made to examine historical examples through the lens of Tradition by employing them "in ways that traditional historians may not approve" (Ahmed 2002, 9). Nonetheless, the presented examples are independently articulate and logically consistent, allowing them to function as a chain in the development of the argument. Finally, the chapter on the creation of false history ends with the unfortunate story of Chandan, which, through a life example, exemplifies our discussions on the same and spatially bounds our preceding arguments from a broader worldview to a specific one.

The discussions in Chapter 5 are based on a reinterpretation of the term Islam and what or who could be considered 'Islam'. These arguments are supplemented by looking at two early theological texts, namely, Al-Baghdadi's *al-Farq Bain al-firak* (Moslem Schisms and Sects) (1920) and Imam al-Ghazali's *Faysal al-Tafriqa Bayna al-Islam wa al-Zandaqa* (On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam) (2002). Al-Baghdadi's work is arguably one of the most "important" works pertaining to the 'Moslem sects'(Watt 80, 1962; Topcu 77, 2019; Judd, 1999), while al-Ghazali's later work was written as an "immanent critique" for the former. Critically looking at the theological works provides us with a non-orientalist' framework for defining what can be considered 'Islam'. The theological retrospective aids us in identifying a compartmentalised yet succinct definition of Islam that does not view Islam as an analytical category of "religion." This actualising process further leads us to the two prominent Discursive Tradition(s) of India: The Ahl-e Sunnat and the Deoband movements, which fall under our earlier theological interpretation of Islam. They fit well within our extended theological definition of Islam, which looks at the discursive

understandings arising from the 'hermeneutical engagements' with the Islamic text. Furthermore, al-Ghazali's differentiation between material heresy and formal heresy helps us in not accepting the "pre-text, text, and con-text(s)" (Ahmed 2015) that fall under the hermeneutical engagements as something given; adding al-Ghazali's framework into the equation provides us with a much richer understanding of Islam as his text has come from within the Islamic tradition. Hence, the findings transcend opaque categorisations and help us to "understand religious identities as historically produced in religious institutions that are in a constant process of transformation" (van der Veer 2003, 30).

These religious identities that are purported as being in a 'constant process of transformation' are what the findings of this thesis aim to recognise. The phenomenon of oppositional Muslims that we come across in our fieldwork is similar to the identification of the constantly fluctuating religious identities, which, as seen in Chapter 5, is based more on a self-definition of Islam itself. The findings conclude that the rising religious fervour among the Indian Hindus has, as a latent manifestation function, produced a more identity-asserting class of young Muslims, who are beginning to take a more 'oppositional' approach towards the rising Hindu nationalism. Similarly, the Pajāma wearing Protestants fall into the category of Oppositional Muslims who share an oppositional reaction towards Hindutva while also criticising the class of Muslims Ulema. Their primary contention is that the Islamic Ulema of India has converted the religious institutions into what they call "*āmāj-gah"* (Persian; shelter/habitat) of their own *Maslak* (Arabic; path) and have, in turn, destroyed these institutions of learning. Apart from the criticism of the prevalent nepotism in the ranks of Ulema, they were much more critical of their alleged departure from 'Islamic principles' in the face of Hindu nationalism. The critique of the established 'orthodoxy' is not something alien to the Islamic tradition; therefore, here, they do not mirror the Christian phenomenon of Protestantism, but rather the tradition of one of the earliest companions of the Prophet, Abu Dhār Al-Ghifari (RA) (cf. Shariati, 2015).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic literature is an ever-increasing self-multiplying phenomenon that has the capacity to multiply every academic year. With over 5.14 million academic articles published in just 2022[4], the daunting task that is faced by any researcher is determining how they should approach this ever-replicating Hydra. When examining qualitative research sources, we believe the best course of action is to return to the 'giants' of the field, as almost all subsequent research is either influenced by them or published in order to invalidate them. Recent studies are heavily influenced by previous writings and, in general, do not provide a tectonic shift in perspective; however, if they do provide such a shift, they ought to be considered in the same manner as it has been done in our study. Our literature review can be divided into two portions: arguments about the creation of false history and the Indian Islamic Discursive Tradition. As a consequence of this, the section on the literature review is broken up into two subsections, the first of which concentrates on false history and the second on the discursive traditions of Islam. The literature review provides us with the foundational arguments in this field of study as well as their subsequent theoretical development.

2.1. Tradition and False History

The heart of the arguments in this thesis takes their influence from the groundbreaking work of René Guénon (2004), *The Crisis of the Modern World*, which is a critique of modernity. It is a detailed critique of the modern man and the rise of what Guénon refers to as "profane philosophy" or "profane science," which have uprooted the modern man from spirituality and mysticism and given him a "purely material character" (Guénon 13-6, 2004). Guénon 's critique of the West is unparalleled to any of his contemporaries; "Guénon begins where [Edward] Said ends" (Hallaq 145, 2018;

[4]https://wordsrated.com/number-of-academic-papers-published-per-year/#:~:text=It%20is%20estimated%20that%20at,%2C%20reviews%2C%20and%20conference%20proceedings.

in Dickson 599, 2021). He quite meticulously differentiates between the categorisation of 'West', which is considered a ‘modern mentality’, and the term ‘East’, which denotes the contrary (23). One of the most important sections of this book is the chapter on ‘Individualism’, wherein he critiques the nature of the modern man and defines it as a ‘negation of any principle higher than individuality’ (55). Individualism, according to Guénon, is the reason behind the ‘decline of the West’, as it is only through individualism that the development of ideas that are from ‘the lowest possibilities of mankind’ and are based on the negation of any supra-human element, comes to be (55). This critique also considers the Protestant movement, and he equates the Protestant refusal to recognise any organised interpretative authority with the introduction of 'free criticism,' which meant that anyone could make religious judgments, thereby paving the way for the formation of various new sects (60-1). His critique of the concept of democracy, which he positions immediately after his discussions on individualism, is perhaps the most controversial aspect of his book. His argument is simple: “The higher cannot proceed from the lower,” meaning that the people cannot ‘confer’ a power that they do not themselves possess. According to Guénon, power is something that can only be given by a higher authority, spiritual authority (73). His arguments regarding the disjunction between spiritual authority and temporal power, which he explores in his second work, were crucial to our own theory.

Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power (2001) is the subsequent book in which René Guénon explores what he means by the separation of authority and power. Here, he makes it amply clear for the reader how spiritual authority is different from temporal power, both in nature and function. He argues that the primary function of the priesthood class is "knowledge and teaching," which qualifies it to have the attribute "wisdom" (18). While temporal power refers to everything in the social order that constitutes the "government," this, on the other hand, is a twofold system of "administrative," "judicial," and "military” (17). Subsequently, in his work, he criticises the concept of ‘centralisation’, which, according to him, gets its root from the Protestant idea of a national church. This centralisation of spiritual authority (the church) is based on the temporal powers in opposition to it, which is done in order to better administer or exercise control over it. Nationalism is also a product of centralisation, in his view, and he stresses that by saying, "the formation of nations is essentially one episode in struggle of the temporal against the spiritual” (60). While

we already know religion acts as an optional-extra (Billig 1995, 77), it does not share an equilibrium with it. Hence, a lack of Tradition leads to a disequilibrium between spiritual authority and temporal power.

The political aspects of this same thread of thought were taken forward by Julius Evola in his work titled *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul* (2003). Here, Evola elaborates on what he and Guénon mean by tradition, defining it as "a society is 'traditional' when it is ruled by principles that transcend the merely human and individual" (2). The sectors of such a society are formed from 'above,' meaning that they are not man-made rules that conform to modern man's individualistic essence. This book is more of a 'survival guide' for the people he considers to be 'traditional,' and his advice to the "late children of the Tradition" is that they should aid in the decline of a civilisation that is already on the decline, following the Hegelian model of "negation of negation," whose outcome would be something positive (6-7). Similar to Guénon, Evola also talks about the growing individuality and demystified nature of the modern man. The author argues that the West is currently going through the Nietzschean “tragic phase” of nihilism, which is due to the absence of God from the lives of humans (19). With all the imperatives, moral values and chivalry crumbled, the existence of the Western man was deemed something devoid of meaning. The reason for this fall is given in his subsequent work.

Julius Evola, in his book titled *The Revolt Against the Modern World* (2018), argues that the reasons for the fall of Western civilisation were that the political aspects of spirituality and tradition were the most " important foundation of authority" for kings. According to him, the right (Ius) of kings to rule derived from the Tradition, which explains why they were "obeyed, feared, and venerated." (7). The roots of authority, in his view, were always metaphysical, which is an aspect the new world lacks. Therefore, he considers "faithfulness" that does not refer to "something beyond the human dimension" to be blind faithfulness (85). Another complementing argument that we find in his writings is when he says that the moment an “empire ceases to be sacred, it ceases to be an empire”. Herein, he argues that the ruler, having lost his pontifical nature, now only acts as a political leader whose decisions could be challenged by anyone (302-7); he is now looked upon as a mere public ‘servant’. The loss of spiritual authority results in the emergence of Machiavellian politics, in which

the ruler rules not on the basis of his virtue, honour, or chivalry but rather through deceitful means of cunning, violence, and utilising religion as an instrument. The works of Evola are considered to be foundational to "political traditionalism" (Sedgwick 314, 2016). Sayyed Hossein Nasr (1989), in his book titled *Knowledge and Sacred*, distinguishes Tradition from the Catholic term traditio, even though they both refer to the concept of transmission. He argues that Tradition means the "truths or principles of a divine origin revealed or unveiled to mankind," which are achieved through the medium of messengers or prophets (64). Despite his adherence to the concept of the transcendent unity of religion (1948), which we would like to distance ourselves from, Schuon sits on the parallel pole to Guénon, as he contradicted most of Guénon 's teachings and diluted the esoteric understanding of it, for a more 'inclusive' one. Schuon allowed for a 'relaxation' in Islam by allowing the consumption of alcohol, prayers at irregular times, and immunity from fasting (Dickson 602, 2021). Nasr provides us with a very useful theorisation that, in its raw essence, is related to political Traditionalism. The difference between the "pontifical man" and the "Promethean man" is an appropriate categorisation for looking at the modern man and the idealised man (144). Here, he describes the Pontifical man in an Islamic term as the vicegerent of God (*khalifatullah*), who is responsible to God for his actions and deeds, which means that man is ruled by aspects that transcend the temporal real. Further in his theorisation, he defines the Promethean man as the "creature of this world" who has lost the sense of sacredness and is drowned in "transience" and "impermanence" (145).

This Promethean man indulges in transient reasoning that does not have any objective morality, which is explained as 'profane' philosophy. This profane philosophy is described as "pretended wisdom," which is purely human and, therefore, based on rational order (Guénon 2009, 9). This same concern regarding the emergence of profane reasoning was shared by Hegel (2005), who argues that the world has given over to "accident" or "chance." The answer to our question as to how the Promethean man established his kingdom is hidden in the profane reasoning. We started our literature review for the arguments pertaining to nation-states from Benedict Anderson's (1991) groundbreaking work *Imagined Communities*. He famously defines the modern nation-state as "an imagined political community" (6) because, according to him, its members would never meet all of their fellow members whom they claim

to be connected to. He further argues that the state is sovereign, as the idea was formulated during the Enlightenment and Revolution, both of which are diametrically opposed to religion. Similarly, he argues, which is also considered the main argument of the book, that “print-languages laid the basis for national consciousness” (44). Though another critical aspect of his book is his disagreement with Ernest Gellner’s (1983) work *Nations and Nationalism*, Anderson argues that Gellner’s proposition that nationalism “invents nations where they do not exist” actually assimilates invention into the category of “falsity” rather than “imagining” (6). In doing so, Gellner presupposes that ‘true’ communities exist and can be comfortably juxtaposed with nations.

Gellner disagrees with the thesis that there are n potential groups who aspire to form a nation. He argues that the “urge to make mutual cultural substitutability” is not so powerful in every group of people (45). Hence, the misguided proposition that the nations are ever-present in the nature of things and they are just “sleeping beauty” waiting to be ‘awakened’ by a nationalist 'awakener' (Minogue 1967; in Smith 191, 1986) is not well-founded, according to Gellner (48). Instead, what he proposes is that when the general social conditions make up for a standardised, homogeneous, centrally sustained high culture that encompasses the entire population and is not only limited to the elite, it becomes the “natural repositories of political legitimacy,” and only under these terms can nations be defined in both “will and culture." Bourdieu (1984) argues that institutions, such as schools, have transformative effects that extend beyond the classrooms. This leads to men sharing a common "will," "culture,” and "polity,” which cannot be easily defied by each other (55). Michael Billig (1995) uses a comparable tone in his book titled *Banal Nationalism* when he states that "nationhood provides a continuous background for their political discourses" and that these discourses are perpetuated by "cultural products" and sometimes by the "structuring of newspapers" (8). This production of the nationhood discourse is not based on a conscious “fervent passion” that calls for nationhood but instead on a “flag hanging unnoticed on the public building” (8). Nationalism, according to Billig, stems from the creation of a difference from the other group; “nationalist thinking involves more than commitment to a group and a sense of difference from other groups” (61). This further contributed to the concept of people considering themselves to be a part of a larger community, thereby introducing the term 'identity' into popular vocabulary (Giddens, 1990). The

creation of an identity inasmuch leads to the assertion that due to the existence of an 'identity', the people “deserve nation-states”. Hence, this theory becomes “inhabited in common sense” and gets “embedded in the habits and thoughts” of the people who consider the formation of the nation-state to be a natural phenomenon (63).

In her book titled *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Liah Greenfeld (1992) argues that "ethnicity" presumes the uniformity or antiquity of a community, which is presented as a natural or innate characteristic of the population. However, she argues that it does not "generate a unique identity" because it only selects a few characteristics from those already present. Therefore, this selection is not based on an objective criterion; a “language... may be imposed on the entire population”, or it can be declared as a native language; “ancestral territory” can be claimed, while a “common history” of the people can be fabricated (13). The ‘Primordial’ attachments are chosen at random without regard to any objective parameters. Edward Shills (1957) describes primordial attachments as "assumed givens of social existence." Eller and Coughlan (1993) propagate this view by describing primordial relations as "ineffable, overpowering, and coercive." Eller and Coughlan argue that this is how Shills perceived primordial attachments. Though this view has been criticised, Shills never considers these objects as given but rather as ‘assumed’ to be given by the people (Özkırımlı 56-7, 2010).

Nationalism is an elitist phenomenon, the notions of which have emerged more recently than they are assumed to be (Connor 1900, 95; Gellner 1983, 57). This is, as it has been argued, achieved through the creation of history. Anthony Smith (1986) states that these identities are created through forms of “myths and symbols,” which he describes as a "myth-symbol complex’ that is further diffused into the population. He argues that ethnicity is largely “mythic or symbolic in character” and that people are ‘carried’ in the forms of artefacts or activities that slowly solidify the ethnie which further solidifies and can only be broken due to exceptional external pressure (15–6). This process is based on “lingering memories of former greatness," which are used by the elites in order to reconstruct nations with a “semblance of antique pedigree” (17). The lingering memories create the “ethic boundaries,” which exist in the “minds of their subjects rather than as lines on a map” (Armstong 7, 1982). As Armstong puts it,

these lingering memories are based on a ‘nostalgia’ that creates a yearning to return to a ‘golden age’ (16).

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (2012), in their book titled *The Invention of Tradition,* distinguish between what they call ‘invented traditions’: (a) those symbolising social cohesion, (b) those establishing or legitimising institutions and (c) those whose main feature was the inculcation of beliefs (9). According to Hobsbawm and Ranger, the types b) and c) were clearly ‘devised’ in order to perpetuate specific structures of power. They further categorise the ‘old and invented practices’, the former being ‘specific’ and ‘binding’ while the latter being vague like ‘patriotism’, ‘duty’ or ‘loyalty’ (10). The marked difference between the two is the ‘virtually compulsory’ nature of the latter, like standing up for the singing of the national anthem. These 'establishing institutions' are comparable to the arguments presented by Patrick Geary (2002) in his book titled *The Myth of Nations,* in which he asserts that a group of people was formed during a moment of ethnogenesis that cannot be repeated and the existence of this phenomenon assumes that these people can demand political autonomy to govern their historical territory (11). This political autonomy exists on the assumption that, somehow, the political and cultural identity has a right to be united. It assumes that the existence of a shared primordial variable confers the right to political autonomy, which is also known as methodological nationalism (Chernilo 2006 and 2007).

History emerges as perhaps the most crucial "ingredient" in the process of nation-building. As Prasenjit Duara (1997) argued in his book *Rescuing History from the Nation,* the “nation emerges as a subject of history” while the discipline of history is used in order to lay the groundwork of a nation. Hence, history and nation-states are inseparable as the nation attains its “privilege” and “sovereignty” as being the subject of history (27). But perhaps the most crucial aspect of Daura’s work is his argument that a nation simultaneously lives inside and outside the scope of history. It “legitimises itself as an essence that continues through history” while also simultaneously claiming itself to be free from its hold. Meaning it glorifies itself through its idealised ancient achievements but also “emphasises its unprecedented nature which has been able to *realise* itself as self-conscious subject of history” (29).

Donald Eugene Smith (1963), in his book titled *India as a Secular State*, traces the usage of history in the foundation of the Indian-nation state and uses various historical sources. He traces how Gandhi employed a monolithic religious doctrine in pursuit of the creation of a national consciousness. He claims in a naïve passage, “Gandhi's leadership of the Indian National Congress gave it a somewhat Hinduized appearance, but his constant emphasis on the religious, social, and political unity of the various communities helped to lay the foundation of the secular state (92)”, that although Gandhi’s intentions were good, they were superseded by Hindu nationalism, as “violence has found much of its raison d'être in the discourses of history” (Daniel 46, 1996). Therefore, as Christophe Jaffrelot (1996) points out in his uncomfortably titled book *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925 to 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilization (with special reference to Central India)*, the “idea of the Golden Age was to become one of the cornerstones of Hindu nationalism,"(11) hence, Gandhi’s insistence on using the *Bhagavadgita* as the foundational text of his political philosophy (Van der Veer 2002, 123–4). It resulted in a few ‘dysfunctional functions’, which we come across in one of Shahid Amin’s (1984) articles, where the *Gaurakshini Sabhas* (Cow Protection League) were later, due to Gandhi's entry into the Indian political scene during the 1920s, converted into ‘Gandhi Panchayats’. Therefore, the section focuses on the British reconstruction of history (Ahmad, 2023) and how ‘Indian’ history was created with a ‘mainstream national culture’ (Nandy 1995, 19) in mind, which further equated the idea of India with Hinduism (Banerjee, 2006; Kinnvall, 2006; Ghassam-Fachandi, 2012).

2.2. Indian Islamic Discursive Traditions

In order to understand the Indian Islamic Discursive Traditions, first, we need to understand what we mean by the term “discursive tradition." To put it simply, Islamic discursive tradition is a “historically evolving set of discourses, embodied in the practices and institutions of Islamic societies and hence deeply imbricated in the material lives of those inhabiting them.” (Hirschkind; in Anjum 2007, 662). Islam cannot be viewed as a homogeneous phenomenon; rather, it must be viewed through the development of Muslim practices in "different times, places, and populations," which reveals Islamic reasoning that has evolved in response to different historical and social conditions (Asad 2009, 23). The Islamic discursive tradition that is defined as a

mere Muslim discourse that "addresses itself to conceptions of Islamic past and future, with reference to Islamic practice in present" cannot be considered as 'Islamic'. These traditions do not imitate the foundation texts of the Quran and Sunnah in a literalist manner, nor do they mindlessly follow the precedent set by their predecessors without paying any heed to "temporality and change" (Jansen 2011, 984; in Enayat 2017, 42). The scholarly engagement with the text, however, links the "practitioners across the temporal modalities of past, present, and future through pedagogy of practical, scholarly… forms of knowledge…deemed central to the tradition" (Mahmood 2005, 115; in Enayat 2017, 42). Here, it is also key to point out that when we say Discursive Tradition(s), we distinguish it from Asad's theory in order to better explain the Indian phenomena. We contest along with Ibrahim Moosa (2003) that "there are many discursive traditions through which Muslims imagine themselves"; it is through this diverse way of "conceiving knowledge in all its complexity of *time* and *space* that people adhering to this faith identify themselves as Muslim" (114). Hence, we accept Asad's initial assertion of the development of Muslim practices in "different times, places, and populations" (Asad 2009, 23) yet argue that due to the inherent contradictory nature of the hermeneutical engagements with the Islamic texts that are found in India, we find them too dispersed and diametrically opposed to each other to frame into a single tradition. These scholarly engagements with the texts are something that we would like to look into in detail.

Due to the non-existence of Orthodoxy in Islam (Watt, 1962), scholarly engagement with the text has become problematic. Asad defines the orthodoxy as crucial to the Islamic tradition but also as having a "distinctive relationship—a relationship to power," meaning the Muslims have the power to "regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practice" and also to "condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace the incorrect ones" (Asad 2009, 22). This function, according to Asad, comes under the authority of the orthodoxy. Ovamir Anjum (2007) points out the inherent tensions and the misinterpretation of this aspect of Asad's theorisation. He argues that when Asad says that "if one wants to write an anthropology of Islam, one should begin… discursive traditions that include... the founding texts of the Quran and the Hadith" (Asad 2009, 20), he does so in order to criticise Gellner's (1981) idea of Islam as a "blueprint for a social order." Due to the absence of a fixed social structure, the reification of Islam is not possible. Therefore, conceptualising Islam in this manner avoids the "essentialist

attempt to reconstruct true Islamic order through philological studies of medieval texts" (Anjum 2007, 667) and considers the subjects as living and rational beings without completely ignoring the texts. Before examining the Indian discursive traditions, we first examined two early theological treatises that provided us with a simple yet succinct definition of the Islamic traditions and, owing to their inclusive definitions of Muslims, allowed us to avoid debates on "what can be considered Islam."

After discussing Islam, we find two critical sources that provide us with essential information about 'what' was historically regarded as Islamic. The two texts are interrelated because the second text was written by Imam al-Ghazali as a form of "immanent critique" to the first. This critique of al-Ghazali provides us with a very flexible framework for understanding what has historically been regarded as "Islamic". Abu-Mansur al-Baghdadi's (d. 1037) seminal work called "Al-Fark Bain al-Firak (Moslem Schisms and Sects)" talks on the topic of a very contentious hadith (saying) that is attributed to the Last Prophet of Islam. The hadith talks about how the Muslim Ummah would be divided into 73 sects, and only one of the sects would be granted paradise. Al-Baghdadi tries to conceptualise which of the sects would be in hellfire by whipping the "various sects into line, cutting, inserting, and combining till they reach the number 73." The definition that he reaches is that the people who profess the "view that the world is created, the unity of his maker, his pre-existence, his attributes, his equity, the denial of his anthropomorphic character…" whoever professes this, along with several other categorisations, "and does not follow heresy… is an orthodox Sunnite" (al-Baghdadi 1920, 29). Refuting these claims, Imam al-Ghazali (d. 1111) wrote a book titled "Faysal al-Tafriqa Bayna al-Islam wa al-Zandaqa (On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam)," which was recently translated by Sherman Jackson (2002). In this book, a distinction has been made between 'formal heresy' and 'material heresy', with the former meaning "wilful persistence in error" and the latter meaning "holding of heretical doctrines through no fault of one's own" (Jackson 2002, 3). According to al-Ghazali, the theological doctrines whose violation can be termed kufr (unbelief) are "a) fundamental (Usul), i.e., belief in God, the prophethood of Muhammad, and the Hereafter; and b) secondary doctrines that are backed by unanimous consensus (ijma) or which are passed on through the authority of the Prophet through the diffuse congruence (tawatur)" (Jackson 2002, 6). Using this differentiation between the material heresy and the formal heresy, which was backed

by the two fundamental texts of the Islamic tradition, the Quran and the Hadith, we could approach the Indian Islamic traditions without getting stuck in the anthropological trap of deciphering the definition of Islam, which has been a "peculiar embarrassment for our discipline" (Geertz 1971, 1).

Ernest Gellner's (1981) work titled *Muslim Society* has a unique application of David Hume's (2001) concept of Flux and Reflux, which is contrary to our understanding and application of the same. Furthermore, Robert Redfield's (1956) work titled Peasant Society and Culture and the idea of "great" and "little" traditions has been looked upon critically, which presents us with a categorisation that is prevalent yet not pertinent to Islam. Furthering the arguments of Islam and orthodoxy, Michael Gilsenan's (2013) *Recognizing Islam* gives a flawed yet critical discussion in understanding the divide between the 'urban' Islam and the 'rural' Islam, which cannot be universalised as the 'Ulema' are shown as disconnected from the mystical forms of Islam (53), which is not the case in India. Finally, Clifford Geertz's (1971) *Islam Observed* has been consulted in a manner in which, despite the considerable criticism, anthropological insights are used in order to complement our own theorisations.

Indian Islam has been looked upon in a very problematic manner, with few claiming that it is "heavily underlined by elements that are accretions from the local environment and contradict the fundamentalist view of the beliefs and practices to which Muslims must adhere" (Ahmad 1981, 7; in Robinson 2000, 45). This analytical misinterpretation emerges due to a presupposition of a fixed social structure of Islam, which is prevalent in many sociological writings (cf. 1973, 1976, 1983). Understanding the historical development and growth of Indian Islamic traditions has been an essential facet of our research, which helps us to "understand religious identities as historically produced in religious institutions that are in a constant process of transformation" (Van Der Veer 2003, 30). Hence, most of the information regarding the development of discursive traditions is taken from historical debates (Hardy, 1973; Metcalf, 1965, 1993, 2009, 2014; Robinson, 1993, 2000; Eaton, 2015; Sanyal, 1996; Jalal, 2008). These extensive readings of historical sources give us much-needed insights into the conditions of Muslims during the twilight of Muslim political autonomy in India and how it led to subsequent reinterpretative movements among

Indian Muslims, which were undertaken in order to distinguish themselves from their Hindu countrymen.

The theorisation of arguments pertaining to 'Balkan-to-Bengal' Islamic traditions is approached through Shahab Ahmed's (2015) seminal work titled *What is Islam,* which aims to conceptualise Islam in "expansive, capacious, and contradictory terms" and also to "look at other historical instances and expressions of Islam" through this reconceptualisation (83). Muhammad Qasim Zaman's (2002) book titled *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam* also helps us conceptualise the challenges and aspects of south-Asian Islamic traditions, which also provides us with a rich background on the contestations between the Deoband school of thought and the Ahl-e Sunnat school of thought. The work also talks in detail about the status of orthodoxy in Islam with the 'opening up' of the means of achieving theological expertise. In a similar vein, Sherali Tareen's (2020) work titled *Defending Muhammad in Modernity* also gives us a much-needed in-depth outlook on the theological debates between the two schools of thought, which further helps us find the paradigmatic basis of the present cultural differences.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND APPLICATION

3.1. Situating Our Research

Our research, despite taking a long, perennial detour, ultimately falls into the category of social anthropology. The initial investigation of our thesis rested on the singular question- how do the people belonging to various discursive traditions react to Hindu Nationalism? Does the existence of such an "external threat" necessitate a change in the inter-sectarian dealings of the Indian Muslims?

To put this to the test, we have divided our research into two parts, the initial part being a theoretical text that argues that modern nation-state formation lacks any pontifical-transcendental authority, and in order to make up or regain this lost *Mythomoteur* of legitimacy, it taps into a (re)creation of a false history (Smith 1986). This creation of a false history, which is uniform for almost every Ethnie, is based on the notion of an 'idealised civilisation' that was supposedly destroyed by the 'other'. The 'other' varies from civilisation to civilisation; it could be the Romans for the Greeks, the Goths for the Romans, the Arabs for the Sassanids, or the Turks for the Hindus. The initial arguments in the first section of our thesis do not conform to a particular society or location; they are universal in nature. Contrary to the first section, the second section is bounded by a particular spatiality. However, it takes the first section as its point of departure, which limits the disruption of the flow of writing and the localisation of the research.

The second section is based on the ethnographic research that we undertook among the Indian Muslims who are looked upon as the 'other' in the Indian context. The ethnographic research was centred around how the Indian-Muslims, when faced with Hindu nationalism, react to their internal stratifications. Does the existence of a 'greater threat' or a 'common adversary' aid in the dissolution and strengthening of

social cohesion among the Indian Muslims' internal religious sectarian identities, or do they continue to view different Islamic sects as they did in the past? This section draws its contents and conclusions from a one-month ethnographic research project involving 21 participants that was undertaken in the city of Aligarh, India.

To defend this mutative amalgamation of a philosophical ethnography, we would like to invoke Kant when he says that "thought without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (Kant 1998, 76). Though these two concepts are logically independent, he asserts that they are "cognitively complementary" and "semantically interdependent" (Hannah 2005, 255). The inclusion of philosophy in anthropology is not a new phenomenon (c.f. Kresse 2007; Geertz, 2000), but with the advent of a rigorous inclusion of post-modernism in the discipline, a fresh series of literature that focuses on this issue has emerged in a very short period of time (cf. Das 2014; Bubandt 2023). This literature centres around the idea of furthering philosophical conceptualisation in ethnographic research. According to Jackson (2014), philosophy is a strategy of distancing ourselves from the 'world of immediate experience' in order to gain perspective on the same, while ethnography is a strategy of 'close encounters' and 'intersubjective-engagements' that allow a person to immerse himself in an experience (Jackson 2014, 28). Therefore, the usage of philosophy saves us from drowning in the endless abyss of immersive engagements and helps us "grasping the familiar by the way of the strange" (Jackson 2014, 28). In addition, it transcends the 'mere mechanical collection of ethnography' that is contrasted with the development of theory (Friedman, 1988; in Okely, 1992, 3). Hence, our initial discussion on the falsification of history has complemented the ethnographic research that we undertook to evaluate if the abovementioned questions hold any validity empirically. This inter-relationality between the two sections helps us bridge the gap between armchair philosophical-theoretics and empirically grounded ethnography.

3.2. "Aligarh", (Un)comfortable as an Old Shoe: Debating the Issues of Positionality

15th January,

The city of Aligarh, located 125 kilometres east of India's capital, has gained notoriety for both positive and negative reasons due to the presence of the Aligarh Muslim

University (AMU). Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) has a unique character that stays with its alumni long after they have left the city; it is often said, 'You can leave Aligarh, but Aligarh doesn't leave you'. After observing this pattern being repeated by several members of my own family as they reminisced about their time at AMU, I felt confident when I stated, "I will be doing my fieldwork at Aligarh University." I reached Aligarh unannounced on an uneventful cold night in the month of January. As I left the impressive red-sandstone, pre-partition railway station building, I looked around for a particular rickshaw puller whom I used to ferry during my undergraduate days. After not being able to find the rickshaw puller with a limp, which was one of the reasons I used to go with him, I continued my journey to my old hostel. I opted for the traditional cycle-rickshaw over the electric one, relishing the opportunity it provided me to reminisce/romanticise the streets of the city along the way with every familiar building that went by us in a measured manner. It became increasingly harder for me to relax my facial muscles. Standing in front of my old hostel gate, a sudden sweeping sensation of 'other' crept into my mind, 'What if the hostel guard asks for my ID?' or "What if someone stops me?". Dragging my bag with effort, I entered the hostel quite effortlessly. Passing the first stage, I started climbing up the stairs that led to my old room, and I saw unrecognisable faces in the corridor, people who looked at me curiously. Walking faster, I finally reached my room. I knocked on the door, and a familiar voice, in a very non-attentive manner, asked me to come in. Barging inside the room in a very nonchalant manner and greeting the familiar faces in quite routine fashion, I was accepted back into the hospitable folds of Aligarh. Perhaps this is the essence of Aligarh, which the generations who have attended the institution miss, an encapsulation of a perpetual home that is embodied by the institution, where one can never feel lost or dejected. Aligarh, with its unwavering presence, envelops its visitors and alums, fostering a profound connection that endures long after they have left its boundaries.

Aligarh Muslim University is a residential institution with a unique character: it instils its values in its students by isolating them from their families and immersing them in the teachings and culture of the university. This distinct culture of AMU is based on quasi-Oriental-Western characteristics, whose initial aim was to acquaint the students with the Western disciplines that were deemed necessary, according to the founder of AMU, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. The aforementioned characteristics of AMU have

pushed some scholars to even term it a “total institution," though one can argue against that by taking examples from Lelyveld’s book itself (Goffman, 1961; in Lelyveld X, 1978)[5].

Aligarh, which has been described as the “largest citadel of educated Muslims in the world,” has influenced generations of Indian Muslims and helped in the subsequent formation of their socio-political identity (Wajihuddin 2021, 14). To comprehend the political mindset or mood of the Indian-Muslim, one ought to visit “mini-India,” as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to AMU in a recent speech[6]. AMU has always been at the centre of nearly all contemporary political debates affecting Indian Muslims and has played a significant role in voicing the concerns of Indian Muslims. As is often said, “To understand the Muslim mind in India, don’t go anywhere else; just come to AMU and spend some time in the famous Shamshad market.” Conducting fieldwork at such a location was the ideal option for our ethnographic study (Parvez 2007; in Wajihuddin 2021, 157). Accordingly, the data for this ethnographic research was collected in the shade of the imposing pre-partition red-sandstone buildings that dot the campus of AMU or while sitting on the splint-supported chairs of the famous tea shops that are located in close proximity to the campus. We shall begin by dealing with the challenges that we come across due to our positionality.

The debates surrounding the positionality of an ethnographer are not something recent; these arguments have been discussed to the extent of exhaustion and have resulted in a ‘revival’ and an extension of the scope of the discipline (Messerschmidt 1981; Fahim 1982; Jackson 1987). The first aspect that we must address here is our ascribed positionality: native. Jones (1970) identifies native ethnographers as the people belonging to the ethnic or minority group that is under study and focuses on the epistemological implications of this relationship (Jones 1970, 251; in Fahim 1980,

[5] Goffman while tracing the social mobility draws a conclusion that the “inmates” and the small “supervisory staff” have a very restricted social mobility and the “social distance is typically great and often formally prescribed” (Goffman 1961, 7). Contrary to Goffman's sociological theory of a total institution, Lelyveld cites an incident in which the Professors Walter Raleigh and Cox decided to play *Kabaddi* with the students of AMU, which sheds light on the relations between the purported ‘inmates’ and their ‘supervisors’ (Lelyveld 1978, 253-54). This relationship demonstrates that AMU cannot be classified as a 'total institution' in its purest form, but only through a deliberate extension of Goffman’s theory.

[6] https://indianexpress.com/article/india/aligarh-muslim-university-centenary-celebration-pm-modi-7114450/

645). Historically speaking, the discipline of anthropology is built upon the study of the non-Western self by a Western man. This places the Orient as an object that is to be deciphered by an 'expert', and his task is to explain this ‘object’ to a curious, homogeneous Western audience (Said, 1978). This dominance is the result of the hegemony of the West over the Orient, in which an objective white male is expected to study and write about “exotic” cultures. The disciplinary shift happened in the post-colonial states, where the ‘objects’ of fascination started to read and comprehend the accounts that were written about their cultures (Kuwayama 2003; Rosaldo 1989; in Foster 2012, 15). These new recruits who went to study their own cultures were interestingly called ‘native’ or indigenous ethnographers, while the Westerners who indulged in a self-study of their own culture were often termed ‘insider ethnographers’ (Kuwayama 2003, 8). The natives, until quite recently, were only considered “chief informants” who could be trained by the colonialists in anthropological modes of data collection in order to reveal the society from “within” (Casagrande 1960: In Narayan 1993, 672). Hence, taking similar reasoning from Kuwayama, instead of calling ourselves ‘insider ethnographers', we would like to place our research into the ‘native’ category as it is a testimony to the colonial roots of the discipline and draws attention to the ‘intrusion’ by the colonial subjects into an imperialist discipline. This intrusion further signals a radical change (Kuwayama 2003, 8). The native ethnographers are often claimed to have slanted subjectivity, which deters them from being objective about their research and the subsequent results.

According to Lowie, Franz Boas encouraged the training of the native ethnographers on the assumption that they could provide “the total way of life” of the people, which would be from the “point of view of the people themselves” (Lowie 1937, 133; in Jones 1970, 252). Despite the initial Western encouragement, the native ethnographer is viewed with suspicion and through a positivist lens of functionalism as an ‘organ’ in a body that would obviously be lower in the hierarchy than the Western man, which implies that he is incapable of being objective, whereas the Western man, due to its inherent 'abilities', can make objective judgments. Therefore, the natives were only seen as potential ‘tools’ that would supply important information to the “real” white male anthropologist (Jones 1970, 252). Replacing the idols of power, the native ethnographer has started to exercise a certain influence over how the data is interpreted

and later presented. This shift has, in turn, resulted in accusations of a lack of subjectivity in the narratives of native ethnography[7].

An often-cited example from *The Mathnawi* of Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi is "the disagreement as to the description and shape of the elephant." To briefly summarise, an elephant was in a dark room, and the people, unable to see it, entered the room and tried to feel it with their palms. The people's description of the elephant was different. The people who touched the trunk commented that the 'creature is like a water pipe', and the person who touched its ear said that it 'appeared to be like a fan' (Nicholson 2022, 572). Similar to this analogy, James Clifford (1986) has argued that ethnographic representations are "partial truths"; the data that an 'objective outsider' produces, despite his insistence on not being contaminated by his own unconscious subjectivity, is, to an extent, subjective (Clifford 1986, 6; in Abu-Lughod 1991, 142). Hence, these 'anthropological representations' have an effect on the person who is being represented and the person who is representing, as every person has a specific conscious or unconscious subjectivity (Said 1989, 224; in Abu-Lughod 1991, 159). Furthermore, the allegations of subjectivity that are often levied on the native ethnographers are based on a superficial idealisation of objectivity, which the discipline claims to possess. Native ethnography enables a person to understand better the cultural paradigms underlying the practices, which might only appear regular or ceremonial to an outsider.

A good researcher is someone who is able to decipher the meaning behind a person's words, a skill that an "outsider" must acquire through experience in the field (Jones 1970, 254). This is something that I began with; I could speak and understand the dialect of the people I was interviewing, and I could easily identify the 'actual data' from the 'dealing' for which AMU students are famous. Communication expertise played a huge role in building rapport and having deeper, more meaningful conversations with participants (Kuwayama 2003; Jones 1970). The presence of my personal 'multi-subjectivities' also played a role in dictating my understanding of the different narratives that were presented to me by the students, as even though the

[7] To save ourselves from a lengthy rebuttal, we must address the fact here that the native hasn't 'broken' the idols, but rather replaced them; the academic supervisor of such researchers is usually a white male anthropologist!

individuals were affiliated with AMU, it did not necessarily mean that they were more similar to me in terms of their social class, worldview, practices, and ideologies. To explain it further, Luckmann (1978) argues that the modern man is not a full-time member of a "total and whole" society but rather a part-time citizen of part-time societies, to which he only owes a partial allegiance (Cheater 1987, 164). Hence, despite my prior relations with the institution and its students, I cannot claim to have a total or wholly integrated perspective of the students. This realisation first occurred to me in the midst of my fieldwork, when participants acknowledged my insider status but refused to let me pay for anything at the tea stalls, which was in accordance with the traditions of AMU, which dictate that an 'outsider' or a 'visitor' is not expected to pay for anything. While conversing with me, my interlocutors displayed trust, which may have been due, in part, to the fact that my identity was easily traceable, and I did not attempt to conceal it. To provide a specific example, my multiple subjectivities as a young 22-year-old master's student at a foreign university led people to confide in me regarding certain things that are supposedly contrary to the present social norms. A female PhD scholar talked quite candidly about the issue relating to her matrimonial proposals and the problems that she was facing due to her family's religious sectarian leanings. This alludes to the fact that some of the participants found me young and 'foreign' enough to confide in me about things that are not openly discussed in their culture and also to the fact that they considered me to be an outsider whom they do not relate to as a person in their social circle.

Participants typically suspect that a native ethnographer is working for some intelligence agencies. Interestingly, this was not the case for me, as I tried to meet people through my contacts who were currently enrolled at AMU, which facilitated my credibility, and due to my prior contact with the institution, they perceived me as 'their own' who was 'struggling' with his fieldwork. The issue of my ascribed status was clearly visible and played a huge role in influencing the perceptions and interactions that I had with the participants. The category that I was put in was of a Sayyid male from Uttar Pradesh belonging to an upper-middle-class background. To dissect this categorisation in a structured manner, the term Sayyid is an honorary title that is attributed to the people who trace their lineage from Fatima (A.S.), the daughter of the last Prophet (SAWW) of Islam. The existence of this title in my full name plunges my positionality to either respect or repugnance (Cf. Ansari 1960; Ahmad

2003; Risley 1915). The ascribed geographical location also plays an important role at AMU, as it determines a person's habitus during his stay at AMU. Relationships at AMU are typically based on a regional or provincial basis; here, the "defining divide" among the students is concerned with the "geography of their dwelling" (Ahmad 2009, 37). Even though I have resided in Delhi (the capital of India) for more than two decades, my ancestral state of Uttar Pradesh is the location to which I am attributed; the ancestral state is viewed as permanent. I did not mind being referred to as a person from Uttar Pradesh because I have spent considerable time at my ancestral home, preventing me from being referred to as a "*Delhi-Wallah*" (a person from Delhi). This combination of identities resulting from living in the metropolitan city of Delhi and the 'cultured' *qasbas* helped in easily approaching both 'modern' and 'conservative' AMU students (cf. Rahman 2015; Nizami 2017). The participants did not perceive me as an unknown stranger but rather as a person whose positionality and motivations could be assumed with relative ease. The quintessential example of this credibility and trust could be explained through their resoluteness in participating in research that was *contrary to contemporary political currents*. The trust that was shown by the participants moves us to our next point, pertaining to the implications and precautions that must be taken while working in such a volatile field of study. Talal Asad (1980) calls the concept of studying the native "cultural imperialism" as the lens of an ethnographic study is historically fixed on the Orient, which makes him suspicious of why the West does not want the non-Western academia to study the West with the same lens (Asad 1980, 662). Furthermore, Said (1989) cites a governmental report by the Defence Science Board that highlights the need to further the social sciences discipline in the colonised world in order to gain "…knowledge about their beliefs, values, and motivations; political, religious, and economic..." This inclusion of indigenous social science in the post-colonial countries is done to use the data "for many additional purposes" and "provide continuing access of Department of Defence personnel to academic and intellectual resources of the "free world" (Said 1989, 214). Keeping this in mind, the presentation and inclusion of raw data have been limited to a certain extent in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants, who did not shy away from narrating things that could invite the intrigue of certain hegemonic apparatuses. As we have seen repeatedly, the public display of "family secrets" could have certain drawbacks, as seen in the case of Abu-Lughod (1991) or even Fahim

(1977), where the publication of these internal aspects of a society created mutual problems for the ‘researched’ and the researcher.

Numerous indigenous societies have been the subject of extensive research by both Western and non-Western anthropologists, whose studies have shed light on various fascinating facets of the societies from a variety of perspectives (Srinivas 1955; Morgan 1871; Geertz 1960; Malinowski 1913). The Western scholarship or the western educated indigenous elites were thought to be the intended audience for these texts, which were seen as the ‘definition’ of a specific culture as there was no scope for a rebuttal from the indigenous people of any sort. According to Beatrice Medicine (2001), the native objection to the books or articles is based on the argument that the final work or completed work is seldom shown to them and almost inevitably includes errors or misrepresentations (Medicine 2001; in Kuwayama 2003, 10). The research is often conducted in a foreign language as well, which the indigenous people are unable to comprehend or participate in the debates. This trend is changing into what Abu-Lughod (1991) defines as the “Rushdie effect." This is an effect of “living in the global age when the subjects of their studies began to read their works." Therefore, it forces us to present a prudently detailed study, which also adds to the objectivity of the same, as we acknowledge that our generalisation, over-simplification, or exaggeration could lead to an instantaneous critique by our samples, who themselves are trained in various social science disciplines.

3.3. The Sk(ills) of Interviewing: A Reflexive Account of Juggling between Subjectivities and Social Class While in the Field

Interviewing, despite its multi-subjectivity, is seldom looked at reflexively. Therefore, the means of procuring the data are often shrouded in mystery. “Interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets” (Oakley 1981, 31; in Abrams 2010, 9), interviewing, as correctly defined by Oakley holds many secrets, the intricacies of which are seldom assessed. A common assumption that we hold while conducting any research is that we are researching something that is ‘outside’ ourselves and that the information that we are looking for cannot be gained solely or simply through introspection (Davies 1999, 3). The interview not only provides an external source of

information but also acts as a dialogue between both the interviewer and the interviewee. In this encounter, both parties are involved in "meaning-making work" that is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, 4; in Davies 1999, 98). A lot of assumptions and subjectivities are often involved in this 'meaning-making' exercise that we have talked about. The first aspect that we would like to focus on is how the social class of the people acts as a defining factor in the process and how location, vocabulary, and social status affect the interaction.

Entering the field as an ethnographer means that we are both the subject and the object of the study (Frankenberg 2014, 182). The initial reaction that people gave me after hearing about my research topic was one of distrust and intrigue. The inclusion of personal details while conducting the groundwork for the interview helped build rapport with the future participants. This has been deemed effective both theoretically and in our own personal fieldwork experience (Oakley 1981, 41). The 'Native' ethnographer, however, cannot reveal all of his personal information because doing so could compromise the participant's objectivity by discouraging them from offending the interviewee. To give an example from my own fieldwork experience, during one of the introductory conversations, I came to know that a potential participant's entire family was a *murid* (literally, one who seeks) of one of my distant relatives. Acknowledging or disclosing this fact would have changed the dynamics of the relationship. The decision to not disclose such information was based on the fact that they had already sat down to talk, which means that the decision to 'help' us had already been taken by them (Jackson 1987, 90), so it was pointless to add a thing that does not supplement the interview but rather has the potential to ruin it. Hence, the 'native' ethnographer often faces an ethical dilemma of disclosing and concealing.

The ascribed or achieved social status has the ability to dictate the entirety of our interactions. Keeping the social conditions as described by Norman Fairclough (1989) in mind, the interactions between the interviewer and the participants were conducted in very mundane settings that did not accompany any symbols related to class or monetary indicators, such as campus lawns, classrooms, or hostels. The practice of inviting participants to specific cafes or even houses has a tendency to make the social class quite apparent, as the choice of café also indicates the social capacities of a

person, as does a house setting, as the location, size, and interior design of a house also make the social class quite apparent. The decision to hold the majority of our interactions in common areas that we shared resulted in the participants feeling at ease and not as if they were house guests. Interviewing inside a house or café also leads to the problem of an undue inclusion of a third person in the conversation.[8] It, knowingly or unknowingly, shapes the interview, as people share more in a one-to-one conversation than in a group conversation (Davies 1999, 104). This openness of the interactions also made it easier to include the female participants in our research as some might have had issues with meeting a stranger, a male interviewer, in a café or a closed environment. They were more comfortable sitting for interviews on the lawns or in classrooms that were located inside the boundaries of the campus.

While conducting an interview, one should try to 'talk' more and 'interview' less; this enables the interviewer and the interviewee to become 'sharing subjects' and makes the discussion more stimulating (Roberts 1981). The interviews, which were based on the life story (Atkinson, 1998; Portelli, 1991; in Abrams 2010, 40) method, helped us gain insight into the evolution of the social relations of the participants. It also helped them recognise their own subjectivities and how the appearance of certain ideologies in the mainstream has changed the people they used to know[9]. Another reason behind using this method was based on how the individual's life experiences can attest to supplementing certain hypotheses (cf. Hareven 1975; Roberts 1984; Cohler 1993). Therefore, the majority of the interviews were self-reflective, which revolved around the subsequent development of the inter and intra-religious-sectarian relationships of the interviewee and how, through the passage of time, they had become rigid or weakened. Keeping in mind the unpredictability of a person's life story, the interview format was kept semi-structured. This open-ended structure of the interviews, in which the interviewer can focus on what he deems important, allowed us to probe for specifics when necessary (Brinkmann 2014, 286).

The interviewees were categorised on the basis of their region and education. They were from the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, which was due to my prior familiarity

[8] Women participants often insisted on bringing a friend along with themselves while the interview is being conducted, though the same is not needed when conducting it in a lawn or any other open areas.
[9] The benefit of using this method is seen with regards to Chandan.

with the region, which also allowed me to have a better understanding of the linguistic norms. Another reason was the historical centrality and influence of the Uttar Pradesh region, which has been at the centre of both recent and historical political changes[10]. Hence, the class of Uttar Pradesh Muslims who are studying at Aligarh presents itself as the ideal interlocutors for our research, as they have been at the centre of both historical and contemporary historical changes. Therefore, the categorisation was based on the level of education of the interviewees; only graduate students with a background in the social sciences were interviewed. This classification was based on the idea of going beyond the generalised narratives that tend to be perpetuated by individuals with an opaque understanding of pre-existing narratives or discourses. Hence, it was based on the assumption that the postgraduate students of different social sciences disciplines, having been trained in critical theory, would be able to give more insightful answers to our questions. This assumption of ours frequently proved to be accurate, as a number of PhD scholars provided us with insights that were marginal or nonexistent in the public narratives. A total of 21 interviews were conducted, 15 of which were with male participants. The limited representation of women in this study is due to the topic of our research and the limited contact between the sexes at the university, which also resulted in reluctance on the part of women to meet a stranger. While on the question of women, a peculiar thing that was noticed while interviewing women participants was their lack of say in the inter-religious sectarian identity that they possessed. The majority of female interviewees did not have an independent *Maslak* (path) perspective; rather, they adhered to the sect practised by and imposed upon them by their parents. This appears as a peculiar yet prospective theme, which was in exact contradiction to the male participants, who appeared to have a more independent outlook on their identity[11].

[10] The upper Gangetic region, the majority of which lies within the modern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, has been at the centre of both historical political conquests and contemporary political debates. Many examples regarding the historicity of the Upper-Gangetic region can be cited here; the existence of the office of *Shaikh Ul-Islam* in the region during the Delhi Sultanate period (Cf. Bulliet 1972; Qureshi 1971; Nizami1961; Jafri 2014), the city of Agra as the capital of the Mughal Empire (Cf. Dale 2009; Sinopoli 1994; Koch 2008), the development of the Nawabi regime in the aftermath of the Mughal empire (Barnett 1980; Cole 1988), the epicentre of revolt during the Revolt of 1857 (Metcalf 1964; Jafri 2019; Mukherjee 2018). We also see a continuation of this prominence in the modern nation-state, where the last 75 years of politics revolved around the status of the Babri Masjid, which again was situated in Uttar Pradesh. Hence, our assertion regarding the historical and contemporary centrality of Uttar Pradesh and its inhabitants holds congruence.

[11] Michel Foucault (1978) in his book *The History of Sexuality: Volume* 1 talks about the concept of *Perpetual Spirals of Power and Pleasure,* wherein the person starts to extract pleasure out of the power structures that are imposed upon them. Ergo, following Foucault's theorization when he says that

As we have already discussed, the semi-structured interviewing format has certain drawbacks relating to the positionality of the interviewee based on age, gender, or social class. We must also visit a reflexive (Cf. Rabinow 1977; Geertz 1973) account of the biases that we had to face while conducting fieldwork among PhD scholars. A problem that is faced while working with "high-status individuals" is that these individuals, instead of sitting for an interview, try to dictate how the interview should be taken (Scott 1984, 171; in Davies 1999, 100). We had a similar experience while interviewing a few of the PhD candidates. While some insisted on a monologue that merely prolonged the interviews without adding any substantive thought, others acted in a condescending manner, claiming, "I can sit for the interview, but would you be able to interpret it correctly?". As a result, field experience is not always pleasant, and despite these condescending monologues or misgivings, we were required to adapt to the environment, sit through hour-long monologues, and extract information that we deemed to be useful from the condescending conversations. Hence, these accounts that are seldom talked about are a critical part of our discipline, as ethnographic research, despite being considered a rite of passage, is, in several cases, shrouded in mystery. Therefore, it is incumbent to look at such ethnographic experiences in a reflexive manner.

"*Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another. They are linked together by complex mechanisms and devices of excitation and incitement.* (Foucault 62, 1978)", we observe the same notion among the female interlocutors, who despite the initial patriarchal imposition of a set of sectarian beliefs, actually started to derive *pleasure* out of this imposition through maintaining a more rigid sectarian bias against the people belonging to the other sects.

CHAPTER IV

AWAKING PHANTASMAGORICAL SPIRIT: THE NEED FOR THE (RE)CREATION OF HISTORY IN A MODERN NATION-STATE

4.1. "Tradition"

This chapter aims to incorporate the discussions related to false history into a larger framework that begins with the writings of Rene Guénon and ends with the case of Chandan, personifying the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. This chapter could be described as what the German scholars call *Ungesichert* (written as *unabgeschert* in the original text) – that is 'insufficiently protected' from critical attacks (Berger, Berger, and Kellner 1974, 7), similar to Peter Berger and company, we have ventured into a vastly uncharted and a highly contested territory that necessitates an explanation for such a recourse. Nevertheless, as Edward Said (1979) famously remarks, "Beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to *enable* what follows from them" (16); our following discussions that might at a cursory glance appear to be disjointed in nature, are synchronised in a manner that formulates a fresh 'beginning' which *enables* us in the 'delimitation' of our arguments. Hence, we find it incumbent on us to begin our discussions by establishing a beginning and then continuing on to our conceptual enquiries.

The word 'tradition' is derived from the Latin verb tradere, which means to 'give over' or 'to transmit'. Similarly, *traditio* specifies the process of transmission, while *traditium* refers to the thing that is being transmitted. Interestingly, the word *tradere* does not simply mean to transmit a certain thing, but rather to transfer something for 'safe-keeping'. Etymologically speaking, tradition is a duty owed by successors to their ancestors, the duty of safeguarding the traditional actions that are transmitted from one generation to another, consisting of the collective experiences and values of their ancestors. The preservation of a tradition is perhaps the "oldest obligation" in

human history, as it involves preserving something that ancestors deemed valuable enough to pass on (Gross 1992, 9-10). Similar standards underpin the ancient Roman law of Traditio, in which, upon the death of a successor, the property was transferred to the heir for safekeeping (Lohr,1967). In the next passages(s), we will define what is meant by the term tradition and how it helps in shaping a society.

Tradition refers to a set of practices, a constellation of beliefs that exist in our society but were inherited by us from the past (Gross 1992, 8). These beliefs cannot be juxtaposed with the Catholic term traditio, as what tradition leaves behind is a "living presence" that leaves an "imprint" but cannot be reduced to just an "imprint" (Nasr 1989, 64). These practices are termed traditions not due to the fact that they were performed in the past but rather due to the fact that they are replicated precisely because they were once performed in the past. This precise repetition of archaic practices shapes the way society acts and also highlights the fact that these practices have had certain positive functions that lead to their repetition. This continuous chain of repetition of traditional practices acts as a legitimising factor for the beliefs/ways of society. Tradition sometimes might also dictate the 'way of thinking', how a society perceives reality, or even how they treat the people around them (Gross 1992, 8). The legitimacy of a tradition lies in its repetition. Theoretically speaking, a minimum of two transmissions that range across three generations are necessary for any act to be considered a tradition (Shills 1981; Gross 1992, 10). For instance, to give an example of a particular type of tradition, a person's claim that his family has traditionally been doctors would only be considered valid if both his father and grandfather were also doctors (which makes him the third link). This tradition also implies that this uninterrupted medicinal education did benefit his forebears, hence the continuation of employment in the same profession. Although we recognise a minimum limit for a repetitive action to be considered a tradition, there is no upper limit to this number. A tradition might be followed from time immemorial, but in certain cases, its religious legitimacy could be challenged.

The word tradition is often used to denote cultures that are not 'modern', a society that has its roots in a specific history. The categories of 'east' and 'west' might help in understanding the preconceived pedestal on which the term tradition is kept. The paradigmatic basis behind the invocation of the term west, in any academic discourse,

means something that is ‘modern’ in ideas or in industry, while the term east denotes a more religious setting of a ‘traditional’ society. The detailed specification of what we usually mean by ‘East’ includes the Chinese civilisation, which is considered the Far East; the Hindu civilisation, which is Central Eastern; and the Near East, looked upon as the Islamic civilisation. The categorisation of Western mentality or Eastern mentality holds a prespecified meaning, with the former representing a modern outlook and the latter representing a more traditionalistic one (Guénon 2004, 22-23). Due to the Occident being a perpetual subject of fascination and study and its alleged passé par-tout character, the usage of the term traditional in describing the East also unconsciously presupposes an “underdevelopment” related to these traditional societies (Lerner 1958; Weiner 1966; in Inglehart & Baker 2000, 3). In the West, innovators are praised for their innovations and deliberations, but gratitude is seldom expressed to the people who have maintained their institutions in the state in which they received them (Shills 1981, 2). Hence, the word tradition is not considered an ideal marker of identification but is used by Oriental scholars in order to define a culture that they consider to be ‘backward’ or ‘unique’. Few societies today insist on maintaining their traditional values in the face of widespread modern pursuits that run counter to the very essence of tradition.

An action ceases to exist the moment it is performed, and the action itself does not last longer than the time that is required for its performance. The transmissible aspects of this action are the images and patterns which were adhered to during the actualisation of an action (Shill 1981, 13). The belief in the infallibility of such actions is often defined as substantive traditionality, “the appreciation of the accomplishments and wisdom of the past and of the institutions especially impregnated with tradition…” (Shills 1981, 22). This substantive traditionality is the insistence on following the preordained path of the predecessors. This insistence is perhaps the only belief that draws flak from the modernists as well as the religious quarters. The former critique of traditionalism has its roots in the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution; the former was aimed at a mechanical level of modernisation, while the latter became a by-product of a total societal change from an agrarian to an urban society, which led to the subsequent rise of an individualistic system of global-capitalism (Gross 1992, 43). The French Revolution was an ideological effort towards the total annihilation of all the institutions surrounding the *Ancien regime*; all institutions which were ‘old’ or

'traditional' were systematically eradicated. The idea to 'begin again', which aimed to redefine the entire structure of society, was popularised in Europe (Gross 1992, 26-27). Tradition became the cause or consequence of clerical dominance, ignorance, social hierarchy, the distribution of wealth in society and the pre-emption of the best positions based on one's ascribed status (Shills 1981, 6). This effort towards the total redefinition of the society led to a rejection of everything that was 'traditional'. This umbrella term included institutions, social classes, kinship, values, and ideas that persisted in French society. Tradition was deemed undesirable because it was viewed as a characteristic of the *Ancien regime* and, therefore, had to be rejected. The religious critique of the pre-existing traditions draws its momentum from a reformist slope, which aims to bring the 'traditional society' out of its assumed ignorance. Furthermore, tradition has also been overlooked by certain 'disciplines' which, in some sense, owe their existence to the study of the French Revolution.

Theoretical engagements regarding tradition have been limited to a normative understanding of the word tradition. Here, we would like to open a passage into a different kind of Tradition (Henceforth written as 'Tradition'). This Tradition is similar to substantive traditionality as it is also based on the appreciation of a thing belonging to a long-forgotten past. The 'primordial traditions' of a society are the foundational archetypes, the nature of which is spiritually exoteric. Rene Guénon (2004), in his theorisation of the Hindu human cycle called *Manvantara,* stresses that the primordial spirit has disappeared in our society. Consequently, our society's ultimate truths have become inaccessible, and the number of people who possess such knowledge is declining. Although the truths have not vanished from the earth's surface, they are concealed by impenetrable veils, making them difficult to uncover (Guénon, 2014). The necessity to return to such a tradition means a return to the lost spirituality and mysticism that has always replicated itself in some nooks and crannies of our world. Hence, Rene Guénon, along with other scholars who will be discussed in the following sections, have talked about an urgency to return to the Tradition. This return strives towards a paradigmatic change in our present society and aims to replace the 'profane' rationalisation with a spiritual/religious one. The profane nature of reasoning that is present in our society has resulted in a 'negation of true intellect' and the limitation of knowledge 'to the lowest forms', which is based on a surface analytical study detached from any objective principles (Guénon 2014, 16). A society that lacks Tradition often,

instead of raising itself to the level of the truth, drags the truth down to its own level, resulting in profane reasoning, and the same profanity creeps into the institutions and morals of the society. Due to the absence of any transcendental paradigm, the modern man finds himself participating in endless squabbles and riddles, which remain unsolved to this day. Richard Feynman, upon being asked about the ontology of nature by his students, famously remarked towards the close of his life, "That question leads down a sinkhole from which no scientist has emerged alive. Nobody has any idea how nature can be the way it is." (Smith 1992). The lack of any paradigmatic basis for thought results in this perpetual questioning being, who, in the ultimate trajectory of the world, is lost.

We also come across a definition of Tradition similar to Guénon 's, but the visible difference is that this definition uses Guénonian theorisation as its point of departure. Julius Evola (2018) talks about how the essence of regality was based on Tradition. He argues that the reason kings and sultans were respected, obeyed, and feared was the transcendental nature of their authority. This non-human characteristic of the kings acted as the foundation of their transcendental authority. This transcendental aura, which encompassed the kings, was a matter that was taken seriously even by their enemies[12] (Evola 2018, 7). This authority, according to Evola, did not rest on contemporary Machiavellian (Machiavelli 2008, 271) political dimensions that lay in its ability of violence or strength and in the secular characteristic of charisma (Weber, Authority) or physical courage. In contrast, the origins of authority have always been of a metaphysical nature. To properly illustrate what we mean by metaphysical authority and by a lack of metaphysical authority, we must refer back to a very specific incident from the Great War.

[12] According to the 'Muslim versions' of history pertaining to the killing of the last Abbasid caliph Al-Musta'sim-billah by the hands of Mongols. With little variations in the records of Juzjani, Vassaf and Ibn al-fuwati, the Abbasid caliph was rolled up in carpets and then trampled on by the Mongol horsemen in order to not shed his 'holy' blood on the soil, which according to the transcendental nature of the Caliph might invite the fury of the God on the invaders. Cf. Boyle, John Andrew. "The Death of the Last Abbasid Caliph: A Contemporary Muslim Account". *Journal of Scientific Studies*, 6(2), 145-161. (1961) or Le Strange, G. "The Story of the Death of the Last Abbasid Caliph, from the Vatican MS. of Ibn-al-Furāt." *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1900, 293–300.

4.2. The Lack of Transcendentality in Nation-State

A Turkish officer has been given the task of delivering a governmental document to the person who has made Masjid al-Nabawi the centre of his operations. The document included the terms of surrender of the city of Medina to the 'nearest allied commander'. It signified the urgency of the matter as well as the desperation of the Arabs, Allied forces, and the Ottoman 'empire' who were awaiting a peaceful surrender of the holy city. The final dispatch for surrendering Medina was sent by Sir Reginald Wingate to the Mucavir (caretaker) of the city of Medina in August. The address of the reply gives us hints of the content of the same: 'To Him who broke the power of Islam and caused bloodshed among Moslems and placed the Caliphate of the Emir, who was God's representative, in bondage and under the domination of the British' (Kedourie 1977, 130). Again, after the signing of armistice terms at Mudros on October 30, 1918, another document with similar enclosement was sent to the Mucavir, who rejected the orders and declared that he would defend the city of his Prophet (PBUH) 'until a decree from the Khalifa was communicated to him'. Again, an ultimatum until December 15 was given to the Mucavir of the city by Wingate, to which he is said to have replied, "I am a Mohammedan. I am an Osmanli. I am the son of Bayer Bay. I am a soldier" (Kedourie 1977, 132). This forlorn and 'faithful' struggle of the Ottoman armies during the siege of Medina helps us formulate the arguments that proceed.

A pitched siege for the city of Medina is not a recent thing; the city had already faced a similar condition during the Battle of Trenches, which failed to penetrate the walls of the city. Perhaps the only dissimilarity between the two incidents is in the character of the besiegers, as the defenders and the besiegers of the city both adhered to the same holy texts. However, to differentiate between the besiegers and the protectors of the city, we can, perhaps, cite a report from Ahmed Shakir Karmi, who was an editor for a Meccan newspaper called 'Al-Qibla', which sheds light on the character of the besiegers whom the Sharif of Mecca so confidently led.

> *it is quite evident [he observes] that the tribes who have submitted to him in this war have not done so out of fear or respect for his authority but from pure greed for the money which is lavished upon them regardless 'Anyone who knows the character of the Bedouins of the Hejaz*

> *knows how true this is, for they are well known for their greed and their lack of any praiseworthy qualities, for they do not hesitate to kill pilgrims who come from far and near'[generalisation, emphasis mine]*(Karmi 1919; in Kedourie 1977, 129).

This report tells us in detail about the common consensus regarding the besiegers of the holy city of Medina. Karmi's ethnicity also plays a role in sanitising the document for any alleged ethnically motivated subjectivity. This generalised assumption also found alarming validity after the fall of Medina to the hands of the Bedouins. An Egyptian Colonel, Sadik bey Yahya, who was not among the Sharifian dependents, wrote quite clearly in his report about the post-annexation conditions of the Holy City of Medina:

> *I regret to say [he declared in his report] that when I entered Medina on the 15/1/1919, I found all the houses, which number about 4850 and which were locked and sealed by the Turkish Government, had been broken open by the Arabs who looted the furniture which they sold at a very cheap price in the Suk because they were ignorant of their value. The Ashraf and others who entered Medina with the Emir Abdullah used to go from house to house and take what they liked and they used to live in the houses as they pleased and this went on for 12 days and even the houses whose owners were at Medina were looted.* (Kedourie 1977, 136)

Finally, to revisit the officer who stands in front of the Al-Masjid an-Nabawi, In order to fulfil the demands of the Mucavir of the city, a governmental document was issued by the Turkish government and brought to Medina, which ordered the surrender of the city. Zia Bey, the Turkish officer who brought the document to Medina, describes the Mucavir of the city as an 'intensely religious' person with a 'strong vein of political shrewdness' which allowed him to act in such a 'distinct' manner, which was a mixture of practicality and unwavering faith. Furthermore, he also highlights the Mucavir's eagerness to defend the city of his Prophet (PBUH). Fakhri Pasha referred to himself as a mere "Mucavir" of the blessed tomb of the Prophet, and another anecdote states that after the surrender of Medina, he went again to the 'Ravza-I Mutahhara, or Garden of Purity…eyes closed and trembling, seemingly lost in fervent supplications.' Kandemir further states that Fakhri Pasha did not want to leave the city of Medina and wanted to stay as 'Mucavir' as he "took refuge in his [Prophet's promise of] intercession" (Kandemir 2011, 190; in El Bakri 2014, 708).

The theme that one notices in the 72-day lone stand of Fakhri Pasha is the transcendental authority that the city of Medina embodies. Zia Bey, who had come to Fakhri Pasha with the official document from the Ottoman government, was sent back to him as he did not consider it to have any 'metaphysical validity'. The reason behind this abject rejection of a direct order from the Turkish government was the lack of transcendental authority that the document embodied. Fakhri Pasha considered Medina a holy site, the resting place of the last Prophet (PBUH), and hence, only the Khalifa could order him to abandon it. The religious authority that the Khalifa embodies is different from the coercive authority of the modern nation-state. The Khalifa/king finds a 'halo' around his head, which equips him with an authority that goes beyond the temporality of the tangible world. The nation-state is detached from the spiritual realm; this separation leads to the deity or God becoming an optional extra that is attached to the state when it is needed and could be removed when its function is completed (Billig 1995, 77).

Contrary to the modern Nation-States, Rene Guénon (2001), in his book *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power,* talks about the two co-existing fundamentals of any Traditional society: Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power. These two characteristics of society did not exist as separate functions, but rather, as "two indispensable aspects" which were bound indissolubly in a unity. The nature of both of these terms lies in their name itself, the term spiritual 'authority' being in direct contrast with temporal 'power'. The latter invokes an idea of strength or force which can materialise and affirm itself through external factors. The essence of the term 'authority' is affirmed by itself as independent of any temporal support and is an inward intelligence *whose only force is that of truth* (Guénon 2001, 16-17). The essential function of spiritual authority is the "conversion" and the "transmission" of the traditional doctrine. In return, this traditional doctrine acts as the basis of social organisations (Evola 2001, 18-19). Hence, the main aspects of the spiritual class are knowledge and teaching, which, through an equilibrium between the two authorities, culminate into the prolongation of the traditional doctrine. Temporal power, on the other hand, deals with the maintenance of the internal stability of the State, and in doing so, it must hold enough 'power' to neutralise external threats. This temporal power is based on two aspects; "administrative" and "judicial" (Guénon 2001, 17). Historically speaking, the central part of any coronation of a king or an emperor had a

certain religious agency attached to it. In the European context, the church played a vital role in the anointment of the king and the subsequent bestowal of religious authority upon the king (Ullmann 1969, 127; in Armstrong 1982, 155). This presence of religious agency during the anointment places the king as a bridge between the temporal and the sacred realms and results in a multi-faceted authority which is based on Tradition. Hence, the temporal power becomes responsible for the maintenance of both the sacerdotal and temporal factors, which are ideally supposed to rule in a collective manner.

4.3. "Pontifex": Differentiating Between the Promethean and the Pontifical

The Pope in the Roman Empire used to be addressed as Pontifex Maximus (Musail, 2014; Dijkstra & Espelo, 2017). In the modern context, the word is translated as 'bridge builder', though there are speculations that the word might originate from Etruscan Pont (way/road), which would make the Pontifex the 'maker of road' (Hekster 2020, 29). The pontifex was considered the bridge between the spiritual and temporal, as its functions ran parallel to those of the emperors. This system created an equilibrium between the functioning of the state and religious authority. The removal of any competing and equally co-existing religious authority from the functioning of the administrative apparatus has resulted in the desacralisation of the entirety of the institutions. Without the existence of these equally competing authorities, the religious/sacred is looked upon by the profane secularised authority as the 'other'. The religious authority is not looked upon as the competing one but rather as one of the objects that adorn the state's arsenal.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1989), in his theorisation of the Pontifical man and Promethean man, takes a lot from the concept of Pontifex. According to Nasr, the pontifical man is a man who lives by tradition; he does not live in *Ghaflah* (unmindfulness); he lives in full awareness of his origin, duty, and primordial purity that he tries to replicate or transmit. This man is the vicegerent of God (Khalifatallah) who is mindful of his responsibility towards God; he recognises his reason for existence and the conditions under which he is given this dominion. He is aware of his role as the intermediary between the sacred and temporal on which he is 'allowed' to rule, provided that he recognises the ephemeral and transcendental nature of his being. This Pontifical man

can strive towards an ideal primordial tradition that is specific to each of the traditions; in Islam, he can strive to be a "universal or perfect man" (al-Insān al-Kāmil). The pontifical man recognises that God created man in his own image (Genesis 1:27). This realisation of idealised perfection leads the man into following the path of perfection that would lead him to gain knowledge of the sacred and to 'become fully himself'. The man who walks the earth recognises that he is the proof of God (Mazhar-e-Ilaahi), as he is a celestial being who has been sent to earth to live a life that is based on Tradition.

The Promethean man is exactly the opposite of the Pontifical man. Promethean man "feels as home on earth," and his outlook on existence is contrary to that of the Pontifical man; he considers it to be temporal. He drowns himself in the ephemeral entices of the modern world, making him a slave of his 'lower nature' and surrendering himself to these pleasures that are under the garb of freedom. According to Nasr, this Promethean man broke free during the Renaissance (Nasr 1989, 146). After the Renaissance, the desacralisation of knowledge and the limited induction of religious authority into the workings of the state sowed the seeds of the Promethean man. This desacralisation resulted in scepticism and antagonism among the populace of Europe as they were unconsciously uprooted from their objective Tradition. The critique of positivist thought is also central to traditionalist thought[13]. This Promethean man has divided his body into a self-imposed duality[14]: the head, which is associated with the mind, and the body, which is associated with intelligence. The existence of the heart is often overlooked by modern man. The heart is the invisible centre of the human body; it is in the heart that knowledge and being meet and form a uniformity. To a large extent, the mind and the body are affected by the heart, and this is why modern man yearns for the tranquillity of the mind. This, in turn, ironically pushes him towards the Eastern spiritual practices of yoga or, in some rare cases, Sufism. Hence, the

[13] Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. "Knowledge and the Sacred". *State University of New York Press.* (1989) refer to chapter 5 for a critique of Auguste Comte… Guénon, Rene. "The Great Triad". Translated by Peter Kingsley. *Quinta Essentia; Cambridge*. (1991) refer to chapter 20 for a detailed critique of the concept of Three Stages.

[14] These two books contain the bulk of the reasoning for the aforementioned Cartesian Dualism. Descartes René, and Mike Moriarty. *Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Oxford University Press, 2008. …Descartes, René. 2015. *The Passions of the Soul and Other Late Philosophical Writings*. Oxford University Press.

Pontifical nature of man has been subsumed by modern man, and the exact replication of the Promethean beliefs is found in modern political structures as well.

Up to this point, through historical and theoretical examples, we have theorised what transcendental authority is and how modern man finds himself isolated due to a lack of a pontifical nature of existence. To comprehend how this theoretical idealisation of a traditional society informs our subsequent arguments, we would need to consult a scholar who is more politically motivated, moving 'downwards' from René Guénon 's discourse and looking at another scholar from the traditionalist school, whose ideas are rejected by Guénon ion purists. Baron Julius Evola (1898-1974) was an Italian Traditionalist widely regarded as the 'origin of political traditionalism'. His political Traditionalism is perhaps the point of contention between purists, as a political change presupposes a general transformation that goes beyond the idea of the transformation of a few "elites." Evola goes beyond Guénon 's reasoning and tries to place the idea of tradition in a more political framework. Evola borrows a lot from the existentialism of Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Immanuel Kant, and Fyodor Dostoevsky. He says that, according to tradition, "every authority is fraudulent, every law is unjust and barbarous," and "every institution is ephemeral." (Evola 2018, 6). He explains this by saying that these laws and institutions do not come from "above" and, therefore, are temporary (Evola 2003, 1). Consequently, as we have repeatedly observed in postmodern literature, there has been a lack of inner peace and a constant longing for the unknown." The ever-reoccurring sense of emptiness, or the fleeting feeling that something is missing, is, according to him, a result of the lack of tradition in our society[15].

Julius Evola (2018) identifies the modern nation-state as a feminine totemism due to the mystification of the peasants that is done through the sacralisation of the motherland (365). This shift in authority, according to Evola, speaks to the desacralisation of modern leaders. As has been argued above, the modern man lacks any Tradition, which also leads to the dissolution of sacred institutions of power. As

[15] To cite a few books that is based on a certain dissolution of a man's objective morality some examples from the works of Franz Kafka; *The metamorphizes* and *White nights*. Albert Camus concept of Absurdism that is best represented in his novel called '*The Stranger/outsider*' or Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* or *Demons* both of the works talk about the modern-man and his vision of the world.

Heidegger famously remarked, “Everything essential and of great magnitude has arisen only out of the fact that man had a home and was rooted in a tradition” (Sheehan, 2017). Similar to Heidegger, Evola suggests that the moment an empire ceases to be sacred, it can no longer be considered an empire, as the authority of an empire is woven into its sacred nature. Hence, the emperor begins to be treated as an equal, not as a person who has come to power through the divine, but rather through dishonest politics. The epitome of such reasoning is present in the Machiavellian political framework, where we observe that politics has been desacralised and is based on non-traditional means. The transcendental concepts of honour, chivalry, and justice are being pushed back, and politics is being limited to a game of thrones. The non-human or transcendental authority was the right (Ius) of the kings; this was the sole reason they were obeyed or feared by the populace. The kings of the past were only inclined to present their own lineage as proof of legitimisation; they did not define themselves by defining the ‘other’ but rather only limited their definitions to themselves. To give an example from a very intriguing source that we came across in our study, the Mughal emperors maintained a seal for themselves that traced their lineage to the Turkish emperor Timur (Gallop, 1999). This was done in order to show the continuity of their lineage to Timur and act as a legitimisation to rule as Timur’s lineage, which is also somehow connected to Cengiz Khan. This whole enterprise was done in order to justify the emperors’ rule, as they were supposedly ruling through the Ius. Similarly, as Marshall Hodson puts it, the Abbasid Caliph assumed the Sassanid Mesopotamian title of “shadow of God of Earth” (Armstrong 1982, 138). Modern society does not recognise this non-human Ius of their leaders, but rather, they are looked upon as ‘public servants’.

Until now, we have categorised how the modern man lacks Tradition, and this trend is also observable among the modern elites. Therefore, one may now wonder how this Promethean man rules. Is he a de-mystified man without transcendental authority who is regarded as an equal? How does he replace the reverence that the people once had for their leaders on account of their transcendent character?

4.4. The Creation of False History

A certain modern *doxa* that engulfs the modern man is his relation to a specific *Ethnie*[16]. The modern man posits this belief of continuity, which he derives from a specific Ethnie. The interpretation stemming from an Ethnie perspective binds the perception of the people through historicity, which becomes an integral part of their interpretation and expressions of the world around them (Smith 1986, 22). The Ethnie is mythic or symbolic in nature; its ontological bases are carefully handpicked or fabricated, which helps in the (re)creation of its paradigmatic basis. This is done in order to prove the historicity of the said Ethnie. To ascertain the need for the creation of history, we will have to look at nationalism and what it means. Nationalism is a broad term, the definition of which is beyond the scope of our research and our capacity, so we would rather "break it down into a series of different fields" in order to avoid addressing the entire subject (Breuilly 2005, 126; in Özkırmızlı 2010, 218). The specific thread that we would like to untangle is the creation of false history and how it makes up for the lack of Tradition in the modern nation-state. The working definition that we will be using to define nationalism is- 'Nationalism is more than a feeling of identity'; it is more of an 'interpretation' or 'theory' of the 'world', it is 'the theory of being within the world of nations' (Billig 1995, 65).

Most people familiar with nationalism would not dispute the fact that the basis of nationalism exists on the concept of awakening. It is argued that the 'national spirit' is ever present in the people, though it has to be awakened (Geary 2002, 18; Gellner 1983, 48; Minogue 1967; in Smith 1986, 191). An example can be taken from the German case, where the annihilation of Roman armies at the Teutoburg forest was considered a nationalistic victory by the Germans (Geary 2002, 22). Another example could also be taken from the Indian Revolt of 1857, which is often termed the first war of independence, ignoring the fact that these struggles were not initiated in pursuit of a 'nation-state'. These instances of appropriating epistemologically diverse struggles and moulding them into a nationalistic framework led to the historical creation of the nationalistic spirit. It may be argued that these episodes of popular struggle have a certain historicity, and it is emphasised that for an ideology to be accepted, it must be

[16] Smith introduces the term *Ethnie* and argues that once the ethnic 'symbols' and 'myths' are 'carried' and formed they are called as *Ethnie.*

grounded in reality. Here, we must also distinguish between 'imagined' and 'false' history. The former is a history that is not based on the objective study of history but instead is created, whereas the latter is based on history but has been reshaped to fit a nationalistic narrative, thereby making it a 'false history'. Interestingly, the nation-state actually lives both in history and at the end of it; it derives its essence from historical continuity, which explains its origins, but also places itself in a 'modern self-consciousness' that detaches itself from history and is considered the 'end of history' (Duara 1997, 29).

There is no denying the fact that societies embody certain types of primordial relations. These attachments, termed 'significant relations' qualities, are the characteristics that are founded in society due to the close ties that the members share due to their language, race, language, and territory (Shils 1957, 142). Eller and Coughlan (1993) have argued that the significant relations that Shils has talked about are sacred, as they derive strength from "a certain ineffable significance… attributed to the tie of blood" (Shils 1957, 142). Contrary to their argument, there has been a consensus that by the word 'attributed', Shils did not mean to say that these objects are given but rather 'assumed' (Özkırmızlı 2010, 57-58). This assumption of having common ties in search of a common history is not a new phenomenon. Adrian Hastings (1997) defines ethnicity as 'a group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language'. This assertion is not entirely incorrect by any means, but as Geary (2002) argues in his book *The Myth of Nations*, where he talks about the relation between the people claiming a Gothic lineage and how they were totally opposite of the modern Goths, "Whatever a Goth was in the third-century kingdom of Cniva, the reality of a Goth in sixth-century Spain was far different" (Geary 118, 2002), as they had a different language, culture, political organisation, and beliefs. Perhaps the only thing one may have in common with their old ethnic ancestors is their surname. The problem arises when a non-existent continuity is drawn from an ancient Ethnie. Armstrong (1982) talks about the nostalgia that plays a vital role in the nation-building process. This nostalgia is defined as a 'superior way of life' that acts as a constant yearning for the past. To deal with this yearning, a *Mythomoteur* is invented about the ideal lost society, which provides "an overall framework of meaning for the ethnic community." Without the existence of such a Mythomoteur, a society cannot practice collective action (Smith

1986, 24-25). This need for a *Mythomoteur* leads to a (re)creation of history through a specific nationalistic lens.

The history of an Ethnie is looked upon as a past that can be remoulded into a framework for the future. These "lingering memories" or idealised pasts are used by the elites to construct a nation with a "semblance of antique pedigree" (Smith 1986, 17). The nation-state enterprise is often seen as a "general imposition of a high culture on society" (Gellner 1983, 57). This top-down imposition also talks of the fact that this imposition is done through a literate elite, and the spirit of nationalism, or "sleeping beauty" (Minogue 1967; in Smith 1986, 191) that must be awakened is actually internalised through the creation of a false history. This modern elitist formulation of history presupposes the existence of the spirit of the nation-state, which is naturally embedded into all of the ancient societies. This notion, which has been termed 'methodological nationalism', assumes that the nation is a 'natural' or 'necessary' form of any society (Chernilo 2006; Özkırmızlı 2010, 2). The problem arises when modern nationalism takes the pre-existing primordial attachments of language, territory, culture, and political organisation and gives them political significance. It assumes that a particular aspect is more important than all other factors present in society. For instance, in India, religion is regarded as the most crucial aspect of nation-building, while language, culture, and a shared territory are ignored. Similarly, in the case of Turkey, an individual's ethnicity takes precedence over their religion. These temporal claims of a nation present them as 'natural', which is described by Umut Özkırmızlı through the Foucauldian concept of 'eventalization' which implies "re-discovering the connection, encounters, supports, blockages…as being self-evident or universal" (Foucault 2002, 226-7; in Özkırımlı 2010, 210). The nation-state as an ideology protrudes into our consciousness by claiming itself to be a 'natural' phenomenon, which makes the existing social arrangements appear natural or inevitable to us (Eagleton 1991; in Billig 1995, 15). We assume that people who speak a common language will eventually form an independent nation and that if a group of people do not share a common religion, they cannot live together; this is the 'natural' course of nationhood that has been embedded unconsciously in our consciousness.

The Ethnie are historical communities that are built on a narrowed-down shared memory. This 'memory' could range from language, culture, religion, or ethnicity;

furthermore, choosing a specific categorisation rests in the hands of people belonging to a 'high culture'. A general consensus for a return to the 'golden age' of a certain Ethnie is prevalent in almost every nation-state; it could be a return to the Roman Empire, the Vedic Age, or some level of Bedouin lifestyle. This return requires qualities that are common to every nationalist's guidebook: courage, self-sacrifice, loyalty, and patriotism. These qualities are invoked in pursuance of the Mythomoteur society that is envisioned by the state. As discussed in the preceding arguments, the nation-state adopts a specific primordial aspect of society and tries to base its identity on it: religion, language, or ethnicity. The selection of a common variable is different for every nation-state. This hegemonic construction of causal history undermines the essence of a heterogeneous society (Duara 1996, 7; in Ahmed 2022, 162). To elaborate, the selection of a particular Mythomoteur for a religious deity or language implies that some individuals may not revere it in common. It is incumbent for the elites to impose a 'cultural homogeneity' and 'cultural unity' as they are the "paramount considerations" for the creation of history (Smith 1986, 147). The (re)creation of history has two equally different sides; one man might attribute the constructed myths as concrete historical facts, while the other might consider them to be *Trahison des clercs*.

4.5. *"Awake Ghazni! We have returned!":* The Banality of Phantasmagorical Fantasies and the Case of Chandan

(I) Sanskritization of the Indian-National Movement

The French General Henri Gouraud, upon entering Damascus after the battle of Maysalun in 1920, took a moment to pause at the tomb of Kurdish emperor Saladin located at the Great Mosque and kicked it while exclaiming, "Awake Saladin! We have returned! My presence here consecrates the victory of the cross over the Crescent!" (Copeland 2009, 378). The desecration of the tomb of a dead person means that the buried is somehow still grounded in present reality (pun intended), meaning these ancient figures find relevance in the modern context. As seen in our previous discussions, the (re)creation of history is based on imagining a teleological chain between the "deeds" done by "ancient heroes" in order to gain an understanding of

what is “happening to one right now," wherein these political figures are categorised into a “cultural schema” (Sherry 1990, 89), which further transmutes into what Roger D. Petersen (2011) terms “ancient hatred” towards the person(s). The relations between the cultural schema and the ancient hatred are always “available for activation” (Petersen 2011, 44). This activation further plays an integral part in crystalising or ‘awakening’ the modern nationalistic spirit, which is seen in almost every post-colonial nation-building process. The process of ‘correcting’ the previous wrongs, or a declaration of a return to ‘power’, provides the people with a strong emotional appeal. A similar example is taken from India, where, on November 13, 1947, just a few months after India achieved independence, the country's deputy prime minister, Sardar Patel, vowed not to rest until the infamous Somnath temple in Gujrat was reconstructed (Smith 1963, 386). As demonstrated in the Introduction, this infamous temple was an integral part of the colonial reconstruction of history that portrayed Muslims as conquerors who destroyed the 'Hindu' civilisation. Hence, the government-funded reconstruction of the Somnath temple that was initiated just after gaining independence was done “in order to demonstrate that Hindu rule was reborn in India” (Bazaz 1954, 360). The insistence on rebuilding the temple can only mean that the Indian national movement was, to a large extent, influenced by colonial histography.

As Bankim Chandra Chatterji puts it, “You can translate a word by a word, but behind the word is an idea… and this idea you cannot translate if it does not exist among the people in whose language you are translating” (Chatterjee 1986, 61; in Madan 1987, 754). Ideally, the people themselves must render their historical experience into meaningful interpretation, wherein the ‘foreign’ ideals must be internalised through one’s own agency. However, as observed in the Indian nation-building case, the search for indigenous *Nationalliterature* (Van der Veer 2001, 132) was based on the predetermined path already precedented by eighteenth-century European thought, which appeared to the oblivious indigenous Western-educated elite nation-builders as part of their independent inquiry to produce an alternative to the existing British colonial apparatus. “Hindoo literature” was conceived as encompassing all the Sanskrit text, which included science, grammar, and law (Van der Veer 2001, 132) and was canonised in the colonial period to view as the basis of ‘Hindu civilisation’. The first reference to such a colonial construction of Indology appears in the writings

of a certain British soldier-writer named William Watts, who, while celebrating the British victory in the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey in 1757, made a clear distinction between Hindus and Muslims. He refers to the former as the "original natives" who were held in "abject slavery…by the Moors," while the latter was described as being “fierce” and "oppressive" (Sen 2000, 100; in Ahmad 2023, 10-1). This streamlining of what is known as an ‘Indian’ history wherein a single homogeneous social group is placed as the ‘original inhabitants’ is a persistent problem in Indian historiography, which, according to Bernard Cohn (1985), could have been resolved if the colonialists had instead focused on writing the "histories of India" (Daniel 1996, 53). The colonial ‘thinning’ of historiography is also a theme explored by Romila Thapar (Thapar 1989), who focuses on a lack of multiple interpretations of history. The rationale behind the colonial streamlining of history is a topic that we would like to discuss in the subsequent passages.

British colonialists in India tried to “manufacture the myth that they were not the first outsiders to rule India; Muslims too were outsiders” (Ahmad 2023, 11), and this narrative was furthered in order to present colonial rule as being the emancipators of the original inhabitants of India. This reinterpretation of history assisted colonial authorities in justifying their own dominance over the Indian population, done as a result of the ‘White man's burden’ to protect the indigenous populace from the "fierce" and "oppressive" circumstances, which in this case were the Muslims. Furthermore, the colonial historiographic discourse was not only limited to the British administrative writings; several indigenous writers also purported the same view. Rammohun Roy (d.1833), for instance, wrote that “for several centuries subject to Mohammadan Rule, and the civil and religious rights of its original inhabitants were constantly trampled upon." Here, what we see is that the British, through a cunning supplantation, made the Muslims responsible for the ‘original sin’, the subjugation of the ‘indigenous’ population. Consequently, this line of thinking persisted even during the Indian nation-building project, as seen in the example of the leader of the militant Hindu organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bhai Parmanand, who seemed more amenable to compromise with the British than with the Muslims, stating, "I feel an impulse in me that the Hindus will willingly cooperate with Great Britain" (Parmanand 1936, 226; in Smith 1963, 457). The streamlining of history produced what is known as “mainstream national culture” that is fearful of diversity and self-assertion, where the

culture promotes a vision of India that has a unitary paradigmatic basis attached to it and aims to “eliminate all fundamental cultural differences within the polity” (Nandy 1995, 19). Nandy also remarks that the colonial need to “survive” in an alien environment forced the British to “grant greater play” to the “surviving memories” (Nandy 1995, 20), which in this case were the Sanskrit texts and sources that were canonised and presented as “Indian culture." This political manoeuvre seemed to have helped in the configuration of the local political loyalties, though it was based on a “compromise” of what Nandy calls the “European principles” (Nandy 1995, 20). Hence, the indigenous demand for an independent nation-state was assumed to be based on the idealised ‘Indian culture’, though “they were mostly unaware that the nation-state system was one of the more recent innovations in human civilisations” (Nandy 1984, 2079). Furthermore, looking at the Indian context, the idealised civilisation was manufactured in accordance with European conveniences.

The construction of a nation-state is based on the notion of an idealised past, which presupposes a spirit of nationalism that has always existed in the people and merely awaits to be awakened. However, what is taken for granted as embodying the ‘Indian culture’ is, as seen in the preceding arguments, the British (re)construction of an ‘Indian’ past. As argued by Rajeev Bhargava (2000), every practice that was initiated by the colonialists in order to functionalise their rule played a part in their own undoing (33). Similarly, history played a significant role in the formation of the Indian nationalist movement. The idealised 'Indian history' served its purpose of depicting Muslims as foreigners, but it also simultaneously portrayed the British as foreigners. Hence, the British, through a (re)construction of history, also provided the Indian nationalists with the tools for their own destruction.

The Indian nation-building process was based on an opaque reading of the existing *Nationalliterature,* which assumed the idealised civilisation to be ‘Hindu’. Khwaja Ghulam Saiyidain (d. 1971), who was the joint educational advisor to the Indian government, lamented this regressive reading of the past, remarking that “the people in dock are really those who advocate or indulge in dreams of an exclusive cultural revivalism which would intolerably reject the great gifts which, say, the civilisation of Islam or the civilisation of West has brought to India” (Saiyidain 1952, 126; in Smith 1963, 376). This late reproach, however, fell on deaf ears as the Indian nation-state

itself was founded on this precise ethnic homogenisation. The Indian national movement took the 'Hindu religious texts as its foundation. Although he argued for an 'inclusive' state, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (d. 1948) simultaneously used a religiously grounded approach as the basis of his political ideology. Gandhi's popularity was based on his saint-like manner as a Hindu ascetic who had renounced the 'worldly comforts' in the pursuit of a higher cause, he famously remarked in his autobiography that "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means" (Smith 1963, 91). Furthermore, Gandhi also employed religious terminology in order to elucidate the political objectives of his nationalistic movement like the concept of Ahimsa (non-violence), Satyagraha (truth force, non-violent resistance), and especially the incessant need to return to a 'Ram Rajya' (the kingdom of Lord Rama) (Anderson 2013, 22; Smith 1963, 92). Gandhi attempted to incorporate religion and politics into the nationalist movement and presented the nationalist struggle as the "Hindu notion of dharmic obligation," which made it the duty of every Hindu to liberate what he called "mother India" (Kolodner 2007, 240). This was another aspect of Hindu mythology that Gandhi borrowed. Hence, the popular perception among the peasants' regarding Gandhi was steeped in religiosity, wherein the populace was in a perpetual "obstinate quest for his darshan" (Pouchepadass 1974, 81). We find an interesting passage by a woman who talks about Gandhi's godlike status, which also further sheds light on the quasi-demi-god status that Gandhi had gained due to his intertwining of religion with politics.

"I have visited the various holy places. In my own home, I have dedicated two temples. Just as we had Rama and Krishna as avatars, so also Mahatma Gandhi has appeared as an avatar, I hear. Until I have seen him, death will not appear" (Tendulkar 1952, 78; in Amin 1984, 290-1)

Gandhi's emergence as a religious figure and the religious undertones that he employed had several far-reaching effects. Gandhi's religious tolerance and appeals for universalism are remarked to be quite "ambivalent" in nature. His inconsistency during the Khilafat movement (cf. Davies 2006, 104; Jaffrelot 1999, 11) or even the cow protection movement[17] was based on religious fervour. Shahid Amin (1984), in

[17] Cow protection in India has been a subject of discussion, violence, political upheaval and the nationalistic process. D.N Jha (2011) highlights the importance of the cow and the *pañcagava* products

his study on the Indian city, called 'Gorakhpur', gives a detailed account of the *Gaurakshini Sabhas* (Cow Protection Leagues) that came into existence during the late 1890s. Amin describes the function of these organisations as a "remorseless… boycott of those who sold cows or bullocks to Muslims or butchers." He further cites a report of one such incident where a farmer by the name of Lakshman Paure was 'punished' for selling his "bullock" to a Muslim. In accordance with the ideological school he represents, Amin emphasises the role of local peasants in administering justice on their own initiative but avoids a critical examination of how the *Gaurakshini Sabhas* were later, during the 1920s, transformed into what he refers to as "Gandhi Panchayats" who "meted out punishment similar to what Lakshman Paure of the village of Pande Kunda had received in 1983." (Amin 1984, 296). This supplements the fact that Gandhi's insistence on using 'Hindu' scriptures as the foundational basis for the Indian-national movement merely helped in perpetuating Hindu fanaticism, as this act of revering the homeland as 'mother India' excluded the other 'non-indigenous' religions. As shown by Richard A. Koenigsberg (1977), one of the core fantasies of nation-states is showing the nation as a suffering mother, which, in the Indian context, was amplified as a result of the existing phantasmagorical religious paradigms.

Gandhi's advocacy for the inclusion of Sanskrit texts as the foundation of the Indian nation-state and his call for a democratic polity may have been the only points of agreement between him and the Hindu nationalists, despite the fact that the latter's acceptance of these two factors was diametrically opposed to Gandhi's reasoning. The Hindu nationalists' support for the former was based on a more pragmatic reading of democracy; in the modern sense, democracy means rule by the 'people'. The first interpretation is based on what the ancient Greeks referred to as Demos, which is the

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that it produced milk, curd, clarified butter, urine and dung, which was used for ritualistic purification role (145). Despite the existence of such purifying contents that were present in the cow, Jah, along with other stresses on the fact that in almost every major text the killing of a cow was considered to be a *mahāpātaka* (minor sin) (145) (Brown 1964, 245). The unviability of cow slaughter is something that seems to have appear later on during the Gupta Period (4th century). Interestingly, the term *goghna* which was used by the ancient Sanskrit philosopher Pānini to describe an 'honoured guest' came to acquire the pejorative meaning of a cow killer (Jha 2011, 128), which also points out to the contemporary trends of perceiving the 'guest' or 'foreigners' as having a potentiality of indulging in cow slaughter. Therefore, this non-Vedic idea, which "does not appear at all in the Vedic literature" has come to be accepted as the one of the "principle tenets of Hinduism on the popular level" (Brown 1964, 249). Hence, the figure of a 'freely giving mother' satisfies the "virile masculinity" (Hansen 1994; In Narayanan 2019, 201) which is generally considered to be at the core of Hindu nationalism, these aspects lead to the undeniable 'duty' of cow protection among the Hindus.

masses or the population in its entirety. In modern society, however, ‘people’ also refers to a “nation”, or what the Greeks called Ethnos, an ethnic group with a shared culture, religion, or language. As Michael Mann (2004) puts it, if a society has a particular ethnicity that operates at its centre, then “one ethnic group forms a majority, and then it can rule “democratically” but also tyrannically” (Mann 2004, 3). This was how the idea of democracy was interpreted by the Hindu nationalists, as it could be easily moulded into majoritarian rule (Jaffrelot 2000, 360). Similarly, Hindu ideologues like Radha Kumud Mookerji, a *Mahasabhite*, in his Hindu Civilisation, emphasised the existence of a historical democratic precedent in Indian civilisation. Attempting to explain this, he insisted that the monarchy during the Vedic period was far from absolute and that “within the framework of autocracy… certain democratic elements, the significance of which should not be missed” (Mookerji 1936; in Jaffrelot 2000, 354). Even Gandhi had several ‘Guénonian moments’ (cf. Guénon 2004, 73-5), as he observed while commenting on the British parliamentary system, “If the money and the time wasted by Parliament were entrusted to *a few good men*, the English nation would be occupying today a much higher platform” (Gandhi 1938, 27, emphasis mine). Perhaps here Gandhi was more in line with his comrade Purushottam Das Tandon, who, despite being “well known for his Hindu traditionalist leanings,” was a Congress party member who, during the Constituent Assembly debates of the 1946–50s, tried to establish a parallel between the role of the Indian Constituent Assembly with the assemblies that were held during the time of Emperor Ashoka: “our glorious past when we were free and when assemblies were held at which the Pundits met to discuss important affairs of the country” (Jaffrelot 2000, 355). This idealisation was based on the so-called existence of a democratic precedent in ‘ancient India’. Furthermore, Radha Kumud Mookerji also claimed to have found that “the Atharvaveda has several passages indicative of the people choosing their king” (354). Therefore, presenting a historical continuity for a modern phenomenon like democracy was also entirely based on the idealisation of the ‘Hindu’ civilisation, which, as we, along with our national leaders, have ‘learned’, was destroyed by certain ‘foreign’ elements. Moreover, the aspect present in the idealisation of the past that remains ambiguous is the identity of the "few good men"; one can only assume that they belonged to the upper echelons of the Hindu Varna system.

The second important aspect that was appropriated by the Hindu nationalists was Sanskrit literature. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (d. 1966) underscored the importance of Sanskrit for Hindus in his *Essential of Hindutva*, remarking that "all that is best in us —the best thoughts, the best ideas, the best lines—seeks instinctively to clothe itself in Sanskrit." (35), The incorporation of Sanskrit literature into the nationalist project provided Savarkar and his comrades with a widely accepted justification for their non-inclusive attitude toward Muslims. The canonisation of the Hindu *Sanskriti* (civilisation), which was based on the Sanskrit scriptures, transmuted these scriptures into a *sub-specie aeternitatis*. Similarly, the idealisation of Ram Rajya was based on the premise that if a similar structure could be reinstated, the populace would be able to overcome poverty, untouchability, and foreign rule. This appeal "totally ignored and alienated the 'Muslim other' in India", who, despite Gandhi's inclusivist interpretation of the Hindu text Ramayana, was by the Hindu nationalists comfortable metaphorized in the "anti-demonic" prose (Van der Veer 2001, 126). This means the struggle that is showcased in the Ramayana between Rama, who represented the good, and Ravana, who represented the evil, was easily appropriated into a conceptual framework to legitimise the struggle of the Hindus against the 'foreigners'- Muslims. Furthermore, as Partha Chatterjee puts it, "the idea of singularity of national history has inevitably led to a single source of Indian tradition, namely, ancient Hindu civilisation." (Chatterjee 1993, 113; in Van der Veer 2001, 127). Here, the contributions of the Indian Muslims towards the development of civilisation are ignored, and the history of Islam is reduced to that of a foreign force responsible for the destruction of the Hindu civilisation. Consequently, despite the arguments pertaining to Gandhi's inclusive attitude, his merging of religion and politics opened Pandora's box, as Hindu nationalists were able to justify their exclusive discourses towards Muslims due to the streamlined orientation of the Indian national movement. As shown in the previous discussions, Hindu nationalism was based on a theoretical extension of the already widely held beliefs, the same beliefs that were also acknowledged by the so-called 'moderate' politicians belonging to the Congress party. The Hindu ideologues idealised the loss of the same civilisation, which was supposedly, according to colonial discourses, destroyed by foreigners. Although, as shown in the previous arguments, their means of achieving the same are pretty contrary to Gandhian thought.

(II) The Case of Chandan

Yes, I faced it (discrimination) once when I was in the 12th Standard. From kindergarten up until 12th standard, I never felt that I was studying in a Hindu-run school; I only realised it once and did so in a very bad manner… When we were in the 12th standard…I… Economics class was going on…so… We had a male teacher…okay…He was the only person who was infamous for this… for being *biased*… So, he wanted to take his medication…We used to pass around our water bottles among our classmates; my classmates did not care if the bottle belonged to a Hindu or a Muslim; we used to drink it either way… My bottle was placed in the front, and he said… He picked up the bottle before taking his medication…and, by chance, asked whom did it belong to?... A friend of mine answered that it belonged to me, so he just kept the bottle on the table and said that he would take his medication later… afterwards, he asked the girl who was sitting beside me… he asked **Akansha,** "Pass me your bottle" she complied, and he took his medication… Everyone in the class was like, 'What just happened?' meaning there was complete silence in the class, and my friends (Hindu) could not make eye contact with me, and I was so-

> **Okay, so everyone realised?**
>
> Everybody realised what had happened; it was very clear, and I had become too numb over the fact that what had happened… "I was almost in tears" …So afterwards, when the class ended…no one spoke at that time (during the incident) … But when the class got over "one of my friends" ...ahh…**Chandan** threw Akansha's bottle into the dustbin and said we would not drink water from this bottle as *Potdar* (The name they used to call their teacher by) had drank from it…
>
> **Did that teacher belong to the upper caste (Hindu)? Was he a Brahmin?**
>
> Yes, his surname was Potdar... So, they threw her bottle into the dustbin… Then, they intentionally drank water from my water bottle… Although they were not thirsty, they drank water from water-bottle… "Just to make me realise" that it is not like that, he (the teacher) has done it, *so it is his fault.*
>
> However, it was very awkward; my female friends (Hindus) who used to hang out with me… They could not talk to me for a time period (the word that she used was Der; That could be translated to a few minutes or even a few days) … Perhaps they themselves felt ashamed (of the incident)[18]

[18] Khan, Nadia. Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, 14th February, 2023. Aligarh, India.

This interview was conducted in India with a PhD candidate relating an incident of religious discrimination she encountered at her school. In this episode, a fascinating tripartite human consciousness manifests itself through the teacher, Chandan, and the female students. We will begin the task of decoding it by first considering the teacher's actions. The teacher's character espouses the belief of 'untouchability' that he practices towards the interlocutor. The impression that we get from the interlocutor and the other students in the classroom is that the teacher deliberately did not want to drink from the interlocutor's bottle. As described by the interlocutor, the teacher belonged to a Hindu 'upper-caste', who have certain historical 'hygienic reservations' about the other. Without stretching our speculations, this also alludes to the fact that the teacher had no problem drinking from Akansha's water bottle, which we assume to be of his religion but whose upper-caste status we cannot confirm. The second character is the silent majority, or her classmates in this instance, who, despite her claim that they "did not care whether the bottle belonged to a Hindu or a Muslim," remained silent in the face of an unjust authoritative figure, the teacher. Ultimately, Chandan embodies a glimmer of light in the tunnel's darkness; he takes the initiative in his personal capacity to rectify the wrong that was committed in front of him through acts of 'humanisation' and solidarity.

Our prior discussions about the fabrication of history are reiterated here; the paradigmatic foundations of making or creating are, one can argue, also the foundations of uncreating or destroying the same. The (re)creation of history does not draw its sustenance from facts but from perspectives—not from factual history but from felt history (Connor 2005, 46). The felt history must include the capacity to galvanise the people into an Ethnie. The typical path is the idealisation of the said mythic society, and that is followed by its fall from grace. The second aspect, which deals with the fall of society, distinguishes the society from the 'other' while also contributing to the society's cohesion. The constructed shared hatred for the other sometimes acts as a common link for the nation as well: "Nothing can weld peoples into a nation and nations into a state as the pressure of a common foe…hatred separates as well as unites" (Savarkar 1923, 19). The 'us' is defined due to the existence of the 'other'; the existence of the former cannot exist without the 'other'. Through identity claims, which is one of the central claims of the nationalists, the discourse posits a homogeneous and fixed identity on both sides and emphasises the distinction between

“us” and “them” (Özkırımlı 2010, 208). Every Mythomoteur needs an adversary, someone who delivers the destructive blow to their ‘ideal civilisation’. They differ from civilisation to civilisation: the Romans for the Greeks, the Goths for the Romans, the Arabs for the Sassanids, or the Turks for the Hindus.

The presence of Muslims in India is not viewed as a clean tabula rasa; there are several inscribed characteristics that are attributed to them. The Muslims are looked upon as strangers who are near and far at the same time, meaning the proximity is felt due to their universal human similarities or citizenship basis, while there also exists tension due to certain ‘alien’ attributes that are attached to them. Here, as Georg Simmel (1972) argues, having the absolute general in common has an opposite effect on people, as they are more prone to stressing emphasis on that which is not common (148). Therefore, the ‘stranger’ is not seen as an individual but rather as a stranger of a distinct type. The Indian Muslims, despite Savarkar’s claims that they “inherit[ing] Hindu blood in their veins” (Savarkar 1923, 33), do not make up for being from the equal other. In addition, T.K. Oommen (1994) proposes four significant categories of ‘other’: (i) equal others, (ii) internal others, (iii) deviant others, and (iv) outsider-unequal others (161-2). The Indian Muslims fall into the fourth category of being the ‘outsider-unequal others’, albeit possessing almost every characteristic except a common religion; they are viewed as foreigners. This “internality” or "externality,” as Ommen further notes, “are not matters of fact or history but of *construction* or cognition” (174). Here, we return to the debates of the preceding section regarding the construction of a *Nationalliterature* that places Muslims in the category of ‘outsider-unequal others’ as their religious leanings do not conform to what Savarkar refers to as indigenous religions (Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism), and being placed in the foreigner category, as a few scholars have pointed out, can only be " defined in a negative fashion." (Kristeva 1991, 95; in Kinnvall 2007, 44).

The British creation of the Indian-Muslim as the ‘oppressive’ or ‘fanatic’ has helped in the modern continuation of the same terminologies. As seen in the 1912 report of the British Assistant Director of Intelligence Bureau, who wrote: “The Muhammadan is always a potential fanatic,” whereas described the Hindus as being in “a deplorable state of physical weakness” (Bamford 1925, 111; in Jaffrelot 1996, 25). Muslims, who are already considered to have brought the ‘end’ of the ‘Hindu civilisation', are further

put as having more aggressive tendencies, while Hindus are supposed to be more passive. Above all, the reason for Hindu weakness was their “tolerance” and “corrupted practices” (Van der Veer 2001, 127) to dwell on the etymology of 'tolerance,' the original usage of which was intended to be associated with "endurance, *fortitude*[19]". Therefore, one can further claim that the Hindus were dispossessed of their ideal civilisation due to their ‘honourable’ conduct, while the Muslims were victorious due to their ‘dishonourable’ means. Alfred Rosenberg (d. 1946), a Nazi ideologue, observed the same concept of honour that, according to him, was prevalent among the Germans and contributed to their downfall while discussing the "Germanic spirit." He argued that “it is evident that almost everything that has preserved the character of our race, our peoples, and our nations has been in the first place the concept of honour and the idea of duty” (Rosenberg 1982, 67-9). This theme also resonates in the writings of Hindu nationalists influenced by Nazism, such as M.S. Golwalkar's (1939) *We, or our nationhood defined*, in which he "expressed an obvious admiration for Nazism and what he called the German Race Spirit" (Banerjee 2006, 238). In order to explain this phenomenon, perhaps we will have to reinvoke Prasenjit Duara’s arguments regarding the nation-state. Here, Hindu nationalism “simultaneously legitimises itself as an essence that continues through history, but is also free from its hold” (Duara 1997, 29). Hindu nationalism concedes that traditional Hindus were too "feminised," "irrational," "gullible," and "anarchic" to run a state (Nandy 1997, 63). Consequently, the emphasis is now placed on the new version of modern-day Hindus who must not repeat the 'mistakes’ made by their ancestors and live in the modern world having a more ‘masculine’ demeanour while also living and learning from their past glories. Therefore, Muslims are placed on a lower pedestal because, unlike their Hindu countrymen and a number of other characteristics that will be examined in the following arguments, they lack ‘honour’.

Having said so, Hindu nationalism was also based on a perpetual fear of the ‘Hindus’ being in danger. B.S. Moonje, who was the guru of K.B. Hedgewar (the founder of the militant Hindu RSS organisation), was known for expressing a similar fear of Muslims, “Out of 1.5 lakh (1,50,000) population of Nagpur, Muslims are only 20 thousand. However, still, we feel insecure. Muslims were never afraid of I lakh 30 thousand

[19] Harper Douglas, “Etymology of tolerance,” Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed September 11, 2023, https://www.etymonline.com/word/tolerance.

Hindus." Exaggerating the cohesion among the Muslims, the Hindu ideologues prophesized that in "420 years Hindus would disappear from because of their steady decline in numbers" (Jaffrelot 1996, 24), claims that could only have been made in light of what the number 420 signifies in the modern sense. Therefore, several misconceptions were attributed to the Indian Muslims, the most prominent of them being 'dirty' due to their dietary habits and the second one being that they "multiply like termites, grasshoppers, like dogs", which can have "four wives (who) can (further) have 24 children. If they are allowed to continue, they will soon be a majority in India" (Engineer 2004, 20; in Kinnvall 2006, 101). Therefore, the Muslim male is looked upon as being masculine and aggressive, which also places him as having a potential for indulging in activities that are considered to be deviant in nature. Hence, the Hindu nationalists always live in perpetual fear of the return of 'Muslim rule', which, as they have been informed by British histography, was based on the destruction of the Hindu civilisation.

This idealised history, or 'invented tradition', is the felt history that has been through colonial scheming, being selected, idealised, popularised, and institutionalised in order to perpetuate a sense of Ethnie, which infiltrates into the unconscious of the people. Eric Hobsbawm (2012) observes that the difference between the old traditions and 'invented traditions' is that the former were specific socially binding practices that were limited to the public sphere, while the latter are unspecified and vague; "loyalty," "duty," and "playing the game" (10). We agree with Hobsbawm when he says that the crucial element for these invented traditions is the "emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership" (Hobsbawm 2012, 11, Emphasis mine), which manifest themselves into the public sphere and have also started to infiltrate into private lives. India, which was popularised by Gandhi as 'mother', has some emotional emphasis attached to it. Muslims who are perceived as 'foreigners' and 'dirty' are violating the sanctity of 'mother' India. Accentuating that the "motherland has been defiled by the polluting, disruptive, and destructive presence of Muslims" (Baccheta 2000, 278; in Kinnwall 2006, 101), and to achieve 'home rule', certain elements or 'other' had to be discarded. Irfan Ahmed (2012) also uses Zygmunt Bauman's theoretical framework of 'humans as waste' in order to explain the condition of Indian Muslims and the expression, "Indian modernity… manufactured the figure of the outcast (Muslims) only to get rid of it". Though his discussion is more related to the

partition of British India, it touches upon the categorisation of Indian Muslims as being dirty, and to make “home (nation) orderly and pure, it needed to be cleansed of dirt” (482). Hence, the ideal Muslims should, as Golwalkar puts it, “either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture” (Golwalkar 1947, 55–6). What we further wish to emphasise, however, is that when Golwalkar speaks of the "glorification of the Hindu race and culture," what he means for Indian Muslims is a complete assimilation into "Hindu culture" and a willingness to accept penance for the sins of the father.

Moving back to the starting point, we would like to talk about the teacher who refused to drink the water, which belonged to a Muslim student. We must make an assumption based on our discussion of fabricated history, the creation of which pits the Hindus or the nation-state against the Muslims. A prominent example of the “imagined destruction of the Hindu civilisation” can be taken from the conquest of the historical figure Mahmud of Ghazni (D. 1030), which is often painted as a transgression of Muslims due to Islam’s inherent iconoclastic outlook. In the work titled *History of India as Told by its Own Historians* (1849), authored by Sir Henry M. Elliot, the British colonial regime tried to present themselves as emancipators of their subject population. However, the presence of an emancipator presupposes an oppressor, for which Mahmud of Ghazni was deemed to be a suitable candidate. Mahmud was the “favourite” of the British colonial administration, as his raids and the destruction of a temple located in Somnath, Gujrat, were given a religious hue (Metcalf 2009, xx). This idealisation of the British colonial authority as the liberators who have delivered the Hindus from the rigid iconoclast Muslim was furthered by several other Indian-origin British lackeys (Dhar 1987, 30; in Ahmad 2012, 483).

Hence, as seen in our previous discussions, the fabrication of history leads one to view the Muslims as invaders who destroyed the ‘glorious Hindu civilisation’ through ‘deceit’ and ‘treason’. When the teacher looked at the student, he could see the object of a thousand years of ‘oppression’ that he was able to imagine without the existence of any historical details. At that moment, the girl represented the people who, through their treachery, resulted in the fall of his ‘civilisation’. As we have seen, this formulation of false history is fundamental and necessary for the formation and

maintenance of the nation-state, but we cannot overlook the fact that the pursuit of homogeneity creates friction between the co-existing communities. This phenomenon is pervasive in almost every nation-building process that is designed to compensate for a lack of transcendental authority. We will not be making any assumptions about the stage of life at which this false history affects an individual, but perhaps we can use another episode from the life of our interlocutor that is related to Chandan.

> Yeah, I told you about Chandan, who threw the bottle into the dustbin… He was the first person that I blocked… on my Instagram…
>
> **Okay, why?**
>
> I blocked him because he wrote such bad things that used to trigger a lot of internal things (body)… Meaning he had a very negative impact, and that was somehow affecting…ahh… it was affecting my mental health, all of his posts…so this is why I blocked him because of my mental health.

Chandan completes the circle that results from the (re)creation of history, despite the fact that he was the first person to take the initiative to make amends for the wrongs done by the teacher in his personal capacity. Through the passage of time, however, he replaces the teacher by adopting the same perspective as the teacher. The interlocutor, despite not having any historical attributes, somehow makes Chandan recall the destruction of his idealised *Mythomoteur*, a process that proceeds without any initiation from the side of the interlocutor. The interlocutor also personifies the image of being 'dirty', a term that, due to their dietary habits, is often attributed to Muslims. Hence, the denial of sharing food belonging to a Muslim has its roots in the colonial construction of history that was appropriated, along with all the ills attached to it, by the Indian national movement, and which also affects the current forms of association between the communities.

CHAPTER V

RETRIEVING ISLAM(S) FROM THE ISLAMIC *ULEMA*: THE EMERGENCE OF OPPOSITIONAL MUSLIMS AND CONCEPTUALIZING *PAJĀMA* WEARING PROTESTANTS

5.1. (Re)conceptualising Islam

Islam has been defined as the 'blueprint' of a social order, which dictates a certain set of rules that help formulate the social order of a society (Gellner 1981, 1). This blueprint acts independently of the ever-changing will of men and contributes to the provision of a concrete moral objective; it is ordained for men, yet it contradicts every human desire. Similarly, the teleological termination of any forthcoming divine transmission distinguishes this 'blueprint' from other diverse 'social blueprints'. Islam has always been stressed as the 'final' message from the divine (The Holy Quran; 5:3). This eradicates any possibility of future divine guidance, which transmutes into the fact that this particular 'scheme', which is considered to be final, has to be implemented on the entire society. This finality aspect of Islam distinguishes it from the other world religions and also adds to an increase in the level of faith that people have in their scriptures.

The study of the social orders that have been placed under such blueprints has had a fixed *Mecca*: The Near East. This specifying of a locus point to Islam is similar to the Christian discourse of specifying Christianity to Europe (Asad 2009, 4). The simple analytical problem arising from this categorisation is the presupposition of a social order in which the 'blueprint' adapts itself. Gellner also helps in continuing and perpetuating the tradition of dissecting the 'Muslim Society' into analytical categories of tribal/urban, little tradition/greater tradition, or even mystical/rational. Now, the tradition of separation between tribal and urban Islam might be relevant to the case of

some societies that fall under the Islamic Ummah, but they cannot be standardised. Moreover, the categorisation of 'Little traditions' and 'Greater traditions' (Redfield, 1956) might be true in the case of Hindu societies, as has been quite meticulously researched by Marriot in his study of the village of *Kishan Garhi* (Marriot 1955), but they cannot be used in the same way in studying Islam. Islam does not revolve around such polar opposite categories, where the little traditions are detached from the greater tradition and have indigenous traditions that have no relation to the greater traditions. The 'Urban Islam' or the urban elites are not purely Puritan beings who strictly conform to scripture and are totally uninvolved in mysticism. They have a convergence with mysticism, which has unfortunately been relegated to a mere expression of a localised form of Islam. Similarly, the little traditions are not independent of the basic Islamic framework but are rather informed by it; they do not, *ideally*, indulge in traditions that are contrary to the basic tenets of Islam. Moreover, the urban classes have had a continuing relationship with and inclusion in these little traditions. Therefore, the great traditions cannot be termed as 'more real' than the little traditions (Asad 2009, 8). Hence, the social order of any Islamic society is not binary and cannot be dealt with in a functionalist's framework.

The inexorable influx of Islam around the world has occurred through distinct channels and diverse epochs of eras. The effects of such unrelenting growth have resulted in discursive interpretations of the Din. The Muslim Ummah has been described as a "community of discourse," wherein the people are the subjects of discourse, which helps them make the discourse meaningful (McNeill 1963; in Voll 1994, 220). These Muslims are not in a "mutual agreement" but rather share a "mutual intelligibility" (Ahmed 2015, 292), meaning long tracts of latitudinal spatiality might separate them yet speak the same 'language'. The language that Muslims speak is something that we would like to theorise about. Its language does not relate to a specific religion whose functionality is confined to harmonising the "worldview" and the "ethos" of a specific group of people (Geertz 1971, 97). Islam is not limited to the simplistic definition of "whatever people believed to be Islam is Islam" (Hourani 1980, 11–14; in Ahmed 2015, 266-7) or "what they actually thought and did" (Braude and Lewis 1982, 3). These definitions have a fundamentalist vein, which helps moderate the process of defining Islam. The common 'language' that results in mutual intelligibility is based on a certain set of texts and the essence of Muslims' traditions. As pointed out by

Shahab Ahmed (2015), the obvious reason behind this 'laidback' definition of Muslim is that if Muslims are doing certain acts that are considered to be non-Islamic, then how can they be termed followers of Islam and their civilisations as Islamic (268). This analytical premise has prompted researchers to overextend Islamic categorisations, rendering them incomprehensible.

Similarly, Wilfred Smith (1991) conceptualises an interestingly flawed framework for studying Islam, wherein he starts with a good spirit of "putting aside the concept of religion" and replaces it with a marked distinction between faith and cumulative tradition. He defines faith as a man's "inner-religious experience" and cumulative tradition as "overt objective data," which constitutes the "historical" deposits of his habitus and is transmitted to him through the generations. Hence, faith is supplemented by the cumulative tradition yet is independent of it, as it belongs to the "inner-religious" experience. We agree with Shahab Ahmed when he criticises Smith's conceptualisation of faith by arguing that if faith cannot 'be imparted to an outsider for his inspection', then how can we conclude that the cumulative tradition is a replication or expression of faith (Ahmed 2015, 261-3). This paradoxical framework also falls into the same category of looking at Islam as what the 'Muslims' claim Islam to be. Consequently, the majority of Western conceptual frameworks are inadequate for analysing Islam.

Having said so, this is where we might have found ourselves in an ethical conundrum, breaking off from the pre-existing analytical categories which are well-ingrained in our discipline. We will have to chart a different course of the framework we will use to understand Islam. Answering this question also depends on a person's views on a specific tradition and how they view them. This is what Talal Asad terms a "*narrative relation"* to the tradition, wherein our positionality varies based on whether we support or oppose that tradition (Asad 2009, 24) or if we find it to be 'morally neutral'. In an attempt to surpass this problem, we will go back to a theological text of Islam that focuses on *Kufr* (unbelief) and its subsequent refutation by another scholar, and begin by defining which traditions could be considered as 'Islam' and then finally move on to the much-discussed discursive traditions that are present in Islam. The identification of a definition enables us to transcend inter-sectarian concerns regarding the attribution of what could be considered as 'Islamic' and also in pursuance of broadening the scope

of Islam, which includes what Shahab Ahmad (2015) terms as pre-text, text, and context. First, we will examine Abu Mansur Baghdadi's work on the division(s) among Muslims and his consequently rigid definition. Moreover, looking at Al-Ghazali's debate or the "immanent critique" of al-Baghdadi's restrictive definition of Islam that he comes up with in his writings provides us with a very fluid definition of what could be considered to be within the scope of Islam. Using al-Ghazali's definition to supplement the present search for understanding 'what is Islam' provides a definition that comes from the 'Islamic tradition' and not from the outside of it.

Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi (d. 1037/428) is the author of perhaps the most prominent treatise, which aimed at drawing a line between Kufr (unbelief) and Islam and recognising the traditions that could be considered Islamic. Al- Baghdadi, along with Muhammad al-Shahrastānī and Ibn Tahir al-Qaisarani, take the stance of accepting the famous hadith attributed to the Prophet, which states that the Muslim creed would be divided into 73 *Firqas* and only one of these groups would be granted entry into the Jannah. They do this in contrast with Said Ibn Hazm, who disregards this hadith altogether (Al-Baghdadi 1920, 4). Al- Al-Baghdadi's effort to "cut, insert, and combine" the *Firqas,* which he considered to be among the 73 sects, provides us with an important definition of Islam as a whole. According to his definition, the group that would be rewarded with a pleasant hereafter is the one comprising of people who confess that "the world is created," "the unity of its maker," "his pre-existence," "his attributes… the denial of anthropomorphic character," and "the prophetic character of Muhammad (PBUH)." Furthermore, they must also profess that the "Koran is the source of all legal regulations and that the Ka'ba is the direction in which all prayers should be turned" (Al-Baghdadi 1920, 29). According to al-Baghdadi, these are the criteria for being a Muslim; anyone who follows this criterion and does not engage in any form of "heresy" is an "orthodox Sunni" and would be part of the only *Firqa* that is going to be saved from hellfire. He insists that the orthodox Sunnis who follow the aforementioned doctrines can have differences, but these differences do not transgress upon the abovementioned structure; hence, the things they might differ in cannot lead them astray (al-Baghdadi 1920, 38). Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi's treatise holds an important definition, but some scholars of arguably more 'repute' have certain reservations against his rigid interpretative style.

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (D. 1111) proposed a completely different classification of Kufr (unbelief) in his famous book titled *Faysal al-Tafriqa Bayna al-Islam wa al-Zandaqa* (On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam), which Sherman Jackson has meticulously translated. In his translation of al-Ghazali's work, Jackson highlights a major theme that differentiates between 'formal heresy' and 'material heresy'. He defines the former as "wilful persistence in error" and the latter as "holding of heretical doctrines through no fault of one's own" (Jackson 2002, 3). The first central theme of Al-Ghazali's work is to 'target' extremists like al-Baghdadi, who refuse to recognise any other interpretation of Islam that is contrary to their own. The second aspect relates to the philosophers he attributes to being crypto-infidels (Zanadiqa/Zindiq). The second aspect does not concern us as we are primarily concerned with the first aspect of his arguments. According to al-Ghazali, the only way to avoid labelling a group of Muslims as unbelievers is to determine whether they adhere to the assertion that "There is no God but God; Muhammad is his messenger", and if they are sincere in their admission then they are to be considered Muslims. In his treatise, he goes beyond the opaque reasoning that al-Baghdadi gives and claims that Kufr (unbelief) is to "deem what the Prophet brought was a lie", just as Iman (faith) is to "deem whatever the Prophet brought was the truth." Interestingly, this definition of his also extends to the Twelver Shia. However, he says that the concept of *Imamate* is "silly," yet does not remove the Shias from the folds of Islam, as they are following the three basic principles of Islam: 1) the oneness of God; 2) the finality of Prophet Muhammad; and 3) the reality of the last day (Jackson 2002, 46–47), which according to him is the basic litmus test for Islam.

Al-Ghazali's litmus test is more theoretically grounded in defining Islam than defining a religion; the centrality of this definition of Islam also saves us from the incoherence of the definitions of religion that surround us, which also makes up for a 'peculiar embarrassment' for our discipline (Geertz 1971, 1). Another facet of defining Islam is that there cannot be a universal definition of religion (Asad 1993, 29). Hence, a more comprehensive and compartmentalised definition helps us restrict and retrieve the true essence of a particular Din (religion) without claiming its universality. Furthermore, placing several deterministic facets on something to be considered a 'religion'

transmutes into a universalist paradox[20]; wherein if we presuppose that for something to be recognised as a 'religion' they must have the Christian-centric pre-established notions of religion, if a tradition does not have the prerequisite characteristics, they are removed from the umbrella categorisation of religion itself and can no longer be considered a religion. Hence, the universalistic terminology of religion fails to deliver a coherent definition.

Islam should not be looked upon as a distinct social structure or a religion consisting of certain heterogeneous symbols, customs, or beliefs; it should be looked upon as a tradition (Asad 2009, 20). Tradition, as described in detail in the preceding chapters, is an act of 'giving' or transmitting certain acts practised by older generations; the validity or legitimacy of the same is rooted in the fact that they are well-established and have a history. Similarly, an Islamic discursive tradition is a tradition of Muslim discourses that attempts to conceptualise Islamic practices with the Islamic past, present, and future (Asad 2009, 20). However, the Islamic discursive tradition should not be based on blind imitation of the acts done by one's predecessors but must include certain prior considerations regarding the temporality and change under which these practices were conceived (Jansen 2011, 984; in Enayat 2017, 42). This tradition has continuity, as practitioners are linked "across the temporal modalities of past, present, and future through the pedagogy of practical, scholarly, and embodied forms of knowledge and virtues deemed central to the tradition." This aspect of the traditions leads to their legitimacy (Mahmood 2005, 115; in Enayat 2017, 42). Here, Asad also clarifies that "not everything Muslims say and do belongs to an Islamic discursive tradition." This also leads us to the question: what are the benchmarks for a practice to be considered an Islamic discursive tradition?

The first framework that Asad provides is that a practice can only be considered Islamic if it is authorised by an 'alim, a khatib, or a Sufi sheikh'; the issue of orthodoxy is discussed in the next section. Ovamir Anjum (2007) makes a crucial point regarding Talal Asad's stance on where one should begin writing an anthropology of Islam: the Quran and Sunnah. Anjum emphasises that what Asad means when he says that one

[20] Carl Schmitt talks on a similar note in his book *The Concept of the Political,* when he discusses the limits of ''Humanity and the paradox inherent in it. Schmitt, Carl. "The Concept of the Political: Extended Edition". Translated by George Schwab. The *University of Chicago Press.* (2007) Pp.54

should begin with the Quran and Sunnah is not an "attempt to define orthodox Islam" but rather a critique of El-Zein's claim that all forms of Islam are equally valid. This implies that one can only begin comprehending Islam through a specific lens based on foundational texts and a combination of theological treatises that provide a vague yet valuable starting point in conceptualising and identifying Islamic traditions. The conceptual framework that is provided to us by Asad does not attempt to look at Islam through a mirror of Christianity (Gellner 1981), "asserting a dichotomy of universal Islam," which categorises other discursive understandings as un-Islamic (Anjum 2007, 671), or negates Islam as an anthropological object of inquiry (El-Zein 1977). Instead, he seeks to comprehend Islam through the "historical conditions" that enabled the production, maintenance, and practitioners' attempts to achieve coherence in the diverse Islamic tradition. In addition, al- Ghazali's distinction between formal heresy and material heresy provides us with an extension of the practices produced due to the passage of time; practices that do not encompass formal heresy can be considered Islamic. Having talked about what can be considered Islamic, the next point that we would like to move on to is our theoretical disagreement about the singularity of Islamic 'tradition'.

The category of 'religion' has a universal familiarity but does not mean that it is cognitively universal. When we assume something to be familiar and accept it in its totality, we restrict ourselves to what can be termed a 'pendulum movement', which only drives us from one point to another, and this knowing gets us nowhere. The act of diluting something is what Hegel (1979) terms 'understanding' or 'absolute power'; the breaking up of an idea into its 'original form' like religion, brings us only to the 'thoughts' that themselves are fixed or familiar. These thoughts become notions when they leave their fixity and take on a more fluid form, though the act of separating is the labour of understanding, which is the greatest of all: absolute power. However, this breaking off from a fixated point leads to an 'isolated freedom'; the Spirit (Geist) only finds "its feet in its absolute disruption" (Hegel 1979, 18–21). The collapse of a fixated conceptual universality is what can be termed absolute knowledge. Therefore, this 'collapse' of a fixated conceptual universality can help us have a better understanding of social phenomena like that of Islam.

In spite of the theoretical coherence found in Asad's writings, we would like to pluralise the word tradition. We concede that Islam has progressed and has transformed due to several “historical conditions”, but here we would like to contrive Islam into a more ‘fluid form’ while invoking Nasr’s (1990) understanding of tradition, which deems Islam as “a tree, the roots of which are sunk through revelation in the Divine Nature and from which the trunk and branches have grown over the ages” (13), meaning that the Islamic traditions are traditions that stem from the same root, but having the same root does not place them in a monolithic category. Hence, we would like to assert that there is not one monolithic category of "Islam" but a multiplicity of "Islam." By asserting the existence of multiplicity among "Islams," we suggest that there are “many discursive traditions through which Muslims imagine themselves.” (Moosa 2003, 114). This model is further supported by Al-Ghazali’s differentiation between formal and material heresy, which we have looked at in detail and provides us with a very inclusive definition of Islam. Using Al-Ghazali’s definition also helps us not limit Islamic traditions only to the Quran and Sunnah, which is, as Irfan Ahmad (2011) puts it, “rather restrictive”. Moreover, it provides a framework to include the historical ‘hermeneutical engagements’ pursued in the “con-text of revelation” (Ahmad 2015, 356). Therefore, it aligns with the fact that the “whole field, or complex or vocabulary of meanings of Revelation that have been produced in the course of the human and historical hermeneutical engagement with Revelation, and which are thus already present as Islam” (356), find a space in this extended definition of what we perceive as ‘Islamic’. Therefore, this definition provides us with a framework that is not fixated on familiarity but based on a cognitive fluidity that goes beyond the ‘predetermined-pendulum-perambulations’. Here, we are not limited by predetermined vantage points but are given the much-needed fluidity needed to conceptualise Islam.

5.2. Islamic Discursive Tradition(s) in India

The ‘Islam’ followed in the Balkans to Bengal is not singular in nature; comparable to its region, it has an inherent ethnic and linguistic diversity. The Balkans-to-Bengal phenomenon is present in a polyglot region, which has created an Islamic ‘high culture’. This high culture was not only limited to the elite, but these elites were also involved in *active projects of circulations*. This circulation was achieved through the

mediums of learned Sufis, or the Ulema, who were in constant interaction with the Muslim and non-Muslim populace of this region. Notably, the Muslims of South Asia enjoyed an Islamic high culture under Mughal rule. However, the anarchy and devastation of the 18th century, which contributed to the subsequent loss of Muslim dynastic power, led to the destruction of the same Islamic high culture (Hardy 1973, 28). With the destruction of Muslim political power and the onset of British colonialism, there was an urgency for securing the boundaries of faith from internal and external threats.

The two main movements that arose against the backdrop of the fall of Muslim political authority were the Deoband movement and the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. The Darul Uloom Deoband was founded in 1867 in a small town called Deoband, located in the Uttar Pradesh province of India. The school was founded for the revival of Islam and the renewal of faith among Muslims. This movement was based on a rejection of modernisation and westernisation. However, it followed the Dars-e-Nizamì system, which was introduced in India by Mulla Nizamuddin Firangi Mahali (d. 1677) (Ahmad 2015). The Deoband school altered the traditional system of a teacher awarding a passing certificate (*sanad*) to his student upon the completion of his studies by implementing fixed classrooms, a fixed curriculum, and an examination system that provided students with certificates in a manner comparable to that of the Delhi college (Masud 2000, xlvii). Many other movements have been influenced by this movement, which can be understood as the root of Islamic thought in South Asia.[21]

The other group that holds prominence in northern India is the Ahl-e Sunnat (Barelvi). This was a movement headed by Ahmed Rida Khan (d.1922) of Bareilly, and due to its location, it was popularised as the 'Barelvi' movement. The Ahl-e Sunnat differs from the Deobandi's on several theological points but converges in their adherence to Hanafi jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The theological premises that the Ahl-e Sunnat stresses

[21] A non-political branch of Deobandi movement that is based on giving Da'wa which is characterised as "a prophetic work" (Mawdudi 1940, 76; In Masud 2000, xxv). Started as a small-scale movement by Ilyas Khandalhvi to retain the namesake Muslim of Mewat back into the fold of Islam. This Da'wa is based on the idea of *gasht* (making rounds) and reform the Muslims by teaching them the basic five pillars of Islam. Some would argue that this concept of "working in the way of God" in which "outer behaviour" is linked to "inner motivation" originated with Christian monks. Asad (1993) argues that the Christian monks described the labour of transcribing manuscripts from the older poorly preserved manuscripts as "prayer and fasting" (Leclercq 1977, 153-54; In Asad 1993, 64-5). We will not tread on this trope though we must agree that he similarity of the idea is noteworthy.

relate to the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen, omnipresence, and omniscience (Masud 2000, xlvii). The Deobandi consider certain practices that the Ahl-e Sunnat practises to be *bi'da* (innovation) in Islam. These practices include visiting graves, the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, and debates surrounding the powers of intercession.

These contradictions should not be approached through the flawed categorisation of Sufi/Ulema or reformist/anti-reformist. The Deoband scholars were well-steeped in the mystical traditions, and most of them were themselves *bait* (pledge of allegiance) in the Sufi Chishti or Qadri tariqas. Even one of the most revered Deobandi scholars, Haji Imdad-Ullah, belonged to the Chishti tradition. The Ahl-e Sunnat orientation has never been mere saint worship but has always represented a highly literate and textually grounded political theology. Furthermore, the Ahl-e Sunnat cannot be termed simply anti-reformist, as Ahmad Raza Khan argued for the preservation of the 'authorised traditions', which meant only the traditions that 'provided moral guidance' to the people and venerated the Prophet were to be followed. He further argued that instead of outright rejecting the traditions, the Deobandi scholars should try to correct or reform the corruptions attached to these practices through the passage of time. Khan himself was a staunch opponent of the frivolous expenditure in Muslim marriages or the corruption that had come to attach itself to the *Mawlid* celebrations.

This categorisation is part of a broader global discourse of "two faces of faith," which aims to put the Deobandi's into the disciplined, scripturalist, orthodox categorisation and the Ahl-e Sunnat into a more flexible, syncretic, and non-Sharia-based people. This idealisation of an 'Indian Islam' has unfortunately been a common trope in our discipline, as seen in the writings of Imtiaz Ahmad (1973; 1976; 1981). Francis Robinson (2000) has already criticised the narrow understanding of Ahmad when he says that Indian Islam is "heavily underlined by elements that are accretions from the local environment and *contradict* the fundamentalist view of the beliefs and practices to which Muslims must adhere" (Ahmad 1981, 7; in Robinson 2000, 45). This alarming understanding of Ahmad does not take Islam as a tradition that has grown out of a historical condition but instead as a distinct social structure operating in a homogenous, universalistic framework. Unfortunately, Veena Das (1984) tries her best to weigh in on the debate by not weighing in. She fails to provide us with any

justification for Ahmad's shortcomings but instead attacks Robinson's alleged "support" that he has for "repressive regimes." (299)

We concur with Robinson, as this was a pertinent theme we encountered during our literature review. Hasan's (2002) scholarship, along with that of his contemporaries, has always attempted to paradoxically place Muslims as Muslims but outside the folds of Islam. In a very problematic article related to Aligarh, Hasan openly talks about his father indulging in acts that are contrary to Islam (52). The theme of these articles attempts to 'humanise' and 'eliminate' the scriptural adherence of Muslims to make them more 'moderate' and 'acceptable' in the eyes of the state. Furthermore, in a very recent article, Irfan Ahmad (2023), while tracing the inherent methodological nationalism present in Indian anthropology, provides us with a very theoretically grounded critique of Veena Das' attempt at providing a rejoinder to Robinson. He points out the reason behind Das' reluctance to "engage with an argument" put forward by Robinson is due to the context behind the term syncretism, which is, according to Ahmad ", a one-way traffic to mark Hinduism's influence on Islam, not the other way round as syncretism semantically has it" (18). Consequently, what gives Islam its "positive side" is the presence of "local" elements; without these "local" Hindu elements, Islam would be perceived negatively.

Moving on to the present scenario concerning the adherents of the two *Maslak* (path), the interlocutors were not well versed in the polemics between the Ahl-e Sunnat school and the Deobandi school of thought. The Ahl-e Sunnat interlocutors were unaware of Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri's work Guarding the Faith (Hifz al-Iman), in which, due to Thanvi's comparison of the Prophet's knowledge with that of animals, beasts, and lunatics, Ahmed Raza Khan issues a *Fatawa* of anathema against him. Khan, in his book *Husām al-Haramayn,* sought to deem the three leaders of Deoband school, namely Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, and Ashraf Ali Thanvi, as being outside the bounds of Islam or as "satanic Wahabis" (*Wahhābiya Shaytāniya*) (Tareen 2020, 309). However, what the interlocutors lacked in historical accuracy, they made up for in cultural penetration (Geertz 1971, 32), which means that despite a lack of theological accuracy, the interlocutors were aware of the cultural consequences of these debates. The Ahl-e Sunnat held the view that they should not pray behind a Deobandi Imam, the reason for which only becomes apparent when we consider the

theological premises of the same. Khan's insistence on issuing a fatwa of kufr against the Deobandis led to a cultural penetration among the Ahl-e Sunnat populace that did not necessitate a theological background. Similarly, in the case of an idealised Deobandi reform, the individual is expected to stand outside of society to transform it; they must be able to resist societal pressures to transform their society. Despite placing the individual as the ultimate authority who should transform society, the pioneers of the Deoband movement framed the masses as cattle dependent on the guidance and leadership of the scholarly elite (Ahmad 2020, 299). The premise of this understanding was based on a rejection of what Weber would have called the 'institutionalised charismatic authority', which was present in the Ahl-e Sunnat. However, it has somewhat backfired for the Deobandi, as now the people from their own Maslak do not pay heed to them, and the Deobandi Ulema themselves are falling into the same category.

The 'orthodoxy' of the Deoband and even the Ahl-e Sunnat school of thought are increasingly starting to draw flak, and their adherents are questioning their authority. The reason behind this is what Gellner would have, perhaps called the 'Protestant' spirit, presenting itself among the urban poor.

5.3. *Pajama* Wearing Protestants in the Congregation of the Faithful: The Challenges to the "Orthodoxy"

The Prophet departed; the Revelation remained. The formation of Islam as a political and religious community and a lack of clergy or a line of succession led to several problems. The case of the Ulema has a certain peculiarity in Islam, wherein the Muslim 'orthodoxy' does not mirror the Christian orthodoxy. Due to the non-existence of orthodoxy, the Muslim world has always been susceptible to radical change. However, for this to be possible without the total annihilation of the Islamic system, it had to be institutionalised into a system that revolved around the Quran and the Sunnah. The holy book and the Sunnah had to be interpreted so they did not lead to esotericization or exclusivity. Hence, the Quran was approached in the lingua franca, and the existence of *Tafsirs* came into being (Robinson 2000, 60). Some scholars have even claimed that the repetitive interpretations of the Quran led to a level of exclusivity; in order to

understand the Quran, one had to read the commentaries, and in order to understand the 'original' meaning of some commentaries, one had to read additional commentaries, resulting in a tedious reading process (Gilsenan 2013, 31). Despite numerous theological texts, it cannot be asserted, as with Christianity, that knowledge is restricted to a particular elite.

In India, Orthodoxy has always had to do with power. The difference in taking a Sanad or Ijaza does not undermine the power of the orthodox institutions that dot the Indian sub-continent. Eaton (2015) developed a critical *Minerva's owl flies at dusk* teleological model, which we find theoretically sound. He divides the stages of Sufism into three parts: the *Khanqah* stage, the *tariqa* stage, and the *ta'ifa* stage. He defines the Khanqah stage as the "true golden stage of Islam," wherein the Sufis, alarmed by the materialism and transgressive nature of conduct in the Abbasid caliphate, chose the path of asceticism. This stage includes Sufis like Hasan al-Basri (d. 728) Ibrahim b. Adham (d. 777), and Sahqiq of Balkh. The Tariqa stage started in the thirteenth century, which created various mystical schools coalescing around a leader. This stage saw the crystallisation of methods and spiritual exercises that were done in order to get closer to the beloved. It also saw the creation of spiritual transmission, wherein the Sufis started to impart their knowledge to specific people who were a part of their Silsila (literally, chain). The Qadri tariqa coalesced around its founder, Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, and claimed to carry the same knowledge passed on in their Silsila. This stage also saw a marked difference between the *Pìr* (teacher) and the *Murìd* (disciple), which is also what Trimingham notes as the process whereby the "creative freedom of the mystic was to be channelled into an institution" (Trimingham 1971, 8; in Eaton 2015, xxx). The Ta'ifa stage, which began in the fifteenth century, is perhaps the most critical stage for us, as it talks about how the mystical element that was present in the earlier stages had now been replaced by the Pir, who had become the intermediary between the people and God. Moreover, the headship of these Ta'ifa's went to the family members of the deceased Pir. Now the spiritual knowledge and power were allegedly passed on through consanguineal channels, with the descendants of the Pir being called pirzadas (literally, "born to a pir") (Eaton 2015, xxx). It has been claimed that the current Sufi institutions showcase characteristics similar to what Eaton calls the Ta'ifa stage. This theoretical applicability of the Ta'ifa stage upon the Indian Sufi

institutions underlines the presence of a hierarchal system, which has come under the criticism of young Muslims.

Similar to the Sufi institutions of India from which the Ahl-e Sunnat movement draws its majority of followers, the majority of movements stemming from Deoband have also ended up in a kinship-based system where the kins of the founders of the movement exercise power. The Deobandi movement, which started with a total rejection of modernity and the odious apparatuses attached to it, has now been divided into various organisations with different political outlooks. Masud (2000) talks about how the Jam'iyyat Ulama i-Hind, an organisation that consists of Deoband scholars known for their non-political commitments, interestingly supports the Indian National Congress (xlviii). Furthermore, the reins of this organisation are comfortably placed in the hands of a particular Madni family that has converted the position of the Amir (commander) into a hereditary one. Similarly, the 'Tablighi Jama'at' foundation, which draws the majority of its members from the Deoband madrasa, has become a generational organisation with Ilyas Kandhalawi's descendants serving as its leaders, Masud paints a very idealised picture of Ilyas Kandhalawi's son, who was "scolded even for looking at sweets," which we suppose is done in order to gratify his 'tailormade piety' in hopes of concealing the nepotism that was undertaken in electing him as the next Amir after the death of his father (Masud 2000, 13). In addition, this aspect of nepotism has recently become more apparent to "educated Muslims," who are beginning to criticise the position of the Ulema and the religious institutions. One of our interlocutors, who was at that time enrolled in a PhD course, made a very discerning critique of such institutions that have been, as he puts it, "tiyan-panccha" (Hindustani colloquial; destroyed) by nepotism:

> Look at the leaders (ulema) that we have, who stay in the same position for 20-20 years. Like an Amir or a dictator… The Hussaini family "kidnapped" the entire Nadwa (Darool Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, a famous seminary in Uttar Pradesh); Nadwa was a college at a time it used to produce Professors, it has become an *āmāj-gah* (Persian; shelter/habitat) for a *Maslak* (Arabic; path). Look at Deoband; the Madni family has tiyan-panccha (Hindustani expression; destroyed) it. This aspect has been understood by the educated Muslims, who have seen these things and are coming to the realisation that these people (Ulema) cannot be our leaders. [22]

[22] Rahman, Ibrahim. Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.

This replacement of idols with other idols is the appropriation of religious institutions by individuals of a particular lineage or family. As observed by our interlocutor, the families have converted the institutions into an "āmāj-gah" (shelter/habitat), the leaders of which are chosen in a quasi-primogeniture manner. This further leads to mistrust among the populace, which can easily be explained using David Hume's concept of flux and reflux.

Islam as a religion has never claimed to be based on a hereditary class or an orthodoxy. Hence, the existence of such institutions is seen as a product of modernity or a deviation from the pure essence of Islam. The 'pure' Islam is considered egalitarian and scholarly, while the hierarchy and exclusiveness of knowledge are considered expendable parts of the same (Gellner 1981, 5). David Hume's flux and reflux theory is an oscillation theory wherein people's beliefs oscillate from one point to another. The non-rational swinging of opinions forms the crux of Hume's thesis, which he refers to as the flux and reflux of polytheism and theism. According to Hume, men change their inclinations from polytheism to theism based on fear, uncertainty, deference, and hierarchy. A good example can be taken from a small stratum of the Indian Muslim populace who indulge in what is popularly known as 'grave-worshipping'; this is done in proportion to the urgency of men's fears and distresses. They recognise that, in the end, they are praying to Allah, and yet they indulge in these acts of grave worship in order to invoke divine intervention on an 'urgent' basis. This further results in the creation of 'middlemen', 'intermediaries' who have the powers to 'aid' a person in approaching their creator. These middlemen are not only limited to the dead 'saint'. However, they are also living and breathing beings who have attached themselves to these institutions by claiming a spiritual or consanguineal chain. The pendulum keeps going in this direction until some 'greater' threat comes along and makes the people rethink their acts. Thereafter, the pendulum starts to go in the opposite direction (Gellner 1981, 9–11). The falling of the idolaters into far more 'vulgar conceptions', as seen in some cases of grave worship, makes the tide turn towards theism (Hume 2001, 28). Here, we would like to go beyond Gellner and perhaps even Hume. Hegel (1979) explains that the 'over-zealous' effort of tearing men from their 'sensuous' preoccupations and 'direct their gaze' to the divine light, which is done in order to check their pre-occupation with the 'dirt' and 'water' that they find themselves to be content with (5). This 'over-zealous' reorientation or

recognition of one's past transgressions, and the changes which are pursued in order to amend these transgressions, are generally very 'Puritan', which aim to outrightly reject the past actions or the "practised Islamic" practices in pursuit of a more "normative Islam" (Waardenburg 2007, 30; in Ahmad 2015, 254). This is seen in both the Ahl-e Sunnat and Deobandi in India. Some of the Ahl-e Sunnat have become too opposed to the idea of Sufi centres and even the orthodoxy that is attached to these institutions, while the Deobandi's have also started to inculcate a particular 'protestant' spirit that questions the established orthodoxy.

W.M. Watt (1962) states that the term 'orthodox' applies only to eastern Christendom, where the authority could differentiate between the 'right belief' or 'heresy'. In the case of Islam, however, such a formal authority does not exist. Consequently, the absence of a formal structure of orthodoxy indicates no orthodoxy in Islam. Sherman Jackson (2002) argues that orthodoxy is based on any authority, which could either be formal or informal. Informal authority is based on 'reputation' instead of a formal investiture, wherein they can hold on to authority despite the absence of a 'formal ecclesiastical hierarchy'. Sherman argues that authority is based on different aspects, like 'threat of stigma', 'malicious gossip', or verbal retorts by society's 'respected members' (Jackson 2002, 30). The problem that arises here is what Robinson calls "now on any Ahmad, Mahmud or Muhammad could claim to speak for Islam" (Robinson 1993, 245), and due to a lack of formal ecclesiastical institutions, the opinions of the "media mufti" (Messick 1986) have a competing tone with the 'traditional' muftis. Offered a choice of Mufti's, the people have started to pick and choose, meaning that they can choose from different opinions of their liking from the "religious public sphere" (Eickelman and Anderson 2003), wherein the Ulema present 'their merchandise' on the common platform. Similar sentiments were also expressed by our interlocutors, who belonged to the Deoband school of thought and believed that individuals could approach the texts without taking any help from the Ulema:

> They (common people) study by themselves; if someone goes to them now and tells them, "Brother, do not do this" or do this or this, do you think they will listen to us? They won't … Until they (common people) do not do their research, or personally read something, or until they do not see it by themselves… They will google it… They will read the *Hadiths*… So, it

> is "obvious" that when they will study, they will trust it… So now people are changing by themselves (without the need for a teacher).[23]

The existence of such narratives stems from the fact that, due to the 'mass higher education' and impact of both social and print forms of information technologies, "Ulema privileged access to authoritative religious knowledge" has been undermined (Zaman 2002, 1). Now, anyone can access religious texts and have an opinion which might go against the opinions of established traditions. Interestingly, the same critique of religious institutions or their attempt towards an exclusivist version of religious knowledge also draws criticism from the graduates of these institutions, critiquing the 'pre-media-mufti' era. One of the interlocutors, while talking about an individual's agency in approaching the Quranic texts, blamed the Ulema class for attempting to limit the dissemination of religious knowledge:

> Because the Quran is a remedy for everything… Everyone recognises this fact- every Muslim has to accept this; we have not been able to realise the *Asl* (Arabic; original, root). This means even our Ulema have kept us distanced from it, that you should not read it directly (without the supervision of a religious teacher)
>
> Previously, no one used to encourage us: "You should read the *tarjuma*" (Arabic; translation) or "You should read the *tafsir*" (Arabic; exegesis of Quran) … They only used to teach us what the *Hazrat* (Used here in a condescending manner to define a religious scholar) used to find Qanaat (Arabic; satisfaction, contentment) in[24].

Taking the cue from Aasif's example, we can assert that the ambivalence of classical Muslim scholars towards the circulation of the written text, as it might lead to their misinterpretation (Mitchell 1991), has been surpassed in the modern era. This ambivalence has also been described as a means of continuing the earlier forms of 'authoritative learning' that were highly influenced by the traditional Ulema (Robinson 1993). It could be claimed that the aforementioned example(s) are of people belonging to the Deoband school of thought, the ideological underpinnings of which state that any Muslim could become a preacher, and it is not limited to the Ulema (Metcalf 1993). Interestingly, however, as some scholars pointed out, this permission is only limited to basic books like reading Muhammad Zakariya's *Fada'il-I a'mal*

[23] Khan, Firdous, Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.
[24] Aasif, Muhammad, Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.

(Zaman 2002, 58). Continuing, the same opinions challenging the 'orthodoxy' are also echoed by the interlocutors belonging to the Ahl-e Sunnat school of thought, who are presumed to be more 'cattle-like'. Their challenge to the orthodoxy is based more on the inherent institutional corruption that plagues the Sufi institutions:

> So, all of these different institutions, in my opinion… "they are making money", they get money, they get social recognition, and they get religious sympathy…So, all of them are protecting their own chairs… They are not providing any benefit to Islam… they are looking at their own interests, their personal interest, their own particular *Sajjadanashin* (Literally: "one who sits at a prayer mat") or *Gaddinashin*, whatever their interest is… [25]

Gellner (1981) talks about the 'urbanised ex-countrymen' who are eager to 'disavow' their own past, especially 'those above them' (52). These people, whom he calls the 'scripturalists', are even found in India; we would like to call these people belonging to the 'urban poor' strata of society. The urban poor classes have an increasingly polemical approach to the question of an established orthodoxy, which they considered to be misguided, as has been observed from the previous examples of Ibrahim and Aasif, who, despite having undertaken a seven-year course of *Ders-e-Nizami*, which transfigures them as a part of the religious institutions, are very vocal in their critique of the same tradition that has been, as Ibrahim frames it, "kidnapped" by the affluent dynasties. They already have a mystical countryside past, which leads them to shun the local forms of Sufism. However, even in the city, they are not well integrated into the traditional urban forms of religiosity, often controlled by the urban and religious elites. The only path they can find in the contemporary period contaminated by individualistic modernity is pure scripturalism, the essence of which is based on criticism of the other discursive expressions of Islam. The notion we have seen in the Ahl-e Sunnat interlocutors is similar as well, in that they are not content with the major institutions of power, whom they consider acting in pursuit of monetary gains. Hence, they become susceptible to formal Islamic institutions, forming a new identity of what we would like to call the '*Pajāma* wearing Protestants'!

[25] Talib, Muhammad, Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.

5.4. The Emergence of Oppositional Muslims

Speak, for this little time is ample,
Before the death of the body and tongue,
Speak, for the truth is still alive,
Speak whatever that needs to be said![26]

> [Talking about his Ahl-e Sunnat friend whose life experiences had resulted in him diluting his regressive identity] "These guys also went to visit the Deoband seminary, so before going there, they were told that "Deobandi's are Gustakh (impudent)" or they are like that… they are "Gustakh-e-Rasool" (relating to the fatwa of anathema that was put on them by Ahmad Riza Khan in his famous book Husam al-Haramayn) … Upon reaching there, there was a *ders* (Arabic; lecture) going on… of Bukhari sharif (part of the *Kutub al-sittah*; six major collections of Hadith relating to the last Prophet Muhammad (SAWW), in Deoband, he told me about it himself… He went and sat in the lecture(ders), and then a Hadith relating to the Prophet (SAWW) was narrated; something like that happened… So, the Ustad(teacher) started weeping; he told me, "I thought to myself that the person who can weep in the love of the Prophet (SAWW), how can he be a *gustakh*?" ... He observed this thing… then he came back (to the village) and started to pray (behind the Deobandi Imams), and his *zehniyat* (Persian mindset) also started to broaden."[27]

This above-quoted interview transcript answers the question of inter-sectarian conflicts among the people from the Deoband school of thought and the Ahl-e Sunnat. Our interlocutor, a recent master's graduate, in answering the question on the issues within the Islamic traditions, gave an important example of one of his friends who, through his life experience, changed his disposition towards the Deoband school of thought. This example underscores an important point: certain unusual circumstances tend to affect the behavioural tendencies of people, which in this case is personified through the agency of a person belonging to the Ahl-e Sunnat tradition who, being so emotionally moved by the Deobandi Ustad's respect for the Holy Prophet (SAWW), changed his previous disposition and started to pray behind a Deobandi Imam. The same trend was seen during our research, with almost every participant claiming an urgency of moving beyond the *'maslaki'* (Arabic; path) issues. In a similar vein,

[26] bol ye thodā vaqt bahut hai / jism o zabāñ kī maut se pahle / bol ki sach zinda hai ab tak / bol jo kuchh kahnā hai kah le. Faiz, Ahmed Faiz. "Nuskha Hai Wafa: Kulliyat Faiz". Education Publishing House; Delhi. (2005). https://www.rekhta.org/ebooks/detail/nuskha-hai-wafa-kulliyat-faiz-faiz-ahmad-faiz-ebooks

[27] Wahab, Ghazali, Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.

Ibrahim also talks about the concept of moving beyond inter-sectarian issues in the face of what he calls an 'external threat':

> Though if we look at the last 4-5 years, in the context of an "external threat", a sense of unity had arisen (among the Muslim 'sects')… there are many kids… from the Barelvi (Ahl-e Sunnat) side and the Deobandi side who concede that this is not the time to think along these lines….Now our God is one; right now our Quran is one…so … the new generation of Muslims, they to a large extent think that there is no space left for an issue pertaining to the *Maslak (s)* (path).[28]

Coinciding with our previous discussions on the emergence of pajāma-wearing Protestants, we proposed that young Indian Muslims are becoming more suspicious of traditional Islamic institutions. The traditional Ulema are being scrutinised more closely by Muslims, as the proliferation of 'media muftis' creates an increasingly competitive 'market'. There is another strand of thought wherein it was observed that these young pajāma-wearing Protestants, having already forsaken the religious institutions, whom they consider to be associated with nepotism, are due to the existence of an 'external threat', beginning to renegotiate the existing internal disagreements within the Indian Islamic traditions. Aasif, commenting on the recent Tablighi Jama'at[29] controversy, held similar opinions:

> [Talking about the reason behind the vilification of Tablighi Jama'at] Look, they do not care about that… that who are you? (Ahl-e Sunnat or the Deoband tradition) ... They only care that your name is in Urdu, that your name is in Arabic… So, they will catch everyone, and they will repeat the same thing to everyone.[30]

Aasif, by taking a prominent example of the inherently "foreign" nature of Muslim names, demonstrates how, in the eyes of Hindu nationalism, belonging to a particular Islamic tradition is of little consequence. The epistemological foundations of such populist notions of exclusion are based on very simplistic notions that can be easily channelled into a populist discourse, which, in this case, are the names. Interestingly, the classification of names as being a roadblock towards the eternal *Moksha* (Sanskrit;

[28] Rahman, Ibrahim. Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.
[29]https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/india-coronavirus-tablighi-jamaat-delhi/2020/04/02/abdc5af0-7386-11ea-ad9b-254ec99993bc_story.html
[30] Aasif, Muhammad, Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.

salvation) has its roots in the writings of leaders belonging to the Hindu Mahasabha. V.G. Deshpande (1949), while 'dictating' the cultural changes that the Muslims must inculcate among themselves in order to become 'acceptable' nationals of the Indian (Hindu) state of the future, stated that "the Muslims would also need to discard their Arabic names (Abdullah, Mohammad, and Ibrahim) in favour of Hindu names such as Ram, Krishna, Hari, etc." (Smith 1963, 375). Thus, Aasif's observations are well-founded and contain an element of truth. Theoretically speaking, a Hindu extremist could care less if a person believes in the concept of Prophets' (SAWW) knowledge of the unseen or if one considers visiting Sufi mausoleums to be forbidden in Islam. What he would focus on is the apparent aspects of his 'Muslimness'. The obvious characteristics of the 'Muslimness' are their 'foreign' names, clothing, facial hair, and practices. Aasif further adds that the presence of an "external threat" could lead towards an increasing feeling of brotherhood among the Muslims, who, till now, had an outlook that was contracted due to issues arising from the existence of discursive hermeneutical engagements within the Islamic traditions:

> That is to say, when you think that there is an "external threat" … So, you "internally" become very strong, and everyone gets together… this happens no when we… We will fight a lot among ourselves, within our family, brothers will fight each other… However, if an outsider comes, then all brothers will unite." … "So, we should look at the "external threat" … If we keep this in consideration, then only we can unite.
>
> **So, do you think that Hindutva could act as an "external threat"?**
>
> They already consider us (as a threat) … they have *ba-qaa'ida* (Persian; formally, systematically) written it, Golwalkar has… In his Bunch of Thoughts, he says there are three threats… First Communists, then Muslims, and Christians… these three are the threats…So, in order to make them [Muslims] *Muttahid* (Arabic; united, undivided), you would have to show them (Muslims) who they have a potentiality of incurring a *Nuksaan* (Arabic; loss, injury) loss from.[31]

It can be argued here that young, educated Muslims like Aasif, who were born during a period of increasing ideological fervour among their countrymen, strive harder to maintain their faith. Here, Aasif concedes that Hindu nationalists already view Muslims as "threats," but this does not cause him to become forlorn. Instead, he emphasises the need to "show them [Muslims] from whom they have the potential to

[31] Aasif, Muhammad, Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.

incur a loss," i.e., he acknowledges that Muslims should be made aware of these texts in order to "unite" them. Moving beyond the hypothetical scenarios, while giving an anecdote from her life, one of our female interlocutors exhibited a propensity to practice her religion as a matter of policy, which stemmed from the "opposition" that she faced due to her religious identity. The emergence of "defensive pride" that would be discussed below emerges among the Muslims due to the competing ideologies that they find themselves surrounded with (Geertz 1971, 65). This forces the religious faith to move closer to a person's 'self-definition' of the same. Increasingly, Muslims no longer consider themselves to be 'Muslim' as a consequence of being born into the faith but rather as a matter of policy, which entails an increase in their religious obligations and mannerisms. In a similar vein, we can take two examples from the narrations of one of our female interlocutors and how the defensive pride is culminating in what Geertz terms "Oppositional Muslims".

> "Quite recently, I had a chance to visit Satna (Madhya Pradesh, India); I went there to represent Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) for a university competition… There, for the first time, I felt... that I am a minority, I felt in danger to be a Muslim… It was like if I had said… Allah Hu-Akbar, they would have killed me for that… I felt it; it was the *Youth Festival*, so all of the Universities were representing themselves… … So, every university had to take out a 'cultural procession' throughout the city… So AMU was there, Benares Hindu University and some private universities… Except for 1-2 universities, the slogan for most of the universities was Jai Shri Ram (Glory to Ram)… when we were passing, we were wearing white suits with hijabs, and the boys were wearing Sherwani as per the traditions of AMU and we were chanting, everyone has to chant some slogans… so we were chanting that '*Dekho Dekho Aaye Nawab*'(Look, Look, the Nawabs are here), we did not use any religious sloganeering from our side, because we are not representing a religion, we were representing our university…"[32]

The presence of ideological fervour, which has unfortunately transfigured into contempt for the Muslims in a curiously ironical way, does not deter the Muslims (in this case, the interlocutor) from practising their religion or make them conceal their identity. What it transmutes into is the creation of the Oppositional Muslims and the subsequent departure of the Muslims towards a more scripturalist and "identity preserving" Islam. As seen in the following example, despite the hostile reception at

[32] Fatima, Shireen, Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India

the venue, our interlocutor remains steadfast in her religious beliefs despite the murky misgivings from the other side:

> We were walking… there were 4-5 people… So, we (*hum*; Literally 'we', though it is often used as a singular noun) started reciting a Dua, so a person (from our own group) said, 'Stay quiet'…*this happened in Madhya Pradesh*(fast-paced) … "stay quiet" … So, I said why should I stay quiet?!... I know that I am not doing anything wrong, I know that I am not reading anything wrong… I am reciting "Allah hu-Akbar" … I do not mean anything wrong by it… You can pick me up and take me away; that is your own problem… So, "as I Individual" (So I, as an individual) do not keep my religious identity… neutral or hidden… [33]

Here, we see that despite the derision demonstrated by the people holding a Hindu nationalistic ideology, the female interlocutor does not delimit her public display of religiosity. This reasoning of hers stems from the fact that people's religion has become, to put it in a Weberian manner, more "rationalised" and less traditional, meaning they no longer adhere to pre-existing norms that were accepted without any scrutiny. Instead, it was "self-conscious", formulated against the traditional holders of Islamic authority: the Sufi Pirs and the Ulema (Metcalf 2014, 12). The religiosity that is, in this context, based on the mistrust of the Ulema, also through a particular "self-definition," transmutes into a more concrete belief in their individual correctness. Therefore, due to the persisting threats to religion that encompass Muslims, religiosity has become more inward. The interlocutor in the aforementioned example, who opposed the orthodoxy, had, in her rejection, defined a self-definition of Islam, which she adhered to while also staying in the same Islamic tradition. We want to differ from Geertz here; the existence of Oppositional Muslims does not guarantee their turn towards what he calls "Scripturalism—turn towards the Koran, the Hadith, and the Sharia," but rather towards the persistence of an Islamic identity. Similar to Shireen's example, we have seen the same aspect in the case of the Ahl-e Sunnat interlocutor Talib, who condemned the monetary motifs attached to his tradition. Albeit his turn was not toward pure Scripturalism, he attempted to formulate his personal 'self-definition' of Islam while maintaining his traditional sectarian leanings. The self-definition of a religion is somewhat problematic because it assumes that the adherent is knowledgeable enough to alter the aspects of 'traditional' Islam that do not fit into

[33] Fatima, Shireen, Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India

his definition of 'Islam'. To elaborate, this is an example from the Ahl-e Sunnat interlocutor, who rejected the ‘orthodoxy’ that was attached to his ‘tradition’ and adhered to the ‘cultural’ aspects of it unless they did not transgress upon *Tawhid*:

> Every Muslim knows that God is one… Whoever is Sunni or Shia might be… he knows that the *Ibadah* (worship) is for Allah, not for anyone else…The things that have come to counter this… They are an “anti-cultural movement” that have been started by Saudi Arabia—Wahhabis… meaning they are a counter-culture movement… I will say that the procession “are more part of the culture than the religion”, going to the Dargahs…” they are not a fundamental core [of the] religion”, “it [is] more of a part of the culture of the Indian Society—Indian subcontinent” …
>
> This means visiting Dargahs, offering flowers or this or that procession… “are the phenomenon of South Asia” they are “discursive traditions” of India, Pakistan or Bangladesh… They can be included in the Religion as they do not have any badness in it… These practices do not produce any huge badness in the society; “good culture are acceptable in Islam” … If they do not affect the *Tawhid,* then they are not a bad thing…[34]

Some might argue that this phenomenon of having a self-definition is based on a quasi-individualistic characteristic, wherein the religion would sink from a “rational” entity to a “sentimental” one (Guénon 2004, 61). Guénon might be correct in his understanding of Protestantism, which he concludes is an individualistic phenomenon, “namely opposition to the traditional spirit; and negation of tradition, once again, is the same as individualism” (Guénon 2004, 60). However, as we have already discussed in the previous section, what is considered to be ‘pure’ in Islam is something that is detached from a hierarchy or exclusiveness of knowledge (Gellner 1981, 5), while in Christianity, the word ‘tradition’ is conceived as something that is related to the foundational ecclesiastical institutions. Therefore, bringing Guénon back into the debate, the quasi-individualistic characteristics found among oppositional Muslims do not make them insist on refusing to accept any authority higher than that of the individual or denying the existence of knowledge higher than the individual's reasoning. They do not engage in what is known as "profane philosophy," as their self-definition of Islam is, in theory, based on the ‘Islamic texts’. Hence, the quasi-individualism that we come across among the oppositional Muslims does not mirror Protestantism, but what it mirrors is the Islamic tradition of having the capacity to

[34] Talib, Muhammad, Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.

provide an immanent critique to the apparatuses of Islamic ‘orthodoxy’ in a manner that has perhaps been best exemplified by the personality of Abu Dhār Al-Ghifari (RA) (cf. Shariati 2015).

Moving forward, the interlocutor, who already has reservations towards his ‘own’ Sufi Ulema, also reveals his disregard for what he calls the Wahhabi. The term Wahhabi has a very powerful historical connotation among Indian Muslims who are hostile towards it due to the Muwahiddun’s “uncompromising opposition to the popular practice." Moreover, the term also came to be associated with sedition in the aftermath of the Revolt of 1857 (Sanyal 1996, 241). Furthermore, the term is used in a vilifying manner among the Ahl-e Sunnat circles, with Ahmed Raza Khan famously quoting, “If a Wahhabi repents, he was not one to begin with” (Sanyal 1996, 246). Therefore, the use of such a term indicates that the interlocutor is still part of the ‘sectarian’ understanding of Islam, but that does not limit him from criticising the malpractices that have attached themselves to Islam. This notion of the interlocutor goes against the dominant static view of religions, which only considers them to “prosper” or “decline” but never expects them to “change” (Geertz 1973, 170). Despite his vocal critique of the corruption in the Islamic tradition he belongs to, he still finds himself part of the same tradition or thought. Hence, the Islamic tradition does not fall into the binary of ‘decline’ or ‘prosper’ but rather into the multiplexity of ‘change’.

The oppositional Muslims that we come across in India do not fall back to the other end of the ‘religious pendulum’, but rather, due to a range of rival religious repositories, they can remain in their traditional Islamic inclination. However, this adherence to one's traditional Islamic understanding now includes the ability to criticise the Ulema of one's tradition who are not acting in accordance with their definition of Islam. This existence of critique of the Islamic ‘orthodoxy’ cannot be placed into the simple category of mirroring Protestantism, as it has already been pointed out that the notion of critique is “integral to many non-Enlightenment societies” (Asad 1993, 23; in Ahmad 2011, 115). Hence, the critique of the Ulema plays a vital role in the subsequent self-definition of the Indian-Muslims. To invoke Ibrahim’s example, this self-definition recognises the Indian-Muslim orthodoxy as being responsible for the *Tiyan-paancha* (destruction) of the Muslim community, and through this acceptance and the rising religious fervour among the Hindus, it can be

argued that due to this amalgamation, he becomes oppositional. Ibrahim, while explaining the role of the Ulema in the destruction of religious institutions, moves on to the question of how the young Muslims are reacting to the Ulema:

> "What is known as "Muslim consciousness" or the Muslim *sha'ūr* (Arabic; consciousness) … It has indeed awakened after the CAA-NRC (relating to the protests against the discriminatory citizenship act which were recently introduced by the BJP government) … They have "outrightly" denied the leadership, be it the religious [of the Ulema], be it the political, they did not let them near it [the protests] …and we saw a huge participation of youth…"
> So, the Muslim youth… they can be boys or girls, "irrespective of gender" … they have, God willingly, shown an awakened [consciousness] because they think… that our religious leadership which has been established for the last 60-70 years, they have given us nothing… besides "degrading" us, pushing us downwards because they have remained in allegiance/loyalty [with the governments] (the word 'loyalty' was used here more in a slave-like sense, where the loyalty is seemingly one-sided)[35]

He talks about his recent observations of an awakening among the Muslim youth, who have distanced themselves from religious institutions due to the latter's proximity and their inherent passivity in the face of state-initiated violence against Muslims. The oppositional Muslims feel it is incumbent to formulate a quasi-individualistic self-definition of Islam that conforms to the contemporary oppositional environment in which they find themselves. This is achieved through a non-alignment with the Ulema, who do not fall into their self-definition of Islam. However, perhaps the most perplexing question that remains unanswered due to the variety of answers is: what is the 'self-definition' of Islam that has awakened among these oppositional Muslims? For some, Islam is what they practice, while for others, it is only limited to their belief in *tawhid*. However, it can be asserted with absolute certainty that the oppositional Muslims' self-definition of Islam is highly malleable and at odds with that of the Ulema. In conclusion, the existence of oppositional Muslims is in direct opposition to Hindu nationalism, which, according to these Muslims, has not been adequately addressed by the Ulema class. Therefore, in order to differentiate themselves from the Ulema, the oppositional Muslims must be more confrontational, as only through a negation can they claim to be different or to have a superior alternative to the established Islamic orthodoxy.

[35] Rahman, Ibrahim. Interview by Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri, Aligarh, India.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Our attempts in this thesis, although influenced by the works of Max Weber, are not made to produce another *Nationalist Ethic and the Spirit of Pajama-Wearing Protestants*. The manner in which our arguments are developed is neither prophetic nor universal; they do not claim to be compatible with all societies or speak for the entirety of the Indian Muslim *Ummah*. Instead, based on our findings, we can conclude that there appears to be a connection between these two aspects: the (re)creation of history and the subsequent changes in the inter-sectarian dealings of the Indian Muslims.

The first part of our thesis was based on understanding the word tradition (Shills 1981; Gross 1992; Lohr 1967) and then differentiating it from 'Tradition' (Guénon 2004, 2014; Evola 2018). Tradition here means that a society can only be 'Traditional' when governed by principles that transcend the human or individual dimensions. According to several scholars from the Perennial School and our beliefs, this is what contemporary society lacks. An individual's life is devoid of a higher meaning, which leads him to indulge in 'profane philosophy' and acts.

This trope brings us to Sayyed Hossein Nasr's theorisation of the difference between the Pontifical and the Promethean man. The term pontifex means 'maker of road' (Hekster 2020, 20) and therefore, a pontifical man is a man who is conscious of both temporal and transcendental realities. He is conscious of his moral obligation to his God, or, as Nasr describes him, the "vicegerent of God (*khalifatullah*)" whose conduct is commensurate with the responsibility entrusted to him. The Promethean man "feels as home on earth" as his outlook on life is limited to his immediate surroundings. This further enslaves him to his "lower nature," causing him to surrender to transient pleasures.

Having focused on the state of modern man, the same reasoning has been extended to the administrative apparatuses that have been disassociated with the spiritual realm. The (re)creation of a false history acts as a supplement to establishing the realm(s) of the Promethean men. This creation of history is predicated on the concept of an 'idealised civilisation' that was allegedly destroyed by the 'other'. It could be the Romans for the Greeks, the Goths for the Romans, the Arabs for the Sassanids, or the Turks for the Hindus, depending on the civilisation. This is, as has been argued, in exact contrast with the earlier forms of authority, which were more ‘inward’, meaning the kings used to justify their rule by identifying themselves and were not based on the creation of the ‘other’. In the contemporary nation-building process, however, the unifying block is based on the creation of the ‘other’ that acts as a unifier for the people: “Nothing can weld peoples into a nation and nations into a State as the pressure of a common foe…hatred separates as well as unites” (Savarkar 1923, 19). In this nation-building process, specific historical examples are taken from the land’s indigenous history that aims to define the ‘history’ of a nation. The destruction of Roman armies in the Teutoburg forest is regarded as a nationalistic victory by the Germans (Geary2002, 22), even though these conflicts were not initiated in pursuit of a ‘nation-state’. This (re)creation of history is a double-edged sword that solidifies the identity of one group of people but dissects the opposite community as the “other”.

Continuing, the thesis rested on how and if the Islamic discursive tradition(s) are reformulating their differences in lieu of an ideology with colonial roots that pits them as the ‘other’. Through employment and a conceptual extension of the term 'Discursive tradition(s),' we hope to comprehend the historical conditions that allowed for the 'production' and ‘maintenance' of these traditions (Asad 2009, 23). In practice, and if we invoke Imam Ghazali here, the majority of these traditions fall under al-Ghazali's definition of a Muslim: "There is no God but God; Muhammad is his messenger" (Jackson 2002, 46). and if they are sincere in their admission, they are to be considered Muslims. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the case of Ashraf Ali Thanvi (page 5), theological boundaries appear to crumble when confronted with "challenging circumstances." Therefore, in some instances, the theological differences that result from historical circumstances no longer serve as the basis for a tradition's anathema.
The Indian Muslims, who are divided into three main groups; Deobandi, Ahl-e Sunnat, and Ahl-I Hadith, exhibit several disagreements amongst each other. The two groups

we focused our research on, the Deobandi and the Ahl-e Sunnat, had several disagreements among themselves. However, they belonged to the same Hanafi jurisprudence, which made them closer to each other in practice, a thing that was even recognised by the Deobandi scholars, who considered the Ahl-e Sunnat “like members of one’s own household who have gone astray." In contrast, they considered the Ahl-I Hadith as not being “part of the household to begin with” (Tareen 2020, 241). Due to their mutual evolution along the shifting historical dimensions in which they are situated, these two traditions have an inherent affinity for one another.

Our fieldwork at Aligarh Muslim University was predicated on several assessments, most of which proved accurate. The first assessment was based on the often-cited quotation, "To understand the Muslim mind in India, don't go anywhere else; just come to AMU" (Parvez 2007; in Wajihuddin 2021, 157). Aligarh has been the seat of Indian Muslim intelligentsia for some time, involved in virtually all contemporary issues about Muslims, and with the institution representing the spirit of the Indian Muslims: “the way Aligarh works, the way Aligarh thinks, the contribution Aligarh makes to Indian life in its manifold aspects will largely determine the place Muslims will occupy in the pattern of Indian life. The way India deals with Aligarh will largely determine the shape of things in the future national position of the Muslims” (Ali 1991, 204; in Varshney 2002, 156). The extensive ethnographic research included 21 participants and was conducted in the shade of the imposing 19th-century buildings that dot the AMU campus or while sitting on the splint-supported chairs of the famous tea shops nearby. The views expressed by the students of Aligarh were commensurate with the expectations placed upon them, with the majority of arguments advocating for the need to transcend *maslaki* (Arabic; path) differences between the various Islamic traditions. The third and final assessment that led us to our subsequent findings is the quasi-individualistic characteristics observed among the students. They exhibited a more objective critique of the corruption that is present in the Indian-Muslim ‘orthodoxy’. This critique was based on a critically objective ‘self-definition’ of Islam, which, in our view, could have only been produced by an educated class of young Muslims.

The coming-up of *pajāma*-wearing Protestants is a phenomenon that was ever-present during our research but was theoretically challenging to conceptualise. Claiming an Indian Islamic perspective to be "protestant" would contribute to the same Orientalist

discourse of imposing a mirror term on an entirely indigenous phenomenon (cf. Ahmed 1986, 50). The specific invocation of this term was an attempt at Indianization and Islamification of a theme already present in the literature (Gellner 1981). With the end of “Ulema privileged access to authoritative religious knowledge” (Zaman 2002, 1), along with a distrust for the authority allegedly contaminated by nepotism. The change is most profound among the 'urban poor', who may be from the Deoband or Ahl-e Sunnat schools of thought but continue to chart their understanding of religion, which often transgresses with that of the religious orthodoxy. However, this mistrust does not lead to a pendulum view of the religion in which the people merely "reflux" to a scripturalist understanding of their faith. In accordance with their interpretations of Islam, empirical evidence suggests that individuals modify their position while remaining within the Islamic tradition. With an increase in Madrasa graduates and the saturation of the Ulema class, both of which challenge the established orthodoxy, the people can pick and choose from the wide range of Ulema belonging to their tradition, depending on whom they might consider to be more ‘Islamic’; consequently, they do not abandon their tradition entirely.

Oppositional Muslims are a phenomenon that, when confronted with opposition, rather than faltering or distancing themselves from Islam, actually draws closer to Islam. This is aided by their self-definition of Islam, which can be contrary to the traditional Ulema understanding. The emergence of such consciousness also complicates the power vested in the Islamic 'orthodoxy', which starts to lose ground. As it has been argued through our findings, the opposition faced by the Muslims has not resulted in them concealing their Muslimness but instead practising it with much more rigour. The existence of oppositional Muslims in India is a reaction to Hindu nationalism, which, in their view, has not been adequately addressed by the Ulema class. Therefore, to formulate or specify the shortcomings of the Ulema, they must be more confrontational, using negation to claim to be different or have a superior alternative.
In conclusion, our hypotheses, which attempted to understand how the Indian Islamic Discursive Traditions react to an external pressure that considers them the ‘other’, have supplemented the argument for the emergence of the oppositional Muslim. These Muslims, who are also defined by us as *pajāma*-wearing Protestants, have a distrust for the traditional Islamic institutions and the Ulema attached to them. They have a different understanding of Islam, dictating the Ulema, which is perhaps opposite to the

earlier forms of adherence, which were vice versa. As has been argued, the emergence of such a phenomenon is due to the variety of new Ulema that owe their existence to the vast number of madrasas. This same attitude is extended towards the opposition that Muslims face from outside their community; they present a more identity-preserving spirit that is based more on individual agency. The interlocutors displayed the same 'defensive pride' in their discourses due to the external opposition they faced regarding their religious identity.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information:

Name – Surname: Saiyid Ashraf Husain Jafri
E-mail (1):
E-mail (2):

Education:

2019-2021	BA in Sociology, Aligarh Muslim University, India
2021-2023	MA in Sociology, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey