Introduction

Chu rakht-i-khwish az in khak
Hane guyand ba ma ashna bud!
Wa lekin kas nadanast in musafar
Che guft wa ba ke guft wa az koja bud!

When I prepared myself to depart from this earth
Everyone said, 'he was our friend'.
But no one really knew this traveller,
What he said and to whom and from where he came.

Muhammad Iqbal[1]

Shortly before his death in April 1938, the celebrated poet and activist intellectual, Muhammad Iqbal, engaged in a public debate with the leading Deobandi scholar, Hussain Ahmad Madani (1879–1957), over the compatibility of Islam and nationalism. Through open letters to newspapers, public statements and poetry, both men attacked each other's interpretations of Islam and respective political visions. Maulana Madani quoted extensively from the Quran and other Islamic sources to argue that Islam sanctioned the founding of political community upon the basis of territory. He even went to the extent of seeking to locate precedents for the idea of nationalism and the nation-state within the history of Islam. Iqbal, however, accused Madani of having strayed from the path of Islam in calling for the adoption of nationalism. Iqbal saw nationalism as 'the greatest enemy of Islam' and devoted much of his work to warning Muslims against adopting nationalism and the model of the nation-state. Unlike Madani and a number of his contemporaries, Iqbal argued that the

[1] Muhammad Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal (Farsi)* (Lahore, 1973), p. 1021.

adoption of modern political ideals and institutions such as nationalism would require a radical transformation of the structure of Islam itself. This rejection of nationalism centred upon Iqbal's own controversial construction of Islam as a complete system that could be contrasted against ideologies such as nationalism and socialism, and which provided solutions to contemporary political, social and economic problems.

This monograph examines the socio-political discourse of Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938). It primarily studies his critique of the ideology of nationalism and his attempts to chart a path for the development of the 'nation' by liberating it from the centralising and homogenising tendencies of the modern state structure. Iqbal's engagement with the ideology of nationalism is used here as a foil for a broader analysis of the interaction between Muslim intellectuals and 'western'[2] or modern political and religious thought in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century South Asia. The nation-state, which has clearly emerged as the dominant form of political organisation in the modern period, is more than a system of legal norms or the embodiment of sovereign authority; it is a socio-cultural phenomenon, an expression of modernity. Its victory over alternative forms of political organisation is reflected in the fact that the state has conquered our imagination, making it difficult to think of alternatives.[3] By focusing on the interaction between Muslim intellectuals and the institution of the nation-state, the present work seeks to provide an insight into both the interaction between Muslim thinkers and modernity and the evolution of Islam.

The interaction of Muslim intellectuals in India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with western or modern political concepts gave rise to an interesting and rich political discourse not solely drawn from the repertoire of political ideas and symbols provided by Muslim heritage, or *turath*; 'Islamic' political concepts and institutions were themselves often re-interpreted and recast. Acknowledging the western impact on the political thought of Muslim intellectuals of his generation, Khuda Bukhsh (1877–1931)[4] noted that Muslims were 'forging

[2] It is recognised that the term 'West' is in itself a problematic category that carries cultural and political connotations. It was employed loosely by the intellectuals studied in this work to refer to the geographical entities of Europe and America, the colonial powers as well as modernity.

[3] Christopher W. Morris, *An Essay on the Modern State* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 46.

[4] Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh translated Arabic, Persian and German texts into English and wrote widely on Islam and Muslims in India. Many of his essays were compiled in *Studies: Indian and Islamic* (London, 1927) and *Contributions to the History of Islamic Civilisation*, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1929–1930).

fresh rules of religious interpretation, reconciling the needs of the hour with their allegiance to the past, justifying modern institutions by appeals to the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet'.[5] Yet it would not be fair to dismiss the work of the Muslim intelligentsia simply as a derivative discourse imbibed from the West. There was often a conscious attempt to adapt western or modern ideas to accord with what they perceived to be the message of Islam and the Indian context. The adoption or rejection of western political ideas and institutions was determined by each individual's evaluation of the West, the desirability of adopting western ways and the compatibility of these ideas and institutions with Islam.

THE SETTING: ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN COLONIAL INDIA

The political decline of the Mughal, Ottoman and Safavid Empires in the eighteenth century did not signal a period of cultural and intellectual stagnation for Muslims. Various Islamic revivalist and reform movements were born out of the need felt by Muslims to re-interpret Islam within a deteriorating political context.[6] In India, the transformation of the East India Company from a commercial organisation to a territorial power in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also spurred Muslim intellectuals to investigate the reasons for the growing dominance and prosperity of the West, specifically Britain. They often explained the rise of the West in terms of its scientific and technological advancement as well as the superiority and stability of its political institutions.[7] The major influx of modern ideas and institutions was, however, concomitant with the establishment of the colonial state in the wake of the suppression of the Mutiny of 1857 and the disempowerment of Muslims both within and beyond India.

Confronted by the new political context, spokesmen for the Muslim community openly discussed the causes for 'Muslim decline' and debated the utility of adopting western institutions and facets of western civilisation. Modernity, with its rationalism, institutions, ideologies and imperialism, brought into relief many new questions forcing the Muslim intelligentsia to re-evaluate 'Islamic' ideas and institutions. Polemical works by missionaries and the burgeoning orientalist literature produced

[5] Bukhsh, *Contributions*, ii, 74.
[6] See, for instance, Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (New York, 1987).
[7] Gulfishan Khan, *Indian Muslim Perceptions of the West During the Eighteenth Century* (Karachi, 1998), pp. 332–364.

by scholars and officials alike further elicited responses from Indian Muslim intellectuals.[8] Maulvi Chiragh Ali (1844–1895),[9] for instance, acknowledged that his own re-assessment of Islamic institutions such as sharia (Islamic law) and the caliphate was chiefly a response to the writings of Malcolm MacColl, the Canon of Ripon, who wrote a series of articles and books critical of the Ottoman Empire and which described Islam as a rigid system that promoted theocratic and illiberal states.[10]

The re-examination of Islam and its institutions was not unique to the period under study. Indeed, the work of eighteenth-century figures such as Shah Waliullah, who attempted to shape an Islamic intellectual and theological response in the face of Mughal political decline, provided models that modern Muslim intellectuals drew upon. Moreover, prior to the interaction with western political discourse, Islam in India had interacted with and adapted to local political structures and necessities.[11] The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, proved to be a 'time of great ferment in the history of Muslim India'; one in which the perceived challenges to Islamic institutions, practises and traditions were more urgent and the responses more varied.[12] The period was characterised by the extensive adoption of print technology, the emergence of new Muslim educational institutions – both religious and secular – and the bourgeoning of Muslim movements that competed in the public arena to provide the 'true' Islamic perspective on a host of socio-political issues.

One response to the colonial context was reflected in the emergence of the Deobandi movement, the genesis of which lay in the establishment of the Dar-ul-Uloom madrasa (school or seminary) at Deoband in 1867.

[8] See Avril Powell, 'Maulana Rahmat Allah Kairanawi and Muslim Christian Controversy in India in the mid-19th Century', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1 (1976), pp. 42–63; and *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond, 1993).

[9] Chiragh Ali's works include *The Proposed Political, Legal and Social Reforms in the Ottoman Empire* (1883) and *A critical exposition of the popular 'jihád', showing that all the wars of Mohammad were defensive; and that aggressive war, or compulsory conversion, is not allowed in the Koran: with appendices proving that the word 'jihad' does not exegetically mean 'warfare', and that slavery is not sanctioned by the prophet of Islam* (Calcutta, 1885).

[10] Chiragh Ali, *The Proposed Political, Legal and Social Reforms*, p. i. See also Malcolm MacColl, *The Sultan and the Powers* (London, 1896).

[11] Muzaffar Alam has shown how Islamic statecraft in India adjusted itself according to the needs of ruling a majority non-Muslim population. He asserts that the 'deeper meaning and content of the political and religious vocabulary in use changed significantly in the Indian context.' Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India c. 1200–1800* (Delhi, 2004).

[12] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton, 2002), pp. 11–12.

Barbara Metcalf has argued that with the establishment of the colonial state the ulama (religious scholars, sing. alim) generally turned away from issues concerning the organisation of state and society and towards a concern with the moral qualities of individual Muslims. Instead of seeking to influence the state, the goal was now to create a community observant of detailed religious law and committed to a spiritual life through the dissemination of instruction in authentic religious practise and belief. The ulama thus focused their attention primarily upon education and religious propaganda. The founders of the Dar-ul-Uloom were at the forefront of developing the madrasa into an institution for bolstering Islamic education and cultivating the moral qualities of the individual Muslim. In line with this, emphasis was placed upon training in *manqulat* (traditionally transmitted) sciences such as *tafsir* (exegesis of the Quran), *hadith*[13] and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), rather than *maqulat* (rational) sciences such as logic and philosophy, which were prioritised in the dominant pre-colonial system of Muslim education in India, the *dars-i-nizami*.[14] This was indicative of the fact that the aim of the Deoband madrasa was not to prepare its students for employment with the state and judiciary, but to train ulama who would be able to give shape to an Islamic revival by serving as spiritual guides, teachers, debaters and publishers.[15]

Through their writings, debates and *fatwa* (legal opinions, pl. *fatawa*), the Deobandi ulama sought to define 'true' Islam and oppose what they perceived as un-Islamic customs being practised by Muslims of the day. They contested the ideas of non-Muslim critics of Islam as well as other Muslim movements, such as the Ahl-i-Hadith, 'Barelwis' and the Ahmadiyya. Amongst the practises that the Deobandi ulama opposed were the observation of Prophet Muhammad's birthday, the practise of *sama* (musical sessions to induce ecstasy) and what they conceived of as 'excesses' associated with Sufism. They also asserted the authority of the ulama as interpreters of the sources of Islam and the need to adhere to the Hanafi school of law. In time, the name of Deoband came to represent a distinct *maslak* (way or path) of South Asian Islam.[16] With thousands of

[13] Tradition, an account of what the Prophet Muhammad said or did, or of his tacit approval for something said or done in his presence.

[14] For an informed study of the *dars-i-nizami* and the impact of the colonial state upon the system of education, see Francis Robinson, *The 'Ulama of the Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture* (New Delhi, 2001).

[15] For a history of Deoband, see Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton, 1982).

[16] Ibid., p. 136.

officially and unofficially affiliated madrasas, the Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband has arguably been the most influential Islamic seminary in South Asia.

Like the Deobandi movement, the Ahl-i-Hadith movement and the Ahl-i-Sunnat wa Jamaat, more commonly known as the 'Barelwi' movement, both looked to the ulama as the foci of religious leadership and sought to shape the Islamic renewal by encouraging strict adherence to sharia. The three movements, however, differed on what constituted the authentic sources of Islam, and they accused each other of faulty jurisprudential principles. The Ahl-i-Hadith called on Muslims to look directly to the Quran and *hadith*. They stressed the need to interpret the Quran and *hadith* literally and rejected the classical schools of law as well as the mediating power of Sufi saints.[17] This brought them into contention with the Deobandis, who accused the Ahl-i-Hadith of basing their views on individual opinions rather than the *hadith*. On their part, the ulama of the Barelwi movement held strictly to Hanafi law and were more open to customary practises and the intercessionary role of saints than the Deobandis. Following the example of the central figure of the movement, Maulana Ahmad Riza Khan (1856–1921), the Barelwi ulama actively engaged in oral and printed debates with other Muslim movements over issues such as the permissibility of *bida* (innovation) and the constituents of the *zaruriyyat-i-din* (essentials of faith). Like the Deobandi ulama, they established madrasas, published tracts and issued *fatawa* to provide guidance to Muslims.[18]

Another response to the colonial state was typified by the Ahmadiyya, who are the followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908) of Qadian, Punjab, who proclaimed himself as the renewer of Islam. The formal foundations for the Ahmadiyya as a distinct religious community were laid in 1888, when Ghulam Ahmad published an *isthihar* (literally, 'advertisement') declaring himself the renewer of the age and called upon Muslims to offer him *ba'ya*, or allegiance. Ghulam Ahmad's use of the newspaper as a medium to call for people to offer him *ba'ya* is significant. The centrality of printing to Ghulam Ahmad's mission is reflected in the fact that he wrote more than eighty-eight books in Urdu, Arabic and Persian, and founded a number of journals, such as the Urdu weekly journal *al-Hakam* (*Wisdom*) in 1897 and the *al-Bard* (*Cold*) in 1902. The initial *isthihar* was followed shortly later by a formal initiation ceremony

[17] Little has been written on the Ahl-i-Hadith. For a succinct analysis of the movement, see Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, pp. 264–295.

[18] For a history of the Barelvis, see Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and his Movement, 1870–1920*, New Edition (New Delhi, 2010).

held in Ludhiana.[19] In 1914, the movement split into two factions, one based in Qadian and the other in Lahore. This split essentially stemmed from differing interpretations of the founder's claim to leadership. The Qadian group subscribed to the view that Ghulam Ahmad was a continuation in the line of the prophets. The Lahore faction, on the other hand, rejected this view and argued that Ghulam Ahmad was a *mujtahid*, renewer of the age, and not a *mahdi*, or prophet. At the time and since, Ghulam Ahmad's claim to leadership has been dismissed as heresy by 'orthodox' Muslims who believe that Muhammad is the last in the line of the prophets. Opposition to the movement has ranged from demands for the Ahmadiyya to be constitutionally classified as non-Muslims to violent attacks such as the anti-Ahmadiyya riots in Pakistan of 1953 and 1974.[20]

A self-consciously modernist response to the colonial context was reflected in the theological writings and educational work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898). The Sayyid chastised the ulama and madrasas for failing to prepare Muslims to face the new socio-political and intellectual milieu. In the post-Mutiny period, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's writings focussed chiefly on the need to shape a rationalist interpretation of Islam, one which reconciled modern science with Islam, and on the urgency for Muslims to adopt modern and English education. His rationalist interpretation of Islam, which is discussed more fully later, was the result of his attempts to respond to criticisms levelled against Islam and to the broader challenges posed to religion by modern science.[21] Although his attempts to shape a new *kalam* (theology) attracted criticism from a broad range of Muslim figures, including the ulama and non-ulama, the Sayyid's efforts in the realm of education drew wider support amongst his contemporaries. The Sayyid believed that education was the key means through which Muslim decline could be redressed. With a view towards introducing western science to educated Indians, he had initially founded the Translation Society in Ghazipur in 1863; this was subsequently renamed the Aligarh Scientific Society. He also

[19] For a history of the Ahmadiyya, see Spencer Lavan, *The Ahmadiyyah Movement: A History and Perspective* (Delhi, 1974), and Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and its Medieval Background* (Berkeley, 1989).

[20] Significantly, the Munir Commission that was convened in the wake of the anti-Ahmadiyya riots of 1953 failed to come up with a definition of 'Muslim'. In 1984, however, the penal code of Pakistan was amended to define Muslim as someone who subscribed to the finality of Muhammad's prophethood. The Ahmadiyyas were thus officially excluded from the fold of Islam.

[21] See C. W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi, 1978).

established the journal *Tehzib al-Akhlaq* (*Social Reform*) in 1870 with the express aim of promoting western education and civilisation amongst the Muslims of India. His most significant contribution to the realm of education, however, was the establishment of the Aligarh Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875. The Aligarh College was to emerge as an important centre of 'Islamic modernism', and a number of important intellectuals such as the renowned scholar in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, Shibli Numani (1857–1914),[22] and Mohsin-ul-Mulk Mehdi Ali (1837–1907)[23] were to be associated with it.

At the political level, the establishment of the colonial state led to concerns over the position of Islam in the new polity and debates over the relevance of 'Islamic' institutions. After all, the colonial state signified the emergence of a polity in which even the nominal symbolism of Muslim political authority was absent. One of the immediate effects of British political ascendancy had been a debate amongst the ulama and members of the intelligentsia over whether areas which came under British control remained *dar-ul-Islam* (land of Islam). Individuals such as Haji Shariat Allah, the founder of the Faraizi movement[24] in Bengal, declared areas under British control to be *dar-ul-harb* (land of war) and prohibited the performance of the Friday congregational prayers in these areas. Others like Abdul Haiy of the Farangi Mahal madrasa in Lucknow, however, drew from Hanafi law to argue that British India remained a *dar-ul-Islam* as long as Muslims were assured the right to practise their religion and pursue their livelihoods.[25] Some scholars rejected the entire debate. Chiragh Ali, for instance, argued that it 'was superfluous' even to raise

[22] Shibli taught at Aligarh for some sixteen years and was an advisor to the education department of the state of Hyderabad. He was also a leading figure in the establishment of the Nadwatul Ulama. His work includes writings on theology, literature, politics, history and biographies on Muhammad, Umar and Aurangzeb.

[23] Mehdi Ali attained the titles of Munir Nawaz Jang and Nawab Mohsin-ud-Daula in recognition of his services to the state of Hyderabad. Before proceeding to Hyderabad, he had served as the *tehsildar* (deputy collector) in Etawah. It was here that he came into contact with Sayyid Ahmad Khan. Although they differed in their views on religion, they worked together for the educational uplift of the Muslim community. Mehdi Ali was a staunch supporter of the Aligarh movement and was to become the secretary of the Muhammadan Educational Conference after the death of Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

[24] Shariat Allah asserted the need for Muslims to strictly observe their Islamic duties (*faraiz*). It was incumbent upon followers of the movement to, amongst other things, renounce 'un-Islamic' practises like revering Sufis and participating in Hindu festivals. For more on the movement and its impact, see Muin-ud-Din Ahmad, *History of the Fara'idi Movement in Bengal 1818–1906* (Karachi, 1965).

[25] Discussed in Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 56–60 and 107–115.

the question of whether British India was a *dar-ul-Islam* or *dar-ul-harb*, as *fiqh* had been formulated with the assumption that Muslims were in political control. Colonial India presented a new context in which Muslims needed to re-think such socio-political categories. He proposed that India was neither a *dar-ul-Islam* nor a *dar-ul-harb*; as the Muslims in India were 'protected' by the British, it was instead a *dar-ul-aman* or *dar-ul-zimma*, the 'house of security or of protection'.[26]

With colonial rule came a host of new political institutions and structures. Particularly important was the introduction of representative political institutions. Shaken by their ignorance of tensions that led to the Mutiny of 1857, the British sought to establish consultative structures that would provide them access to public opinion. The Indian Councils Act of 1861, for instance, reconstituted the Viceroy's Legislative Council to allow for non-official Indian members and made provisions for the establishment of provincial legislatures. The Act was, however, limited in terms of its representative nature. The non-official members were chosen, not elected. Moreover, the powers to vote were restricted to the official members. It is worth noting here that Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who was himself nominated to be a member of the Council in 1878, had stressed the importance of including Indians in the Legislative Council. In his *Asbab-i-Bagawat-i-Hind* (*Causes of the Indian Revolt*), he argued against the view that the Mutiny had been a manifestation of the religious obligation of Muslims to revolt against non-Muslim rulers.[27] Instead he asserted that the root cause had been the disconnect between the British government and the people. The British had been unaware of any possible opposition to policies they sought to implement, and this in turn allowed for misunderstandings about British intent on the part of the people. There was thus an urgent need for the inclusion of Indians in the Legislative Council.[28]

As sections within India began to press for the expansion of representative institutions and the introduction of elected legislatures, Muslim figures grappled with the implications this would have on the position of Muslims in colonial India given its large Hindu majority. Particularly significant in this respect was the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and its call on the colonial authorities to, among other things,

[26] Ali, *The Proposed Political, Legal and Social Reforms*, pp. 24–25.
[27] Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, compiled by Shan Mohammad (Bombay, 1972), pp. 68–69.
[28] See Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, with an introduction by Francis Robinson (Oxford, 2000).

expand the legislatures and allow educated Indians to have a greater say in governance. Some important figures such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan opposed the extension of the elective principle and warned Muslims (and non-Muslims, for that matter) against joining the Congress. A central element of the Sayyid's opposition to the Congress was the fear that the expansion of representative institutions would diminish the position and influence of Muslims.[29] He further argued that liberal forms of representation could only be effectively adopted in states where the people were bonded by a single 'community of race and creed' or where the 'advance of education' had rendered such differences insignificant.[30]

It should be underlined that far from displacing the salience of religious identities in the political sphere, the manner in which representative institutions were introduced in colonial India served to institutionalise 'Muslim' as a political category. Colonial policy on representation was informed by the assumption that the introduction of western representative institutions was unsuitable to India, where society was constituted by numerous caste, religions and races. Thus it was held that the representative institutions introduced at the legislative and provincial levels had to take 'communal interests' and categories into account.[31] Sections of the Muslim intelligentsia who feared that Muslims would be outnumbered by Hindus in elected legislatures themselves called upon the British to take cognisance of these categories in any future constitutional reforms. Most notably, a deputation of prominent Muslims called on the Viceroy, Lord Minto, in October 1906 to assert the need for the recognition of Muslims as a community with special political interests. The delegation stressed that in view of their 'political significance', Muslims should be given representation that exceeded their numerical proportion and called for the provision of separate electorates for Muslims.[32]

Consequently, the India Councils Act of 1909, which introduced a substantial element of electoral representation in most provincial legislatures, provided for separate electorates for Muslims. This Act effectively served to institutionalise political representation along religious lines. In subsequent deliberations over constitutional reforms, the All-India Muslim League, which had been founded in December 1906, would stake

[29] Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Writings and Speeches*, p. 220.
[30] Ibid., pp. 156–157.
[31] Shabnum Tejani, *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History, 1890–1950* (Bloomington, 2008), pp. 113–141.
[32] See Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims 1860–1923* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 144–174.