

BOOK REVIEW

**Constructing Pakistan: Foundational Texts and the Rise of  
Muslim National Identity,**

Israj khan<sup>1</sup>

**Author:** Masood Ashraf Raja

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The book under review is, “*Constructing Pakistan: Foundational Texts and the Rise of Muslim National Identity, 1857-1947*” written by Masood Ashraf Raja is a medium size, hard cover, paper bond research book. Masood Ashraf Raja is Assistant Professor of Postcolonial record and hypotheses at Kent State University, United States. He is an eminent educationist and a reputed researcher of the British era in India. His noteworthy essays have been available in journals such as *South Asian Review*, *Caribbean Studies*, *Digest of Middle East Studies*, *Mosaic*, *Muslim Public Affairs Journal* etc. He is at present working on his subsequent book under the titled *Secular Fundamentalism: Poetics of Incitement and the Muslim Sacred*.

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**Main theme of the book:** This book is a research effort to explain the early Muslim response after the war of independence during the British rule, the different point of views, and the idea of Muslim nationalism that takes shape in the literary process. The author main claims, that the rise of the Muslim politics in the independent movement and the creation of a separate nation can not be understood without paying due attention to the early rise of Muslim exceptionalism. In 1940's several extensive works shaped by both proponents and opponents of Pakistan movement. The post colonial, executive and administrative historiography of India and Pakistan, the partition of Sub-Continent came to signify both, a tragedy and a triumph respectively. According to author during the division of India and the creation of the two states faced disgusting massacre steadfast by both divided sides. This bifurcation not only created two separate national ideologies but also created communal distrust and an enduring feud. The author also draws the diverse Muslim responses to the post 1857 British superiority.

This study provides an all-around debate of Indian Muslim nationalism from the rise of post 1857, Muslim nationalism in the initial stages to a more alert exertion for a separate state of their own, after Lahore Resolution in March 1940. The author main debate, challenging the predictable and postcolonial assessment of the Indian national history, is that the Indian Muslim fastidious exceptionality and Muslim nationalism preceded the augment of Hindu nationalism. The author used in

this book the leading theories of nationalism-including mechanism of Benedict Anderson, Anthony D. Smith, John Breuilly, Partha Chatterjee etc., investigates the literary, political, and sanctified texts fashioned by the Muslims of the subcontinent. *Constructing Pakistan* addresses the formerly abandoned feature of postcolonial and historical assignation with the conception and edifice of Indian Muslim national distinctiveness prior to the division of India in 1947. In this twofold act of recovery and involvement, a diverse jumble of literary, political, and religious texts are engaged to propose that if the Muslim literary erection of this time phase is read within the political arena and not just within the dome of culture, then the rise of Indian Muslim nationalism can be obviously traced within these texts and through their touching value for the Muslims of India.

The arguments of constructing Pakistan revolves on assumptions that post rebellion era becomes enormously significant for the Muslim elite to compel the governing British rule into a hegemonic sight of the Muslims, and then it compel the Muslim privileged class to develop a terminology of political beliefs that must constantly appeal to the people in order to go into the British administration of privileges and indulgence. Accordingly, the rise of early Muslim exceptionalism and its ultimate specific jingoistic recitation, of which Pakistan was one upshot, can then be interpret as political acts. The cause, most Hindu and European historians cannot illustrate a

distinct Muslim prudence of separate exclusivity before the 1940s is because they outline this exceptionality either in the form of confrontation and conflict or in the form of party politics. Finally author convincingly proved from the project that the creation of Pakistan was neither a product of the British plot, as sight by the opponents of Pakistan, nor shaped by incompatible differences between the two communities as observed by some of the proponents of the ideology of Pakistan.

Constructing Pakistan is an attempt, however is a re-reading of various elapsed and some forgotten transcript to propose that the initiative the of Muslim nationalism separation took shape in the work of writers, poets, academicians and political leaders instantly after the War of Independence in 1857 and long before the party politics became a customary trend due to radical change of Muslim material condition.

**Review:** Besides acknowledgements, introduction, conclusion, bibliography and index the book has been divided into seven chapters. The author began with a reference to Jinnah's inaugural discourse as the first Governor of Pakistan and the succeeding pages of his investigation into the establishment of Pakistan have been an attempt at re-reading the textual narration of the Pakistan movement to suggest that the movement of freedom so devotedly celebrated by Jinnah in his first speech was made apparent by a protracted and frequently complicated, dialogue of the Muslim national identity.

In chapter first, under the titled ‘the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and Mirza Ghalib’s narrative of survival’ which has been reproduced by the author with the prior permission of Taylor and Francis, (2009). Publishers under the same titled in “*Prose Studies* Vol.31(1) pp. 40-54”. In this chapter the author intensely investigates Ghalib’s *Dastanbu* as translated *Dastanbuuy: A Dairy of the Indian Revolt of 1857*, the deserted work of Ghalib due to the pro-British was predestined to prove his unquestionable loyalty towards latest masters, post insurgence history to demonstrate the early chapter of this fastidious Muslim stipulation. The author intensely analysis the *Dastanbuuy* with different viewpoints and observably proposes that Ghalib’s chronicle was intended to be a high premeditated public document written for a particularly British audience. According to the author, *Dastanbuuy* gives us on side, one of the most prominent accounts of the rebellion recorded by Ghalib but also points out tool to marginalize and becomes emblematical of future Muslim struggle.

Chapter second, under the caption ‘post-rebellion India and the rise of Muslim exceptionalism’ the author affirms that the most significant book concerning revolt of 1857 is the W.W.Hunter’s text which is according to Paul Brass ‘erroneously considers a seminal text for launching the myth of Muslim backwardness’. In this episode the author explains in detailed W.W.Hunter, Sir Syed Ahmad khan and Jafer Thanasari’s contrasting literary works i.e. *The Indian Musalmans, The Causes of the Indian Revolt* and *Kala*

*Pani* (Black Water) the English and Urdu text respectively, briefly analyses by the author and underscore the significance of the post revolt Muslim politics and the centrality of the Muslim query to the post turmoil British management of India.

In chapter third, ‘the Muslim literary renaissance; Muhammad Hussain Azad and Altaf Hussain Hali’ the author discusses the important aspects of Muslim textual revitalization and Muslim nationalism, and throughout the work of Muhammad Hussain Azad and Altaf Hussain Hali the essayist squabble that the Muslim nation appears in its Indian particularly, but with a supranational history and an entail to achieve contemporary awareness to make scope within a new British administration. During this phase of literary production, writers no longer speak for themselves but speak in the name of the Muslim nation. Raja holds that the Indian Muslim nationalism was essentially ex-territorial, in the sagacity that it traced its history away from Indian margin within the supranational notion of *Ummah*. The author asserts that these tentative dual views of nationhood also obscure the diction of Muslim distinctiveness. As the Muslim text took, a pragmatic twist after the war of independence in India, it also drew upon the transnational Muslim history to query the present and to express a prospective vision. In the scrutiny of the author the augment of the Muslim *Ummah* was traced not just in its religious sphere, but also in its modes of comprehension making.

In chapter fourth, ‘the early Urdu novel and Muslim exceptionalism’ the author spotlights on the early Urdu novelists and their works i.e. Rattan Nath Sarshar’s *Fasana-e-Azad* (Story of Azad), Adul Haleem Sharar’s *Zawal-e-Baghdad* (The Decline of Baghdad) and *Firdaus-e-Bareen* (Hidden Paradise) but the author main focus on the Deputy Nazeer Ahmad’s *Mirat-ul-Urus* (A Bride’s Mirror) and *Ibn-ul-Waqat* (The Time-Server). According to the author only Naseer Ahmad’s works bear any semblance to the western traditionalist novel. *Mirat-ul-Urus* is enlightening novel that portray a young Muslim lady sustaining her spouse in ensuing as a civil servant in the British establishment and drew the commonplace features of material accomplishment in the new politico-economic system.

In chapter fifth, ‘the critique of loyalism and the neo-traditionalists; Shibli Naumani and Akber Allahabadi’ the author innermost hub to explain, that the Muslim response to the British regime was never monumental, as revealed the works of Shibli and Akber Allahabadi. Both symbolize the loyalist Muslim politics and in this debate the essayist also pinpoints the revisit to the Islamic practices and to their significance in the work of conformist Muslims along with their efforts at rescuing the Muslim subject of resistance. The author converses the major dissenting voices from the purist who were contrasting to Naseer Ahmad and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s loyalist affinity.

The next chapter, the title ‘Allama Muhammad Iqbal; challenging the master’s narrative’ the author convincingly spotlight the Iqbal involvement and his contribution to the Muslim critique of the West, as well as his articulation of Muslim nationhood. In this portion the author praises Iqbal, proclaim him the most significant Muslim and a celebrated figure of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the one who somehow band together the conformist and contemporary strands of the Muslim thoughts and endeavor the most dreadful philosophical challenge to the superseding West. According to the author ‘by Iqbal’s time, then, the Muslim literary production had moved into what most theorist and historians consider a legitimate nationalist movement’.

In the last chapter under the caption ‘the politics of Muslim nationhood; Iqbal and Mawdudi the author thoroughly discusses the political philosophy of Iqbal ‘the first scholar and politician to delineate the physical boundaries of a future nation state in India’ and Abul A’ala Mawdudi’s political philosophy of Islamic State. The author underscores their efforts to articulate the idea of a separate state for the Indian Muslims and declaring that both Iqbal and Mawdudi are conscious to the drawbacks of merely Western secular nationalism and are suspicious about it. For both, Islam should form the practicalities of daily life in an Islamic state and not be abbreviated to the business of an individual. The author concludes the topic declaring that a popular discussion generates between Iqbal and Mawdudi that afterward, suitable by the Muslim



League and Jinnah in its pursuit for a separate for the Muslim state in India. They used Islam as a card of ‘national differences and as a mobilizing ideology, the followers of Mawdudi, on other hand consider Islam the very basis of a separate Muslim nation state’.

**Conclusion:** Constructing Pakistan is an effort to revisit this loyalism as a complicated shape of confrontation that, in the last, formulates the Muslim query, central to the British politics after the war of independence. In this book the author proposes that idea of Muslim separatism and exceptionalism got shape in the textual exertion of poets, writers, religious scholars and political leaders long before the party politics then became a popular phenomenon. The book under review makes the author looks neither like philosopher nor a dreamer. Neither is he looks a master of over projection nor a theologian. He seems away from them both. He is aware of loopholes in their stance and also fully conversant with their subjects. He is the owner of historical sense which gives him the measure of their entire shortcoming.

A well written research book by Masood Ashraf Raja, showcasing the textual material with logical sequential order and at the end of the each chapter references are given which convinced the reader straight away, besides a lengthy list of bibliography, more than two hundred books provides an additional source of knowledge to the topic. While the unusual terminology and difficult language used by the author can make an average reader fragile to continue the flat reading of the book.