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The term Muslim brotherhood, Islamic solidarity or pan-Islamism are all rooted to the Quranic concept of the word 'Umma', which originally meant community but later referred to the followers of Prophet Mohammed.

In his "Last Pilgrimage" address the Prophet said, "Oh ye people, a Muslim is another Muslim's brother and thus all Muslims are brothers among themselves" (The Muslim Dilemma by M.R.A.Baig, 1974, Page 12). Religious brotherhood and solidarity in the Muslim community are therefore, the main pillars of Pan-Islamism. This spiritual message of seventh century had an objective to create an egalitarian society among the warring Arab tribes but the Islamic history of thirteen centuries contradicted it as the Muslim society remained divided due to political and material reasons.

The Indian Muslims however, carried forward the legacy of Islamic invaders, who used this concept of Muslim brotherhood to keep the new Islamic recruits socially separated from the Hindus obviously with a political design.

Afghans, Turks and Arabs, who all entered India as invaders, were Sunni Muslims, who strongly believed in Sunnat (practice of the Prophet) but they had no brotherly fraternity. Historically they were inimical to each other. "The relation between Moghuls and Afghans were not friendly. The Afghans had a deep seated hatred for the Moghuls, and it was only the yoke of subjection which had reconciled them to the domination of the latter and passage of time had partly healed the wounds" (A Social History of Islamic India by Mohammad Yasin, Second Edition, 1974, Page 10).

Theoretically, the Muslim community is a caste-less society but in practice Indian Muslims are socially divided between the descendants of Muslim invaders, converts from upper caste Hindus and lower caste Hindu converts. Shaikh, Sayed, Pathan and Moghuls who belong to upper strata of Muslim society and popularly known as Ashraf Muslims do not maintain equality in social interaction with their co-religionists, who belong to their pre-Islamic lower caste Hindus like barber, washerman, weaver, butcher, scavenger and so on. Still carrying the mental burden of their pre-Islamic castes, they continue to suffer from inferiority complex in their social interaction with upper caste converts. Though, there is no religious binding, the inter-marriage between different groups of Indian converts is not common in Muslim society. In fact the Muslims have relatively fewer points of quarrels with Hindus than of their own community that is widely divided in various sects.

Historically, the converted Muslims in India have all along been heterogeneous communities with their distinct ethnic, cultural, sectarian, social, professional, occupational and linguistic identity. It may be therefore, against history to describe that the Muslims in whole of India followed a straight and distinct course in the matter of religious fraternity. Even with some amount of religious uniformity among them, the striking contrast in their social customs, food habit, dress code, language and other social behaviour at all India level negates the concept of Muslim community as a homogenous unit. Even the expansion of Muslim rule in India for centuries failed to make all the Indian Muslims a homogenous unit and they were never under effective control of any centralised religious head. They however, remained "around the nucleus of diverse races, the Arab and the Afghan, the Turk and Turkoman, Mongol and the Mongoloid Tatar" (A Social History of Islamic India by Mohammad Yasin, Second Edition, 1974, Page 1).

"Though the Muslim community of Hindusthan presented itself to the superficial view as prima facie a solid homogeneous bloc held together by the cement of Islam, it was in reality a composite community having within its fold representatives of races from all over the Muslim world and Hindu converts from all grades of society" (A Social History of Islamic India by Mohammad Yasin, Second Edition, 1974. Page 3). "Islam which has already broken up into the traditional seventy-three sects, got further disintegrated in Hindustan since its introduction in this country" (Ibid. Page 63). "Islam in India has never functioned as an organic unity" (Islam in India and Pakistan by Murray T. Titus, 1959, Page 54). Factually, the Indian Muslims are found more comfortable with people of different religious groups of their respective regions than their co-religionists from other regions of the country.

For example the Muslims of Kerala or Tamil Nadu have better social or cultural fraternity with the non-Muslims of their respective regions than their religious counterparts of North India.

"The Muslims, needless to say, were not as often believed a homogeneous mass. Among them, like the other Indian communities, there were horizontal differences on the basis of language, culture, sects, profession etc as well as vertical differences based on castes and classes" (Islam and Muslim by Asghar Ali Engineer, 1985, Page 127).

The bitter and sharp relation between the two main sects that is Shia and Sunnis pervaded all the ranks of Muslim society. "The Shias were regarded worse than idolaters by the Sunnis and vice versa" (A Social History of Islamic India, by Mohammad Yasin, May 1974). Moreover, the sectarian violence between Shias and Sunnis, Deobandis and Barelavis, anti Ahmadiya riots and aversion against Mujahirs (Muslim refugees) in Pakistan are ample proof that the so-called religious brotherhood and unity among them is nothing but a myth.

The concept of brotherhood in Islam as also in other religions suggests pursuit of social equality. But the social stratification of Indian Muslims in various social segments and their social segregation from Ashraf Muslims clearly indicate that no brotherly fraternity exists among them. Contrary to the concept of religious equality and the Islamic brotherhood, social inequality remained the striking feature of Indian Muslims too (Indian Muslims - Edited by Noor Mohammad, 1999, Page 219). "Muslim community is not a homogeneous, a well-knit and consolidated community" (Muslim Attitudes by Moin Shakir, 1974, Page 2). The Muslim ruling class however always used this concept to exploit the Indian converts to Islam for their political cause even though the latter carried forward their pre-Islamic social and cultural traits.

The movement for Islamic brotherhood was initially launched in an organised manner as a hate-Hindu campaign by Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi, a Sufi saint. which dates back to the period of Akbar. Upset with the 'liberal' attitude of Moghul Emperor Akbar towards the Hindus, when he abolished Jeziya (Islamic tax on non-Muslims), Sarhindi emerged as Mujaddid (renewer of Islam)

for rejuvenating Islam to its pristine form. After the death of Akbar, he succeeded to a great extent in negating the 'religious liberalism' of the former and gave an ideological basis to separate the Muslims from the Hindus. His contribution served as a nucleus to Muslim politics in post-Moghul India.

After the decline of Moghul Empire following the death of Aurangzeb, Shah Waliullah (1703- 1762/63), another Sufi saint of Delhi carried forward the task initiated by Sarhindi. "Shah Waliullah was the first person to cry that Islam was in danger" (Muslims in India by Qamar Hasan, 1988,Page 3), the slogan usually raised by Muslim communalists to mobilise the community members in the name of Islamic brotherhood. Since then a consistent attempt was made by the Muslim leadership to segregate their community members by stirring up a feeling of Islamic brotherhood and turned it to be the main ingredient of Muslim politics in the country.

With the advent of British rule the Muslim elite in connivance with Islamic orthodoxy imposed the spiritual concept of Islamic brotherhood on their co-religionists and permanently divided the country between two parallel societies of the Hindus and the Muslims. With the ultimate objective for restoration of Islamic political order their politics was focussed solely on religious fraternity of the Muslims with organised attempt to undermine the concept of Indian nationalism. Religious consolidation became their practical ideology for developing "group consciousness rooted in the communal consciousness of the community, which was contrary to the growth of common national consciousness. This divisive politics in the name of their religious identity became a launching pad for the movement of Muslim separatism. "For obvious reasons the Muslim communalists want to keep the sense of communal solidarity alive" (Muslim Attitudes by Moin Shakir, 1974, Page 6).

The rising tide of Muslim politics was quite visible in the first quarter of twentieth century particularly after formation of All India Muslim League in 1906. It gave birth to Muslim communalism and inhibited the integration and assimilation of Muslims in Indian society. Aligarh Muslim University put fuel to the fire by giving communal colour to issues like Urdu language and separate electorates for Muslims and steadily accelerated the movement for communal politics in the name of religious brotherhood. Events like Khilafat Movement, Mopla riot in Kerala, propagation of two-nation theory, Pakistan movement and finally the partition of the country were the outcome of such politics. Consistent demands relating to the exclusive identity of the Muslims in Independent India - are also linked with the same divisive concept.

For centuries, the Hindus tried to accept the Muslims as an inseparable part of Indian society but the ruling class in the community thwarted such attempt only for their political interest. They aggressively responded to the cry of Shah Waliullah on the imaginary danger to Islam and used the concept of religious brotherhood was put to use for this purpose.. The cry for 'Islam is in danger' crystallised the imaginary concept of Muslim brotherhood or the religious solidarity of the Muslims, which formed the main ingredient of Muslim politics in India. Some of the Muslim scholars have rightly pointed out this divisive political design of

the feudal section in the community. "It would seem that, in the sub-continent, Muhammad's concept of 'Umma Muslima' (Muslim Community as a homogeneous unit) is only successful in politics and as a defensive posture" (The Muslim Dilemma by M.R.A.Baig, 1974, Page 17).

The social history of Indian Muslims is not same all over the country. The Muslims of Bengal, Assam or southern States never had any linguistic or cultural problems faced by the Muslims of Hindi belt. "There cannot be any common language or common culture for all the Muslims in India" (Muslims Attitude by Moin Shakir, 1974, Page 3). But the injured pride of the Muslim elite of north India after the collapse of Moghul Empire compelled them to launch Islamic revival movement with the sole objective to unite the Muslims as a homogeneous political entity.

Delhi being projected as Rome of medieval India gave a leverage to the Muslims of the north to maintain their cultural authority over their community members all over the country. They ignored the regional character and other local problems that are related to their education and economic developments. Accordingly, they imposed communal politics by raising the bogey of religious identity and succeeded in their efforts to keep them separated from the Hindu majority whom they had ruled for centuries.

The Muslim intellectuals, who were mostly from north India repeatedly projected their cultural superiority and succeeded in creating a concept of Muslim as a separate nation. To prove their point they relied mostly on the sources from northern India and on European accounts that had a biased view on the pre-medieval cultural heritage of this country. Even the interpretations of Quran and Hadith, which are the basics of Islam - were politically biased to show the superiority of the north.

The objective of the Ulema, who joined the Indian National Congress during freedom movement - was not in tune with Indian nationalism but their move was for a self-regulated Millat (Autonomous Muslim community) with separate Islamic constitution for governance. The partition of the country on the basis of two-nation theory however, frustrated their attempt but Islamic brotherhood remained their political ploy for keeping alive the communal divide between the Hindus and the Muslims. They never made any attempt to integrate their community members with the rest of Indian society.

The slogan of communal brotherhood remained the main weapon for the political fight of Muslims even in post-partition India. The social elite of Muslim society also exploited the spiritual concept of Islamic brotherhood only to expand the autonomous space for Muslim politics in the country. Elitist character of Muslim politics failed to comprehend and work on the economic and social problem of Indian Muslims.

Repeated slogans for a separate religious identity was basically for a separate political identity of the Muslims, which is contrary to the spirit of joint electorate system enforced in India after partition. This mental burden of religious fraternity caused immense

harm to the millions of commoners in Muslim society, which continues to remain socially, economically and educationally backward. In the absence of liberal, science-based and forward looking education they were exploited by the elite section in the community in the name of communal brotherhood. Such efforts to homogenise a religious group in the plurality of Indian society widened the centuries old communal mistrust between the two major religious communities of this country.

Abolition of the British system of separate electorates for Muslims was the first effort of the post-Independence political leadership for their emotional integration with the rest of Indian population. But the Muslim leaders while taking advantage of the secular constitution promoted the same divisive concept of religious solidarity, which implied communal unity. But it was only to meet their political aspirations. They aggressively resisted against any attempt for social integration by repeating the old cry of 'Islam in danger' raised by Waliullah. Self-assertion of Muslim brotherhood on communal lines pushed the Muslim community into mental and psychological ghettos.

Distinct political character of the Muslim leaders, as seen in their communal demand for separate electorates for their community members in pre-Partition India did not change even after Independence. "A.Q. Ansari, a prominent Congress leader, established a Muslim Front inside the Congress. It was demanded that Congress party should give election tickets to Muslims on the basis of their population" (Muslims in free India by Moin Shakir, 1972, page 73).

Keeping the Muslim masses ignorant of the realities of modern age, their leaders continue to arouse the sentiments of internal religious unity for maintaining a distinct communal identity. What exactly was the concept of Muslim brotherhood meant in a larger space of democracy always remained an unanswered question. Against whom they want communal solidarity is a big question mark for the Muslim thinkers. By raising the cry of religious identity they in fact callously neglected the assimilation of their community members in the national mainstream and kept alive the communal divide in the country. They performed the ritual of Islamic brotherhood at an opportune time only to unite the uneducated masses for their political ends. This was the root cause behind Muslim separatism.

Ironically, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India gave a concept of synthesis culture that was also supported by Maulana Azad. A number of scholars including even Muslims do not agree to this thesis. "It may be wondered what Nehru and Azad thought of their words when they witnessed the pitiless ferocity with which the supposed 'synthesized' Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs fell on each other during the partition riot" (The Muslim Dilemma by M.R.A. Baig, 1974, Page 28). The writer even being a Muslim questioned pointedly - "why did Hinduism fail with Muslims when it succeeded with the Greeks, Scythians, Parthians and Huns" (Ibid. Page 26)? The politics of communal solidarity was in fact the real cause behind the failure of the Hindus to assimilate the Muslims in Indian society.

Propagation of the concept of communal brotherhood for political gain prevented the crystallisation of harmonious nationhood in the country. The Muslim leaders never took a forceful lead to effect a compromise between their community members and the Hindu majority of the Indian society so that both the communities could live peacefully.

Muslim politics in post-Independence India remained dominated by a combined mindset of pre-partition Muslim orthodoxy that believed in political domination of Muslims and those of Aligarh movement who supported the two-nation theory and created Pakistan. They often raise the communal voice of Muslim brotherhood for Islamic solution to all the problems of Muslim society. In the name of Muslim brotherhood they continue to exhibit closed minds on medieval history. They are not ready to understand the contradiction between the spirit of Islamic brotherhood propagated by the Prophet and of Aurangzeb, who had executed his own brother Dara Shikoh only for the throne of Delhi. Ironically, Aurangzeb continues to be the hero of Muslim orthodoxy in India. Ignoring such heinous crime against Islam, the Muslim thinkers ignore the need for assimilation of their community members in the larger space of pluralistic Indian society. The key issue of social peace and harmony could be achieved only if they have a broad meeting of hearts and minds with the nationalist scholars of the larger majority of the land.

Indian society was always liberal in the matter of faith as it believed in unity of God. Traditionally, the Indian majority had nothing against Islam. But the vast majority of Indian society rejected the Islamic recruits as alien cultural group, when the Islamic clerics accompanying the Muslim invaders propagated Arabicism as synonym to Islam and thereby moulded the new recruits of their religion in a character, which was completely different from the locals. In the new environment the Indian Muslims developed a sense of superiority complex and they maintained exclusiveness towards the indigenous community. Their political masters gradually succeeded in creating a new ethnic group and separated it from the original inhabitants. The stress on the distinctive cultural identity of the Muslims was in fact a political ploy to separate the followers of Islam from the Hindu majority. Instead of using the spirit of religious brotherhood to secure a permanent communal harmony in the country they used this spiritual concept only for separating the Muslims permanently from the Hindus.

Since the advent of Islam down to the present day unreal social homogeneity has been a political ploy of Islamic orthodoxy to keep the communal divide alive in this country.

The most unfortunate part of the contemporary Muslim politics in India is that the leadership in the community is still not ready to take lessons from the damage caused to Indian society due to propagation of religious brotherhood for political gains. Instead of guiding the Muslim masses on positive lines they continue to guide them towards communal polarisation which is further widening the gulf of mistrust between the two communities.

"The liberal Islam advocates separation of Islam from social and political life of the Muslims" (Muslims in free India by Moin Shakir, 1972, Page 67). The concept of brotherhood in any religion is to promote peace, harmony and unity in the society but in the case of Islamic brotherhood in India it is only promoting communal divide, which is detrimental to national interests. The assimilation of Muslims in Indian society does not mean change of faith. It is only to dilute the rulers and ruled syndrome of medieval era being carried forward by the Muslim leaders.

If the Indian Muslims try to understand the philosophical spirit of community brotherhood as pronounced by the Prophet they will open a new chapter in Indian history by creating an environment for permanent communal peace and harmony in the Indian society.

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