

Two Nation Theory: Its Importance and Perspectives by Muslims Leaders

Nation

The word “NATION” is derived from Latin route “NATUS” of “NATIO” which means “Birth” of “Born”. Therefore, Nation implies homogeneous population of the people who are organized and blood-related. Today the word NATION is used in a wider sense.

A Nation is a body of people who see part at least of their identity in terms of a single communal identity with some considerable historical continuity of union, with major elements of common culture, and with a sense of geographical location at least for a good part of those who make up the nation.

We can define nation as a people who have some common attributes of race, language, religion or culture and united and organized by the state and by common sentiments and aspiration. A nation becomes so only when it has a spirit or feeling of nationality.

A nation is a culturally homogeneous social group, and a politically free unit of the people, fully conscious of its psychic life and expression in a tenacious way.

Nationality

Mazzini said:

“Every people has its special mission and that mission constitutes its nationality”.

Nation and Nationality differ in their meaning although they were used interchangeably. A nation is a people having a sense of oneness among them and who are politically independent. In the case of nationality it implies a psychological feeling of unity among a people, but also sense of oneness among them. The sense of unity might be an account, of the people having common history and culture. But nationality largely requires the element of political independence either achieved or aspired.

Secondly, a nation must have a political organization of passionate desire for such an organization. But a nationality is a political, cultural, spiritual and unified community of a people.

A.E. Zimmern said:

“Nationality, like religion, is subjective, psychological, a condition of mind, a spiritual possession, a way of feeling, thinking and living”.



Two Nation Theory

The two-nation theory in its simplest way means that cultural, political, religious, economic and social dissimilarities between the two major communities, Hindus and Muslims of the Sub-continent. These differences of outlook, in fact, were greatly instrumental in giving rise to two distinct political ideologies which were responsible for the partition of the sub-continent into two independent states.

The two-nation theory means that the Hindus and the Muslims are two different nations. On the basis of two-nation theory the Quaid-i-Azam demanded the partition of India into two states, a Muslim state to be called Pakistan and the other Hindu India that is Bharat.

Evolution of Two Nation Theory

Concept of Muslims as a Nation developed before the establishment of Pakistan. Pakistan was the product of this concept of nationhood rather than Pakistan creating a concept of nationhood. Retrospectively the Muslim nationalism emerged with the advent of Islam that introduced new principles pertinent to every sphere of life. It pledged the redemption of the humankind establishing a benign society based on Qur'anic teachings. The beginning of the Muslim nationalism in the Sub-Continent may be attributed to the first Indian who accepted Islam. The Arab traders had introduced the new religion, Islam, in the Indian coastal areas. Muhammad bin Qasim was the first Muslim invader who conquered some part of India and after that, Mahmud of Ghazna launched 17 attacks and opened the gate to preach Islam. The Muslim sufi (saints) like Ali Hejveri, Miran Hussain Zanjani etc. entered Sub-Continent. They, rejecting the vices in the Indian society, presented the pure practical picture of the teachings of Islam and got huge conversions. Qutub-ud-Din Aibuk permanently established Muslim dynasty in India that followed Sultanate and Mughal dynasties. Thus a strong Muslim community had emerged in India who had its own way of life, traditions, heroes, history and culture. Islam could not be absorbed in Hinduism. Deen-e-Ilahi, Bakhti movements, etc. created reaction amongst the Muslim ulama to preserve the pure Islamic character and save it from external onslaught. Role of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi and others is noteworthy. Equality and social justice inspired conversions to Islam.

The British won over the Muslim rulers due to the industrial and scientific developments and modern war strategy. The War of Independence (1857) was a shattering setback to the Indian Muslims who were held responsible for the rebellion by the British. The Muslims were put into the backwardness with the help of Hindus. This was one of the outstanding motivations that paved the way to declare the separate identity of nationalism, the Muslim nationalism. The Muslim scholars sought to reform the teaching of Islamic law and to promote its application in a Muslim society. The prominent name among them is Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98) who awakened and guided his community well in time. His educational drive, the Ali-Garh movement, proved to be the best means of social mobility for the Muslim gentry under colonial rule.



In 1885 the Indian National Congress was founded to indicate the beginning of the Indian nationalist movement under the British. The Congress worked and helped the British rule. Sir Syed advised the Muslims not to join it because, he thought, the Muslims were not in position to involve into the anti-government activities. It has been argued that Sir Syed's fear of Hindu domination sowed the seeds for the "Two Nations Theory" later espoused by the All-India Muslim League, founded in 1906 and led to its demand for a separate state for the Muslims of India. Sir Syed argued that modern education and non-political activities might be the key to Muslim advancement. The Ali-Garh movement produced educated leadership who could protect the Muslims' rights on the Western political lines.

All India Muslim League had been founded in Dhaka to promote loyalty to the British and to protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Muslims of India. Thus the concept of 'separate electorates' was put forward to dawn a new day for the Indian Muslims.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Two-Nation Theory

In beginning Sir Syed believed in Indian Nationalism but later due to Hindi-Urdu controversy, Sir Syed's faith in a united India was shaken and he began to advocate the two nation theory. He made the Muslims realize that they are separate nation. Their religion is very powerful. Muslims should demand for separate homeland of their own.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was the first Muslim leader who used the word "NATION" for the Muslims of Sub-continent. According to Sir Syed in India there exist two nations, the Hindus and Muslims. They could not live together and that as the time would pass the hostility between the two-nation would grow. Sir Syed was of the view that Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations because their religion, history, culture and civilization were different from each other.

Sir Syed's political views could be summed up as:

1. That India was a continent, not a country.
2. That it was inhabited by a vast population of different races and different creeds.
3. That among these, Hindus and Muslims, were the major nations on the basis of nationality, religion, customs, cultures, cultural and historical traditions.
4. After the British quit, they could not share the political power equally. That was simply impossible and inconceivable.
5. The Indian National Congress was not acceptable to the Muslims.
6. Muslims could not accept a democratic set up of western type because with a one to four ratio of population, they could be enslaved by the Hindus.
7. There would be a disastrous civil war if the Congress persisted in its policy of yoking together the two nations.

The above discuss leads us to conclude that Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was the staunch believer and eminent preacher to Two-Nation Theory; on account of which, he may be called the real founder



to two-Nation Theory in sub-continent.

Allama Iqbal and Two-Nation Theory

Allama Iqbal was a great poet, philosopher and a politician. Iqbal had a sensitive heart and a deep-thinking inquisitive mind. He was dismayed at the pathetic conditions of the Muslims in general and of the Indian Muslims in particular.

Allama Iqbal delivered historical address at Allahabad.

“The units of Indian society are not territorial as in the European countries. India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races speaking different languages and professing different religions. Their behaviour is not at all determined by a common race-consciousness.”

Under such circumstances, Allama Iqbal proposed a separate state of the Muslims. In his presidential address to the Allahabad session of the Muslim League in 1930, he said:

“Personally I would go further.... I would like to see the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sindh and Balochistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a single consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of North West India.”

Allama Iqbal claimed that the Muslims were a separate nation in every respect. His own words in this regard were as follows:

“We have a population of seven crore among all nations of the sub-continent, we are the most united. In fact, of all the nations inhabiting the country, Muslims are the only true nation according to the most modern definition of the world.”

In short the prophecy of Iqbal acted as a spur for the Muslims of India who craved out an independent state Pakistan for themselves, Seventeen years later (Allahabad Address 1930) on 14th August 1947.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Two-Nation Theory

Quaid-e-Azam's struggle also based on two-nation theory: Quaid-e-Azam said:

“Difference in India between the two major nations, the Hindus and the Muslims are thousand times greater when compared with the continent of Europe.”

Quaid-e-Azam further said:

“India is not a national state. India is not a country but a Sub-continent composed of

nationalities, the two major nations being Hindus and the Muslims whose culture and civilizations, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, laws and jurisprudence, social moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions, outlook on life and of life are fundamentally different. By all canons of international law we are nation.”

In 1940, Muslim League embraced the creed of Chaudhry Rehmat Ali and the historic session on March 23, 1940 in Lahore demanded the establishment of Pakistan. On that occasion, Quaid-e-Azam in his presidential address said:

“Islam and Hinduism are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders... The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literatures. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine together and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions.”

He refuted the claim of All Indian Nation Congress that India had only one single nation, in the name of Indian by the following statement.

The history of the last twelve hundred years has failed to achieve the unity and has witnessed, India always divided into Hindu India and Muslim India.

Quaid-e-Azam made the English ruler realize the fundamental deep rooted spiritual economic, social and political differences. He said that their efforts would frustrate which they were making to bind all Indians through central Government.

Importance of Two Nation Theory

The Two-Nation Theory served as the basis of demand for Pakistan by the Muslims in British India. There are two major nations in British India. The Muslims are not a community but a nation with a distinctive history, heritage, culture, civilization, and future aspirations.

The Muslims wanted to preserve and protect their distinct identity and advance their interests in India. They wanted to order their lives in accordance with their ideals and philosophy of life without being overwhelmed by an unsympathetic majority.

Initially, they demanded safeguards, constitutional guarantees and a federal system of government with powers to the provinces for protection and advancement of their heritage, identity and interests. Later, they demanded a separate state when neither the British nor the Hindu majority community was willing to offer those guarantees and safeguards.