Monumental Matters

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While the British and Indian nationalists were writing stories to reorder the Mughal monuments as ideological spaces for their respective communities, certain Muslims, too, were forging a unique relationship with these historical sites. This chapter will examine how the Muslim elites re-empowered the community and re-constituted a modern identity at the Mughal monuments. The account begins two decades before the Uprising of 1857 and ends with Indian and Pakistani independence from the British Raj. The distinctive spatial practices at the monuments were born out of the particular struggles these men engaged with, to first defend against the social death of their religious community, then to seek social justice and equality, and finally to obtain political representation in an India increasingly defined by electoral politics. In this period of social and political change, the Mughal monuments, once integral parts of the Islamic “moral city,” become divested of their power to shape Muslim identity. Forced into a self-protective disposition after the Uprising, many Muslims looked exclusively to the space of the mosque to orient themselves and to construct a social identity. When the electoral principle and the discourse of secular nationalism started to inform and order the public sphere, the Mughal monuments, the historical spaces of Indian Islam, were abandoned to imagine a separate national identity. India, in this new Muslim geography, was a land of loss, moral decay, and confusion, and the Mughal monument stood as the principal spatial signifier of the unhomely reality of an Indian Muslim nation existing within secular India.

Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan’s Hybrid Ordering of the Mughal Monuments

In the decades before the Uprising of 1857 a handful of Muslim intellectuals attempted to study and represent the eminent monuments of the great Mughal cities. Most notable among these was Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817–98). Sir Sayyid hailed from a noble family of the sharif class that traced its ancestry
to Central Asia and Persia. After his family fell on hard times, he took a job as a clerk for an East India Company court in Delhi and was quickly promoted to subjudge. Outside of his work, Sir Sayyid’s interests turned toward the study of the city’s culture, history, and architecture. He was a new kind of Muslim intellectual who possessed a modern sensibility and a deep desire to preserve Muslim cultural life. Sir Sayyid’s architectural research appeared when Bahadur Shah still held court in the Red Fort and Delhi was a hub of Urdu culture. As he sensed that Indian Muslim culture was in the throes of dissolution he sought ways to stay this movement. Rajmohan Gandhi describes this exercise with respect to his writings: “Like other sharif Muslims he too turned to the past to compensate for decline; unlike most of them he did so with skill.”2 The text that exemplifies this skill is his famous *Athar al-sanadid* (*Works of the nobles*) of 1847. Published in Urdu, it provides insight into his research and theories on the Hindu and Islamic historical sites of Delhi. Beyond its informative purpose it also contradicted British representations of Indians trapped under the weight of religious observations, lacking objectivity, and being blind to historical progress. More important, his text preserved the Muslim practices and memory that enlivened Delhi’s monuments. In the pages of the *Athar al-sanadid*, Islamic and especially Mughal monuments emerged as spaces of multiplicity; they were simultaneously the practiced spaces of the Muslim community and historical markers of their Indian past.

The *Athar al-sanadid* was not completely new in its epistemological syncrétism. British officials would often commission Indians to illustrate and write descriptions of monuments as souvenirs of their times spent in Indian cities. The collector and magistrate of Agra, John Steven Lushington, for example, commissioned a student at the Government College, Lalah Sil Chand, to compile a history of Agra and a description of its buildings in 1824. Called the *Tafrih al-‘imarai* (*Account of the public buildings*), it was written in Persian and contained thirteen color drawings of the city’s monuments.3 Sil Chand’s descriptions provided the monument’s measurements, its functions, and the names of patrons—in short, all the supposedly objective information that would have satisfied his sponsor. On a subtextual level, Sil Chand allows the history and memory of Mughal authority to continue to signify the city. He refers, for example, to Agra as Akbarabad, its Mughal name, and to the Taj
Mahal as the “illustrious garden of the Taj-e Ganj.” He also resurrected the names and locations of the now demolished palaces of the nobility, thus inscribing them in the account of the city. These are perhaps minor details, but they assure the endurance of local Muslim memory and perspective on the sites in the records of the British power.

Another work that performs this blending of knowledge is the Mir‘at Giti-numa of 1850, a geographical work by ‘Abd al-Karim Mushtak of Jhajjar. Also written in Persian, it presents a survey of Islam that ends with its entry into India. Moving through the eras of Muslim rule in India, Mushtak brings the reader to Mughal Delhi. He writes of the city in flowery prose: “And the width and length and height and fine arrangement [of the gardens, houses, courts, mosques, etc.] cannot be grasped by the intellect, for they are wider than the face of the earth and higher than the circle of the highest heaven, and to the inhabitants [of the city] everyday is like a celebration and every night is shivaratri; one cannot have worldly thoughts there.” Delhi is represented here as a sublime effect that no objective inquiry can fully capture. In stating this, the author elevates the lived and imagined experience of the city beyond the positivist knowledge that is to follow. He also orients the city for us, calling the Jama Masjid the “navel of the city.” The sensuality and centrality of the great mosque is then further elaborated for the reader in the description of the activities that occur in its southeast corner: the gathering of people buying and selling silk, pigeons, livestock, children’s toys, instruments, weaponry, food, and kebab. The evening, he relates, brings the storytellers telling their tales and claiming their due. The din of trade, the shouting of merchants, the haggling, the meetings of neighbors, and the sale of objects that came from as far as Kabul and Shiraz signify the space of the Jama Masjid as much as its presence as a historical monument. The author takes the opportunity of a commissioned geographical history to bring the reader over to his view of the Mughal monument, where its space is not solely defined by its placement in the linear history of past events but by the acts of praying, selling, buying, haggling, and just walking, in other words, by the spatial practices of Delhi’s everyday life.

Following in the tradition of these writers, Sir Sayyid’s Athar al-sanadid also endeavored to achieve the goal of enlivening the spaces of Delhi through a description of Muslim culture, urban activity, and memory. Unlike the
previous histories, written in Persian for British patrons, his text was written in Urdu and intended for the Muslim community as much as for the British. He visited the monuments he wrote about and consulted the Persian histories available to him, such as the *Mir’at aftab-nama* of 1802. Sir Sayyid’s six hundred–page book had 130 woodcut illustrations made by Mirza Shah Rukh Beg and was divided into four parts—miscellaneous monuments of Delhi, the Red Fort and its buildings, the buildings of Shahjahanabad, and the cultural life of Delhi. In the second edition of the *Athar al-sanadid* of 1854, he reduced the final part to a few pages and updated and rearranged the order of the monuments according to building type. In contrast to the British view that saw Delhi as a set of ghost cities surrounding Shahjahanabad, Sir Sayyid represented his Delhi as coterminous with the past Delhis. As Narayani Gupta observed, “*Athar* was not an architectural history” but endeavored to create “a homogenised past for Delhi, where the ‘Hindu’ buildings . . . continued into ‘Islamic’ . . .” Such a mode of writing stood in opposition to the ASI’s later dissection of Delhi’s architecture into Hindu and Muslims parts. In Sir Sayyid’s book, history comes alive to inform the present, itself “described in terms of people—the diviners, the poets, artists, writers and musicians—as well as of the built environment.” His description of the Jama Masjid exemplifies such an enlivening of history. Like Mushtak, he brings in the lived reality of the mosque and presents it alongside more positivist information concerning the style and form of the structure. Also like the earlier author, he presents the business and cultural activities as integral to the mosque’s meaning. The north gate of the mosque, he mentions, is next to the great market where one finds money-changers and kebab sellers. Here, Sir Sayyid points out, Madari Sufis perform feats of strength; there, the jugglers perform their art. The scene is so exciting, he explains, that it renders the young old and the old young. Close by, storytellers sitting on carpets narrate the legends of Amir Hamza, Hatim Tai, and Bostan Khayal to the hundreds of people who come to hear these tales. Before the eastern gate of the mosque is the Khas Bazaar, a daily fair offering songbirds, pigeons, and a horse market can be found. Through the presentation of the Jama Masjid as the center of such profuse activity, Sir Sayyid, like the poet Nazir Akbarabadi before him, gives the reader a sense of how the local community enjoyed the sights, sounds, and smells of the space of the great mosque beyond their daily worship. In describ-
ing the great mosque both as a great specimen of high Mughal architecture and as a space of everyday life in Delhi, he demonstrates the multiplicity and openness of these spaces to forge alternative knowledge alongside, or even contradicting, that of the dominant power.

The life and power of the Jama Masjid is put into highest relief when one reads it against Sir Sayyid’s description of Humayun’s Tomb and the surrounding garden. He takes a more sorrowful tone as he compares its former greatness to its present state: “There was a time when the garden was well cared for: water channels ran everywhere, there were tanks into which the water fell in a cascade or from which it came up in water fountains; beautiful flowers bloomed there and the nightingales made their song heard there. But now all is destroyed. The cypress, whose elegant bearing excited the jealousies of beauties, and the rose, whose crimson defied that of their lips, do not exist anymore, even in memory. The channels have left their beds, the tanks are dry, the fountains no longer run, the wells are deprived of water, there is no trace of the waterfalls that beautified the place, only a few ruins give an idea of things that have been destroyed.”15 After this lyrical description of the garden, which resembles in tenor and tone Mir’s shahrashob, Sir Sayyid concludes his account with factual data: the name of the tomb’s patron, Begam Nabob Haji; the year of its construction (973 Hijra; ca. 1565 CE); the time it took to construct the building (sixteen years); and how much the project cost (15 lakhs of rupees). This hybrid style of architectural discourse that is “ornate and literary, and not burdened with factual details” enlivens the tomb and thwarts the feeling of stasis that results from the scientism of modern architectural history.16

The interspersion of the literary in the otherwise positivistic text of Athar al-sanadid reveals a desire for a synthesis of British and Indian epistemological practices. In this age of social decline, Muslim elites writing of the monuments of the past found an elegant method for preserving their culture in a landscape increasingly shaped by British utilitarianism and Indian resistance to its scientific codification of monuments and geography. Without resorting to open confrontation or insularity, Sir Sayyid’s Athar al-sanadid produced the monument as a space of multiplicity in which both the British and the Indian Muslim could find a familiar ordering. Tangentially, the text also reveals the tolerant scholarly culture of mid-century Delhi, when Indians and British came together as peers in the pursuit of archaeological study.
On 5 August 1852 Sir Sayyid was voted in as a member of the Archaeological Society of Delhi and joined the growing group of native members that included Ibrahim Khan Bahadur, the principal suddur amin of Delhi, and Nawab Ziya al-din of Loharu. Theophilus Metcalfe, a resident of Delhi, served as the society’s president. Convening monthly between 1847 and 1857 to read papers, prepare translations, and participate in gentlemanly debate, the society offered a space in which British and Indians could freely exchange ideas about architecture. The society offered Sir Sayyid and other native elites an opportunity to share their interest in the built heritage of Delhi and to advance their cultural understanding of these spaces.

Reclaiming Muslim Space after the Uprising of 1857

In the aftermath of the Uprising, the shared sense of purpose and open exchange exemplified by the Archaeological Society would be lost. The field of archaeology was now the exclusive domain of the British government, and Indians its employees. At this moment of great trauma, Muslim intellectuals directed all their energies toward helping their community survive both spiritually and materially. The particularly desperate social condition of the Indian Muslim community after 1857 and his aspiration to modernize Muslim society compelled Sir Sayyid to change his approach to Islamic architecture. This shift is most apparent in his opinion of monuments built and maintained by the Muslim charitable institution of the waqf. In his estimation, these buildings hindered the progress of the Indian Muslim community: “The grand mosques and monuments and religious madrasas and maktabs, which were supported by charitable endowments from the Muslim nobility, were to Sir Sayyid symbols of their greed masked with a façade of piety, betraying only the builders’ lack of concern for the collective well-being of the Muslim.” Influenced by the teachings of the great reformer of Indian Islam, Shah Waliullah (1703–62), Sir Sayyid started to censure the same public monuments of his community that he had extolled in Athar al-sanadid. The turn away from their beauty or history and toward the social aspect of Muslim buildings radically reordered these sites: mosques, shrines, and schools would no longer prove vital spaces in the network of Muslim economic and social practices, in which the waqf played a central role gathering and dispersing money. Instead, they were recast as the contradictory spaces of Islam, con-
structions intended to preserve the wealth of the few at the expense of the many. Speaking to all and for all Muslims from the site of these structures, Sir Sayyid designated these spaces signs of Indian Muslim decline. The new disposition exemplifies how the oppression Muslims suffered after the Uprising and their struggle to survive in the new urban order altered the relations between the community’s leaders and its built environments.

The deterioration of the Islamic urban order of Delhi, while starting years earlier, reached its climax in the post-Uprising period. The British rulers dissolved the Islamic “moral city,” and its constellation of interconnected spaces that included mosques, the palace, schools, homes, neighborhoods, and the market. The modern ordering, based on hygiene, control, and the separation of the public and private spheres of activity, disconnected the moral city and then reassembled its parts to create a new urban space. After the suppression of the Uprising, Delhi’s citizens, who had once identified themselves through the system of unified spaces, were left disoriented. The poet Ghalib, returning to Delhi at this time, expressed this loss of place: “Between the Jami Masjid and the Raighat Gate, there is nothing but a vast wasteland, dreary and desolate” (see figure 8). After describing the city’s ruins, he asked how his culture could possibly endure in this devastation: “So how can Urdu survive? I swear to God, Dihli is a town no more. You might call it a military encampment, but the Fort and the city are no more. The Bazar [sic] and the lovely canal are no more.” The same fragmentation occurred in Lucknow, long considered the last great city of Muslim culture. The city’s Jami Masjid and the Asafi Imambara were occupied by the British after the Uprising. The former was never again allowed to be used as a Friday mosque, thus falling into ruin. Without “the heart of the Muslim socioreligious life in the city” the social order deteriorated, and the enmity between the Sunni and Shiite communities of Lucknow that still persists today can be traced to that spatial deprivation. As Lucknow was made safe for the dominant power to reassume its authority, spatial practices that had made it an Islamic moral city, like Delhi, were eradicated.

Another significant change to the urban order of Muslim society in the aftermath of the Uprising was the division of social space into the private realm of religion and domestic life and the public realm of politics and government. Prior to this division, the mosque, school, market, and palace were
signified as public spaces by the activities of community leaders, whose exemplary actions (prayer, study, discourse, debate, etc.) constituted and created the moral city and community. In opposition to this stood the nondiscursive realm of carnal and mystical activity engaged in by women and Sufis. After the Uprising the state relegated all things religious to the private realm, and mosques and madrasas—previously understood as the public spaces of Indian Islam—were placed in the same category as the home and the Sufi lodge. This resignification, Faisal Fatehali Devji argues, made them spaces of the *zaif*, or the weak, “of slaves, youths and women, where rational or responsible discourse neither occurred nor was heard.” Without the open and public status of spaces like the mosque, Muslim leaders had no place to address or interpellate their community. To change this condition of displacement, these leaders needed to first take back the public spaces lost in the Uprising, to then return them to the public sphere.

It is against this background of social decline and urban reformation that the Mughal monuments of Delhi and Northern India emerged as ambivalent spaces of the weakened Muslim community and the newly empowered British
Raj. Of the Mughal monuments, the Jama Masjid and the Fatehpuri Masjid of Delhi were selected by Muslim leaders as the spaces for whose restoration they would petition the state. Shaped by the power relations of the period, these mosques were separated from the other public sites that once constituted the Mughal moral city, such as the Red Fort, the Chandni Chowk market, madrasas, and the tombs. The two mosques alone emerged as the space of Indian Muslim social survival and identification.

The Return of the Mughal Mosques

When Muslims were allowed back into Delhi in 1859, they found the city in a state of physical and social disorder. Their ruling-class status, their Urdu culture, and the Mughal authority were no more. Furthermore, the state’s policy of retribution left the Muslim community, more than any other group, alienated from the great city they called home. *Dastanbuy*, or *Nosegay*, a narrative of the Uprising written in Urdu by Ghalib, provides a window onto the imbalance of the city’s social order:

In January of 1858, the Hindus were given a proclamation of freedom by which they were allowed to live again in the city, and these people have begun to return from the places where they had found refuge. But the houses of the dispossessed Muslims had long remained empty and were so covered with vegetation that the walls seemed to be made of grass—and every blade of grass tells that the house of the Muslim is still empty.26

When this account reaches the hands of my friends, I want them to know that the city is empty of Muslims—their houses are not lit at night and during the day their chimneys give forth no smoke. And Ghalib, who had thousands of friends in the city and acquaintances in every house, now is in his loneliness, has none to talk with except his pen and no companion but his shadow.27

When Muslims could finally return to Delhi, the British authority remained aloof and indifferent to their demands for rehabilitation aid. Adding insult to injury, the populace was denied access to the city’s principal congregational mosques, the Jama Masjid and the Fatehpuri Masjid, effectively prohibiting them from coming together as a community to pray on Fridays.
Two years after the threat of reprisals and insurgency dissipated, the state was still undecided as to what to do with these two Mughal mosques. In the meantime, the Jama Masjid was being used to billet the Thirteenth Punjab Infantry. Suggestions for alternative uses for the mosque were also forwarded. For example, A. A. Roberts, the officiating financial commissioner for the Punjab, wanted to preserve the city’s great mosques from further decay but keep them under British control. In their empty and static state the confiscated mosques would serve “as grand but silent monuments of the successes which was [sic] vouchsafed to us in September 1857.” Roberts added that they would act “as tokens of our displeasure towards the blinded fantasies” of the Mughal king and the rebels. Philip Egerton, the city magistrate of Delhi and another staunch supporter of retaining custody of the Jama Masjid in British hands, wanted it to be converted into a Christian cathedral and have the marble slabs of its floor inscribed with the names of Christian martyrs. While such ideas circulated, the mosque remained occupied by the army and no prayer took place. Then in 1858 the viceroy, Lord Canning, let it be known that he was “averse to the continued occupation of the musjid [sic] by our troops, and he trusts that Brigadier Longfield will be able to locate them elsewhere.” Plans and conditions for the restoration of the mosque to the Muslim community were drawn up next.

The secretary of the government of India confirmed the government’s plan for the handover in 1860: “If at any time the respectable Mahomedans of Delhi should ask for the restoration of the Jumma Masjid, and agree to make proper arrangement for keeping it in repair, the Governor General considers it desirable that it should be restored.” The secretary to the government of Punjab then clarified that the Jama Masjid would be restored to the Muslim community only after the appropriate terms for handing it over had been outlined and agreed on. The Muslim community had first to come forth with a united voice. This meant that the Shiite and Sunni sects had to suppress their sectarian differences, that the conservative Wahhabis had to compromise with the progressive Bida’ites, and that all parties had to mind the authority of the mosque’s managing committee. The influence of the British government, while officially prohibited inside the mosque, was discernible in two ways: in the selection of managers deemed loyal to the government; and in limiting the discourse and practices in the mosque to religious matters.
Two years later, on 19 April 1862, a group of men finally stepped forward to request that the mosque be restored to the Muslim community. After their loyalty had been ascertained, the government made preparations to restore the mosque to Delhi’s Muslims. Four general conditions had to be accepted before the actual handover took place.

1st Keeping the peace within the Mosque.
2nd Settling disputes with regard to the building or its purposes.
3rd Preventing or reporting the occurrence of offences against the State within the Mosque.
4th Keeping the Mosque in repair and keeping accounts of the endowment property.34

Along with these stipulations, the men had to acknowledge the government’s right to confiscate the mosque should there be any sign of seditious behavior taking place inside.35 The final step in the process of restoration was the selection of ten managers composed of respectable and loyal men of Delhi’s Muslim community. Once this committee of managers had found approval the mosque would be handed over to the Muslim community for religious services.

After the papers were signed and the managing committee constituted, the matter of the actual return was discussed. The secretary of the government of Punjab wanted the transfer of the mosque to occur quietly and ordered that “no public demonstrations should take place.”36 On the morning of 28 November 1862 the deputy commissioner of police wrote to the commissioner and superintendent of Delhi that he had the honor to report that the Jama Masjid had been opened to the Muslim population for worship. Six rules of conduct were first read to the attendees and then hung in English and Persian at the mosque gates. Rule one and two stated that non-Muslims were prohibited from entering the mosque during prayer and that no one, excluding the khadim and the muezzin, was allowed to stay overnight. The third rule permitted Hindus to visit the mosque as long as they did not stray from “ordinary decent behavior.” The fourth rule stated that European officers and gentlemen, civil and military, “can enter without restrictions as to shoes” and that dogs and smoking were restricted. According to rule five, European soldiers needed permission from the district officer or commanding
officer to enter the mosque. The sixth rule stated that two sentries would be appointed to stand at the North and South Gates and that the managers, not the government, would pay their wages from the mosque’s waqf. Once these rules were heard, the Jama Masjid was open for gathering and prayer and assumed its place as the central space of Muslim public life in Delhi. However, as the rules suggest, the mosque remained a government-regulated space—far from an ideal situation, but one the community accepted as a necessary first step toward regaining its public viability.

The second Mughal mosque of note to be given back to the Muslims was the Fatehpuri Masjid. Built by Fatehpuri Begam, a wife of Shah Jahan in 1650, it sits at the western end of the great avenue called Chandni Chowk, facing the Lahore Gate of the Red Fort. After the Uprising of 1857 a Hindu merchant named Lala Chunna Mal bought the inner courtyard and surrounding shops of the mosque for Rs. 40,000 at a public auction. After he died, it was passed down to his son Umrao Singh, who continued to collect rents from the shops located in the courtyard and outside the mosque. The mosque was still in limited use, and people routinely complained that their prayers were disturbed by the affairs of business conducted in the shops. The Hindu ownership and contradictory use of the mosque’s interior as a market served as a constant reminder of the unequal reprisals meted out to the Muslims after the British seized Delhi. The conditions at the Fatehpuri Masjid thus belied the official policy of religious tolerance and the evenhandedness of the British Raj.

The incongruous spatial practices at the Fatehpuri Masjid lasted for twenty years, until the government in Punjab forwarded to W. G. Davies, the commissioner and superintendent of the Delhi Division, a confidential letter containing Viceroy Lord Lytton’s opinion that “it would be a very polite measure to restore if possible those mosques which are now in the possession of Hindus at Delhi, to the Muhammudans on the occasion of the Imperial Assemblage; unless there are any great objections.” Inquiries were subsequently made into whether the proprietor of the mosque was willing to release its ownership. After some negotiation, Singh agreed to sell the mosque for a cash sum of Rs. 1,10,000. The exchange was made, and on 1 May the government handed the shops and courtyard of the mosque over to a board of managers composed of seven reputable Muslim men from the community approved by Davies. The
same rules of conduct that were hung at the gateways of the Jama Masjid were placed at the entrance of the Fatehpuri Masjid.

The return of the Fatehpuri Masjid was unlike the quiet handing over of the Jama Masjid. Speeches and newspaper articles proclaimed the greatness of the event. The mosque was used to give a spatial dimension to the tolerance of British imperial rule, and the building’s restoration to the Muslim community was seen as punctuating the official acts surrounding the Imperial Assemblage of January 1877 in Delhi. The assemblage marked the ascension of Queen Victoria to the title of Kaiser-i Hind, or empress of India. The new distinction symbolized the power relations between the British and Indians and reaffirmed the government’s promise to end its policy of religious interference. Committed to protecting the feudal order, the British rulers now styled themselves as not the ousters but as the inheritors of Mughal authority. Like the emperors Akbar and Shah Jahan, the new empress would protect the diverse communities of India and demand allegiance from the remaining royalty. Queen Victoria had announced these intentions in 1858, when the crown took nominal control of India from the East India Company, but the assembly of 1877 would perform this new social ordering through processions and public ceremony. The gathering and distribution according to the ranks of the diverse subjects, princes, chiefs, retainers, and military forces spatially demonstrated the British Raj’s resurrection of the old and familiar feudal idiom of the Mughal durbar. Yet the liberal policies and Mughal practices of this new power were contradicted by the continued occupation of the mosques of Delhi.

In planning for this assembly, Lord Lytton and his advisors selected Delhi as the location due to its historical association with Indian imperial history. But because the city still retained vestiges of the biased policy of retribution following the Uprising, it remained a conflicted space of empire. The fact that the Fatehpuri Masjid and other mosques remained in non-Muslim hands, for example, clashed with the representation of impartiality assumed by the new imperial government. The viceroy therefore proposed a strategy to infuse the government’s impartial sentiment into Delhi by returning the confiscated mosques to the Muslim community in time for the assembly. The return of Fatehpuri Masjid and the Zinat-ul Masjid, located to the south of Red Fort’s
Delhi Gate and built by a daughter of Emperor Aurangzeb, were listed among the government’s “various acts of grace” and later published along with the proceedings of the assembly in a special gazette.\textsuperscript{39} Circumscribed by the events of the assembly, the space of the Fatehpuri Mosque was signified as a symbol of the new relationship of the British rulers toward the Muslim community.

The \textit{Annual Register} reported the Muslim community’s satisfaction with the government’s actions. Altaf Hussain Hali (1837–1914), an Urdu poet and a protégé of Sir Sayyid, hailed the policy of restoration and toleration as a new chapter in the social struggle of Muslims under the British Raj. In his poem \textit{Musaddas} of 1879, he wrote of the community’s new freedom to worship:

\begin{quote}
No one wishes your religion and faith ill. No one is hostile to the Traditions and the Quran. \\
No one damages the pillars of the community. No one forbids observance of the Holy Law’s commands. \\
Pray without fear in places of worship. Loudly proclaim the calls to prayer in your mosques.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

For the next three decades, the committee of managers exercised control of the financial and preservation matters of the Jama Masjid and the Fatehpuri Masjid without criticism. Neither was the state’s interference challenged, as it exercised its power over these mosques by approving or rejecting new members of the managing committees and pressuring them to ensure that no seditious behavior transpired in the mosques. The deputy commissioner of Delhi annually received reports from the managing committee’s office and was kept appraised of changes in management and maintenance matters.

This stable situation changed as the Mughal mosques entered the twentieth century. Members of the Muslim community raised questions regarding the managing committee’s ability to represent them, the restriction of political discourse inside the mosques, and the government’s lack of oversight of the waqf. The community began to challenge the policies of the state from the space of the mosque and called into question its noninterference policy, which according to Ayesha Jalal was a fantasy more than a reality: “Far from eliminating politics from the realms of religion and culture, the colonial state did much to bring these spheres closer than ever and reshape them in the process.”\textsuperscript{41} One area in which the government’s involvement with the mosque was
most visible and could therefore be challenged directly was the waqf, which was protected by the law. The other area was the public condemnation of the destruction or desecration of mosques in the press. The Muslim community utilized the courts and the press to challenge British practices and to reshape the mosque to fit its own needs and aspirations. No other structure or space offered this radical possibility—not the palace, not the fort, not the garden or the shrine. Through court cases and newspaper reports the mosque was transformed from a local structure limited to religious practices into a nationalized space of the Indian Muslim community, a site where political resistance and social desire for recognition could find expression. At Delhi’s Jama Masjid, this transformation started to take shape in the first decade of the twentieth century.

From Mosques to Monuments of Muslim India

At the start of the twentieth century new political pressures on the Muslim community forced a reordering of the Mughal mosques and monuments. No longer would they function solely as religious spaces and touristic sites devoid of explicit political meaning. With communal politics framing Muslim identity, especially in Northern India, the mosque became a critical space in which to convene, discuss, and express dissatisfaction with the government. To prevent this kind of politicization of the large and important mosques of Delhi, the government made the management committees of both the Jama Masjid and the Fatehpuri Masjid sign agreements to prohibit political discussions inside the buildings. This policy of indirect supervision of the Jama Masjid through the managing committee worked for almost five decades, but in 1909 the political forces shaping the outside landscape also entered the mosque. In the summer of that year two men, Haji Fazil-al-Rahman and Muhammad-ud-din, of Delhi, filed a petition to take the managing committee of the Jama Masjid to civil court. The petitioners intended to publicize the managing committee’s complicity with government interference in religious matters, its unchecked practices of collecting and distributing the waqf revenues, and its lack of concern for and misrepresentation of the Muslim community at large. Although the Delhi District Court dismissed the case, a closer inspection of the charges reveals how the demand for justice for all Muslims rendered the Mughal Jama Masjid a space of political and social transformation.
According to Act XX of 1863, or the Religious Endowment Act, any party can sue the managers of a mosque for misfeasance, breach of trust, or neglect of duty in the civil court. The plaintiffs’ primary contention in the case of 1909 was that the Jama Masjid was a space not devoted to Muslim practice but to the spreading of pro-government, loyalist propaganda. Fazil-al-Rahman claimed that he submitted his petition for no other reason than to see proper management of the mosque where he prayed regularly and to which his family contributed large sums of money. The plaintiffs further stated that previous complaints regarding the mosque’s mismanagement had gone unacknowledged. Six of these complaints were included in the petition and were directed against the managing committee: (1) that the committee had an illegitimate monopoly over all waqf properties; (2) that the committee members were not representative of the community and that they reserved jobs at the mosque for family members or friends; (3) that the imam, who was both an employee and a committee member, kept the money given by native rulers for the upkeep of the mosque; (4) that there were no accounts or audits made of the budget, which was supposed to be shared with the Muslim community; (5) that the committee prohibited the recitation of the Qur’an in the mosque, a pious act allowed by the Mughal emperors; and (6) that vacancies in the committee were not announced publicly but reserved for friends and family.

The deputy commissioner, C. A. Barron, was forced to disagree with this assessment of the committee as he and his predecessors had selected the men based on their good character. In further defense of the mosque managing committee, he cited a letter of 8 August 1909 from its members in response to the plaintiffs’ allegations. The committee began by asserting that the suit was nothing more than “the result of personal enmity and jealousy.” The reputation of the plaintiffs was then individually discredited. First, Fazil-al-Rahman’s character was questioned for having serious family differences with Haji Abdul Ghani, his brother and a managing committee member, and for associating with people of notorious repute like Mirza Hairat Dihlavi, who had been arrested for forgery. In fact, the latter edited the Curzon Gazette, a newspaper that published reports critical of the British government. For example, in 1902 it printed an article blaming the British for engendering a culture of corruption at religious structures and questioned the government’s noninterference methods that left large Muslim endowments open to abuse:
“From the time the protecting hand of Government has been removed, lakhs and even crores of Rupees . . . have been wasted . . . the Mutawallis or managers are filling their pockets and no Hindu or Mohammadan has the power of demanding accounts of them.”47 According to the committee’s letter, Mirza Hairat published the plaintiffs’ petition in his newspaper to publicize their grievances with the larger Muslim community and thus to incite public agitation. The second plaintiff was also discredited as “not a man of any consequence.”

The managing committee’s letter went on to refute the claim that it had prohibited the recitation of the Qu’ran; rather, preaching was restricted in the mosque. The committee reasoned that if anyone was allowed to preach, it would open up the mosque to seditious discourse, and it stated that the preachers that were invited knew the pulpit was “for purely religious purposes and not to be utilized for controversial or other undesirable purposes.”48 The letter against the court petition thus gave the committee an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to prevent sedition in the mosque. Accepting the points made in the letter, the Delhi District Court dismissed the plaintiffs’ petition on the grounds of this character assessment and for lack of detailed argumentation and evidence.

Although Fazil-al-Rahman and Muhammad-ud-din’s case never made it to court, the petition still had an impact on the space of the Jama Masjid and its meaning to the Muslim community. First, under the provisions of Act XX, the mosque was turned into a node in the web of power relations, where the petitioners could openly challenge the practices of the committee of managers as contradictory to the spirit of a Muslim mosque. Working in collusion with the state, the petition asserted, the committee turned what was supposed to be the most egalitarian space within Delhi’s Muslim world into a hierarchical and thus contradictory space. The publication in Urdu of this petition and the subsequent commentary by Mirza Hairat reproduced the mosque as an ambivalent space of the Muslim community. In this particular case, the Muslim community of Delhi received neither the justice it sought nor control of the mosque. But the case and the accompanying press support proved instrumental in shaping how the Muslim community of Delhi would begin to politically identify itself through the space of the Jama Masjid. The community also did not have to wait long to get its desired waqf reforms: in 1914 the govern-
ment convened in Delhi a Religious Endowments Conference to discuss the concerns of Muslims for better management of the waqf endowments; out of these meetings and through constant pressure from the press came the Charitable and Religious Trusts Act XIV of 1920 and the Mussalman Waqf Act XLII of 1923 that made managers subject to public oversight. They now had to keep careful records of their expenditures and payments and had to annually publish their accounts.49

The Jama Masjid case of 1909 proved that the state could no longer ignore the general displeasure of the Muslim community regarding the mismanagement of waqf properties. Beyond motivating the government to reform its laws regarding Muslim endowments, the case revealed a shift in the disposition of the Muslim community toward its public spaces. Through the practices of prayer, gatherings, and festivals, the mosque could be defined as a lived space. The palaces, forts, empty shrines, and gardens might have gone the way of history, but the mosque still constituted the center of Muslim life. It was the spatial embodiment of the universal and central principle of Islam—unity. The mosque unified the ummah like no other Islamic structure did: through the practice of prayer that occurred there, it brought man to God. Though times might change and empires might fall and rise, tawhid, the unity of God, remained constant and was externalized in the social unity of the ummah.

Accepting these concepts, the poet and Indian Muslim nationalist Iqbal projected the idea of tawhid further outside of India and named the Kaaba in Mecca the external symbol of unity.50 Mosques in this cosmology locally materialized the principle of universal unity. Every mosque was oriented toward the Kaaba, and the faithful faced in that direction as they prayed together. This orientation and practice subjected the mosque to a vastly different ordering than the public spaces of the British government and the spaces of the Hindu majority and thus symbolized the uniqueness of the Muslim community. Once the mosque was understood as the spatial heart of this community that linked it to God and the rest of the Muslim world, its protection became a prime political concern of all Muslims. This recognition engendered the national and political significance of the mosque as a monument of Muslim India. From the first decades of the twentieth century until the introduction of the concept of Pakistan, the mosque functioned as a practiced and iterative
space forging a Muslim national identity as distinct from the other communities of British India.

The Mosque and the Production of Communal Space

In the years following the petition against the managing committee of the Jama Masjid, other mosques and Islamic sites began to receive coverage in the Muslim press. Like the Jama Masjid, these sites were publicly discussed and debated and reordered through the struggle for social survival and the desire to forge a national sensibility among India’s Muslims. In 1913, Madina, an Urdu newspaper out of Bijnor, reported the joyful return of the Mughal Sunehri Masjid of Delhi, built in 1731, to the community. The story explained how after 1857 it had been occupied and no one was allowed to engage in namaz, or prayer, there. After several unsuccessful attempts by Muslims in the community to gain access to the mosque for prayer, it was finally opened: “It has been heard happily that now the Chief Commissioner of Delhi allowed Muslims to perform namaz in the mosque.”51 Several months later, Madina reported on restoration work at the Red Fort: “There is good news that the Government of India has started to adorn some buildings of Red Fort in the same way as they looked before the Mutiny.”52 Uplifting stories like these, however, remained few and far between. The more typical reports concerned the British destruction and desecration of mosques. The most widely known example of such a transgression was the Kanpur mosque incident, which galvanized Muslims all over India into demanding social justice.

A modest mosque built by bisatis, or peddlers, the Kanpur mosque was brought to national prominence in 1913 through strident reports in the Muslim press. The crisis at the mosque revolved around the local government’s destruction of the dalan (causeway) used for ablutions to widen the street. While the dalan was not actually part of the mosque’s sanctuary, the community and the press represented it as a sacred space whose demolition amounted to an act of trespassing. Months before its destruction, the Muslims of Kanpur petitioned the government to abandon the demolition plan, and a fatwa was issued in support of this demand. The local and provincial governments, however, went ahead with the dalan’s demolition because the mosque was not a waqf property and the dalan not part of the mosque proper. These technical
definitions of what constituted a mosque were rendered moot by the press, which presented the government’s tampering with any part of the mosque as an act of intrusion. Government officials, like the lieutenant governor of Uttar Pradesh, James Meston, were blind to the mosque’s evolving role as a radicalized space, and that the press was transforming a local mosque of little renown into a national space of Muslim social identification. For months the Urdu press ran provocative headlines signifying the demolition of the dalan as a symbol of British disregard for Muslim space and society. On 23 April the editor of Madina, Agha Rafiq, wrote a perspective piece regarding what he called the municipality’s takeover of Islamic places of worship and on how such a move should be read: “We are surprised to know that the local municipality wants to acquire a portion of the Bisti Bazar Mosque in Kanpur to build roads. . . . To respect the places of worship of Indian communities is the prime responsibility of the Government of India.” He goes on to equate the destruction of mosques with the oppression of the religion itself, and he ends by warning the government that the demolition of the dalan will only lead to the destruction of the social order. On 8 July Madina reported the dalan’s demolition under the provocative title, “Demolition of Islamic Places of Worship.” This incident was then linked to the demolition of another mosque, that of Sheikh Abdul Haq in Delhi, which the paper claimed “clearly express that the Government of India has no respect for Islamic places of worship” and that it “gives no value to the religious sentiments of Muslims.” Later in September, in response to an opinion printed in a British daily, the Pioneer, Madina linked the Kanpur mosque to the Mughal Fatehpuri Masjid of Delhi. The Pioneer had advised the Muslim community not to see the incident at Kanpur as reflecting the government’s ill will toward the community, saying that they should instead focus on the return of mosques, like that of the Fatehpuri Masjid, as proof of its goodwill. Madina responded by pointing out that the Fatehpuri Masjid had been sold to a Hindu before it was given back in the context of the Imperial Assembly and went on to clarify the Muslim position: “But we would like to tell the Pioneer that Muslims remember such incidents including the Fatehpuri Mosque in which mosques have been restored to Muslims by the Government. Muslims are thankful for such graceful acts. At the same time it does not mean that mosques would not be demolished in the future and that Muslims could be targeted without any mistake.” Madina
presented itself as the voice of a united body of Muslims—and the government as its opponent. The space of the Kanpur mosque, like the Fatehpuri Mosque, had become a pivot on which the power relations of Muslims and their government now turned.

As the weeks went by, other newspapers read by Muslims like Comrade, al-Hilal, and Zamindar continued to press the government for restitution after interfering with the community’s religion. Further agitations, arrests, and even deaths surrounding the demolished dalan functioned to crystallize Muslim opinion against the British on a national scale. To put an end to this trend, the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, at the request of the Muslim League, finally visited Kanpur. The Muslim community’s victory came soon after, on 14 October, when the viceroy agreed to pardon prisoners arrested in agitations and to rebuild the dalan.

In the aftermath of the Kanpur mosque incident, several transformations can be observed in the ordering of Muslim social space and the community’s sense of place in larger British India: first, it turned the mosque from a local place of worship into a national space for the formation of a Muslim community; second, it revealed to Muslims all across India that their displacement from the public realm was probable if they did not remain vigilant; and third, the mosque was returned to the public realm as a space of debate. The rhetorical ordering of the small and local mosque of Kanpur as a protected space of Indian Muslim identity was also used to defend the small mosques of Delhi from destruction between 1913 and 1929, when land was cleared to make room for the capital city of New Delhi.

Resisting New Delhi through the Mosques of Delhi

The construction of New Delhi forced the displacement of Indians who owned land and buildings on the land demarcated for the new city. To stave off agitations, the government approached this relocation process judiciously. It counted monuments and divided them into two categories: those that should be saved and restored and those that could be purchased for later demolition. The deputy commissioner, H. C. Beadon, further divided the buildings considered worthy of preservation into three groups: ancient monuments of historic interest; religious buildings still in use and of more than local repute; and sacred tombs and recognized graveyards. All other structures, Beadon
reasoned, could be bought out from their owners and demolished. Mughal monuments of all kinds would be spared. What seemed a simple and reasonable solution to the problem of making room met with opposition from the Muslim press. Unlike the British, who divided Muslim structures along historical importance, level of use, and renown, the press signified all Muslim structures as protected spaces of the Muslim community, thus thwarting the ordering imposed by Beadon. The demolition of any of these structures could now be framed as proof of the government’s illiberal rule. The Hamdard daily, edited by Muhammad Ali from Delhi, wrote of the British destruction of Delhi’s Muslim spaces in a two-part piece titled “Old Graves and Mosques of Delhi,” registering the difference in the British perception of these spaces: “The old monuments, whether they be graves, mosques or shrines, are loved and respected by all communities, but mosques and graves are especially respected from the religious point of view by Muslims. . . . On the one hand, these graves and mosques have deep relevance to the history of Muslims. On the other hand, the graves of both the poor and the King are given the same religious respect.” The article goes on to insist that the Muslim community does not want its religious structures disturbed and that although the chief commissioner of Delhi, William M. Hailey, having assured Muslims of Delhi that he would not hurt their sentiments, had nevertheless gone ahead and demolished a “famous mosque” by the Koki Bridge. The mosque’s fame derived from being the location at which the Sufi Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi had delivered his sermons during the reigns of the Mughal emperors. Since all Muslims were aware of the mosque’s special status, it should not have been slated for destruction. The commissioner acknowledged his mistake and rebuilt the mosque.

In the second news piece, the Hamdard took Hailey to task for designating some mosques and graves as of limited local interest and subsequently fit for demolition. In response to this bias, the newspaper stated: “The view of Mr. Hailey that all the ‘essential religious buildings and graves of top personages’ would not be disturbed is confusing. Indeed no discrimination can be made among the religious buildings. A broken old mosque of which all the walls are fallen and whose history is unknown is religiously no different from the big Jama Masjid of Delhi.” The Hamdard continued to follow the planning and demolitions of Delhi for two years. In 1915 it reported three
unfortunate incidents in regard to mosques and graves in Delhi. Using the law of land acquisition, the *Hamdard* explained, the government had bought the Burji Masjid, where prayer was done five times a day and where the Hazrat Shah Bahauddin shrine was located. This, *Hamdard* stated, ran counter to the government’s intention of sparing the good sentiments of the people of Delhi in building its new city.

Another Delhi newspaper, the *Muslim*, reported in July 1922 that the Bagh Kalali mosque located inside the precincts of New Delhi was destined for demolition according to a map the writer had seen. The paper asserted the Muslim point of view regarding the destruction of mosques: “The laws about mosques in Islamic jurisprudence are so strict that once a mosque is built it becomes sacred and respectable until the Day of Resurrection. Even an inch of its land cannot be used for any other purpose.” This observation was followed by an implicit warning to the government: “Firstly, the mosques were occupied. We tolerated it because we were helpless. Now the mosques are being martyred for roads and buildings. If this condition prevails, it will be difficult for Muslims to tolerate.”61 From the *Muslim*’s stance concerning the history of mosques in Delhi it becomes clear that these structures, no matter their historical value, were uniformly understood as symbolic spaces of Muslim social identity. The article also bears testimony to a growing sense of empowerment derived from the community’s critique of governmental actions against its mosques. By 1922 the mosque had become a space of Muslim social identity serving the community as a public line of defense against what were seen as British attempts to bring about the community’s social death.

In the decades before independence the mosque, more than any other Islamic structure, became the principal space of Muslim social identification. Therefore, of all the Mughal monuments only the Jama Masjid and the Fatehpuri Masjid were selected as representative spaces of the Muslim community. Considering this reality, the state presented their restoration as symbols of its goodwill toward India’s Muslims. But the British underestimated the true significance of the mosque as a lived space at the heart of the community. While Muslims certainly appreciated the return of the Mughal mosques, the supposedly grand British gesture did not settle the issue of their social subjugation; rather, it merely marked the beginning of the community’s efforts to reclaim control over their public spaces of social identification and
resistance. British rule prevailed at the Red Fort and the Taj Mahal because it went largely uncontested by the Muslim community. But at the Jama Masjid, the Fatehpuri Masjid, and other religious sites, Muslims rejected the power structures put in place by the British. From the space of the mosque, other horizons of action would open up in the 1930s and 1940s and guide the Muslim community through the struggles for independence and state formation.

From Community to Nation and the Politicization of Islamic Monuments

By the 1930s New Delhi was a completed city, the ASI stood on solid footing, and the Muslim press had secured the mosque as the representative architectural space of Indian Muslim identity. Also at this time, the electoral principle began to frame the political landscape and the All-India Muslim League was defining Muslim nationhood as distinct from the symbolic ordering of the Indian nation by the secular Congress Party. This difference was pinned to the Muslim community’s minority status. Initially this position helped the community negotiate its place “within the paradigm of ‘inclusionary secular nationalist’ politics articulated by the Indian congress.”\(^{62}\) But by the 1930s the Congress Party had changed its tactics from a policy of inclusion to what Ali Riaz described as a secular form of majoritarianism, “because they perceived it as an antidote to the rising influence of Muslim identity politics.”\(^{63}\) From this standpoint, both the Muslim League and the Hindu nationalist party were negatively figured as “religious communalists” and labeled as divisive and therefore harmful to the goals of national independence and democracy.

The Muslim League rose in influence after the passing of the Government of India Act of 1909, which introduced the electoral principle and the promise to give Indian Muslims a reserved number of seats in local and imperial governments. The British government included this last and controversial provision to quell Muslim fears of domination by a permanent Hindu majority. This tactic of claiming unfair representation may have had its effectiveness in balancing power, but the Muslim League knew it could also weaken its cause for greater overall Indian power in government. Thus in 1916 the Muslim League came together with the Indian National Congress in a spirit of compromise. For its part, Congress agreed to the principle of weighted votes, separate electorates, and a one-third reservation of seats for Muslims
in the imperial government. These proposals were written into law in the Government of India Act of 1919. But the climate of compromise began to dissipate as Congress secularists increasingly claimed these electoral measures to be antithetical to the democratic process. The Nehru Report of 1928 all but rescinded the previous compromises and a policy of secular majoritarianism began to inflect Congress decisions and tactics. The Muslim League responded by separating from the Congress and injecting the discourse of Muslim nationalism into the sphere of political policy and debate. This alteration of native power relations initiated a new spatial disposition to the geography and the Mughal monuments of India. Muslim leaders positioned their community as a separate nation existing within the secularist and Hindu ones. Those elements of the Indian landscape that contradicted this vision, such as the Mughal monument, celebrated for its syncretic form, were either reordered to align with Indian Muslim nationalism or purged from the newly constituting communal space.

The rhetorical logic of the Indian Muslim political elite framed the Mughals, long admired and imitated by the British rulers and by secularist Indians for their integrationist ethos, as contradictory to the idea of Muslim nationhood. For example, the Muslim League shunned Akbar, the greatest historical unifier of Hindu and Muslim India. Nehru observed this rejection on Akbar’s four hundredth birthday in 1942, when “all classes of people, including many Muslims joined, but the Muslim League kept aloof because Akbar was a symbol of India’s unity.” The Mughal monument, a sign of Indian Islam’s cultural heterodoxy, was also expunged from the imagined landscape of the emerging Indian Muslim nation. This distancing from the Mughal era and its heritage was not an entirely recent development but the final stage of a movement initiated by Islamic reformists in the eighteenth century.

In their efforts to make sense of the deteriorating state of Indian Islam after the demise of Aurangzeb in 1707, some Muslim reformists pointed to the corruption of their religion by Hindu customs. To counteract this decline, they urged Muslims to simplify their faith, to look to the Prophet and the customs of the Arabs for guidance in everyday matters. Shah Waliullah led this charge in Delhi after the city was devastation by a series of attacks starting with Nadir Shah’s in 1739. He advised his followers to look past the local and to the Arabian Peninsula to find their cultural bearings and to reclaim their sense of
community and spiritual character: “We are Arab people whose fathers have fallen in exile (ghurba) in the country of Hindustan, and Arabic genealogy and Arabic language are our pride.” Following this logic, he condemned the local traditions that had developed around Sufi mystics, like the pilgrimage to the tombs of Sufi saints, venerated by both Hindus and Muslims. When Muslims again experienced devastating loss, disorientation, and fragmentation after 1857, Shah Waliullah’s teachings found new purchase. Educated Muslims like Sir Sayyid saw in them a way to save the soul of the community by insulating it against the assaults of British modernization while preparing a communal mirror based on an idealized vision of Indian Islam.

Although reformists slowly stripped Indian Islam of its Hindu accretions throughout the nineteenth century, the process took on a quality of political urgency after 1857, when the British government separated and codified the Indian public according to communal categories. New dispositions and relationships to the state were thus mediated through religious practice and conflict. At the intersection of the movement of Muslim reformism and British identity politics, the Indian Muslim community began to take shape as a distinct social formation. Official representations of public agitations manifest this new communal figuration; whether they originally derived from personal, local, or class conflicts, they were almost always represented as altercations between Hindus and Muslims in official documents. Muslims that had identified with their degree of wealth, ancestry, and regional or sectarian affiliation found it expedient to assume the religious identification to “compete more effectively for government patronage.” To put flesh on the bones of this invented category, a new Indian Muslim morality, history, and culture were constructed. The first to give shape to this embodiment of the “Indian Muslim” was Sir Sayyid. Starting with his Causes of the Indian Revolt of 1858, Sir Sayyid defended the Muslim population against the misconceived notion that they were the enemies of the British Raj. This kind of critique became especially necessary after W. W. Hunter’s scathing study of 1871, The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel against the Queen? One year later the first census was taken, making it a quantitative reality that Muslims constituted twenty-two percent of India’s population, thus cementing their minority status.

Confronted with misconceptions and demographics Sir Sayyid became
concerned with producing a favorable representation of Muslims and, more practically, with their social survival. This need took on a new urgency after the various India Council Acts began to open the local and municipal councils to natives. Here the Muslims would be at a disadvantage because, unlike the Hindus, they did not adapt their education to meet the demands of a modernizing world. Sir Sayyid built his famous Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, later known as Aligarh Muslim University, in 1875 with the aim of addressing this deficiency. The modernization of Indian Muslim education brought with it a new national sensibility whereby the community began to see and represent itself as a distinct group with its own history, culture, and social order.

Another stimulus for the constitution of Indian Muslim national identity, and one that would affect the space of Mughal monuments more directly, was the epic poem, *Musaddas*, written by Hali at the urging of Sir Sayyid in 1879. *Musaddas* narrates the rise and decline of Muslim culture from the eminent early caliphs to the decadence of the late nineteenth century and offers the community a way out of its weakened state. Hali begins by describing the great heights reached by Muslims in the arts and sciences. In the section called “The Monuments of Islam” he writes, “There is no continent upon this globe in which their buildings do not stand firm; Arabia, India, Egypt, Spain, Syria, Dailam, the whole world is filled with their foundations.” In the poem, these monuments function as symbols of the greatness of early Islamic culture, but in their present state they stand as contradictory spaces: “Those palaces of stone and their brilliant purity, to whose ruins moss clings today!” Like Shah Waliullah and Sir Sayyid, Hali ascribes this decline to the lost purity of faith, which the community must again attain to save itself.

In *Musaddas* the monument signals the trajectory of Muslim decline that leads readers at last to India. Here, Hali proceeds to describe the poverty, indolence, and general lack of readiness of the Indian Muslim community to take its place in the larger sphere of British rule. The reason for the community’s sorry state is its loss of moral direction, which can be rediscovered by looking to the Prophet’s timeless message. Hali maintains that by reacquainting itself with Arab culture and history, the community may be directed to a “moral realm immune to temporal cycles of progress and decline.” In this framework, monuments akin to the forms of early Islam are lauded, while
those that show local variations in style and function are considered degraded. By this logic the syncretic Mughal monuments inevitably symbolized the beginning of Muslim decline, when the classical simplicity of early Islam was lost for good.76

The movement away from present day India and back to the Hijaz of the Prophet reoriented the community temporally and spatially and helped it differentiate itself from the other communities. Progress for the good of the community was thus not seen as the forward movement of modernism per se but as the return to the simple, unchanging character of classical Arab Islam. While secularists and the British government alike vied for legitimacy by looking to the Mughals as their model, Hali instructed the Muslim community to sever such affiliations with the past and to see itself as a separate Islamic nation—though part of the larger Islamic world—living and functioning in an alien modern India. In so doing, Hali transposed Islam and modernity, making the former the new master-signifier of the Indian Muslim. As national independence loomed on the horizon and the political terrain was shifting underfoot, Islam, and the symbolic order it signified, would stabilize the community and direct its identification with the Indian landscape and its monuments.

Muslim Nationalism and the Spaces of the “Moral Community”

By the late 1930s and the 1940s, the secularist Congress and the British government put increasing pressure on Muslims to reveal where they stood in the struggle for freedom and the larger political landscape. Sensing that the independence movement was gravitating toward Hindu symbolism and cultural idioms, Muslim leaders altered their demands for electoral privilege to call for a separate nation status based on Islamic symbolism.77 Underscoring this demand were the cultural arguments of Sir Sayyid, Hali, and the poet and reformist Iqbal. In 1940, at the historical meeting of the Muslim League in Lahore, the party’s leader, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, summed up this reasoning in a speech that inaugurated the new object of Indian Muslim desire, Pakistan: “Hindus and the Muslims belong to two different religions, philosophies, social customs and literature. . . . It is quite clear that Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes and different episodes. . . . To yoke together
two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state.”78 This view introduced the conception of the Indian Muslim community as a nation living separately within a nation and lacking a place of its own. A separate territory was now desired in order to manifest the Muslim nation.

Pakistan, it must be remembered, began as an ideological imagining and did not become a territorial reality until 1946. Until then, Muslim elites thought of it as a useful concept for constructing an imagined “moral community” but considered its actual creation an unattainable goal, given the geographic dispersion of Indian Muslims throughout the subcontinent. As David Gilmartin points out, the primary concern of the Pakistan movement was “to create a Muslim political community, to define a symbolic center to give moral and political meaning to the concept of a united ‘Muslim community’ in India.”79 This overarching Indian Muslim identity then supplanted regional social formations and spaces such as town mosques, schools, and shrines. Before the Pakistan movement, the political moral order of most Indian Muslims was conceived on a local level, “with its own distinctive structures of authority, subordination, and conflict.”80 This moral order was further constituted through the spatial dynamics of local arenas of public performance, which by the 1930s and 1940s were for many Muslims limited to mosques and yearly festivals at Sufi shrines.

Another way of defining Muslim unity, before the introduction of the concept of Pakistan, was through tajdid, or reform, which “long played a central role in the discursive articulation of Muslim moral community.”81 Reform at the heart of the national movement provided Indian Muslim political elites with a radical ideology that the British state or the Congress Party could neither assimilate nor debate.82 Finally, the public agitations surrounding the destruction of mosques, the corrupt waqf administration, and the demise of the Ottoman Khilafat, also helped produce a common identity out of common interests. However, none of the local and reformist forces ordering the social space and identity of the Muslim community could provide a “fixed image of unity,” which was needed to move forward the Muslim League’s claim of nationhood. To bring this about, first, local public arenas were framed as representative spaces of division; then, Pakistan, as an idea and subsequently as a
state, was conceived “in sharp moral opposition to this world of conflict and division.” Therefore Pakistan, the universal and desired space of the Indian Muslim community, was imagined as a place to supersede the local and historical spaces of Indian Islam.

While Pakistan was just an idea, there seemed a possibility for Muslims to divide their allegiances between the imagined space of the national community and the local spaces of their everyday lives. But in 1946, as independence drew closer to the horizon, a choice was forced on the Muslim League’s leadership: to allow Pakistan to remain an idea or to redefine it as an object in terms of territorial statehood. The latter choice was not solely reflective of Jinnah’s desire to further the moral unification of the Indian Muslim community but might also have been forced by Nehru’s conception of an independent India. As Gilmartin explains, Nehru’s India derived from a secular national ideology that was “a sort of rationalist statism tied to science, modernity, and the individual ethics championed by Gandhi.” A direct product of this secularism was the replacement of the religious identity structured by British imperialism with an identity based only on territory. For a Muslim community faced with a loss of power and electoral seats in this new social order of individual citizenship, Pakistan as a territorial entity seemed the only option for retaining its integrity. Jinnah and the Muslim League chose a territorial Pakistan over the idea of Pakistan, and the Congress Party accepted their choice as a sacrifice necessary for the founding of an independent Republic of India as a secular state.

The territorial reality of Pakistan shook the Indian Muslim social order to its core. As long as the notion of a separate Indian Muslim nation was no more than a symbol of moral unity, it did not challenge the sense of place through which most Indian Muslims experienced their everyday lives. Those spaces that organized daily encounters, provided moral guidance, and helped negotiate relationships inside and outside the community could coexist with an imagined Pakistan. However, when the idea emerged as a physical reality in the negotiations among the British, the Congress Party, and the Muslim League, what ensued was “the disjunction between place and territory,” which for those Muslims remaining in India meant a loss of place and local identity. Muslim leaders who had supported Pakistan as a moralizing ideal able to unite a disparate community and to help them negotiate local relationships
were dismayed by its sudden transformation into a physically bounded reality. Men like Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya saw Pakistan and Partition as destructive to the culturally mediated sense of place that had helped Muslims identify themselves in the Indian landscape. These men had tried to suture the community to “the places that had already been sanctified in the Ganges-Jamuna doab by the blessedness (barakat) of the community’s pious forbears.” However, as Gilmartin explains, their efforts were overwhelmed by the more powerful draw of Pakistan: “This desperate attempt to maintain the linking of place, ancestry, sanctity, and moral order was cast against the backdrop of a fixed partition of territory that had symbolically torn these linkages asunder.” The Mughal monument in this vortex of social and political change was cast adrift along with all other signs of Muslim connectedness to the Indian landscape.

The Congress leader and staunch supporter of Hindu-Muslim cooperation, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, warned Indian Muslims in April 1946 that when Pakistan became a reality, they would “awaken overnight and discover that they have become aliens and foreigners . . . left to the mercies of what then would become an unadulterated Hindu Raj.” The absurdity of denying a thousand years of Muslim history in India, of abandoning the rich Indo-Islamic civilization, and the profound relationships that had grown between Hindus and Muslims was the keynote of his argument against Pakistan. In the end, the physical reality of Pakistan offered little more to the Indian Muslim community than the loss of a place that had been carefully constructed over hundreds of years of living, struggling, and dying. With the separation of Pakistan from India, the sense of an overarching moral community no longer defined Indian Muslim life for those who remained. Along with that loss came the fragmentation of the leadership of the Muslim community, as many elites left their homes in the big cities for a future in Pakistan. Finally, as Gilmartin correctly argues, without a regional identity or a sense of place in India, the only recourse the Muslim community had to express its social conditions of conflict and pain was through violence. The other way, and one taken by the majority in later years, was through silence.

From the post-Uprising period to independence, the Mughal monument that had once been a beacon of Indo-Islamic glory and achievement slowly faded from the lives of the Indian Muslim community. This process started
soon after the demise of the moral city, when the monuments were severed from the social network they once maintained, and only the mosque rose in prominence as the principal symbolic space of the community. However, it was not until the prospect of independence drew near, when Muslim leaders adopted the symbolism of the reformist movements, that the Mughal monuments were shunned for their Indo-Islamic significance. Through the leaders’ desire to constitute an identity by the master-signifier of Islam, Pakistan became a *point de capiton*, fixing in place the free-floating signs of territory, nation, culture, and architecture. In this new symbolic order the Mughal monument was meaningful if it served Islam and the national aspirations of the Muslim community. When Pakistan finally became a territorial reality on 15 August 1947, neither the ideologies of Islamic nationalism nor secular nationalism could contain the sublime trauma of Partition. In the atmosphere of chaos, death, and suffering that ensued, Mughal monuments would once again be enlisted as spaces to help bring order and meaning to the new nation-state of India.