

## **Concept Note: Mushirul Hasan Memorial Seminar 2024**

**21 February 2024**

### **Nation, Nationalism and Communitarian Politics in early 20th century**

The Department of History & Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia is organizing the Mushirul Hasan Memorial Seminar on the following topic: Nation, Nationalism and Communitarian Politics in early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Benedict Anderson, in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and spread of Nationalism* defined a nation as an ‘imagined political community that is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’. He makes the nation into an ‘imaginary construct’. Hans Kohn considered nationalism as ‘first and foremost a state of mind, an act of consciousness’. In *Nationalismus*, Hans Kohn welcomed the sentiment of nationalism found in Tagore’s novel, *Ghore Baire* where, the protagonist of the novel appreciated national differences but placed justice ahead of patriotism and warned against making up one’s country an end in itself. Kohn could not ignore the signs of divisive political nationalism that he saw in India.

Charles Heimsath in his *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* defined nationalism as: ‘...an attitude of mind, or set of beliefs, that is shared by a group of people large enough to be influential, and that embodies ideas of the nation and the nation's goals, elevates those ideas to a prime position over other public values, and compels the assertion of the identity and the aims of the nation’.

Thus, nationalism has been linked to the goal of fostering a sense of unity and belonging. Since the Second World War, the colonized subjects were inspired by ideas of nationalism to pursue independence/freedom. By institutionalizing the nationalist movement into an

autonomous nation-state, nationalist movements aimed to safeguard both their national identity and their right to self-determination.

The idea of 'India' itself is rather new. One of the prominent nationalist leaders Surendranath Banerjee coined the phrase "nation-making". "Nation in the making" refers to a continuous process in which unity is established, challenged and occasionally subjected to prejudice or disintegration. It is crucial to underline that All-India unity has coexisted with regional identities, linguistic variety, tribal allegiances and religious identities. India's diversity is a fundamental component of the country's cohesiveness. This cohesiveness was not a given, it was something that was worked upon/ established throughout the freedom struggle, that we must actively work to maintain.

The seminar's goal is to explore and trace the origins of nationalism as a potent political force in India – a recently formed nation. The discussion will center on the concepts of **nationalism and communitarian politics** in India, where a difficult but tenacious path to independence was forged despite the contestations and disruptions. The seminar aims at covering a broad range of topics spread over a wide chronological span. No limits are set by sub-themes so that the discussions can be as varied and intellectually engaging as possible.

Those interested in participating are requested to send an abstract of 300 words by the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2024. The email addresses are [dohistoryjmi@gmail.com](mailto:dohistoryjmi@gmail.com), AND [history@jmi.ac.in](mailto:history@jmi.ac.in)