

The Hindustani Muslim Community of British Guiana and Pakistan, 1947

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Abstract

This is the first paper to deliberate on the role that the overseas Hindustani Muslims of British Guiana played in the creation of Pakistan in 1947.¹ In doing so, the debate about Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, has been inescapably revived; however, the central focus of this paper is the role that the Hindustani Muslims of British Guiana played in the creation of Pakistan. Guyana/Pakistani ties are strong and dates back to 1838 with the arrival of Hindustani Muslims in Guyana. Some of these Muslims returned to India and then moved to Pakistan when the subcontinent was divided. One such person was the legendary, Gool Mohammad Khan and his decedents, in particular, two of his daughters, Husn Ara Hakam and Gulshan Ara Wahab who became actively involved in the Pakistan movement side by side with Mr. Jinnah. Mrs. H. A. Hakam and Mrs. G.A. Wahab were exemplary citizens for all humanity. Born in obscurity in British Guiana, they entered the world stage in India and Pakistan, and were integral figures for the battle of Pakistan.

In British Guiana the bloody division of the subcontinent in 1947 did lead to subtle Hindu/Muslim tension. This paper asserts that the Muslim leadership of the former British Guiana, now Guyana,² solidly supported the creation of Pakistan and vilified India. This is apparent because the largest Islamic organisation, the Sad'r Anjuman-E-Islam acquiesced to the two-nation theory, or the division of India along religious lines. However, a smaller Islamic group, the Islamic Association of British Guiana (IABG initially rejected the two-nation theory). Not long after, in 1949, the IABG merged with the Sad'r Anjuman-E-Islam and support for Pakistan grew larger and more cohesive. From the print media and the rhetoric from both sides, Hindus and Muslims, it's evident that the Sad'r -E-Anjuman not only supported the state of Pakistan but became the voice of Pakistan in British Guiana. Prior to this, Muslims were oriented to the motherland, Hindustan. While the average Muslim saw themselves as Hindustani, they supported the state of Pakistan and began to identify with Pakistan. The British Guianese Muslim urged local Muslims to look to Pakistan as the motherland, and they referred to Pakistan and its leaders as "our country and our leaders." Their moral, political and financial support to the state of Pakistan is documented in this paper, and a case is made that Pakistan replaced India as the motherland. As well, the state of Pakistan took the responsibility of "mothering" the Muslims in British Guiana by offering theological aid, scholarships, political and moral support.

The Overseas Hindustani Muslims

The migration of Indians to British Guiana that began in 1838 was historical for it planted the seeds of Islam in the Western hemisphere. An English evangelist, W.H Brett in 1887 observed, "There are Afghans from the mountains of Afghanistan, who are

Mohammedans; Nepalese, who features remind one of the Caucasian race; a few Bengalese, also a few number of Madrassesees; but the bulk of the East Indians came hither from the North West Provinces of India.”³ He continued, “the language spoken by these people are various and difficult, but Hindi is one which is best spoken and most easily learned. If one knows some Urdu, he will be all the more respected.”⁴ Between 1838 to 1916 close to 240,000 Hindus and Muslims migrated to British Guiana, and of the 240,000 about 20% were Sunni and Shia Muslims. The Shia was very insignificant. Evangelists found it difficult to convert Muslims to Christianity. By 1947 when the British quit, Indian immigrants in British Guiana had a choice of three nationalities: British Guianese, Indian or Pakistani. Many were confronted with this dilemma, to stay or to return to a divided homeland. A handful opted for Indian and Pakistan nationality. The latter were Muslims who then saw Pakistan as their motherland. British Guiana would remain a British colony until 1966. As independence approached, the country experienced racial riots between the two dominant groups, Africans and Indians.

In this paper the term “overseas Hindustani Muslims” is used to identify the Muslim community of British Guiana who came from what is today South Asia or pre-partitioned India. The term India was unfamiliar to them because it was imposed from the outside. Hindustan was the name that those North Indian Muslim immigrants knew their motherland as; it was not a term imposed by outsiders. Hindustan is Persian and Urdu term for India and Hind in Arabic. The Persians first referred to the people east of the Sindu River as Hindustanis. North Indian Hindus have always known their country as Bharat. Bharat is the official name of India in its constitution. As well, the term “overseas Hindustani Muslims” is used to reiterate the fact that these Muslims migrated from pre-partitioned Hindustan, which means they came from areas that are now Bangladesh and Pakistan. The British used the term “overseas Indians” and “Indian Immigrants,” when referring to Indians in British Guiana. These labourers were temporary workers and were expected to return home. The term “overseas Indians” was used in correspondences, diaries, reports, birth and death records, immigrant’s biographical data, hospital records, etc. Today, the term South Asia is more accurate to describe the geographical area that the Hindustanis migrated from. In Guyana, up until the 1950s, Muslims referred to India as Hindustan. In a poem dedicated to Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Samadeen, a Guyanese in 1950, referred to India as Hindustan⁵ like many of his countrymen.

The Hindustani Muslims of British Guiana were not a monolithic group. They were very diverse like their brethren in the motherland. Sociologist Dr. Nasser Mustapha of Trinidad writes, “there is a tendency to believe that in India all Muslims were the same, but among all Indians there were marked diversity in linguists, culture and religion.”⁶ He continued, “Even their food was prepared differently. In marriage ceremonies and in family life there was also much diversity.”⁷ They were predominantly from the United Provinces and Oudh (now Uttar Pradesh), and Bihar. A small number of immigrants also came from the Bengal, the North West Frontier (Afghan Province), Baluchistan and the Punjab. They came from the land of the Mughals who built the Taj Mahal and from districts and cities where Mughal culture proliferated- Lucknow, Ghazipur, Allahbad, Gorakpur, Murshidabad, Azamgarh,

Mirzapur, Shahabad, Sultanpur, Faizabad, and Azamgarh. Lucknow and Faizabad, as well as Patna, were centres of great learning and culture. They brought with them the rich Mughal cuisine, sheer *korma*, *biryani/pilau*, *gulab jamun*, *jaleebi*, *kofta kebab*. The Turkish *salwar kameez* (shirt and pants) which was adopted by Muslim India was introduced to Guyana along with the Urdu language. Many Hindustani came from Patna was a major city of Bihar, a center of learning and the seat of the Mughal Governor where Arabic and a considerable amount of Persian and Urdu poetry, was written. Hyderabad, Lucknow, Delhi and Patna attracted poets, painters and scholars. Muslims have left their indomitable mark on India in cuisine, architecture, gardening, music, paintings, clothing, literary and artistic achievements, civil engineering, statistical digest, dictionary of science, memoirs, books of rules and procedures and this legacy came with them to the Caribbean.

A large segment of Muslims, descendants of lower castes Hindus, converted to Islam hundreds of year ago because of the egalitarianism of Islam which freed them from that rigid caste system that existed. However, the Muslims from North India and especially the Bengalis were still stratified by castes, but it was a loose stratification which still made it possible to move up the social ladder. Especially in the Bengal, from 1838 to 1885 where Muslims comprised about 48% of the population, many of these converted Muslims from rural areas still bore Hindu names and “continued with their older way of life to a marked degree”.⁸ Islam was pregnant with local beliefs and practices of Hindu origin.⁹ On the other hand, the *nabawi* (royal) cultured Muslims who came to British Guiana and who had originated from the United Provinces, Oudh, and Bihar, bore Persian, Turkish and Arabic names and spoke Urdu and were a privileged minority during the Mughal era. Large minorities of Hindustani Muslims in pre-partitioned India were of Baluchis, Afghan, Iranian, Turkish and Arab stock and immigration to British Guiana reflected this makeup. As well, some Afghan (Pathan) Muslims who fiercely opposed British rule in India were exiled to British Guiana.¹⁰ In addition, some left for the Caribbean to escape persecution. These Hindustani Muslims spoke Urdu, Avadi, Brijbasha, Mateili, and Bhojpuri; in addition, a handful spoke Farsi and Pashto, among other North Indian languages.¹¹ Under caste Muslims were identified as ***Musulman, sheik, fakirs, ghois, and hajams, Julahas, Mahomedaan, Syeds, Mughuls, and Pathans.***¹² The majority of Muslim women bore names like ***Nasimun, Ameerun, Rashidan, Kariman or Aseeman*** which became corrupted due to the loss of their Urdu language. These names among many others have evolved into ***Nasimoon, Karimoon, Ameeroun, Rashimoon, Aseemoun, or Nazmoon.***¹³ Most men bore three to four names and most common were the suffix ***uddin, example: Alimuddin, Zahiruddin, Shahabuddin or Kamaluddin.***

As we move towards the turbulent period of the 1940s in the homeland, Muslims were affected by communalism that engulfed India. Hindus naturally were happy that Muslim rule ended but not comfortable living under British Colonialism that replaced Mughal rule. Finally, Hindus would take control of India and they were ecstatic but Muslims were worried that India’s secularism may come to an end. Muslims in British Guiana and India wanted to protect secularism while the majority of Hindus were

calling for a *Ramraj* (Hindu State). On the other hand, the average Hindustani Muslims in British Guiana desired for a united Hindustan of Hindus and Muslims, but as we approached the 1940s when flames engulfed their Hindustan most Guyanese Muslim found solidarity with Pakistan. However, the British Guiana Muslim Association (BGMA) did not support the division of India. They eventually became silent after uniting with the Sad'r Anjuman-Islam. The Hindustani Muslim leadership of British Guiana began speaking like they were Pakistanis and referred to the Pakistani leadership as "our leaders."¹⁴ They sided with Pakistan and the literature from the Muslim community in British Guiana was emotionally pro-Pakistan and very anti-India. The Muslim leadership in British Guiana educated their respective *jamaat* (community) about the need for a Pakistan and eventually when Pakistan was achieved, they rigorously educated local Muslims of the goals and aspirations of the new Muslim state. Pakistan then replaced India. There has been a marked closeness between the Muslims in this part of the world and India up to 1947, and with Pakistan since that time'.¹⁵ Since then the Hindustani Muslims have been ignored by scholars of indentureship. Hinduism and indentureship became synonymous, and Muslims are ignored in this discourse because they identify with the *ummah* (*Muslims worldwide*). Their identification with the *ummah* began after World War II when colonial atrocities and nationalist's furor in the Islamic World made headlines in various Islamic periodicals of British Guiana, such as the *Voice of Islam* and *Nur-e-Islam*. The plight of Muslims under colonial domination caught the attention of locals and for the first time in history Muslims in British Guiana began identifying with the *ummah*. Events in Indonesia, Algeria, Jordan and Palestine were well covered in these periodicals.¹⁶

Eventually, the immigrants had no desire to return to the motherland, and over time, they were stranger to Hindustan. There was neither empathy nor solidarity with similar groups in other parts of the world or with the motherland. They did not hold a collective memory of their Hindustani, and if it did exist, that recollection was vague. From 1838 to 1916, during this great migration, the motherland was fractured by regional nationalism. The Hindustan which was engulfed in Hindu Muslim violence had changed tremendously. Due to the print media, the *jamaat* (community) system, and travel between India and British Guiana, the plight of Muslims in Hindustan caught the attention of their brethren here in British Guiana, and loyalty switched to Pakistan. There was neither any loyalty to the local British authority, but rather a stronger identification with the *ummah* which was under European colonialism.

Qaid-E-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah

Qaid-E-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, is a hero in his homeland and in India he is still seen as a villain. In British Guiana he was seen as a fighter for Muslims rights in India, "a son of *azadi*" (freedom).¹⁷ But today a more accurate picture of Jinnah is emerging after his former nemesis, L.K. Advani, an infamous communalist, referred to him as secularist during a visit to Pakistan in 2005. Since then the Jinnah debate has been reopened. Muhammad Ali Jinnah is better known as the *Qaid -E-Azam*, or father of the nation, and his sister Fatima, *Madr-E-*

Millet (mother of the nation). In India, he is mostly seen as communalist: cold, arrogant and uncompromising. This image of Jinnah has been reinforced by such films like *Gandhi* and Mountbatten's mini series: "*Lord Mountbatten: The Last Viceroy*." To a large extent, the same image of Mr. Jinnah was held by non-Muslims in British Guiana and it is still the case among them in independent Guyana today. However, among the Muslims in British Guiana Jinnah was their hero. The image of Jinnah, the demon, is not so according to his daughter, Dina who claimed that her father was a loving and kind man who spent time with her. They exchanged letters even after partition.¹⁸ Indian nationalist Sarojini Naidu describes Jinnah as an "ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity...after he helped forge the Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the Muslim League in 1916."¹⁹ Well known Indian scholar Asghar Engineer quotes famous Indian rationalist M.N. Roy, "Mohammed Ali Jinnah was the most maligned and misunderstood man. Jinnah was not an idealist in the sense of being a visionary; he was a practical man possessed of great shrewdness as well as of more than average intelligence."²⁰ Mr. Jinnah was born in Karachi, Sind on December 26th, 1876 and there is speculation that he is of Iranian Shia heritage, while some claim that he is from Rajput ancestors of Sahiwal in the Punjab.²¹ He was one of eight children and was sent to Sind Madrasatul Islam and the Christian Missionary Society High School in Karachi. Eventually, he was sent to work for a company in London that did business for his father. Jinnah hardly knew his father because he died when he was very young and not long after he lost his mother as well. In London, he enrolled himself at the Lincoln's Inn to study law, and in 1896, not yet twenty, he became the youngest Indian to pass the bar exam.²²

Jinnah was not interested in titles and refused a knighthood and a doctorate degree from Aligarh, his favorite university.²³ When someone addressed him as *Maulana* (*learned Islamic Teacher*), he replied, "call me Mr. Jinnah" and he was widely criticized by his own Muslims for being too Western.²⁴ Jinnah could not speak, read or write Urdu well, and his critics accused him of eating ham and drinking whisky. They began demonizing Jinnah as his Muslim League grew mass support. Jinnah never envisioned Pakistan as an Islamic state; he was a secular, progressive and brilliant man who took responsibility for his sister Fatima from an early age. He sent Fatima to Calcutta Dental College in 1919 and in 1923 when she finished her studies; he opened an office for Fatima making her financially independent. She was at his side at all Muslim League meetings, and when Pakistan became a reality, Fatima Jinnah was at his side when they arrived in Karachi, the capital of the new state.²⁵ Later when Jinnah became ill, Fatima gave up her job and cared for him full-time.

The idea of a Muslim homeland in the subcontinent was first articulated by Sir Muhammad Iqbal, Chaudri Rahmat Ali and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. On December 30th, 1930, Sir Muhammad Iqbal "spelt out the two nation theory of Hindu and Muslim separate nationhood."²⁶ Iqbal's political philosophy had rippling effects on Jinnah as the Pakistan movement grew serious. Jinnah in March 1929 pressed for a resolution on Muslim rights in his famous Fourteen Points. On November 28, 1930 he attended the first Round Table Conference in England for Indian rights and independence but

was “disappointed in Indian politics” and decided to practice law in England, until he was convinced to return to India in April 1934.²⁷ As well, around 1933, Chaudhri Rahmat Ali and a group of his Cambridge University colleagues started the Pakistan National Movement at Cambridge, England, and they coined the term Pakistan for this new homeland.²⁸ Interestingly, some historians date the freedom movement back to the War of 1857 and the two nation theory to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of Aligarh.²⁹ However, some assert that the root of partition was planted earlier when Islamic armies of Turks, Mongols and Afghans conquered Hindustan. But this assertion is repudiated by India’s first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who asserted that “the invaders who came from the northwest, like so many of their predecessors in more ancient time, became absorbed into India and part of her life.”³⁰ Nehru held the belief that these so called invaders became Indian and became integrated into Indian society by intermarriages and “every effort was made not to interfere with the ways and customs of the people.”³¹ As well, he noted that there were others invasions of India prior to the coming of Islam and that “its wrong and misleading to talk of a Moslem invasion of India or a Muslim period in India, just as its wrong to refer to the coming of the British to India as a Christian invasion, or to call the British period in India a Christian period.”³²

The culmination of Pakistan must be seen in a larger content. Instead of demonizing Jinnah, it’s necessary to understand what changed this man who was once hailed as the “ambassador of Hindu/Muslim Unity.”³³ The Mughal Empire became weak and the British colonized India in 1857 ending about 500 hundred years of Muslim rule. Hindus by large welcomed the end of Muslim rule with euphoria and supported the British take over. Let’s not forget that the Muslims also fought along side the British. Persian was replaced as the official language and Hindi began sanskritization. Many mosques were razed and many Muslims killed. In Benares in 1809 riots alone fifty mosques were destroyed.³⁴ In other parts of Uttar Pradesh, especially from 1871 to 1872 and from 1883 to 1893, major communal riots reeked havoc. Eventually, the Mughal Empire came to an end after the invasion of the British. The Mughal emperor was exiled to Burma and all Mughal princes were executed. In the 1920’s Hindu nationalism naturally was stronger. The rise of the Arya Samaj and the Mahasabha began speaking of a *Ram Raj* (Kingdom of Ram) and they refused to accept that Muslims were a distinct group; instead they called for the return of Muslims to the Hindu fold- the *Shuddi* movement.³⁵ By the 1930s Urdu poetry reflected the helplessness Muslim felt: “*gham, rona, ranj, dil tootna, maut*, -sorrow, tears, broken heart, desolation, death and doomsday.”³⁶ Then came a national outcry to make the hymn, *Vande Mataram* (Oh mother we bow to you) the national anthem, which sent shiver through the spines of Muslims. To further inflame Muslim anger, the Congress Party refused to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan. These developments helped separatists justify the need for a Pakistan.³⁷

Not all Muslims supported the “two nation theory”, however it’s a widely held view by communalists that Muslims introduced the two-nation theory and thus are blamed and ridiculed for the partition. According to Indian scholar Sikand, the two-nation theory did not start with the legendary Lahore Declaration of 1940, but much earlier

by a Hindu fundamentalist's party. Sikand writes, "The notion of Hindus and Muslims being separate, antagonistic, nations was central to the Hindu 'nationalist' discourse articulated by 'upper' caste, principally Brahmin, ideologues in late nineteenth century Bengal and Maharashtra."³⁸ The common perception that partition was the result of Muslim communalism has been refuted by many scholars. Jinnah was once a strong advocate of Indian unity, how suddenly he advocated for a Muslim homeland in this infamous "two-nation" theory speech of 1940? Sikand asserts, "we would do well to remember that long before this the Hindu Mahasabha under Savarkar and others had already come to the conclusion that Hindus and Muslims represented two different, indeed antagonistic, nations."³⁹ Nehru himself accused the Hindu Mahabasha of fomenting communalism in this book, *The Discovery of India*.⁴⁰ As well, Jinnah came under attack by Nehru for being arrogant and obstinate. Pandit Nehru warned that Muslims were most vulnerable since they were from the most socially, politically and economically depressed areas and that the division would create further problems rather than giving into the Muslim League's to divide the country.⁴¹ At this epoch in history Jinnah was not sure of division.

The other held belief is that Nehru's intransigence led to the division because he "rejected separate electorates in the constitution of 1928 for Muslims."⁴² Jinnah's 14 Points proposal which included separate electorates to guarantee some safeguards to prevent a Hindu-controlled legislature was rejected by Congress. The object of these fourteen points was to have five Muslim majority provinces, against the six Hindu majority provinces with a weak center, so that non-Muslims may not be able to dominate over Muslims. This would have satisfied Muslim interests, in particular, "the retention of separate electorates or the creation of "safeguards" to prevent a Hindu-controlled legislature."⁴³ Jinnah's proposals were rejected, and there after, cooperation between the Congress party and the Muslim League leading up to independence was rare.⁴⁴

As independence approached, bloody communalism engulfed Northern India and Congress's refusal to give the Muslims a visible political voice gave momentum to the Pakistan movement. According to famous British historian, Stanley Wolpert, Jinnah and his "lieutenants" compiled reports from all provinces of India "run by autonomous Congress ministries," to prove that Muslims were not fairly represented in their ministries.⁴⁵ Jinnah was adamant that Muslims will not accept second class status and stated that Muslims were being discriminated in employment, education, business; however Maulana A.K Azad and other *Alims* (teachers) supported Nehru and the Congress Party.⁴⁶ In 1937, in a speech in Lucknow, Mr. Jinnah accused Congress of alienating the Muslims and called the Congress a Hindu Party by "pursuing a policy which is exclusively Hindu," and finally, in March of 1940 he made the famous speech in Lahore, in which he demanded a separate homeland because according to him "the *Musalman*s (Urdu for Muslims) were not a minority, the *Musalman* are a nation."⁴⁷ Mr. Jinnah was irate after the 1937 elections in which the Muslim League "lost heavily and the Congress reneged on its promise to take two League ministers in the U.P cabinet. For him it was a great betrayal."⁴⁸ Yet, by 1946 Jinnah was not yet sure about Pakistan because he accepted "what was known as the Cabinet Mission Plan, which proposed a

federation of Indian provinces.⁴⁹ Correspondence between Nehru and Jinnah up to 1946 add credence that Jinnah was not sure about division (Pakistan) since “he wanted to spend his last days in Mumbai where he had built a house for himself...”⁵⁰ These correspondences are now public records for anyone to see. Ram Puniyani makes reference to George Fernandes, a fan of infamous Indian communal leader L.K. Advani who accused Nehru of backing out from the Cabinet Mission Plans, “so it was Nehru who was responsible for partition,”⁵¹ according to him. Many Indian Muslims today blame the Congress Party, the Muslim League, and Lord Mountbatten for that hasty decision to divide the Subcontinent. Senior Indian journalist, Saeed Naqvi, writes, “Lord Mountbatten, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Congress leaders were all equally guilty for having partitioned the country.”⁵² So it’s not accurate to blame all Muslims for the creation of Pakistan. Naqvi asserts that “a mass awareness programme” if undertaken will show that Muslims alone were not responsible for the division and it might incriminate Congress leaders for the division of India.⁵³ One Indian Muslim lamented, “Our cowardly, effete, tired leadership accepted the partition plan without battling an eyelid and fell back on the propaganda of blaming it on Jinnah.”⁵⁴ Another popular Muslim leader of that era, Abdul Gaffar Khan, in making references to Nehru, remarked, “You have thrown us to the wolves.”⁵⁵

The Muslim leadership in British Guiana followed closely the rise of Mohammed Ali Jinnah and saw him as a “saviour of the Muslims” in India who were being slaughtered by Hindus in the wanton Hindu/Muslim violence.⁵⁶ They accepted him as their leader as well, and he is frequently referred to as “our” leader.⁵⁷ For the brief period that he lived after the creation of Pakistan, the Muslim print media in British Guiana carried many stories of his social and political life. Their affection for Mr. Jinnah is succinctly captured in a poem titled, “Ode to Qaid-E-Azam, Mohammed Ali Jinnah.”⁵⁸ (See annex 2) It was written by A. Samadeen who hailed from Albion, in the county of Berbice, and was published in *Islam and Nur-E-Islam* in January 1950 after the death of Jinnah. This journal, being the only major Muslim periodical of its time, and the voice of British Guiana’s largest Islamic organisation, capsulated the sentiments those locals held of Jinnah.

Jinnah, the hero, reads the poem, was a star who rose “in that Eastern land, and brought forth with it a hero, brave. That star was the birth of Pakistan, and guiding it came Jinnah, his people to save.”⁵⁹ He was seen as a “giant” who fought against the “stalwarts of Hindustan”⁶⁰ who wanted to subjugate the Muslims but Jinnah survived and led the *azadi* movement or the freedom movement. He is seen as a “son of *azad*,” and a “faithful soldier of Islam.”⁶¹ Jinnah sudden death was a solemn moment among the Muslims of British Guiana who held prayers and hoisted the flag of Pakistan at mosques nationwide in his honour. The Muslims of British Guiana and their brethren in Pakistan while in sorrow chanted, “*Pakistan Zindabad*,” or long live Pakistan.⁶² The emotions of Jinnah’s death among the Muslims of British Guiana is capsulated in the following stanza: “Oh Noble Monarch of a new-born state, Oh faithful soldier of Islam, with broken hearts on this cruel date, we bid thee our last and humble Salam.”⁶³ Today, a more accurate picture of Mr. Jinnah has been emerging since the visit of L. K. Advani to

Pakistan in 2005. More recently, on a visit to Pakistan in 2005, Advani backtracked. He shocked the world when he referred to Mr. Jinnah as a secularist; a man he once vilified.⁶⁴ The Jinnah debate has reopened again after Jaswant Singh's 2009 publication of his book's, *Jinnah, Partition and Independence* in which he blamed both Jinnah and Nehru for the partition of India and asserted that Jinnah has been demonized in India and not the sole villain of partition.⁶⁵ How much secular and how much communal was Jinnah is still an enigma, but for sure he was not an Islamist who hesitantly accepted the idea of Pakistan. No doubt, Mr. Jinnah was very popular in British Guiana amongst his brethren.

Hindu/Muslim Relationship in Guyana 1838-1947

Hindu Muslim relationship in British Guiana since 1838 was always cordial and friendlier than what existed in Hindustan when Indians left for British Guiana. *Jahajis* (shipmates) were forced to share space immediately upon embarking ships. Muslims, Hindus, and various Hindu castes: *ahirs, chamars, dhobis, telis* and *Brahmins* shared the same space and eat from the same utensils. They were all given the same rations and clothing when they departed Calcutta, and while they were in the holding depot at Garden Reach, Calcutta, caste and religious barriers began to evaporate. The three-month voyage from India to the Caribbean played a major role in the disappearance of the caste system. Hindustanis were recruited from various parts of India and were sent to the port of Kolkota where they stayed for up to three months before being shipped to the Guianas. Life long bonds and friendship developed here. We get a first-hand account of the journey from India to Guianas from Munshi Rahman Khan, an ethnic *Pathan*, from Hamipur, Uttar Pradesh, India in 1898. He was 24 years of age when he left for Suriname. He writes, "At the depot *brahmins* and *khryastias* quickly abandoned their traditions. The *janau* (sacred thread), *tikka* (sign on forehead) and the *kanthi mala* were abandoned and many no longer acted in accordance to the rules and regulations of his or her caste or religion."⁶⁶ They were not forced to give up their traditions but voluntary many did. "The *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas* and others laughingly began to throw off their threads and necklaces into the river saying: 'Mother Ganges, we offer you our belongings, if ever we return, we shall adorn them again.'⁶⁷ Suddenly, according to Khan the *Brahmins* became sudras. There was no longer an interest to maintain the "sanctity of caste and creed."⁶⁸ No longer were there differences between *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas* or *sudras*. *Brahmin, Muslims, Chammar and Ahirs* queue together and eat the same food, and neither was the Brahmin insulted to be fed by someone wearing shoes. They all shared plates and eat alongside each others. Hindus did not complain about eating next to a Muslim, and upper castes Hindus quickly kept company with lower castes women since many traveled single.⁶⁹ These developments led to closer Hindu/Muslim relationships.

Unlike in Fiji, where the Hindu/Muslim divide is obvious, Jayawardena writes, "Guyanese Hindus and Muslims have closer relationships."⁷⁰ Indians began arriving in Fiji in 1879 much later than in British Guiana which commenced in 1838. Fijian Indians have a "more realistic knowledge" of India while the Hindustanis in Guyana have more of an abstract and mythological knowledge of India.⁷¹ Most importantly, Islam was seen as an "Indian" religion in British Guyana up until the 1960s when it became globalised. Unlike Guyana, large groups of Punjabis and Gujarati migrated to Fiji as free

immigrants and did not share a common history of indentureship like Indians in Guyana. Hindustanis arriving in British Guiana, worked on the same sugar plantations, and on those plantations they shared breakfast, lunches and stories of India. They discussed the tribulations they faced in British Guiana. They spoke similar languages and came from similar districts in India. Life long bonds were forged at the Calcutta Depot and during the three months journey to British Guiana. Both Hindus and Muslim assisted each other in building mosques *and temples*. Alienated from the motherland and void of *Brahmins*, Hindu/Muslim relationship grew stronger. To avoid Afro-Guyanese domination, Hindus and Muslims forged social and political bonds. Literacy increase and there were growing ties between Hindus and Muslims. Eventually, Hinduism and Islam came to be seen as “Indian religions” and that process of “Indianising” Islam helped in cementing Hindu/Muslim ties. As well, the shortage of women in the colony, especially during the early period of indentureship led to frequent marriages between Hindus and Muslims. These early Hindustanis practiced endogamy and their descendents still do so. It was acceptable to marry one of your own *jahaji bhai* or *bahen* (shipmate) rather than an outsider. “For Guyanese, intermarriage between Hindus and Muslims is a tolerated deviance, while it is fiercely condemned in Fiji.”⁷² In British Guiana, at times it did cause stress to families who are resistant to their children marrying Hindus and have led to verbal abuse and suicide among families. “Among Hindus of both countries there is a historical tradition of Muslim pillage; forced conversion of the most beautiful girls for their harem-in Fiji the resentment is vivid.”⁷³ Muslims are perceived by Hindus in Guyana as stern and arrogant in that they hardly convert to the religion of their spouse and always expect non-Muslims to adopt Islam. They hold stereotypes of each other, Muslims the beef eating, sexually voracious and shrewd businessmen and Hindus, docile, poor-eating and frugal.⁷⁴

Guyana’s history is void of Hindu/Muslim communalism. While Muslims have more in common with Christians, they were both unaware of this. Muslims and Hindus eat from each others home, attended each other’s weddings, and birth celebrations. In times of sorrow and disasters, they have been there for each other. The average immigrants from villages were poor and illiterate. Most Muslims were literate since it was compulsory to read the *Quran* and pray five-times a day in Arabic. They had attended Urdu schools back in India where they learned to read *Quran* and study *tehzeeb* (etiquette). The average Muslims were aware of their history in Hindustan and in British Guiana became aware of growing Hindu/Muslim tension in India. As we move towards the 1940s, when the motherland was consumed by Hindu/Muslim violence and there was call to divide the country along religious lines, British Guiana did not experience Hindu/Muslim violence. But the division ushered a new era of Muslim awareness. There was verbal attack between the Pakistan and Indian camps here in British Guiana. And even after the creation of Pakistan there were “elements both here (Guyana) and in the Indian Union who have refused to recognize that there are two dominions...”⁷⁵

Politically Muslims and Hindus see eye to eye. Ethnic politics in Guyana is paramount to religious identification, after all both Islam and Hinduism for them are “Indian

religions.” The Indian party of British Guiana, the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) overwhelming is supported by Muslims who are mostly of Hindustani decent; however there was a period of political antagonism between Hindus and Muslims, when the Guyana United Muslim Party (GUMP) appealed to Muslims to support separate political representation. It was a miserable failure because a Muslim identity did not exist among Indian in Guyana. GUMP failed to secure even one seat in the parliament. Political antagonism is non-existent today between Hindus and Muslims. However, a Muslim identity is developing since the 1960s because of many factors. One most important is the globalization of Islam or exposure to the *ummah* (Muslim World). This is because of the invasions and bombing of Muslim countries, the Palestinian *nakba* (catastrophe) that has agonized the Muslims for almost sixty years, the Russian and American invasion of Afghanistan, the European neglect to protect Bosnian and Albanian Muslims, the on going struggles of Muslims in the Palestine, Philippines, Kashmir, Iraq, Chechnya, and Iran. Accesses to print media, the internet, an upsurge of global television networks, many frequent visits to and from Guyana by Muslims from the *ummah* and growing Islamophobia have helped to cultivate a Muslim consciousness among the Guyanese Muslims and more recently, Guyana’s membership in the OIC. The plight of the *ummah* is brought home via the print media, internet, television and frequent visits by Muslims from Pakistan, South Africa and the Arab Islamic World has stirred the emotions of local Muslims who have come to the conclusion that the wanton killing of Muslims and ongoing occupation of Muslim lands is a clear indication that Muslim lives are of little value as compare to American and European.

The Sad’s Anjuman-E- Islam and Support for Pakistan

Support for Pakistan was strong from the Sad’r Anjuman, British Guiana’s most vibrant Islamic organisation. From the 1940s to 1950s, the Sad’r Anjuman was headed under the brilliant leadership of Mr. Rahman Baksh Gajraj, President, and Mr. Gool Mohamed Khan, Vice President. It was a dramatic period in Muslim history when many Islamic nations waged nationalist’s struggles against imperialism. Global events had ramifications on the local Muslims population in British Guiana, and more precisely the called for a Muslim homeland in the Subcontinent received a sympathetic ear in British Guiana among the Muslims. ***Voice of Islam***, the official organ of the Sad’r Anjuman wrote, “Pakistan is a creation of Man, but it came with approbation of god and no matter what evils acts may be committed against it Pakistan will live on, unconquered.”⁷⁶ Celebration was held all over British Guiana and at the Jamma Masjid in Queenstown, after the *Jumma Namaz (Friday prayer)* “the whole day was observed as a holiday. Greetings and congratulations were cabled to Mr. Jinnah, Governor-General.”⁷⁷ At mosques, the flag of Pakistan was hoisted and to date the flag of Pakistan is hoisted at many mosques and Islamic gathering in Guyana. The white and green star and crescent is synonymous with Muslims and seen on their cars, homes and businesses.

In 1949, the Sad’r Anjuman and the Islamic Association of British Guiana (IABG) merged and “together we stand,” read the editorial of the new journal, *Islam and Nur-E- Islam*.⁷⁸ It was a rare moment of Muslim unity in the history of British Guiana. Support for Pakistan continued. The cry for Pakistan, a new and weak state was raised at every

mosque in British Guiana. The editorial of *Voice of Islam* of March 1948 welcomed with euphoria the birth of Pakistan and called for a Pakistani representative in British Guyana.⁷⁹ They articulated for an ambassador who they envisioned would represent their interest in British Guiana. They now identified with Pakistan and no longer wanted to be yoked with India. The local Muslim leadership was not at all comfortable having just an Indian representative in British Guiana.

At the second all Guiana Muslim Conference held on Sunday December 4th, 1949, the Sad's Anjuman-E-Islam and now merged with the IABG sent congratulatory messages to the new state of Pakistan and issued the following resolution at this historical gathering:

*WHEREAS the Muslims of British Guiana, deeply conscious of their religious and cultural ties with the people of the Dominion of Pakistan, have been watching with prayer and pride the heroic struggles of the people and Government of that great country, BE IT RESOLVED that this Second All-Guiana Muslim Conference sends its congratulations, to the people and Government of Pakistan on the progress and stability so far achieved, and prays that Allah may continue to guide her statesmen to such actions as shall be conducive to the welfare and advancement of her people, and in accordance with our Holy Laws, and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution be forwarded to the proper authorities in Karachi, Washington and London.*⁸⁰

The pages of *Voice of Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, the new name of the united organization gave prominence to news from Pakistan. Its pages from 1948-1950 were filled with news concerning Pakistan and in particular Kashmir. In fact, a section of the journal was titled Pakistan Affairs. To get a deeper appreciation of what was featured in the journal, take a look at the following headlines: "India's Lust for Conquest of Kashmir May lead to World War,"⁸¹ and "In Kashmir India is Obstructing Holding of Plebiscite."⁸² Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan's speech, "the Truth about Kashmir," was featured in the journal as well.⁸³ "Elements" in British Guiana and in India were ridiculed for not accepting that "there are two Dominions," India and Pakistan. There was an outburst of support for Pakistan and a stern warning to India. The editorial of *Islam* accused India of "believing that they could use superior force and power, and crush the smaller nation into abject subservience."⁸⁴ The editorial continued, "this group will have their hopes and dreams founder on a rock of disappointment."⁸⁵ Those "elements" that were against division and especially Muslims were called "so-called Muslims" and "either ashamed of their religion or are too weak to stand firm and declare their spiritual strength."⁸⁶

The Muslim leadership in British Guiana saw themselves as Pakistanis. They defended the creation of Pakistan and rally to her hour of need, while vilifying India. To capulate these sentiments a long quote is taken from an editorial of *Islam*:

To the contrary Muslims are enjoined to tolerate people of different beliefs and faiths. We want to be friends and to live as friendly neighbours with all the

*people of the world, more particularly those in and out of the Indian Union, but what we do object to most seriously and most strenuously is any attempt to dominate or subjugate us. We are prepared to live and cooperate with all our neighbours, but the cooperation must be on the basis of a recognized equality.*⁸⁷

Relationship was further consolidated in 1949 when Mr. R. B. Gajraj travelled to New York to meet Pakistan's first Ambassador to the UN, Mr. M. A. H. Ishpahani. He referred to the Pakistani ambassador as "our ambassador."⁸⁸ Ambassador Ishpahani also reciprocated with a visit to the Muslim community of British Guiana and while there, he lectured them on Muslim unity.

The Sad'r Anjuman was noticeably absent from the many grand celebrations of India's independence in the colony. Nationwide celebrations were held and India's flag was hoisted, but not surprisingly the Sad'r Anjuman did not partake in these celebrations. An observation of reports in the media, fliers and newspapers advertisement in the colony makes it obvious whose side the Anjuman took. However, a smaller and less popular Muslim group, Muslim Association of British Guiana (BGMA) demonstrated solidarity with Hindus throughout the colony and held joint festivities. Mr. M. Azeem Khan of the BGMA said, "And in British Guiana the two sides will continue to live as a united people and the division of the motherland will in no way alter the friendly relationship that exists."⁸⁹ Dr. J. B. Singh of the British Guiana East Indian Association hoisted the flag of India and Moulvi Mohammed Ali of the BGMA hoisted the flag of Pakistan. Also present were Kamrudden Ali, President of the Muslim Youth Organisation and Hussain Ghanie of BGMA.⁹⁰ Interestingly, it was reported in the media that the Muslims of Windsor Forest Mosque hoisted only the flag of Pakistan, while Hindus hosted both Pakistan and India's flags at Ruimzigt and La Jouse.⁹¹

The Qaid-E-Azam Funds

The Qaid-E-Azam funds was established in 1947 during the turbulent period of division for the wretched poor who poured into Pakistan, mainly in Karachi and Lahore. The horror of division was known in British Guiana via newspapers from India and from Pakistani diplomats at the United Nations and in London who fed Caribbean Muslims Pakistani news constantly via the post, and visits to the region. Not surprising, it was through the *jamaat* (community) system that Guyanese Muslims became aware of the brutality and wretched poverty that their brethrens faced during the process of migrating to Pakistan and the emotions was startling. Even after decades, the bond between these people from across many oceans remained strong. Throughout the length and breath of British Guiana, mosques and Muslim owned businesses collected funds for the destitute that fled to Pakistan. They held India responsible for the plight of Muslims.

Islam and Nur-E-Islam brought home emotionally the plight of Muslim refugees during the bloody division. Headlines in local Muslim periodicals read: "The senseless savagery that was loosed upon the Muslims in Bengal, Delhi, and in other Indian States, wherein laks "of our people" were killed, women abducted etc., will forever remain a

blot upon the fair name of India.”⁹² Muslims in British Guiana did not see their brethren in Hindustan as the aggressors but rather they placed the blame squarely on India. They asserted that Muslims “reacted and soon the fire had caught on both states.”⁹³ It’s obvious that the objective of the journal was to bring home the pain of their Muslim brethren and to justify why the need for Pakistan. Helpless and vexed, the Muslims in British Guiana vividly captured the image back in India, “they left their possessions behind “partially starved, with clothes in tatters and nowhere to sleep.”⁹⁴ Guyanese Muslims became aware of the financial hardship faced by the Pakistani Government and its inability to provide sufficient help to Biharis and Uttar Pradeshis refugees who poured into Karachi and Lahore. Ties to these refugees were strong; let’s not forget that the majority of Guyanese Muslims are of Bihari and Uttar Pradeshis ancestry.

The majority of Muslims were farmers and small shop owners yet they dug deep into their pockets for Pakistan. The British Guiana dollar back then had a high value. Donations came from all economic strata, rich and poor, widows and even five Hindus contributed. Widows like the hazel-eyed Begum was Bibi Hamidan, a stern, pious and generous Muslim of Afghan origin of Maida Village, Corentyne contributed to the fund. Many fondly called her *mama* and she indeed like a mother to all. To educate children in *Quran*, she swiftly allowed the lower flat of her house to be used as a *madarsa (Quranic School)*. The author’s great grand mother, Baitullan Khan of Kitty, Georgetown, contributed .96 cents to the Jinnah Fund. Batullan lost her husband, Pheer Khan, when she was still in her 20s. Among other women who contributed were Begum Abdool Rahman of Kitty, a hefty \$50, Mrs. Saheedan, Mrs. Mariam Boodhoo, Mrs. Sakina, and Mrs. Jumnee of Peters Hall, Mrs. Rabbia Khatoon of Versailles, Mrs. Muridan Nowaban of LBI, Mrs. Mariam Hanhi of Triumph, Mrs. S. Razack of Windsor Forest, Begum Zainab Alli of Wakenaam, Mrs. Shakeedan and Begum Hassanally of Bagotstown. Almost every Muslim family from the villages of Maida and Kildonian on the Corentyne coast who were mainly farmers and small shop owners contributed. From the Essequibo Coast to East Bank and from the West Bank Demerara to the West Coast Berbice and to Corentyne Coast, Muslim from all walks of life donated generously to the Jinnah Funds (**see annex 2**).

President and leader of the Guyanese Muslim, Mr. Gajraj was contacted by the first Pakistani High Commissioner to London in 1948, Mr. Habib I. Rahimtullah. It was also through this channel that the Guyanese Muslim leadership received information of events in the subcontinent. *Islam* writes, “His Excellency Mr. Habib I. Rahimullah, asked our Patron, R. B. Gajraj, who was then in London, whether Muslims here would assist.”⁹⁵ *Masjids* throughout Guyana were asked to solicit monies from local Muslims and “Muslims responded nobly to the call.”⁹⁶ Initially, 125 pounds were collected and funds collected later were forwarded. A list was compiled to document those who donated to the Jinnah Funds, and it was published in the Anjuman’s periodical. The sum of about 936.62 BG dollars were collected and delivered in 1948 when Mr. Gajraj travelled to Pakistan and met with Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan and this government.⁹⁷

President of the Sad'r Anjuman, Mr. R. B. Gajraj, donated a large sum of money to the tune of \$240.00, while the Sad'r Anjuman contributed \$50.64. A Mr. Karamat Khan of Mahaicony contributed \$50, Mr. Sardar Mohammed of Essequibo \$ 25, Mr. Sultan A. Hamid of Windsor Forest \$25, Mr. A. Razack of Windsor Forest \$30, Mr. A. Rahaman and the Fyrish Jamaat \$13.90 and Moulvi Abdool Hack and the Albion Jamaat \$25. Interestingly, a few non-Muslims donated to the Pakistan funds, Mr. Sukhai of Essequibo, Mr. Ram, Aurora, Essequibo, Mr. Boodhan Singh and Mr. S. P. Singh of Stabroek market. The famous Guyanese millionaire today, E. Beharry made a modest donation. As well, the well known Gafoors, millionaires of Guyana today contributed \$1.50.

A Village Call Pakistan

In 1947 a small area between La Jalousie and Windsor Forest that was predominantly populated by Muslims was unofficially named Pakistan. There were also some Chinese and Hindus who lived there. The first batch of Chinese immigrants settled in that area. The name was "adopted" by the Muslims who wanted to do something in honour of the establishment of the Moslem state of Pakistan in August of 1947. It was more their affinity to the newly created country which they viewed as their new motherland instead of Hindustan, and more importantly because most all of the villagers were Muslims. Many *ustads* (teachers) and *imams* (religious leaders) who were fluent in Urdu originated here. Not far from here is Philadelphia, where the first mosque in Guyana was erected by Muslim indentured labours. A monument has been placed there to commemorate this important history.

Guyanese in the Pakistan Movement

From their abode of Dir, Afghanistan, to India to British Guiana in 1874 and back to India and then Pakistan, Gool Mohammed Khan Yousufzai and his descendents have left an intricate bond between Guyana and Pakistan. Gool Mohammed Khan was born in 1853 in a small village of Morani of the Nasruddin Khel tribe in the rugged and mountainous district of lower Dir in Afghanistan according to G. M Khan himself in this book, *Unity V Trinity*⁹⁸. Today, the Dir district is part of Pakistan's NWFP province. Britain sliced part of Afghanistan into its empire, which later became part of Pakistan, when the subcontinent was divided in 1947. Dir district today borders Afghanistan to the west, Chitral in the north, Swat in east and Bajaur in the south. It's a mountainous region where most people live in the valley of Dir, and was ruled by a princely dynasty until 1969. Dir has always been a religiously conservative place.

Khan received his early education in various schools and mosques. At the age of sixteen he passed his examination in Arabic, that is, in Fiqa, Sirf and Naho. On February 14, 1869, at the age of sixteen, he started out on foot from Afghanistan to

India since there were no railways or other means of conveyance at the time. He went to India to bring his brother back to Afghanistan as his mother was anxious to see him. His brother was residing in Jaroa State, Rajputana, India. Gool Mohamed completed the journey in 54 days on foot, and Gool Mohamed stayed in India for four years. He resided partly with his brother and partly in the service of the prince.⁹⁹

On learning his mother had died, Gool Mohamed Khan returned to Afghanistan alone in 1873, and then returned to India on August 1874 where he joined the British Regiment. While there he learned Urdu, Hindi and Mathematics. He resigned from the regiment and decided to go to British Guiana in search of a better life.¹⁰⁰

He arrived in British Guiana on May 11, 1877. While waiting at the depot to be drafted to work on the sugar plantation, he was fortuitously recruited to join the Police Force. In his book, *Unity v Trinity*, he recorded his arrival in British Guiana and his accidental recruitment to the Police Force: "I arrived in Guiana on 11th May, 1877 and whilst waiting to be drafted to some batch for the sugar plantation, it happened that the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Mr. Payne, was passing by the Depot, when I saluted him as I took him to be an officer."¹⁰¹ Mr. Payne invited G. M. Khan to join the police force. "I readily consented as I had learnt to my cost that the supposed El Dorado existed only in air not even in paper."¹⁰²

"I was guided by other European Police officers for six months. Fortunately I was able to pick up a little English as much to enable me to perform my duties. It was just a paradox for an Afghan to learn English in those days. One day whilst I was on duty a gentleman (who I subsequently learnt was Reverend Darnell, a priest of Christ Church) asked me if I would give him lessons in Nagri. I agreed provided he taught me English in return. The pact was signed and we were both master and pupil during our respective periods".¹⁰³

During this time, Gool Mohamed Khan was not involved in religious activities. As he indicated in his book, *Unity v Trinity*, "Unfortunately I had no knowledge of Islamic History" and when asked by Reverend Darnell why he did not attend church, he replied: "I have no interest in church".¹⁰⁴ Reverend Darnell gave him a book he had written. Gool Mohamed Khan later revealed "... the perusal of the book lent by Reverend Darnell had such an impression on me that had I not had a sound belief in Islam I would have changed my religion".¹⁰⁵

As a result of the criticisms made by the Christian community of the Prophet Mohammad and Islam, Gool Mohamed Khan was motivated to educate himself about the Quran as well as the Bible. Thus, he followed the historic debates and discourses with the religious leaders of the Christian Church that resulted in the publication of his book, *Unity v Trinity*.¹⁰⁶ The first edition of the book was published in 1910 in British Guiana. It was later discovered that his niece, Begum Akhter Jahan Khan,

published a third edition of the book in August, 1988 in Pakistan. In the publisher's note, she laudably said "...the book is a veritable illustration of a noble act of propagation of Islam and the unity of Allah".¹⁰⁷

Gool Mohamed Khan had a great zeal and fervor for learning more about Islam and other religions. He devoted a considerable amount of time increasing his religious knowledge by reading and educating himself. He appeared to have enjoyed reveling in discussions and debates. He stated, "I found an interest in the argument, and in a short time, I collected over a hundred books, and pamphlets of different religions. I resigned from the police force in 1879, and started my own business, but I was so deeply engrossed that I was always inclined to have an argument with someone, whether Hindu, Christian, or anyone, but the result was creating more bad feeling than benefit. I afterwards discontinued it but still now and then, when my presence was necessary, I used to go and help my Muslim brethren."¹⁰⁸

Another historical achievement of Gool Mohamed Khan and the Afghan community was the building of the Jama Masjid in Guyana. The Juma Masjid in Church Street, Georgetown, a prominent Muslim (Afghan) merchant, in the year 1895 got together a band of fellow Muslims, and it was decided to erect an edifice worthy of the lofty ideals of Islam".¹⁰⁹ The mosque currently is under renovation. In 1947, an article titled, "Do you know your Georgetown? The Juma Masjid, Where Muslims Worship" was published in the Guiana Graphic, a newspaper in British Guiana. The first three paragraphs of the article stated: "The foundation stone of the mosque was laid 52 years ago, in 1895, and the building completed the following year, when it was opened for worship under the late Mr. Gool Mohamed Khan, as the first Imam".¹¹⁰

The article later indicated: "... the late Mr. Gool Mohamed Khan Begum, Gulshanara Wahab and Begum Husanara Khan were born in British Guiana. Begum Husanara Khan was born on June 7, 1887. In 1906 they left British Guiana with their father, Gool Mohamed Khan, who returned to India with his family. Both of these women were widely know for their simplistic lives void of false pretensions. "These ladies demonstrated their scholarly knowledge, intellect, [humility and the zest for a cause.](#)"

In reviewing the book, *Portraits of Two Legendary Women*, written by Begum Akhter Jahan Khan, daughter of Begum G.A. Wahab and niece of Begum Hakam, Payam writes, "both actively participated in social welfare activities and dedicated themselves to the cause of Muslim women and Islam. Mrs. Hakam was one of those few Muslim women who worked with the Quaid-e-Azam"¹¹¹ In fact, as Vice President of All India Muslim Ladies Conference in February 1946 she invited Muhammad Ali Jinnah to address the first ever gathering of women in *pardah* (veil). After listening to Muhammad Ali Jinnah she was convinced and became an advocate of Pakistan. Mrs. Hakkam became know in Calcutta for her "clarion call for the promotion and propagation of the Muslim League" and her efforts were recognized by the media.¹¹² "Mrs. Hakam was an active member of the Pakistan Movement and was one of the few Muslim women who worked with Mohamed Ali Jinnah and

contributed immensely to the cause of Pakistan.”¹¹³ She attended all major Muslim League gathering from 1938-1947 including the historical March 1940 All India Muslim League Session in Lahore where the historic Pakistan Resolution was passed. Mrs. Hakam signed the Pledge of Pakistan fully embracing the call for a Muslim homeland on April 6, 1946 after rupture with the Indian National Congress.¹¹⁴

In 1906 Mrs. Hakkam left British Guiana for India with her family. In 1910, four years after she arrived from her native British Guiana, she was married to Muhammad Mukhlasur Rahman Abdul Hakim, and in 1910 she became a member of the National Indian Association Club, and “later took the interest in the formation of the All India Muslim Women’s Conference, founded by the Begum of Bhopal.”¹¹⁵ She single handedly managed to have a branch of the Conference established in Calcutta. “In 1927, Begum Hakam joined the All India Women’s Conference.”¹¹⁶

Begum Hakam was highly educated and excelled in both her political and civilian careers in India. She has been cited for many distinguished career achievements. Among her singular accomplishments, she was an elected member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly. “The Begum was the first women Honorary magistrate in Calcutta in the late 1920s and performed her duties diligently mixing up with men, keeping herself in veil throughout her life.”¹¹⁷ She was the founder of the M. A. Girls Scout in Calcutta and the Jamiat Khawateen for women in Pakistan. Mrs. Hakam played a pivotal role for the emancipation of Muslim women in India and Pakistan including East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and dedicated herself to elevate their social and moral standards and for the cause of female education. She was the first lady Honorary Magistrate in Calcutta (1927) and an elected Member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly (1946).

She was the only female member of the All India Muslim League Council for Bengal, which was involved in the creation of Pakistan. “By the 1930s, she started taking part in the League’s activities and was taken on the Women’s Central Sub-Committee in 1941 and helped in strengthening the provincial sub-committee of which she was a leading member since its formation.”¹¹⁸ After two years, she was again nominated on the central sub-committee where she worked “incessantly for the famine-stricken people of Bengal.”¹¹⁹ Mrs. H. A Hakam was a remarkable and extraordinary woman who selflessly dedicated her life for the good and welfare of people, particularly the poor and orphans. Also, she was an active member of many benevolent and charitable women’s organizations.”¹²⁰ “She made donations, collected food, clothes, medicines etc., for the suffering people. About this time she also founded an orphanage known as Bait-ul-Afzal, at Calcutta, which was shifted to Dacca after independence.”¹²¹

As the communal mayhem engulfed the Bengal and other parts of India, partition was inevitable and, Mrs. Hakam life became consumed in “popularizing the League’s cause and helped enrolling a large number of women in the Muslim League.”¹²² “In

1945, she toured the NWF Province as a delegate of the Central Sub-Committee for the League election campaign."¹²³ One year later she went to Bihar to help the provincial women's sub-committee in its relief work."¹²⁴

After independence, Qaid-E-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah requested that Begum Hakam stay in Calcutta where she had to supervise the hundreds of thousands of helpless Muslims. She took on the role of a politician, mother, and social worker which she was too familiar with. Her task was enormous and exacerbated by the large number of homeless Muslims due to communal riots. Begum Hakam migrated to Pakistan when living in Calcutta became unbearable.¹²⁵

"The two sisters worked without respite for the rehabilitation of the uprooted Muslims in Pakistan."¹²⁶ Soon after, in the early 1970s they faced another crisis, the civil war in East Pakistan in 1971. Non-Bengalis who supported the Pakistani army action in East Pakistan "were termed collaborators and made targets of attacks by local people."¹²⁷ She had another enormous responsibility to look after "thousands of injured men, women and children" who flocked to Dakka's Mohammadpur and with little resources Begum Akhter Jahan Khan took it upon her self to look after them.¹²⁸

From their abode of Dir, Afghanistan, Gool Muhammad Khan's adventure took him to India, to British Guiana and back to India, and his descendents ended up in Pakistan. He made history in British Guiana, now Guyana after publishing the pamphlet, *Unity and Trinity* in defence of Islam. Also, he built the famous Jama Masjid in Georgetown, Guyana and then brought his family back to India and then to Pakistan leaving behind a son and a daughter in Guyana who were never reunited with the family in South Asia. Khan and his descendents such as the two legendary women, Begum Husanara Hakam and Gulshanara Wahab, leaving the obscurity of Guyana, made history in India and Pakistan. Widely travelled and respected, Mrs. Hakam was the founder and office-bearer of a number of social and cultural organizations. Begum Akhter Jahan Khan writes, "My late mother, Mrs. G. A. Wahab and my late father Dr. A. Wahab actively participated in social and welfare activities, and played dominant roles in promoting education. "Mrs. Wahab, however, dedicated herself to the cause of Muslim women and Islam and vigorously pursued her missionary zeal to bring about radical changes in Muslim women's attitude towards developing modern education and the Islamic way of life."¹²⁹ Mrs. H. A Hakam died October 30, 1985 in Karachi, Pakistan. She was 98 years.

Pakistan Mothers Overseas Hindustanis

After its creation in 1947, Pakistan quickly consolidated relationships with the Muslims of British Guiana because of their common ethnic and religious affiliations. This relationship was cultivated through the state of Pakistan and the Pakistani *Ullema* (Muslim intelligentsia). Pakistan's first ambassador to the United

Nations, Al Haj Mirza Abdul Hassan Ispahani made an official visit to British Guiana in 1947.¹³⁰ Relationship was established with the Muslim community in British Guiana, and thought the missions in New York and London information was disseminated to the local Muslims about developments in Pakistan. Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK wrote to Mr. R. B. Gajraj and lobbied for the financial and political support from Guyanese Muslims. In referring to the IABG, who were against partition, he wrote, "It is to be hoped that this small percentage will soon realize that their interests lie entirely with Pakistan."¹³¹ He wrote, "It is to be hoped that this small percentage will soon realize that their interests lie entirely with Pakistan."¹³² The hard work of the Pakistani political and religious establishment did make an impact because Pakistan did become the religious and cultural citadel of Muslim decedents of these early Hindustani Muslims. Mosques, villages, and streets in Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad were named to celebrate the birth of Pakistan.

Mr. Rahman Baksh Gajraj though the Pakistani Ambassador in the United States secured scholarships for local Muslims at various Universities in Pakistan. Dr. Imdad Hussain, Educational and Cultural Attaché to the Embassy advised that "the University of the Punjab has created three free scholarships"- each for Muslim Students from Guyana and East Africa or other foreign countries in the field of science, oriental and arts.¹³³

The over zealous Pakistani religious establishment was poised to take on the responsibility for the overseas Hindustani Muslims. Famous, Pakistani Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqi al Qaderi, Maulana Fazlur Rahman Ansari, and Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani are household names among Muslims in British Guiana, Suriname and Trinidad. They actively became the spiritual leaders of Muslims Guyana. Referring to "Indian" Muslims of South Africa, Maulana Aleem Siddiqi urged them to be faithful to their adopted homeland, South Africa. He lectured the Muslims: "Consequently I advised the Muslims of South Africa with all the force at my command to scratch the word "Indian" and adopt the South African nationality forthwith, so that they may be able to identify themselves with their country of adoption."¹³⁴ Not surprisingly, he was aware of the overseas Hindustani Muslims in the Caribbean and elsewhere. He warned, "This advice however is not only confined to the Muslims of South African, but is also equally meant for all those Muslim populations of Indo-Pakistani origin which are found today in such countries as Ceylon, East Africa, Malaya, Indonesia, Australia, Trinidad, British Guiana, Fiji, Mauritius and Reunion."¹³⁵ After the division, a handful of Indian Muslims left Guyana and opted for Pakistani citizenship. The *Maulana* advised overseas Hindustanis to stay faithful to their adopted homeland but "should certainly have the highest love and sympathy for Pakistan."¹³⁶

Prior to the division of India, in 1937 Maulana Shamsuddin visited British Guiana. This was followed by Maulana Fazlur Rahman Ansari, Maulana M. Aleem Siddiqui in 1959 and Maulana Ahmad Shah Noorani Siddique in 1968. Muslim missionaries from Pakistan and especially through the *tabligh jamaat* regularly visited the Islamic communities in Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad, where they were often received with

euphoria. Consistently they have tried to unite the different Islamic organizations, and have tried to mediate in order to bridge differences among the Muslims in these countries. They became the theological authorities on *fiqh*, (Islamic laws), and advise locals on a wide range of religious, social and political issues as they relate to Islam. They have also helped in providing Islamic literature, teachers and scholarships for Caribbean Muslims. There is great excitement when religious, political, civic and sports personalities from Pakistan visit Guyana. Many Muslim families have named their children after Pakistani cricketers. The strong bond between Pakistan and Guyana that existed since 1947 was evident when Pakistan attended Guyana's independence celebration in 1966 and presented a stunning oriental rug to the new nation. A few years later, the two countries established diplomatic ties and in the 1980s they exchanged honorary consuls in Georgetown and in Karachi. Muslims from Guyana travelled to Pakistan to study Islamic theology as well as secular subjects.¹³⁷ Since the independence of Guyana, the Pakistani High Commissioner to Canada has been accredited to Guyana and makes frequent visits to the Muslim Community of Guyana.

Conclusion

This paper centers on the overseas Hindustani Muslim community of British Guiana during the turbulent period of 1947 and examined the role they played in the creation of Pakistan. In addition, it brings to light an extraordinary figure in the history of Muslims and Islam in Guyana, Gool Mohammad Khan and his descendants, Begum Husn Ara Khan (Begum Hakam) and Jahan Ara Khan (Mrs. Wahab) whom were active participants in the creation of Pakistan with Muhammad Ali Jinnah. In doing so, this paper reexamined briefly the series of events that pushed the "ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity," Mohammed Ali Jinnah to demand a Muslim homeland in the subcontinent in 1947. It is evident that the majority of Muslims of British Guiana identified and supported the creation of Pakistan; it is conclusive that the Muslim leadership of British Guiana and its large following did give moral, political and financial support to Pakistan. As communalism engulfed Northern India, the Muslim leadership in British Guiana saw division as inevitable and they rallied behind Pakistan. Mr. Jinnah emerged as a hero among British Guianese Muslims, and the division of India along religious lines was supported by the largest and most powerful Islamic organization in British Guiana, the Sad'r Anjuman-E-Islam which became the mouthpiece of Pakistan during the late forties to the fifties. The Muslim leadership moved their followers through the jamaat system to identify and support Pakistan, and they perceived India as the villain. Interestingly, the Muslim leadership in British Guiana saw themselves as Pakistanis, referred to Hindustani Muslims as "our people" and Mr. Jinnah as "our leader." Both Pakistan and the local Muslims identified with each: moral, financial, social and political supports were reciprocal. Pakistan then replaced India as the cultural and religious abode of the decedents of Hindustani Muslim emigrants who began arriving in British Guiana from 1838 to 1917, and to this day, Pakistan holds a special place in the hearts of Muslim Guyana.

Annexes # 1:

Qaid E Azam Refugee Relief Funds

Source: Voice of Islam, Georgetown, British Guiana, March 1948



2

Ode to Qaid -E-Azam

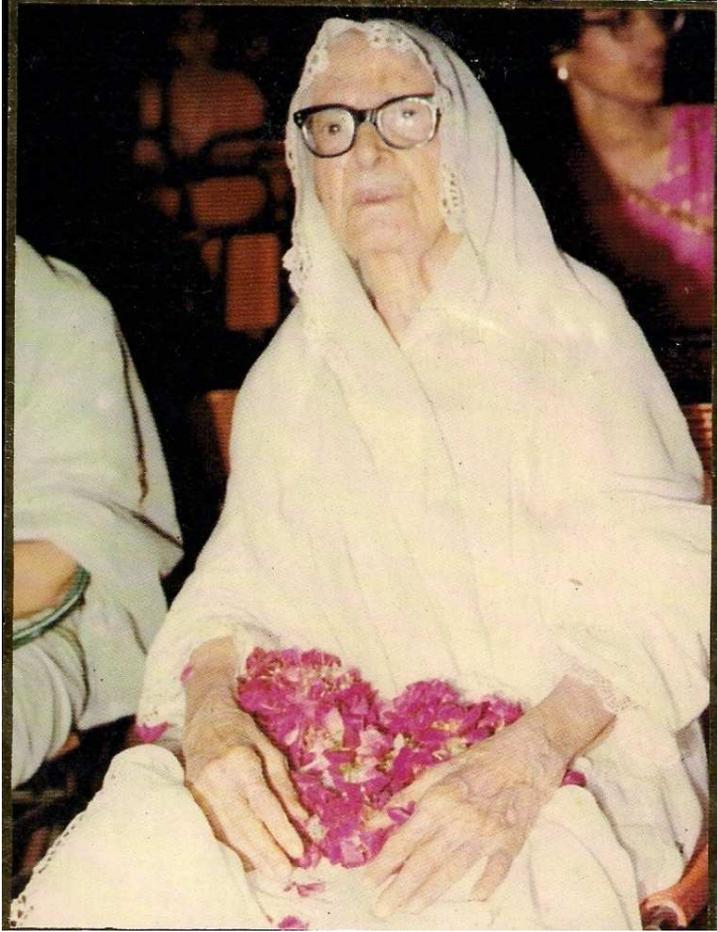
Islam and Nur-E-Islam, Georgetown, British Guyana, January 1950

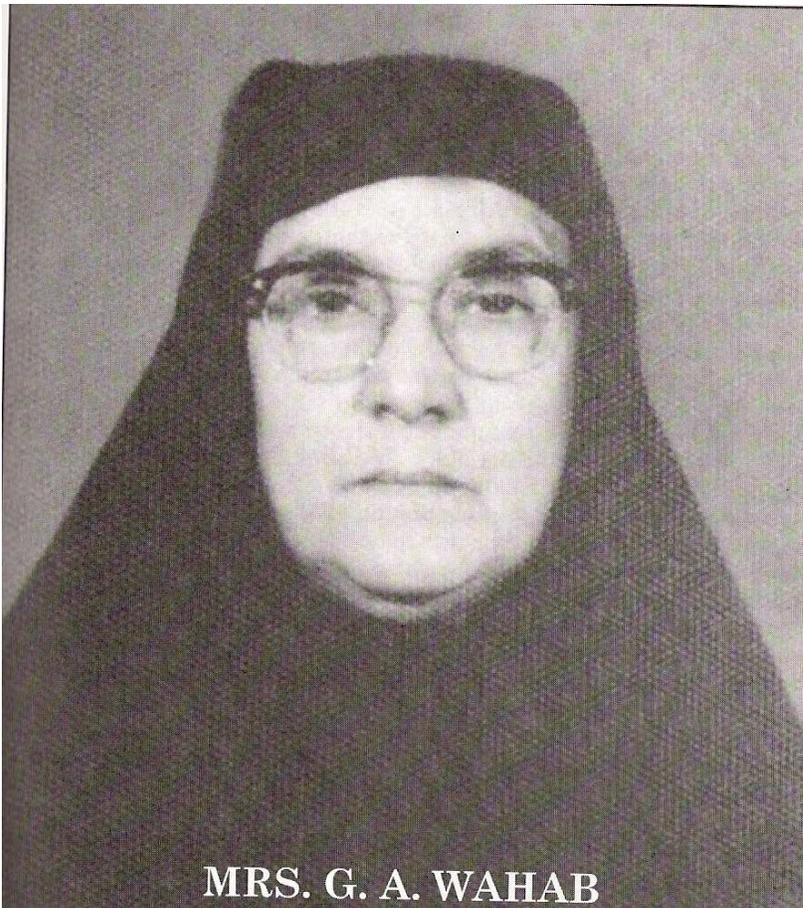




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MRS. G. A. WAHAB

End Notes:

¹ Consequently, India will be addressed in this paper as Hindustan, the Persian name of India that Indian Muslims have come to know.

² Guyana and British Guiana are used interchangeably; British Guiana is the pre independence name for what is now Guyana.

³ F. P.L Josa, *The Apostle of the Indians of Guiana*, Project Canterbury, available online at: <http://anglicanhistory.org/sa/gy/brett/02.html>

⁴ Ibid.,

⁵ *Islam and Nur -E-Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, January, 1950, p. 23.

⁶ Muslims, Indian Diaspora Supplement, *Trinidad Guardian*, May 30, 2000, pp. 4-6.

⁷ Ibid.

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- ⁸ Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*: Delhi, Oxford Press, 1996, p.69.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.70 &71.
- ¹⁰ K.O. A, *Question of Labour: Indentured Immigration into Trinidad & British Guiana, 1875-191*, New York: 1994 and David Hollet, *Passage from India to El Dorado: Guyana and the Great Migration*: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. NJ, 1999.
- ¹¹ Author during field research found some Muslims who still read and speak Farsi which support evidence in various Muslim periodicals that a handful of learned Muslim spoke Farsi such as Haji Shakoor.
- ¹² This information was extracted from the immigration records stored at the National Archives of Guyana.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Voice of Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, April 1948, p. 53 and *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, March 1949, p. 31.
- ¹⁵ Raymond Chickrie, "Muslims in Guyana: History, Traditions, Conflict and Change," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 2, October 1999, pp. 181-191.
- ¹⁶ *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, January 1950, p. 23, *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, March-April 1949, p.6, and *Voice of Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, March 1948, p.6.
- ¹⁷ A. Samadeen, Ode to Qaid-E-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, January 1950, p. 23.
- ¹⁸ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah Pakistan and Islamic Identity*: London, Routledge, 1997, pp.116-118.
- ¹⁹ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Jinnah: how much secular, how much communal," The Milli Gazette Online, available on line at: <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/2005/01-15July05-Print-Edition/011507200552.htm>, accessed September 29, 2007.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah Pakistan*, p. 3 & 4.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p.4.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p.10.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.
- ²⁶ Ikram Azam, *Pakistan Reflections*: Karachi: Kifayat Academy, 1987.p. 3.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.* (P for Punjab, A for Afghan (Pathans), K for Kashmir, S for Sind and stan Persian suffix for country, as well Pakistan comes from the Persian term, Pak meaning pure or virgin).
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*: London, Oxford University, 2001. p. 238.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah Pakistan*, pp.7 & 8.
- ³⁴ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah Pakistan*, p.38.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.80.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.45.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.113-115.
- ³⁸ Yoginder Sikand, "Advani and Jinnah," June 5, 2005, available online at: http://www.awaazsaw.org/weblog/2005_06_05_awaazlogarc.html, accessed September 28, 2007.
- ³⁹ Yoginder Sikand, "People's History of Partition, Pakistan came into being not simply because of Muslim Communalism," available on line at: <http://www.himalmag.com/oct2000/review.html>, accessed September 29, 2007.
- ⁴⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery*, pp. 388-390.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 530.

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- ⁴² Percival Spear. *A History of India*. Vol. 2.: New Delhi, Penguin press, 1990, p. 229.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
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- ⁴⁵ Stanley Wolpert, *India*, California: University of California Press, 1991, p. 102.
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- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- ⁴⁸ Asghar Ali Engineer, “*Jinnah: how much secular, how much communal*,” The Milli Gazette, available online: <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/2005/01-15July05-Print-Edition/011507200552.htm>, accessed August 10, 2007.
- ⁴⁹ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah Pakistan*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
- ⁵⁰ Asghar Ali Engineer, “*Jinnah: how much*”, *op. cit.*
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- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.57.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ A. Samadeen, Ode to Qaid-E-Azam, *op.cit.* p. 23.
- ⁵⁷ “President Rahaman B. Gajraj, Guest at United Nations Assembly,” *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, 1949, p.31.
- ⁵⁸ A. Samadeen, Ode to Qaid-E-Azam, *op. cit.*p. 23.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.23.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ Asghar Ali Engineer, “*Jinnah: how much*”, *op. cit.* and Ram Puniyani, “*Partition culprit*”, *op. cit.*
- ⁶⁵ Jaswant Singh, *Jinnah, India-Partition and Independence*, Rupa Publishing, New Delhi, 2009.
- ⁶⁶ Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff, Ellen BAL and Alok Deo Singh., *Autobiography of an Indian Indentured Labourer-Munshi Rahman Khan*, Delhi: Shipra, 2005, p. 78.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰ Chandra Jayawardena, “Culture and Ethnicity in Guyana and Fiji,” *Man, New Series*, Vol. 15, No. 3. September 1980, p.436.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 434.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁴ Johannes Gerrit de Kruijf, *Guyana Junction*. Dutch University Press, Utrecht, Netherlands, 1998, p.
- ⁷⁵ *Voice of Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, April 1948, pp. 6-7.
- ⁷⁶ “Qaid-E-Azam Refugee Relief Fund.” *Voice Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana, March 1948, p.27 (publication of British Guiana’s strongest and largest Islamic Organisation of that period, after the British Guiana Islamic Association merged with the Sad’r in 1947 and the two Journals *Voice of Islam* and *Nur-E-Islam* merged.
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- ⁷⁸ “Together we stand,” *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, Georgetown, British Guiana , March-April 1949, p.6.
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- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*
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- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 10-11.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.12.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.12.
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- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, and Centennial Magazine, brochure, Queenstown Jama Masjid, Georgetown: Guyana, 1995, p. 23.
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- ¹¹⁴ Begum Akhter Jahan Khan, p. 64.
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¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Akhtar Payami.

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