

The rising of the muslim league



The prominent leaders that helped form the Muslim League for example leaders like Sir Salimullah who initially sketched a plan for an all India Muslim organisation, which was seconded by Hakim Ajmal Khan and Sir Sayed and other Muslim leaders like Ameer Ali who disapproved of the Indian National Congress as being pro-Hindu and believed that the party could not represent the Muslim community to its full potential and hence lead to the rise of the Muslim League.

Muslim orthodoxy or its patrons in elite sections in the community with the sword of 'religious identity' and slogan - 'Islam is in danger' continuously challenged the political awakening in Indian society if it directly or indirectly affected their superior status and influence. They therefore viewed the democratic and secular movement launched by the Congress as challenge to their supremacy over the Hindus. Another reason was the Acceptance of Devanagari script and Hindi as an official language of United Province now Uttar Pradesh in place of Persian in 1900 by Lieutenant Governor A. Macdonnel was another significant development to stir the Muslims on communal line. No such aggressive resistance was made when the British replaced Persian with English in late thirties of nineteenth century. Sir Sayed Ahmed died in 1898 but his followers in defense of Urdu language launched agitation against the decision of the representative of British power in United Province.

On first October 1906 a 35-member delegation of the Muslim nobles, aristocracies, legal professionals and other elite section of the community mostly associated with Aligarh movement gathered at Simla under the leadership of Aga Khan to present an address to Lord Minto. They demanded

proportionate representation of Muslims in government jobs, appointment of Muslim judges in High Courts and members in Viceroy's council etc. Though, Simla deputation failed to obtain any positive commitment from the Viceroy, it worked as a catalyst for foundation of AIML to safeguard the interests of the Muslims.[1]

Chapter II

2. 1 This chapter will deal in brief about the Leagues most prolific leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Born in Karachi in 1876, eldest son of a wealthy Muslim merchant, young Jinnah was shipped off to London alone at age 16 to study business management. During his next three years in the bustling capital of Victoria's booming Empire, Jinnah's eager mind focused on politics and the law rather than commerce. He was inspired by the "Grand Old Man" of India's National Congress, Dadabhai Naoroji, just elected to Britain's House of Commons, whose maiden speech Jinnah heard from the balcony.

Jinnah was called to London's Bar from Lincoln's Inn in 1896, and returned home to launch his singularly successful legal career in Bombay. At 34, he was elected to serve as the Bombay Presidency's Muslim representative on the Viceroy's Central Legislative Council, whose members then included ex-Congress president Gopal Krishna Gokhale, hailed by Mahatma Gandhi as "my political guru". Gokhale's high regard for Jinnah's integrity, intellect and moderation is reflected in the sobriquet he coined for his junior colleague, "best ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity". And in December of 1916 Jinnah managed in Lucknow to bring India's National Congress and the hitherto far

more conservative and loyalist Muslim League together in demanding the same set of post-War representative reforms, which Jinnah drafted, the Lucknow Pact. Before the end of World War I, then, Jinnah was the most prominent young leader of both major political organisations in British India, his fearless opposition to Bombay's arch-conservative governor, Lord Willingdon, moreover, won him the adulation of Bombay's youth at war's end. Jinnah's love of the law was too great, to allow him to adopt the revolutionary method of Satyagraha launched by Mahatma Gandhi in protest against those black acts and against Dyer's subsequent brutal massacre of unarmed peasants in Amritsar's Jallianwala Bagh that dark April of 1919. Though Jinnah tried at Nagpur's Congress session in 1920 to argue against Gandhi's revolutionary resolutions, fearing they would lead to more violence, he was outvoted, booed and heckled from the pandal, leaving the Congress to Gandhi's undisputed leadership, soon afterwards leaving India to live in London.

Elections were held throughout British India under the Government of India Act of 1935 in 1937, and the Congress, thanks in great measure to Jawaharlal Nehru's charismatic campaigning, won a clear victory in most provinces. The League, confronting a number of regional Muslim party competitors, was unable to claim a single province, mustering only 109 seats, compared to Congress' 716. Nehru, therefore, insisted there were only "two forces" left in India, the Congress and the British, urging all others to "line up". Jinnah refused, however, to accept Nehru's invitation. "There is a third party in this country and that is the Muslims," he said. That December of 1937 the Muslim League met again in Lucknow. President Jinnah

addressed his devoted followers, dressed no longer as a British barrister, donning instead the black Persian lamb cap and black sherwani in which he would soon become famous the world over as Quaid-i-Azam of the Muslim nation, soon to be born as Pakistan. Jinnah hereafter charged Congress' leadership with alienating all Muslims by pursuing an "exclusively Hindu" policy. Mahatma Gandhi's "revolution" and his leadership Jinnah now viewed as anti-Muslim, totally "Hindu". Nor would several prolonged summit meetings with Gandhi in Jinnah's Malabar Hill-top home ever change his mind. Jinnah insisted that unless Gandhi and his Congress admitted their Hindu bias, and recognised his Muslim League as the only political party representative of British India's Muslim population there could be no solution to south Asia's Hindu-Muslim conflict and "civilisational divide", short of Partition.

Mountbatten decided to opt for Partition, as Krishna Menon and Nehru had advised. Mountbatten, of course, easily convinced Nehru to ask him and Edwina to linger on a bit longer in Delhi as dominion India's first governor-general, though hard as he tried could not persuade Jinnah to agree to offer him that same job in Pakistan. After partition Jinnah opted instead to serve as his own governor-general, equal in rank to Mountbatten. An appropriate honour for Pakistan's founding father, but one he could only enjoy for the last single pain-filled year of his life.[2]

Chapter III

The formation of AIML was a major landmark in the history of modern India. The first formal entry of a centrally organized political party exclusively for Muslims had the following objectives:

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To promote among the Muslims of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government, and remove any misconception that may arise as to the instruction of Government with regard to any of its measures.

To protect and advance the political rights and interests of Muslims of India, and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government.

To prevent the rise among the Muslims of India of any feeling of hostility towards other communities without prejudice to the afore-mentioned objects of the League.[3]

The Muslim league should be given place in the legislature commensurate with their services rendered to the British Empire

Reservation in the services for the Muslims.

Pre-instatement in the High Courts and the other lower Courts.

Muslim election board should be established.[4]

Chapter IV

4. 1 Ideologies and of the Muslim league.

A lot of the members of the Muslim league were elites representing the heritage of Mughal aristocratic culture but these members were separated from the Muslim masses, and unlike their Bengali counterparts, they were at odds with the ulama, who exercised considerable influence over the peasantry. The elites represented a foreign culture: they spoke in Urdu and Hindustani, boasted of foreign racial origin and tried to preserve Delhi and Lucknow court culture where as on the other end there were the Bengali

speaking muslims known as ajlaf. This diversity in the members of the muslim league could be the reason for its poor support in the first general elections. The congress with its charismatic leaders and diversity and member from different walks of life obviously had the upper hand when it came to public support.

At a League conference in Lahore in 1940, Jinnah said: “ 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.”[5]

This was actually said by Jinnah in one of his speeches this gives us a fair idea into the minds sets of the Members of the Muslim League and its members and their ideology. At this point they were already starting to feel insecure about their position in the Indian socio and political scenario and hence believed that a separate region for the Muslims would be the only solution.

Chapter V

5. 1 Achievements of the Muslim League:

Initially AIML remained a pocket organization of urbanized Muslims. However, the support of the British Government to the political Islamists in their non-secular intention as well as contemptuous attitude towards majority rule helped the League to become the sole representative body of Indian

Muslims. To confront the challenge of modern political system, the AIML successfully achieved the status of separate electorates for the Muslims within three years of its formation. It was the first big achievement of the party, which granted separate constitutional identity to the Muslims.

Lucknow Pact in 1916 put official seal on the separate identity of Muslims, which was another landmark in the separatist movement launched by the AIML.[6]

5. 2 The Lucknow Pact:

The Lucknow Pact was in a way, an effort to compromise between the Congress and Muslim League. A joint meeting of the Congress and the Muslim League was held in 1915 at Bombay, which was followed by the second joint meeting in Lucknow in 1916.

The Home rule movement and the First World War had developed national awareness among the Muslims too. Seeds of extremism had been sown in the Muslim community as well. Maulana Abdul Kalam's newspaper "Al Hilal" and Muhammad Ali's "Comrade" had filled the Muslim mind with nationalism. Consequently this led to the formation of the Lucknow Pact and the objectives of the Pact are as follows:

1. There shall be self-government in India.
2. Muslims should be given one-third representation in the central government.
3. There should be separate electorates for all the communities until a community demanded for joint electorates.

4. System of weight age should be adopted.
5. The number of the members of Central Legislative Council should be increased to 150.
6. At the provincial level, four-fifth of the members of the Legislative Councils should be elected and one-fifth should be nominated.
7. The strength of Provincial legislative should not be less than 125 in the major provinces and from 50 to 75 in the minor provinces.
8. All members, except those nominated, were to be elected directly on the basis of adult franchise.
9. No bill concerning a community should be passed if the bill is opposed by three-fourth of the members of that community in the Legislative Council.
10. Term of the Legislative Council should be five years.
11. Members of Legislative Council should themselves elect their president.
12. Half of the members of Imperial Legislative Council should be Indians.
13. Indian Council must be abolished.
14. The salaries of the Secretary of State for Indian Affairs should be paid by the British Government and not from Indian funds.
15. Out of two Under Secretaries, one should be Indian.
16. The Executive should be separated from the Judiciary.[7]

Chapter VI

6. 1 The Notion of Pakistan

This chapter will deal with the ill effects of the formation of the Muslim league, it is widely known that the Muslim league was formed in order to gain favoring over the Indian Congress when it came to the British. The Muslims went to such an extent to gain attention that they propagated the notion of a separate dominion in the country for the Muslims which would be under the country but would have weak central influence but this notion escalated into a different result altogether which resulted into partition. This chapter shall deal with that issue in detail.

Muhammad Iqbal is credited with having suggested it in his address as President of the League session 1930. But the fact is that Iqbal was not thinking in terms of Partition of India, but in the terms of a federation autonomous from India. Not a strong central government, but a federation of provinces enjoying the largest possible autonomy was apparently his solution for the communal problem. But not heed was then paid to his suggestion.

The idea was suggested by a student in Cambridge University 1930 whose name was Chowdhry Rahmat Ali he published a pamphlet " Now or Never" in 1933 in which the idea of Pakistan was explained. But the Muslims who came to London to assist the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1933, when pointedly asked about their opinion on the Pakistan plan, dismissed it as a school-boyish exercise, a chimera.[8]

The scenario changed completely for the league when in the famous Lahore session the Pakistan Resolution was adopted on March 23, 1940. Jinnah reiterated the two-nation theory highlighting the social, political, economic, and cultural differences of the two communities.

There was no turning back for the league after the Pakistan Resolution. The league followed a policy of cooperation with the British government and did not support the Quit India movement of August 1942. The league was determined to have a separate Muslim state, whereas the congress was opposed to the idea of partition. Reconciliation was not possible, and talks between Gandhi and Jinnah for a united India in September 1944 failed. After the end of World War II, Great Britain did not have the economic or political resources to hold the British Empire in India. It decided to leave India finally and ordered elections to central and provincial legislatures. In the election of December 1945 the league won all 30 seats reserved for Muslims with 86 percent of the votes in the elections. The congress captured all the general seats with 91 percent of the votes. In the provincial elections of February 1946, the league won 440 seats reserved for Muslims out of a total of 495 with 75 percent of the votes.

Flush with success, the Muslim members gathered in April for the Delhi convention and demanded a sovereign state and two constitution-making bodies. Jinnah addressed the gathering, after winning the elections saying that Pakistan should be established without delay. It would consist of the Muslim majority areas of Bengal and Assam in the east and the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind, and Baluchistan in the west. The British government had dispatched a cabinet mission in March to transfer power.

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The league accepted the plan of the cabinet mission, but the league working committee in July withdrew its earlier acceptance and called for a Direct Action Day on August 16.

The league joined the interim government in October but decided not to attend the Constituent Assembly. In January 1947 the Muslim League launched a “ direct action” against the non-Muslim League government of Khizr Hayat Tiwana (1900-75) of the Punjab. Partition was inevitable, and the new viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten (1900-79), began to talk with leaders from the league as well as the congress to work out a compromise formula. On June 3, 1947, it was announced that India and Pakistan would be granted independence. The Indian Independence Act was passed by the British parliament in July, and the deadline was set for midnight on August 14-15. The demand of the league for a separate state was realized when the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was born on August 14.[9]

Chapter VII

The Congress wasted precious time denouncing the British rather than allaying Muslim fears during the highly charged election campaign of 1946. Even the more mature Congress leaders, especially Gandhi and Nehru, failed to see how genuinely afraid the Muslims were and how exhausted and weak the British had become in the aftermath of the war.

Prior to partition the relationship between the Indian Congress and the Muslim League was very strained as the researcher has stated earlier the leaders at the beginning were not opting for the partition of India but wanted a dominion status for a Muslim majority state but because of the

discrepancies between the Muslim and Hindu leaders Partition was inevitable. The Muslim leaders were also beginning to feel that in order to have any type of proper of Muslim representation of the Muslim community and in order not to be in the supremacy of the Indian National Congress it would have to opt for partition in order to rule its people better, with proper representation.

Chapter VIII

7. 1 Separatist Trends:

A question which has been constantly asked for years. How had the ' Great Divide' between Britain, India and Pakistan come about and why had partition arrived hand-in-hand with independence.

The two explanations which still have the widest currency, however, are little more than elevations to the level of historiography of the polemic of the leading protagonists in the pre-independence struggle. Most Pakistani historians still explain Muslim separatism in the terms of two nation theory which was the Muslim League's creed in the 1940s, while Indian historians claim that it was the result of the deliberate British policy of Divide and Rule, an argument which was first raised by Jawaharlal Nehru in the 1930s. They along with other Indian nationalist historians , point in particular to the British granting of separate electorates and communal representations in the legislatures as an intentional policy to create inter communal political conflict and to prevent the growth of nationalist spirit.[10]

Thus the researcher believes the separatist trends emerged due to the governing policies of the British that created the rift between the Hindu and

the Muslims, two communities that were living in comparative harmony for 800 years before the advent of the British entry now were hostile to each other because of the insecurities that the British had created between them.

Chapter IX

9. 1 Shortcomings of the Muslim League:

Its efforts to use Islam as a mass mobiliser had made little impact because its religious appeals were mediated by outsiders the major leaders lacked personal influence in the villages and because they were based on sources of Muslims authority, the Quran, the alim, and the mosque which were unimportant to the 'pir-ridden' villagers.[11]Whereas the congress had Gandhiji with whom the villagers related to in contrast to the high society Muslim leaders of the Muslim League.

Historians have usually explained the Muslim League's growth in terms of the mass support for Pakistan. 'The bulk of the landed aristocracy remained loyal to the idea of a united India', hence did not give full support to the Muslim leagues propagandas. Shahid Burki, for example declared, 'these provinces [Punjab, Sind, and the North west frontier] became Pakistan because a majority of their population were Muslims and not because the politically powerful landed aristocracy gave Jinnah's movement overwhelming support. This study of the Leagues development in the key province of Punjab was revealed, however, that the rural elite's support was crucial to its success. The landlords' and pirs' command of the rural population's votes was far more important in mobilizing support for the League than the popularity of its demand for Pakistan].[12]This proving the

fact it was still leaders at the grass root level that gained whatever support the Muslim League had.

CONCLUSION

The researcher believes that the formation of the Muslim League was inevitable with a country like ours where there is so much diversity even till today a lot of communities feel that they are neglected and poorly represented in comparison to majority, hence this was the same feeling and ideology that lead to the formation of the Muslim League. It was a sad and inevitable fact and truth that partition happened due to the split in the National Congress and differences between the Hindu and Muslim leaders. Had the British not instigated the communities so much with its divide and rule policy we would have been looking at a different Indian map now. If only the notion of Muhammad Iqbal of dominion status within the country was recognized.

The researcher believes that yes there would have been conflicts between the two communities with the creation of this dominion but the effects would not have been as grave as partition as lasting as the constant conflicts that India has with Pakistan.

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