

## **A JOURNEY IN HISTORY: FROM SAFEGUARDS FOR THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF THE INDO-PAK SUB-CONTINENT TO THE PAKISTAN RESOLUTION**

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### **Abstract**

*This article is an analysis of the Muslim politics in the sub continent from 1857-1940. It is common knowledge that there was a growing consciousness amongst the Muslims of the subcontinent of their separate existence as a nation during the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But till 1940 Muslims in general and their political organization, Muslim League, in particular, were not ready for the demand of a separate homeland for the Muslims. Their aim in politics was just the safeguard of their rights as a separate entity within united India. They felt that parliamentary democracy based on the rule of majority was not in their interest unless certain measures were guaranteed for the minorities particularly the largest minority, the Muslims. The political atmosphere in India was changing rapidly. The Congress Ministries from 1937-39 proved to be an eye opener for the Muslims and the Muslim League. The Muslim League acknowledged it needed to reorganize itself and work towards mass participation and only then its political career could be secured. Furthermore it felt it needed an alternative path. It was ready to face the bitter reality that Hindus and Muslims could not survive within united India. It was time that Muslims demanded a separate homeland for themselves and finally in March 1940 from the platform of Muslim League a resolution was passed for the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent. This was the famous Lahore Resolution or Pakistan Resolution which then became the centre of the political struggle of the Muslims of the subcontinent.*

In colonial India, Hindus and Muslims emerged as two distinct, separate entities each with its own separate interests. Hindus being the majority were looking forward to such times when India would be de-colonized, and they would acquire Political Power. Muslims as a minority, wanted certain safeguards for their interests. In the beginning the Muslims were content only with the demands of reservation of seats, separate electorates and principle of weightage, but gradually events took such a turn that, they started dreading the possible rule of Hindu majority. They feared such times when they would be crushed under the tyranny of the majority for whom not only ethical and moral values but also democratic political values did not exist.

Very gradually voices were heard amongst the Muslims asking for total separation of their ways. Whether it was Bazme Shibli, Gul Khan, Maulana Obeidullah Sindhi, Ch. Rehmat Ali or Allama Iqbal, to name the few amongst many, there was a demand for a



separate state for the Muslims and in March 1940, in Lahore from the platform of the All India Muslim League under the presidentship of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah a resolution was passed which is commonly known as the 'Pakistan Resolution'. Muslims of India had now determined their path. Their destiny was to be Pakistan, a separate homeland.

The nineteenth century brought many changes to the Indo-Pak Sub-continent. It was in this century that India became a part of the British Empire and it was the colonization of India that formally brought to an end the centuries old rule of the Muslims. It was also in this very century that a wave of Hindu nationalism started sweeping all over India. It started with people like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who wanted to reform the Hindu society and wanted to bring about a positive change in it. But unfortunately this wave of nationalism lost its positive colour, became negative in nature and targeted the Muslims of the Sub-continent. There was a widespread antagonism and hatred against the Muslims. These nationalists felt that the presence of an imperial power gave them the opportunity not only for the redress of their centuries old grievances, but also to take revenge from the Muslims.

The Muslims of the Sub-continent on the other hand had lost power to the British as a result of the war of Independence 1857. Their rule had come to an end. They were now like a rudderless ship, at the mercy of the cruel waves of time. Not only were they powerless, they were also overwhelmed by self-pity. Theirs was a defeatist attitude and apparently they wanted to drown in their misery. Majority of them were illiterate as they loathed modern western education alongwith other things that belonged to the English people.<sup>1</sup>

It was in this background that Sir Syed Ahmed Khan wrote "Causes of Indian Revolt" and "Loyal Mohammadans of India". He initially believed that both the Hindus and Muslims shared certain problems which could be solved by concerted efforts, but gradually he became disillusioned. In 1867, Diyanand Saraswati started his Arya Samaj Movement which aimed at converting Muslims to their original "Dharam"- Hinduism. "Cow Protection Societies" were established all over North India which aimed at urging the government to ban cow-slaughter. The Hindus also demanded abolition of Urdu as court-language to be replaced by Hindi, the language of the Hindus. They did not demand the commonly spoken "Parakrit". They wanted Hindi written in Devanagiri Script and vocabulary drawn from Sanskrit. Events like these forced Sir Syed who had always compared India to "a beautiful bride with two eyes (Hindus and Muslims) and who should never be blinded or made one-eyed", to think only for the interest of the Muslim community. This realization of the separate entity of the Muslims urged Sir Syed to ask the Muslims not to join the Indian National Congress which was established in 1885. Not only this, he wanted the Indian Muslims to keep themselves away and aloof from political activity and to concentrate only on their educational and socio – economic uplift.

<sup>1</sup> T. Morrison in *Political India 1832-1932* ed. Sir John Cumming (London 1932 p. 87) as quoted by Waheed-uz-Zaman, *Towards Pakistan*, (Lahore: Publishers United Ltd., 1954), p.2



On the whole his advice was followed by the Muslim Community for a considerable time.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile the British government wanted to introduce political reforms gradually in India. It was really ironic that on the one hand, they had enslaved people, captured their land, exploited their resources and at the same time they were interested in their political development. In fact the western mind was groping for a *modus Vivendi* to carry on day to day relations with what it considered to be exotic and Bizzare Culture<sup>3</sup>.

In 1905, the Liberals had come to power in England and with them in power, there was much more emphasis on political reforms in the colonies particularly in India. In view of administrative problems the Province of Bengal was partitioned by the Viceroy Lord Curzon into East Bengal and Assam (Muslim majority) and Bengal (Hindu majority). The modification of the boundaries of Bengal was made an occasion for unprecedented agitation by the Hindus – first of Bengal and later on of other parts of India. Ulterior motives were imputed to Curzon<sup>4</sup>. It was called a deadly blow to Bengali nationality, vivisection of the motherland, insult to Goddess Kali etc. Demonstrations were held from the platform of the Indian National Congress, which claimed to be the representative of all Indians, but at that point in time it was representing just the Hindus. The opposition to the partition was an eye-opener for the Muslims. So to let their separate voice be heard, a deputation of thirty five Muslims met the then viceroy, Lord Minto in October 1906. The address claimed a fair share for the Muslims in the forthcoming representation of Indians in the form of (1) reservation of seats (2) separate electorates and (3) the principle of weightage. Minto in his reply to Simla Deputation stated the British recognition that Muslims formed a distinct political community in India. It remained with Muslims to endow that distinct political community with its own political organizations.<sup>5</sup>

In December 1906, the All India Muslim League came into being. The manifesto of the League emphasized on the loyalty of the Muslims to the British Government alongwith certain safeguards for the Muslim community by the government. In fact the League was the result of the ever-increasing apprehensions of the Muslims, particularly after the Surat session of the Congress in which extremist Hindus had emerged as powerful leaders. The All India Muslim League remained a feeble and underweight suckling for several years after its nativity.

The Morley Minto Reforms (1909) accepted Muslim demand for separate electorate, but Hindu politicians and the Congress immediately began to condemn the provision of separate representation for Muslims and demanded the removal of such anomalous restrictions between different sections of his Majesty's subjects in the matter of franchise. At this point in time, most of the Muslims felt that common efforts of Hindus and Muslims could be more fruitful for India and Quaid-e-Azam was one of them. He was an

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<sup>2</sup> Ch. Muhammad Ali, *The emergence of Pakistan* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1967), p.9

<sup>3</sup> Lucian W. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Cambridge MIT Press, 1965), printed by Allah Wala Printing, Lahore p.116

<sup>4</sup> I.H. Qureshi, *The Struggle For Pakistan* (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1965), p. 27

<sup>5</sup> P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), p. 164



ardent advocate of Hindu Muslim unity. The Lucknow Pact 1916 was mainly the brain child of Quaid-e-Azam and according to the Pact, Congress had accepted Muslim demands for reservation of seats, Separate electorates and the principle of weightage. The Pact was signed amid the turmoil of World War I which ended in 1918. During the war, British had sought the cooperation of Indian people and persuaded them to fight on the war fronts for the Allied Powers (British being one of them) on the promise of self-rule for India after the war.

The Muslims of the Sub-continent had sided with the Allied Powers in spite of the fact that they had to fight against Turkey, the centre of Khilafat. In October 1918, Turkey sued for an armistice and in 1920, the Allied powers concluded the Treaty of Sevres with Turkey. It was as humiliating a pact as a victor could force upon its defeated adversary. The mounting evidence of Allied and particularly British intention to smash Turkey enraged nearly all sections of Muslim opinion in India. A Khilafat Conference had been held earlier in November 1919, which then gave birth to All India Khilafat Committee. Thus a movement started in India which is known as the "Khilafat Movement", which attracted conservatives and liberals, old and young, rich and poor alike.

In February 1920, Gandhi formally broached a non-cooperation campaign and in June 1920, after an All-Parties Hindu-Muslim Conference at Allahabad, joined with Abul Kalam Azad, Ali Brothers, Hasrat Mohani and others to draw up a detailed programme of non-cooperation with the government. In September 1920, the Indian National Congress at Calcutta formally adopted Non-cooperation as its meeting policy.<sup>6</sup>

This Hindu-Muslim unity was very heartening indeed but it was superficial and temporary. The Moplah Rebellion revived the old Hindu-Muslim antagonism. Hindu-Muslim riots started from the Hills of Malabar and spread to different parts of India. Once again the two communities stood separately, divided by hatred and animosity, each savouring its own identity. In 1919, the British government had introduced another set of reforms known as the Government of India Act 1919, which introduced partial responsible government in the Indian provinces known as "Dyarchy". While efforts were being made to resolve the Hindu-Muslim differences and to agree to a formula of future political reforms (under section 84-A of Government of India Act 1919, the first inquiry into the possibilities of further constitutional advance should be undertaken after a period of ten years),<sup>7</sup> the All-Parties conference agreed to form a committee for this very purpose. The committee prepared an extensive plan which is known as Nehru Report 1928. Instead of finding a solution for constitutional reforms, the report further widened the gulf between Hindus and Muslims. Democratic, though the Nehru Report may have been in principle, it fundamentally repudiated the Lucknow Pact and offered no compensatory advantages to the Muslim community.<sup>8</sup> With regards to Separate electorates it said "Everybody knows that separate electorates are bad for the growth of national Spirit are still worse for a minority" General reservation of seats for any community whether found in minority or majority is a full recognition of communalism

<sup>6</sup> P. Hardy, Op. Cit., p.189

<sup>7</sup> Waheed-uz-Zaman, Op. Cit., p.36

<sup>8</sup> Stanley Wolpert, Jinnah of Pakistan (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 97



and differs little from communal electorates (Nehru Report). Weightage which had been adopted by the Montague Chelmsford reforms was also rejected. It is amazing that all those principles which were agreed upon in the Lucknow Pact were now rejected. Jinnah appealed to all Muslims "not to be alarmed. I see no reason for consternation and stampede. Muslims should organize themselves, stand united and should press every reasonable point for the protection of their community".<sup>9</sup> This report was an eye-opener for the Muslims and as a reaction to the report Quid-e-Azam presented his famous Fourteen Points in 1929, which comprised of all the demands of the Muslim community in India.

While the All-Parties Committee was working on its report, an interesting proposal was put forward to form a single province comprising of the Punjab, NWFP, Sindh and Baluchistan. It was of course rejected vehemently by the Hindus. In December 1930, the Muslim League held its annual session at Allahabad. The Muslim League at that time was not remarkable for its activity, and the session would have passed unnoticed but for the unusual fact that it was presided over by a poet who delivered an unusual address. Iqbal surveyed the scene and illuminated it with philosophic insight. In striking words he indicated the goal towards which the conscious and unconscious strivings of the Muslim community were taking them.<sup>10</sup> He said 'I would like to see the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan, amalgamated into a single state. Self government within the British Empire or without the British Empire'.<sup>11</sup>

As it has been indicated earlier in the context of Nehru Report the unification of the Muslim territories was not a new concept. Very gradually the Muslims of India had started to think in terms of a separate homeland for themselves. Due to the particular socio-political circumstances of India, reservation of seats or a few other safeguards were not sufficient for them. They wanted more than that a new direction for their struggle, a new aim and a new objective for their efforts. A Cambridge Student Rehmat Ali, proposed the name for this new direction –Pakistan.

The year 1935, brought with it a new package of constitutional reforms called the Government of India Act 1935 which proposed a federal system of government with provincial autonomy. Under the new Act, Provincial elections were held in the winters of 1936-1937. The claim of Congress to be the representative of all Indians was proved wrong as it was unable to capture majority seats in all the provinces. From amongst 11 provinces, it got majority only in 5 provinces (U.P., C.P., Bihar, Orissa and Madras) whereas in two provinces (Bombay and NWFP) it formed coalition governments. The Muslim League had to face defeat very badly. It could not form government anywhere. In fact till this time, the League was considered by the masses as an 'aristocratic party'. It did not have any roots among the common people. Furthermore it was internally torn and disintegrated. Quid-e-Azam had lost his faith in the League and had gone to England in 1931, from where he was persuaded to come back to India just one year before the election. The Congress ministries started working in July 1937. In March 1937 its

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<sup>9</sup> M.H. Saiyid, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, (Lahore: S.M. Ashraf, 1945), p.2

<sup>10</sup> Ch. Muhammad Ali, Op. Cit., p.25

<sup>11</sup> I.H. Qureshi, Op. Cit., Appendix-B



president Jawaharlal Nehru said "There are only two forces in India today, British imperialism and Indian nationalism as represented by the Congress". Jinnah reminded him sharply that there was a third party to be reckoned with, the Muslims. It was in fact the negative attitude of the Congress ministries which in a very short time changed the mindset of Indian Muslims. Muslims of India felt the brunt of Hindu prejudice and they faced the rule of a majority that did not know any modesty and was not aware of the basic principle of a democratic government which is tolerance for a minority. The Indian National Congress violated all the norms of a true democratic government. The coming into power of the Congress ministries signaled an alarming increase in the number of Hindu-Muslim riots and accentuation of bitter feelings between Muslims and Hindus in the Congress-governed provinces<sup>12</sup>. Hoisting of the tri-coloured flag, recital of *Bande Mataram*, bowing before Gandhi's portrait, music in front of mosques, deprivation of minority in the name of the religious-cultural freedom of the majority, were a few of the many atrocities committed by the Congress government. All these were brought under discussion in the famous Pir Pur Report, Shareef Report and Fazle Huq Report and the Congress high command including Jawahar Lal Nehru agreed to many of the allegations put forward in these reports.

Sir Percival Griffiths in his book 'The British Impact on India' wrote 'the real creator of Pakistan was the Congress High Command. As a result of its attitude towards the Muslim minority in India was stirred from one end of the Sub-continent to the other as it had become conscious of the danger to its political existence'<sup>13</sup>.

The Muslim League felt the dire need of reorganizing itself. It tried to find ways to win the support of the Muslim masses hence the 'two Annas' membership which was half the fee of Congress membership was introduced. The students wing of the Muslim League (M.S.F.) and the women wing were organized and this was the time when the Muslims of the subcontinent started using the title Quaid-e-Azam for Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah (Patna, 1938).

While these efforts were being made, World War II started in September 1939. The Viceroy of India announced India's entry into the war and by November 1939 the Congress ministries had resigned. December 22 was celebrated by the Muslims of India as 'Day of Deliverance' throughout India according to the instructions of the Quaid-e-Azam. The Muslim League was not only seriously organizing itself, it was also trying to find an alternative for their demand of adequate safeguards for the Muslims. In February 1940, the All India Muslim League working Committee and Council deliberated on the proposal for a separate homeland for the Muslims and decided to officially declare it in the session of the League to be held in March 1940 at Lahore.

On March 22, Jinnah delivered his presidential address in the open Session of the Muslim League. "The problem of India", he declared, "is not of an inter-communal character but manifestly, of an international one and it must be treated as such." He warned that if the

<sup>12</sup> A History of the Freedom Movement Volume IV (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society Publication 1970), p.30

<sup>13</sup> A History of the Freedom Movement. Op. Cit., p.47



British Government were really in earnest and sincere to secure peace and happiness of the people of this sub-continent, the only course open was to allow major nations separate homelands by dividing India into autonomous national states.<sup>14</sup>

The next day, on March 23, a Resolution was moved in the open session of the Muslim League by Mr. Fazlul Haq, the then Premier of Bengal. Ch. Khaliq-uz-Zaman seconded the Resolution. According to the Resolution:

1. The Scheme of a federation embodied in the Government of India Act 1935 is totally unsuited to and unworkable in the peculiar conditions of this country and is altogether unacceptable to Muslim India<sup>15</sup>.
2. No constitutional plan would be workable in the country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'independent states' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign<sup>16</sup>.
3. Effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the Constitution for Minorities in their units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them and in other parts of India where the Musalmans are in a minority, adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for them and other minorities<sup>17</sup>.

The Pakistan resolution, at this point in time was the expression and manifestation of the important right of self determination. On the basis of this important right Muslims were asking a separate homeland for the Muslim Nation of India. This Resolution was welcomed all over the Sub-continent by the Muslims. Underlying this welcome was the fear that in independent India they could be victimized and repressed by the Hindu majority as had happened during the days of the Congress Ministries.

The Resolution was criticized for the use of the word 'states' from different quarters of the Muslims community. In 1946 in a Convention of the Legislators of the Muslim League, a resolution was adopted which clearly indicated that Pakistan was intended to be a single state.

'The zones comprising Bengal and Assam in the North-East and the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sind, Baluchistan in the North west of India, namely Pakistan zones, where the Muslims are in a dominant majority, be constituted into sovereign independent state and

<sup>14</sup> A history of the Freedom Movement. Op. Cit., p.93

<sup>15</sup> I.H. Qureshi, Op. Cit., Appendix-C

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> I.H. Qureshi, Op. Cit., Appendix-C

that an unequivocal undertaking be given to implement the establishment of Pakistan without delay'.

And thus the Muslims of the sub-continent started a new journey in March 1940. From mere safeguards for themselves in the form of reservation of seats and separate electorates, they had reached a mile-stone in their struggle and were under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, striving for a separate homeland for themselves. Pakistan was finally created as an independent sovereign state in 1947.