



# Freedom Movement and The Birth of Pakistan

by

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Pakistan emerged on the world map on August 14, 1947. It has its roots into the remote past. Its establishment was the culmination of the struggle by Muslims of the South-Asian subcontinent for a separate homeland of their own. Its foundation was laid when Mohammad Bin Qasim subdued Sindh in 711 A.D., as a reprisal against sea pirates that had taken refuge in Raja Dahir's kingdom.

### **Advent of Islam**

The first permanent Muslim foothold was achieved with Mohammad Bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh in 711 A.D. An autonomous Muslim state linked with the Umayyad, and later with the Abbassid, caliphate was established. Its jurisdiction extended over the Southern and Central parts of present Pakistan. Several new cities were founded and Arabic was introduced as the official language.

At the time of Mahmud of Ghazna's invasion, Muslim rule existed in Multan and some other regions. The Ghaznavids (976—1148) and their successors, the Gaurids (1148—1206), were Central Asian by origin; their respective kingdoms covered mostly the regions of present Pakistan, but their capitals were outside India. In the early thirteenth century were laid the foundations of Muslim rule in India, with extended boundaries and Delhi as the capital. From 1206 to 1526 A.D., five dynasties held sway. Then followed the period of Mughal ascendancy (1526—1707), and their rule, however, continued till mid-nineteenth century. In 1857, the Mughal empire came to an end and was replaced by the British.

From the time of the Ghaznavids, Persian had gradually replaced Arabic as the official language and the Muslims developed their own economic, political and religious institutions. *Shariah* was recognized as the basic law of the state and in principle the rulers were expected to enforce it, so the prolonged periods of laxity were generally followed by reinforcement of the basic law under public pressure.

The impact of Islam on the South Asian subcontinent was deep and far reaching. Islam introduced not only a new religion, but

also a new civilization, a new value structure and a new way of life. The Islamic traditions of art and literature, of culture and refinement, of social and welfare institutions, were introduced. The Muslims also introduced new trends in architecture, and they gave the sub-continent most of its magnificent forts, palaces towers, majestic mosques and beautiful monuments. New fruits from Central Asia were introduced, and the interaction between Central Asia and India in the culinary field gave birth to the Mughlai (Mughal) cuisine which holds sway over the northern parts of the subcontinent even today.

Horticulture and gardening were developed to a point that well-laid gardens with fountains and running water came to be called "Mughal Gardens" Highways were built; so was a grand trunk road from Bengal to the Frontier. A new revenue system was introduced, which continues to this day. Literature and the arts came to be patronised, a new language (Urdu) was developed and local languages encouraged, a new school of (north Indian) classical music developed, and new sratorial trends introduced. The cultural and civilizational aspect of Muslim rule reached their zenith during the reign of Emperor Shah-Jahan, the great builder, whose age is often compared to that of Louis XV in France.

The new language, Urdu, was a blend of Arabic, Persian and Sansi; it drew heavily from Arabic and Persian while adopting indigenous words and idioms. It took birth in the Deccan (South of Narbada), as a result of Muslim soldiers from the north intermingling and establishing communication with the local population in later thirteenth century. Though Persian continued to be the court language, Urdu gained currency among the general populace over the centuries to become the *lingua franca* of the subcontinent, before parochialism and communal prejudice deflected the Hindus to opt for Hindi in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. Apart from religion, culture, laws and ethos, Urdu also enabled the Muslim community during the period of its ascendancy to preserve its separate identity in the Subcontinent.

The problem of Muslim identity became increasingly critical during the period of the decline of Mughal empire (1720 onwards)

which saw the rise of independent principalities and especially of the militant Marathas in Western India. Their depredations, especially into the heart of the empire, even up to Delhi, the capital indicated the weakening of Muslim power. Shah Waliullah (1703—62), the scholar-theologian, sought to address the twin problems of Muslim identity and loss of Muslim power at various levels. He founded a school of thought, laid the foundations of Islamic renaissance in the Subcontinent, and became the prime inspiration for almost all subsequent social and religious reform movements of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He was also responsible for masterminding a coalition of Muslim forces under Ahmad Shah Abdali (1773), the founder of modern Afghanistan, to checkmate the Maratha ascendancy on the Indian political chessboard and the Jat depredations in the Punjab. The Maraths were finally routed in the extremely consequential third Battle of Panipat (1761), with their dreams of becoming the sovereign power in the Subcontinent shattered for once and all.

### **Rise of the British**

Meantime, the British through the East India Company had gained a foothold in Bengal. The East India Company which was granted trading rights and permission to establish a factory at Surat in 1600 A.D. by emperor Akbar had expanded its activities a good deal during the next century and a half. It had constructed forts at Madras and Calcutta, and established a private para military force on the pretext of providing protection to its ships, trade, and colonies. It competed with other European trading companies, notably the Dutch and the French, and was supremely successful in almost driving them out of the sub-continent except for some port-cities by the middle seventeenth century. And now, for the first time in the battle at Plassey in 1757, the East India Company, as a result of their joining forces with Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula's deputy scored their first major victory against an Indian ruler.

In perspective, the victory at Plassey, which invested the British with sovereign power in Bengal, foreshadowed the rise of the British power in India. Seven years later, in 1764, the triumph of the British arms at the battle of Buxar not only confirmed their sover-

eignty over Bengal, but also extended it to cover Bihar and Oudh. Buxar also gave the British the *Diwani* (tax collection rights) in both Bengal and Bihar, and brought Oudh under their suzerainty or in direct control. Several minor wars followed Buxar, but the major one was the Fourth Mysore War at Seringapattam in 1799, in which the British were finally able to oust from power their greatest foe in India namely, Tipu Sultan of Mysore. He fell fighting with his sword in hand. The death of Tipu Sultan made the British the supreme power in the whole of southern India. Next came the turn of the Marathas, their erstwhile allies against Tipu, and the Marathas war (1818—1819) extended British supremacy to western India and Rajputana. In 1843, the Battle at Miani, near Hyderabad, ended the rule of the Mirs of Sindh and opened the way for the extension of British power and influence in Balochistan. Punjab, the North-West Frontier region and Kashmir were added to the sprawling British empire of after the Second Anglo-Sikh war during 1848-49. And seven years later, in 1856, the fabulous kingdom of Oudh was annexed on the pretext of maladministration. Meantime, several other states like Hyderabad, Bahawalpur, Khairpur and Bhopal were successfully pressurised into accepting British suzerainty and indirect control, while others like Jhansi, Sumbalpur, Katchela and Nagpur were annexed under the doctrine of lapse, which laid down that any state or principality whose ruler had died childless would lapse to the British Government. Thus, by 1856, the entire subcontinent, from Kashmir to Cape Comorin and from Gujrat to Assam, had come under the overlordship of the East India Company.

### **Muslim Resistance and the War of Independence of 1857**

In Bengal, South India, Sindh, Balochistan, Oudh and the North-Western region, indeed in large parts of India, the British had risen to power at the expense of the Muslims; hence they were the first to realise the potential threat to Indian freedom the British policies and strategies had posed from mid-eighteenth century. Thus by early nineteenth century, the more thoughtful among Muslims had pronounced India a *dar al-harab* i.e. an abode of war. Indeed, Shah Abdul Aziz, the son of Shah Waliullah and the first translator of the Quran into Persian in India, had given a *fatwa* pronouncing India under British Government as *dar al-harab*. Shah Waliullah had ear-

lier diagnosed the malaise that had eaten into the very vitals of the Muslim body-politic in the post-Aurangzeb period (1707), and had suggested the twin ideals of moral reform and political supremacy of Islam. While the first edict meant that Muslims should get rid of all un-Islamic practices which they had brought over from Hinduism or had adopted through their contact with the Hindus, the latter ideal meant that Islam could not flourish under alien domination and that political supremacy was essential if Muslims were to fashion their destiny according to their own ethos. These Waliullahi ideals inspired the rise of the Mujahidin movement (1826—64), founded by Syed Ahmad Shaheed of Rai Braeli (1786—1891).

Syed Ahmad Shaheed pronounced the twin principles of a free homeland and a reformed Islam. He upheld the doctrine of *dar al-harab* and preached *jihād* against alien domination. His first target was the Sikh kingdom in north-western India where Muslims were being denied even the right to practise their religion—for instance, even the right to say *Azan*. Thus, Syed Ahmad Shaheed unfurled the banner of *Jihad* against the *Sikhs* from the northern heights in 1826. His cataclysmic campaign in the Frontier underwent many vicissitudes, but at one time (1830) Sayid Shaheed even captured Peshawar, and proclaimed an Islamic Republic, with himself at its head. Latter, however, he alongwith his principal lieutenants was killed (1831) in an encounter at Balakot. Fortunately though, the movement, inspired by certain transcendent ideals, did not die out with him. It was reorganized from its base at Patna and replenished with recruits from as far afield as Bihar, and Eastern Bengal. And with the collapse of the Sikh power in the Punjab, Kashmir and the Frontier, the Mujahidin waged a rather long and sustained struggle against its successor, the British. Their struggle continued almost unabated till about 1865 when their headquarters in the Frontier and their vast network inside the country were utterly wiped out.

Thus, the Mujahidin, who were the first to breathe a spirit of revolt and revolutions in the Subcontinent, became the forerunners of the war of 1857. Indeed, their preaching of *Jihad* through their vast network and through itinerant preachers form more than two decades had in part prepared the Muslims for revolt. The Mujahidin preaching against the British found a fertile soil because of certain



extra-religious factor such as the scuttling of the indigenous industry and trade, the economic emasculation of both the gentry and the masses alike, the heavy taxation burden, the extremely provocative activities of the missionaries, the racial exclusiveness and feigned superiority of the British ruling classes, and their contemptuous and disdainful attitude and behaviour towards Indians and all things Indian, besides the annexation of several kingdoms by the British on various pretexts. These causes had infuriated the Indians as a whole beyond repair, invested them with a mounting feeling of discontent and rage, and drove them to desperation. Thus came the War of Independence of 1857, which engulfed practically the whole of northern India in its raging flames, and threatened British rule in India. However, because of certain weaknesses, both internal and external, this herculean Indian effort to throw off the British yoke could not succeed. This failure, at once both spectacular and dismal, spelled disaster for India, and especially for Muslims.

### **Economic Collapse of Muslims**

The British pinned down the responsibility for the popular war on the Muslims and were determined to teach them a lesson. Even otherwise, the British economic, linguistic and administrative policies had generally discriminated against Muslims from the beginning. Thus, the Permanent Settlement of 1793 had dispossessed the Muslim nobility of Bengal of most their lands, and made Muslim peasantry subservient to the Hindu tax collectors, now raised to the position of landlords. If the Permanent Settlement had dispossessed the Muslims in Bengal, the Macaulay's Minute of 1835 replacing Persian by English as the court language had hurt the Muslims economically throughout the British dominions. This decision had made the Muslims "illiterate" so far as the official language was concerned, and, therefore, unfit for any government employment. The East India Company's commercial policy and likewise reduced Muslim artisans to a state of unemployment and penury.

This general trend towards the economic collapse of Muslims received further impetus in the post-1857 period when the British, incensed at Muslim "audacity" to stage a revolution against them, launched upon an avowedly anti-Muslim policy. Their lands were

confiscated without rhyme or reason; they were barred from getting enlisted in the army and the police, their traditional vocations. Indeed, they were made to stew in their own juice persecuted, humbled, and frustrated. Thus, by 1870s, according to W.W. Hunter, the author of *Indian Musalmans*, there was scarcely a Government office in Calcutta in which a Muslim could “hope for any post above the rank of a porter, messenger, filler of ink-pots and mender of pens”. The poignancy of the Muslim economic situation was summed up by Hunter in these words, “A hundred and seventy years ago it was almost impossible for a well-born Musalman in Bengal to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich”. In the rest of the subcontinent as well, the Muslims had fallen on evil days in the aftermath of the mass uprising.

### **Muslim Response (1860s—1880s)**

The Muslim response to the multi-faced challenge posed by the rise of the British was rather disparate, trady, unintegrated, and somewhat group-oriented or local in character. The religious leaders who had provided leadership to the community since the decline of Muslim power in India, withdrew from the mainstream of community life, and devoted themselves exclusively to imparting religious education. Their seminaries, especially at Deoband, Farangi Mahal, Rai Bareilly and Calcutta did help the Muslims to preserve their identity, but hardly addressed themselves to the problem of economic collapse of the Muslims. The first response came in April 1863 when Nawab Abdul Latif (1828—93) launched the Mohammendan Literary Society in Calcutta, then the capital of the British Indian Empire. The Society stood for Western learning and progress; it submitted to the government a number of memorials on the state of Muslim education and on social and religious issues; it was in part responsible for the Government’s Resolution of August 7, 1871 on Muslim education. Initially apolitical, the Society progressively assumed a political role : it represented the Muslim viewpoint and Muslim grievances to the government. Syed Ameer Ali (1849—1928), the great jurist and scholar, also addressed the Muslim problem, but primarily in political terms. He founded the National (later, Central) Mohammedan Association in 1878; and it submitted a memorial to the Viceroys in August 1882, which for the

first time processed, aggregated and articulated Muslim demands and grievances. The memorial which became the basis of discussion on the state of Muslim education and Muslim employment for three years, finally led to the Government's Resolution of July, 15, 1885. It signified a reversal of government's policy towards Muslim progress. Ameer Ali, who was by far the most politically oriented among the Muslim leaders of his time, mooted the idea of a conference of Muslim leaders and intelligentsia and later the establishment of an All India Muslim Political Conference, both in 1888, but his plans were aborted because of opposition or lack of response from other leaders.

Of all the Muslim responses, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's (1819—98) was the most sustained, the most wide-ranging and the most comprehensive; it was also more widely owned up by the mainstream Muslim community and was more consequential. Sir Syed's panacea for the Muslim situation in the post-1857 period was modern education. He founded schools at various places and a college at Aligarh; he launched the *Tahzib al Akhlaq* to bring about moral and social reform; he fought against the prevalent feeling of despondency and resignation. And, "Aligarh, with all the forces it organized", to quote Kraemer, became "the starting point of a slow awakening of the Muslim community out of its listlessness". It was also "the most potent factor in the breaking down of the crushing feeling of backwardness and despondency".

### **Aligarh Movement**

Sir Syed's movement at the time was considered mainly educational, if only because of his unending stress on Muslims acquiring modern education. He was also averse to Muslims participating in any sort of organized political activity, which, he feared, might revive British hostility towards them. That was why he opposed Ameer Ali's proposed Political Conference and why he advised Muslims against joining the Indian National Congress, when it was organized in 1885. However, in his policies and programme, he was, in part, guided and goaded by political considerations. For one thing, in his age education was the passport to political power; for another, he seemed supremely conscious of the basic fact "that the political life of the Muslims could be saved from extinction by

their participating in and not by discarding Western education". For instance, the Mohammedan Educational Conference, which he founded in 1886, helped to provide a common platform for the Muslims of various provinces to come together, "to formulate a centre of public opinion for the entire Mohammedan 'nation' and then to spread those ideas among the community" and to create communal consciousness and solidarity. The Aligarh School which Sir Syed founded, says Dr. I.H. Qureshi, "gave the Muslim community a new hope, a new sense of mission. From the deepest despair it pulled the Muslims out into a new field of fruitful activity..... Indeed Aligarh was the cradle of the feeling of nationalism among the Muslims because it kept alive the idea of a well integrated Muslim community in the Subcontinent."

### **Muslims Enter Politics**

The growth of communal consciousness among Hindus since the 1860s made the Aligarh movement increasingly politically oriented. Earlier in 1867 the Hindus in Banaras had launched an agitation for the ouster of Urdu from courts. As years rolled by, Sir Syed also became increasingly fearful of the numerical, educational and economic superiority of the Hindus ; this obliged him to demand reservation of seats for Muslims and other important Indian elements in the Imperial Council. Otherwise, he felt, the Muslims stood no chance of getting elected by a predominantly Hindu electorate on the basis of sheer numbers. The Congress' demand for elections without reservations alarmed him and led him to oppose its claims and demands.

The course of events during the next two decades also showed that Muslim rights stood in danger of being trampled upon. Under the influence of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, an extremist Hindu leader, the Congress mounted agitation, directly or indirectly, in favour of Hindi and cow-protection, and a representative form of government on a non-denominational basis.

The Hindu agitation for making Hindi the court language in the U.P., Bihar and Oudh succeeded in 1900, affecting the Muslims adversely, not only economically but also culturally since the elevation of Hindi posed a threat to the status of Urdu as the *Lingua franca* of India. Hence, the Muslims under Nawab Muhsin-ul-Mulk,

organized the Urdu Defence Association in 1900. Before long, this Association took on the complexion of a political platform; it also became the forerunner of the All-India Muslim League.

Then came another opportunity for Muslims to test the bonafides of the Hindus *vis-a-vis* their legitimate rights. In 1905, the unwieldy Bengal Presidency was partitioned for purely administrative reasons; but, as a by-product, it resulted in the emergence of the Muslim majority province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The Hindus had till then dominated the entire Bengal Presidency economically and otherwise, and this partition portended a termination of their monopoly in the political, economic, cultural and educational spheres, so far as the new province was concerned. Hence, under the auspices of the Congress, the Hindus launched a countrywide movement against the partition of Bengal. And, in so agitating against the Bengal partition, they came to be pitted against the beneficiaries of the new province namely the Muslims.

First, the anti-Urdu agitation in the U.P., and Bihar; then the cow-protection activities resulting in Hindu-Muslim riots followed by the setting up of Shivaji Clubs and the concurrent degradation of Muslim rulers, especially Aurangzeb Alamgir; next the demand for elections on a non-denominational basis which would preclude Muslims from getting elected without Hindu backing; and now the agitation against the partition of Bengal and these demands and postures, one after the other, had pitted the Hindus against the Muslims, embittering their relations for the worse and foreclosing the traditional avenues of cooperation between them.

It was against this backdrop that the Muslims demanded separate electorate in 1906, in order to ensure their representation through genuine representatives. The demand also implied that the Indian Muslims, though a minority, were yet a distinct entity by themselves in Indian's body-politic, and that they were determined to keep their entity intact in any future constitutional arrangement. Thus, from now on separate electorate became the sheet-anchor of Indian Muslim politics. They were conceded by the British in the Minto-Morley Reforms (1909), and by the Congress in the Lucknow Pact (1916) which Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876—1948) had masterminded to bring about.

## **Foundation of the Muslim League (1906)**

Meantime, the Muslims' compelling urge to organize themselves politically led to the founding of the All-India Muslim League at Dhaka in 1906. With the Aga Khan (1877—1957) as the permanent President and Nawab Salimullah Khan (the Nawab of Dhaka), Nawab Muhsin-ul-Mul, Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk and Mohamed Ali (1877—1931) as the core of its leadership, the League aspired to become the political mouthpiece of Indian Muslims. Its platform included safeguarding of Muslim interests, articulating their demands, building up public opinion in favour of separate electorate, and countering Hindu propaganda and agitation against the partition of Bengal.

The rather precipitative annulment of this partition in 1911, and this in the face of His Majesty's Government's plighted word, gave Muslims a rude shock. The British complicity in the spoilation of the Ottoman Empire and in the strangulation of Iran about the same time caused further alienation. The British had refused Turkish troops' access to Libya through Egypt in 1911, when Libya was raided by Italy, and then during the subsequent Balkan wars of 1912-13, which brought the Balkan powers to the gates of Adrianopole, the British sympathies, as usual, were with the aggressors and against the aggrieved Turks.

Then, in 1912, the British refused to grant the Aligarh Muslim University scheme, on which Muslim India had set its heart, and which was designed not only to strengthen Muslim community consciousness throughout the subcontinent, but also to further strengthen the concept of an integrated pan-Indian Muslims community. Finally, in 1913, a portion of a mosque in Cawnpore was demolished to make room for building a road. These events, coming one after the other in barely two years but hurting Muslim susceptibilities grievously and almost beyond repair, completely eroded Muslim faith in the British promises, justice and conduct British. Thus were the Muslims launched upon a career of anti-Britishness.

Two major developments followed this disillusionment. First, the League was brought in line with the Congress and the ideals of self-government and Hindu-Muslim unity were incorporated in its plank. Second, the Muslims presently turned to their Hindu brethren, put faith in their words, and tried to find an honorable place within

the framework of Indian nationalism. Negotiations between the Congress and Muslim League led to a rapprochement between them, and the adoption of a joint scheme of reforms at Lucknow, where the two parties met in session in 1916. In the Lucknow Pact, as the scheme came to be generally known, the Congress accepted the principle of separate electorate, and the Muslim, in return for 'weightage' to the Muslims in the minority provinces, agreed to surrender their majorities in the Punjab and Bengal. From the Muslim viewpoint, the most significant gain was the assumption implicit underlying the Lucknow Pact *viz.*, that the Hindu and Muslims were distinct entities on the Indian political scene, represented by the Congress and the League respectively. This Pact formed the basis of the next of installment of reforms, commonly known as the Montford Reforms of 1919.

### **Khilafat Movement (1919—23)**

The movement against British, which the Muslims had launched upon during 1912-13, came to a head about seven years later when the iniquitous Treaty of Sevres (1920) was published. That treaty sought to partition even the traditional Turkish homelands, and cripple Turkey as an independent state. Additionally, British complicity in the on-going Greek invasion of Turkey (1919—22) was all too apparent. In the result, the Muslims seethed with rage, strained at the leash, and yearned for action—bold action.

For this, however, they did not have to wait for long. For, about the same time, the British, perhaps unwittingly, had hurled in the face of the Indians the grotesque Rowlatt Act (1919), the inhuman butchery at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, and numerous other galling crimes in various districts of the Punjab which were put under Martial Law. The Punjab wrongs, as they came to be called, sent the Congress and the Hindus in a fighting mood. There was thus a conjunction of Hindu and Muslim purposes, both aimed against the British, eventually leading to a joint Hindu-Muslim movement. Launched in the name of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs, and with a view to undoing both, the Khilafat (and the civil disobedience) movement soon took the entire country by storm and the British by surprise. To induce Hindu cooperation, Mohatma Gandhi (1869—1948) was accepted as the leader, and Maulana Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali, the top Khilafatists, toured the country from one end to the other. Spontaneous and astonishing was the response to the Khilafat call; incredible were the sacrifice the people underwent

joyously. Some 30,000 people courted arrest in just 30 days; people boycotted government institutions and court, quitted government jobs, and returned titles in large numbers. Although it was a joint Hindu-Muslim movement, the Muslim bore the brunt of the struggle.

All these sacrifices, however, came to naught since the Hindu-Muslim alliance, founded as it was on a momentary hostility towards the British, could not long endure. After the arrest of the Ali brothers, Gandhi, the Khilafat dictator, seized upon an incident at Chauri Chaura, a remote village in the U.P., to call off the movement. Then, Turkey herself took the fateful decision to abolish the institution of Khilafat in March 1924. This Turkish decision robbed the movement of its *raison d'etre* and the Muslims sank back in utter despondency and helplessness.

However, the Khilafat movement had made important contributions, both at home and abroad. Abroad, it accomplished, albeit indirectly, some of the objectives for which it was launched. The fear of an Indian Muslim "revolt" over the question of Turkish territorial integrity and the existence of Turkey as an independent Muslim state was, in part, instrumental in changing the British foreign policy from outright hostility to one of neutrality in the Turkish 'war of liberation' (1919—22) and in getting the British to back out from the original Allied powers' plans to partition Turkey. The Indian Khilafat movement also gave immense diplomatic leverage to the new Angora government under Ghazi Mustapha Kemal Pasha (1881—1938) in their negotiations with the British. At home, the movement mobilized the Muslims politically at the grass root level for the first time, and this experience came in handy during the subsequent Pakistan movement. Since the Khilafat movement was launched for the advancement of an Islamic cause, it helped strengthen their Islamic sensibilities and orientation, quickened their community consciousness, and crystalized the trend towards the emergence of an integrated pan-Indian Muslim community with common objectives and an unified all-India policy. All this was of critical importance in the 1930s and 1940s when Jinnah sought to gather all the Muslims on the platform of the all-India Muslim League, to formulate an all-India plank, and organize them for the struggle of Pakistan. Finally, the Khilafat movement sandwiched as it was between the Aligarh and the Pakistan movement, represented the second phase in the Muslim quest for freedom after the 1857 debacle ; it was integral to the development of Muslim politics towards Pakistan.



## Muslims Demand Safeguards

The failure of the joint Hindu-Muslim movement was followed by a gruesome chapter in India's communal history. The founding of avowedly anti-Muslim Shuddhi and Sangathan movements led to a riposte—the launching of Tabligh and Tanzim movements by Muslims. Communal riots became widespread, claiming a huge toll in dead and injured, and leaving behind a trail of communal bitterness and hostility. What, however, disillusioned Muslims was the Congress leaders' attitude of partisanship. In order to remove the causes, several Hindu-Muslim unity conferences were held, but to no avail. Meantime, not only the extremist Hindu leaders, even the Congress leaders came out against separate electorate. The Montford Reforms were due to be reviewed and revised after ten years, and the British Government appointed a statutory Commission under John Simon in 1927. The Congress boycotted the Commission for its all white character, and appointed a Committee under Pandit Motilal Nehru (d, 1931) to draft a constitution for free India. The Muslims and the Muslim League were divided on the Commission issue, one faction cooperating with it and the other boycotting it. But both the factions were more or less united on Muslim demands statutory majorities for Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal on population basis, separation of Sindh from Bombay, setting up of Balochistan as a separate province, introduction of constitutional reforms in the North-West Frontier Province and one-third representation for Muslims at the Centre. The National Convention at Calcutta in December 1928, called by the Congress to discuss the Nehru Report, rejected the Muslim demands except for the conditional acceptance of the demand in respect of Sindh. Muslim insistence on a genuine federation with autonomous provinces was countered by the onerous Hindu drive towards a unitary state. This disillusioned even the moderate Muslim leaders such as Jinnah.

Meantime Jinnah had been successful in reviving the Muslim League which had gone into eclipse during the Khilafat period. And in order to bridge the differences in Muslim ranks, to accommodate the various Muslim viewpoints, and, moreover, to clarify his position and that of Muslims *vis-a-vis* the Nehru Report further, he formulated the "Fourteen Points" as the minimum Muslim demands in March 1929. These points sought to set up five stable Muslim Provinces to balance the seven Hindu ones under a federal structure.

tions, with adequate checks and balances.

In the ensuing Round Table Conference (1930—32) in London, called by the British Government to consider further reforms, the Muslim leaders unitedly took up this stance and pressed home this policy. The Government of India Act of 1935 which was the end-result of the deliberations at this Conference, conceded Muslims some of their basic demands notable among them being the separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency, and the introduction of reforms in the N.W.F.P., but watered down, as in the reforms of 1919, their majorities in the Punjab and Bengal. The Act incorporated the Communal Award (1931) which retained separate electorates. The Act conceded provincial autonomy, and provided for a responsible federal government at the Centre when a sufficient number of princely states had acceded to the Federation.

### **Congress Rule in the Provinces and Muslims (1937—39)**

In the ensuing provincial elections (1937), the Congress swept the polls in the general constituencies, but won only 26 out of 492 Muslim seats. The League, though poorly organized, yet won a substantial portion of Muslim seats, especially in the Muslim minority provinces and the largest number of seats in Bengal. The League desired cooperation with the Congress and stood for forming coalition governments on the same lines as those formed in the Muslim majority provinces of Bengal, the Punjab, and the NWFP. But the Congress opted for Hindu unitarianism and hegemonic ambitions, so that when it did assume power in the Hindu-majority provinces in July 1937, it formed exclusive Congress ministries, and excluded Muslims from the portals of power.

It also enacted measures such as Hindi, *Bande Mataram* and the *Vidya Mandir* scheme which were imposed as the National language, the national song, and the national scheme of education. And these measures threatened the dissolution of Muslims not only as a political, but also as a religio-cultural, entity. Thus the Congress rule in the provinces (1937—39), which the Muslim regarded as a glimpse of the sort of dispensation that awaited India under the Congress, portended for the Muslims precisely what they had been trying to avert since the 1880s. To quote Penderal Moon, the Hindus "were prepared to share the throne only with Muslims who consented to merge themselves in a predominantly Hindu organization". In the U.P. for instance, "they offered the League not partnership but

absorption". Simultaneously, the Congress stepped up its drive to topple the non-Congress ministries in the Muslim majority provinces, especially the Punjab and Bengal. The Frontier fell into the Congress' lap in September, 1937, and Assam a year later, while the Sindh ministry was kept hostage at the mercy of Congress and other Hindu power brokers. These developments obviously alarmed not only the Muslims in the minority provinces but, more importantly, those in the majority areas. In the words of Penderal Moon, "If the U.P. sample was to be the pattern of Congress's political conduct, then what would be the position of Muslims when a federal government for all India came to be formed ? There would be no room on the throne of India save for Congress and Congress stooges."

### **Muslim League Reorganized**

From mid-1936 onwards, Jinnah had undertaken the task of reorganizing the moribund League systematically, transforming it into an effective political machine. He was continually on the move during 1936-37, addressing rallies and arguing with provincial Muslim elites, seeking to persuade one and all to join the League, so that the Muslims could play an effective role in all-India politics and the future constitutional set up. Finally, the Congress' haughty and aggressive posture to count the Muslims out drove home to them the impelling need for unity among their disparate ranks. Thus, not only did the Muslims pay heed to Jinnah's call for unity and swell the ranks of the League as never before ; but even the Muslim premiers of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam joined the League along with their followers. This occurred in October 1937, when the league annual session met at Lucknow. Also on this occasion, the League's structure was made democratic ; a two-anna membership was fixed ; a "national" flag was adopted and unfurled atop the league pandal ; a volunteer corps was organized ; and a League anthem was composed and sung, buttressing Jinnah's call to unity and organize themselves on the League's platform. By late 1939 when the Congress ministries resigned on the war issue, the Muslims had the time and the opportunity to search their inner social consciousness in a desperate bid to find coherent and meaningful articulation of their cherished yearnings. To their joy, they discovered the existence of the spiritual essence of national life. Till then, they had basked in "unreflective silence" ; now they discovered that their sentiments of nationality

had flamed into nationalism. They also found that their nationalism was not to be a "soul as it were wandering in search of a body in which to begin life over again and dies out finding none". For not only had the Muslims developed the will to live as a nation ; nature had also endowed them with a territory which they could occupy and make a state as well as a cultural home for their newly discovered nation. These two prerequisites, as laid down by Renan, provided them with the intellectual justification for claiming a distinct nationalism (apart from Indian or Hindu nationalism) for themselves. Their cogitation during the 1930s led them to the concept of a separate Muslim nationhood and of a separate Muslim nationalism, and they claimed (in the words of Jinnah) that "We are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, names and nomenclatures, sense of values and proportion, legal laws and moral code, customs and calendar, history and tradition, aptitude and ambition ; in short, we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law we are a nation."

Extremely significant was the impact, on Indian politics, of this Muslim claim to separate nationhood. From a minority supplicating for safeguards, they had turned into a nation, separate and distinct from others, and entitled in its own right to a separate, sovereign state in the Sub-continent. Having so cogently argued the case for separate Muslim nationhood, Jinnah induced the Muslim League to adopt as its goal the establishment of a Muslim state in the Muslim majority areas—viz., the northwestern and eastern zones of India. This occurred at the League session at Lahore in March 1940, and the resolution calling for the division of the sub-continent into Hindu and Muslim majority states came to be known as the Pakistan Resolution.

This was first time that the Muslim claim to separate nationhood and to a separate Muslim homeland in the sub-continent was put forward in explicit and cogent terms. Yet a close reading of Indo-Muslim history shows that the idea of separate Muslim nationhood had ever remained central, through in a latent form, to Muslim thought currents and sensibility in the sub-continent. It was, for instance, implicit in the Mujahidin (1820—60s), the Aligarh (1870s—90s) and the Khilafat (1919—23) movements, the demand for separate electorate (1906), the founding of the League (1906), the signing of the Lucknow pact, (1916), the All Parties Muslim Conference Resolution (1929), the Fourteen Points (1929), the demands put forward at the Round Table Conference (1930—32),

and in the stout refusal of Jinnah in 1937 to merge the League in the Congress in return for a share in the Congress ministries. Likewise, the partition idea had been mooted off and on since Abdul Halim Sharar's first proposal in 1890 to Allama Muhammad Iqbal's celebrated presidential address at the League Allahabad session (1930), which represented the first authoritative pronouncement on the subject from a political platform on behalf of Muslim India, and in the various schemes mooted during the 1930s. The name "Pakistan" itself was coined in 1933 by Chaudhri Rahmat Ali, a Cambridge student.

### **Iqbal's Contribution**

Iqbal's deep involvement with Muslim politics in general and the Punjab League affairs in particular had brought him close to Jinnah in the middle 1930s ; with him he also corresponded regularly during most of 1936 and 1937. In his letters to Jinnah, Iqbal discussed at some length the political situation in the sub-continent and the burning issues of the day ; he identified the short-term and long-term goals of Muslim India ; he urged Jinnah to preserve and persist in his tireless efforts to reorganize the League on a sound basis, galvanize the Muslims into a power to be reckoned with, and to provide coherence, direction and expression to their innermost urges and cherished yearnings. Additionally, Iqbal also urged Jinnah to solve the critical problem of Muslim identity as well as that of chronic Muslim poverty in the sub-continent by opting for Pakistan. Apart from profoundly influencing Jinnah and the League in favour of the enchanting goal of Pakistan, Iqbal's chief contribution lay in the fact that he was the first to intellectualize the Muslim problem in India. His Allahabad address (1930) represents an intellectual justification for Pakistan. The problem in India he pointed out, was not communal but international in dimension, since the two peoples, so divergent in their ethos and *weltanschauung*, could not be yoked together. Thus, it were not merely the cultural and political demensions of the Hindu-Muslim problem that pointed the way towards Pakistan. The historical, economic, social, linguistic and religious variables affecting Hindus and Muslims and their interaction on the social plane as well goaded the Muslims towards chalking out an independent existence of their own, unthwarted by the physical contiguity, the social milieu, the cultural intrusion and the continuing political pressure of the Hindus who were not only numerically superior but also educationally, economically and politically more advanced than the Muslims.

The formulation of the Muslim demand of Pakistan in 1940 had a tremendous impact on the nature and course of Indian politics. The Hindu reaction, was, of course, quick, bitter, malicious. They called the Pakistan demand "anti-national"; they characterised it as "vivesection": above all, they denounced it as imperialist-inspired to obstruct India's march to freedom. In denouncing the demand outright, they, however, missed the central fact of the Indian political situation: the astonishingly tremendous response, the Pakistan demand had elicited from the Muslim masses. They also failed to take due cognizance of the fact that a hundred million Muslims were now supremely conscious of their distinct nationhood and were prepared to stake every thing to actualize their self-perceived destiny—the creation of an independent Muslim state in the sub-continent.

The British were equally hostile to the Muslim demand for, at least two important reasons. First, they had long considered themselves as the architects of the unity of India, and of an Indian nation. Second, they had long regarded the super-imposed unity under *pax Britannica* as their greatest achievement and lasting contribution in history. And the Pakistan demand threatened to undo these presumed achievements on which the British had long prided.

However, despite the Hindu denunciations and the British alarm, the course of Muslim, indeed Indian, politics was from now on firmly set towards Pakistan. The first move that Jinnah made after the enunciation of the Pakistan goal in March 1940 was to wrest an assurance from the Viceroy which, *inter alia*, put Muslim India on par with Hindu India as represented by the Congress. At his insistence, the federal part of the Government of India was finally scrapped and His Majesty's Government of India was finally scrapped and His Majesty's Government held out an assurance (in their August 8, 1940 declaration) that they "could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities to any system of government whose authority was directly denied by large elements in India's national life", and that they "could not be a party to the coercion of such elements into submission to any such government". This meant that prior agreement of the Muslims was essential in the formation of any interim national government during the war period as well as in any final settlement to be arrived at in respect of India's future constitution.

## **Cripps Offer**

The Cripps Offer of April 1942 marked the next step forward on the long, tortuous road to Pakistan. In immediate terms, it was designed to secure Indian cooperation in the sub-continent's defences against the invading Japanese hordes: but its long-term implications were apparent in the fact that it sought to meet the Pakistan demand half way and that it represented the British alternative to Pakistan. The Cripps Offer conceded the provinces the right to opt out of the proposed Indian union, but fell short of the Muslim demand to divide India on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas. Hence it was rejected by the Muslim League. The Congress also rejected it but for the opposite reason—namely, for the concession it had made to the Muslim viewpoint. In the wake of the Cripps' failure was launched the "Quit India" movement by the Congress. It was designed to coerce the British into surrendering total power to the Congress on its own terms. This meant the exclusion of all other parties, and especially the Muslim League. Jinnah, therefore, called the movement a double-loaded pistol, and called on the Muslims to keep themselves aloof. The top Congress leaders were, however, arrested before they could formally launch the movement. And with Congress removed from the political scene, Jinnah had a field day. And he utilized the next three years to step up his efforts to organize and stabilize the Muslim League and to reach out the message of Pakistan to the meanest village in the sub-continent.

## **Rajaji Formula and Jinnah-Gandhi Talks**

If the Cripps' Offer was the British alternative to Pakistan, the Rajaji Formula (1944) represented the Congress alternative to the Muslim demand. C. Rajagopalacharia ("Rajaji"), the former Congress Premier of Madras, had advocated a Congress—League settlement on the basis of Pakistan since the Cripps' Offer, and his formula had the blessing of Gandhi as well. But the Muslim League could not accept it since it offered only a "moth-eaten, mutilated Pakistan", and that appended with a plethora of preconditions, which rendered the formula altogether unfeasible and unworkable.

The Rajaji Formula was, however, accepted as the basis of

prolonged Jinnah-Gandhi talks in September 1944. They parleyed for eighteen days at Jinnah's residence in Bombay, but to no avail. The talks failed because Gandhi would not budge an inch from his previous stance, because he would concede nothing. For one thing, he stoutly refused to accept the League as the authoritative political spokesman of Indian Muslims. For another, he rejected the Muslims' right to separate nationhood.

### **Simla Conference and After**

The next move in Indian politics came from the British. After the end of the war in Europe, Britain was anxious to gain India's whole-hearted cooperation in the prosecution of the war against the Japanese in the East. Hence His Majesty's Government proposed in June 1945 the formation of an interim government at the centre, and called a conference at Simla to work out the modalities. But the Simla Conference failed to take off since neither the Congress nor Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, would concede the Muslim League its representative status and the right to nominate all the members to the Muslim quota of seats in the proposed interim government. Immediately thereafter, the League demanded the holding of general elections so that the question of its representative status was settled for once and all. The elections were finally announced for winter 1945-46 and they were fought determinedly by all the parties.

Of all the issues, two dominated the election campaign: (1) whether the League was the sole representative body of the Muslims; and (2) whether the Muslims stood behind the Pakistan demand. Despite being far behind the Congress in organization and finances, the League was yet able to mobilize the Muslims to an extent that the election results vindicated beyond doubt its claim to represent the Muslims; they also showed that the Muslims stood solidly behind the demand for Pakistan. The League captured all the thirty Muslim seats in the Central Assembly and also secured eighty-eight per cent of all the Muslim seats in the provinces. On its part, the Congress swept the polls in the general constituencies. Thus politically India stood divided between the Congress and the League.

### **Cabinet Mission Plan (1946)**

The stage was thus set for a final constitutional settlement. A Cabinet Mission, consisting of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A. V. Alexander, was sent down to India. It was com-



missioned to devise, in consultation with the various political parties, a constitution-making machinery, and to set up a popular interim government. However, finding no meeting ground between the Congress and the League, the Cabinet Mission made its own proposals in May 1946. Known as the Cabinet Mission Plan, these proposals stipulated a limited centre, supreme only in foreign affairs, defence and communications, and three autonomous groups of provinces. Two of these groups were to have Muslim majorities in the north-west and north-east of the sub-continent, while the third one, comprising the Indian mainland, was to have a Hindu majority.

A statesman that he was, Jinnah saw his chance. He interpreted the clauses relating to limited centre and the grouping of provinces as "the foundation of Pakistan", and induced the League Council to accept the Plan in early June.

After obtaining various assurances from the Viceroy, Muslim League also agreed to join the Interim Government. The Congress, which had initially welcomed the Plan, now staged a somersault. Its luminaries from Gandhi downward began campaigning fiercely against the twin proposals of limited centre and grouping of Hindu and Muslim provinces, which alone had induced the League into accepting the Plan. And in July 1946 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889—1964), the President-elect of the Congress, asserted that the Congress had accepted nothing but the mode of election to the Constituent Assembly. "The overriding motive of his posture of defiance was surely the belief that now at last the day of power was on hand. The imminent departure of the British was assured and the Muslim League could be pushed aside, or swamped, by the national will for freedom in unity."

Confronted with this Congress' posture, the Muslim League had no option but to put up a "posture of defiance" of its own. It called on Muslims to return British titles in protest against the British betrayal of the Muslims. Thus, for the first time in all its annals, the league had said good-bye to constitutionalism. It also voted for direct action to achieve Pakistan. It was now on the war path.

### **Interim Government**

Meantime, the secret negotiations between the Congress and Viceroy resulted in the Congress forming an Interim Government under Pandit Nehru on September 2, 1946; the Muslims, however,

went unrepresented. A fortnight earlier, communal, Hindu-Muslim riots had broken out in Calcutta on an unprecedented scale, the toll claiming some 5,000 in dead, and twice as many in wounded in just three days. Before long, the riots spread to other places as well Bombay, Ahmedabad, Noakhali, Bihar and Garhmukhteshwar, among others. In the last two places they were altogether an one-sided affairs, with the Hindus pouncing upon and butchering unwary Muslims in cold blood in thousands; indeed, in tens of thousands in Bihar.

The League which had watched this developing situation with distress, finally consented to join the Interim Government on October 25, 1946..... if only to safeguard Muslim interests. But it stoutly refused to enter the Constituent Assembly or partake in the constitutional machinery provided by the Cabinet Mission Plan till such time as the Congress had accepted the Plan unequivocally, unreservedly, and in toto. A hastily improvised conference of the three parties (Congress, League and the Akali Dal representing the Sikhs) in London in December did not cut much ice either, but it did vindicate the League's stance on the grouping provision, the chief bone of contention between the Congress and League. The Constituent Assembly met on December 9 as scheduled, but without the League, and immediately proceeded to draft constitution on the lines proposed by Pandit Nehru.

By the close of 1946, communal riots had flared up to murderous heights, engulfing almost the entire subcontinent. The two peoples, it seemed, were engaged in a fight to the finish. The situation became all the more explosive when the League launched civil disobedience movements in the Punjab, the Frontier and Assam; in the first two for the restoration of civil liberties, and in the last one to get the Line System, analogous to the South African apartheid and directed against the Muslims repealed. The time for a peaceful transfer of power was fast running out.

### **Partition Plan (1947)**

All this coupled with the failure of the Interim Government to work as a coalition or a national government, finally, forced the British Government to realize the utter impossibility of seeking to impose the constitution being framed by the Congress-dominated Constituent Assembly on the unwilling Muslim majority provinces. Nor were the British in a position to impose a solution of their own.

Hence, a time limit for British withdrawal from the subcontinent was fixed, and Lord Mountbatten sent out as Viceroy to work out the details of the transfer of Power. The new Viceroy's protracted negotiations with the various political leaders resulted in the June 3, 1947 (Mountbatten) Plan by which the British decided to partition the subcontinent, and hand over power to two successor states on 15 August 1947. The Plan was duly accepted by the three parties to the dispute *viz.*, the Congress, the League and the Sikhs.

### **Birth of Pakistan**

14 August 1947 was Pakistan's date with destiny. One that day, Mountbatten formally transferred power to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, on behalf of His Majesty's Government. In his reply, the Quaid-i-Azam reciprocated the sentiments set forth in the King's message which Lord Mountbatten had delivered, and reminded the new born nation that "great responsibilities" lay ahead. And as a symbol of their new found freedom fluttered a top the Assembly building the newly designed, Pakistan flag the crescent and starspangled green of Muslim independence.

The next day, 15 August, Jinnah was sworn in as the first Governor-General of Pakistan, followed by the swearing in of the first Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, till then the General Secretary of the All-India Muslim League. Thus the dream state of Pakistan had emerged on the world's map, and the man who had played the key role in causing its birth was there on hand to preside over its destinies during the crucial period of its birth-pangs.





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