

MUSLIMS
AGAINST
PARTITION

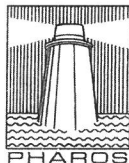
SHAMSUL ISLAM

MUSLIMS
AGAINST
PARTITION

Revisiting the legacy
of Allah Bakhsh and
other patriotic Muslims

Foreword

Prof. HARBANS MUKHIA



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To the memory of

*Indu Kant Shukla,
Mukul Sinha,
Atiq Siddiqui,
Praful Bidwai and
R.M. Pal*

*whose lives enriched our discourse against
religious bigotry, fascism, war hysteria,
exploitation and injustice
through their inspiring writings and deeds.*

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FOREWORD

This remarkable book by Shamsul Islam is a terse reminder to us all that history and society are immensely more complex than the simplicities we reduce these to in our own understanding of the past and the present. One of the commonest reductions is the image of ourselves and of others in undifferentiated, homogenous entities, each enclosed in a self-contained box. Thus the Partition of India took place because the Muslims wanted a separate homeland and Hindus wanted an undivided Bharat. No shades of views, no variation of opinions, least of all any mutually shared space is left with even a shadow of possibility within this image. That is the common take on issues in our everyday life and it acquires a greater self-assurance when issues come to a head.

At the level of professional history, however, divergence of opinion among Congress leaders has indeed been noted. Some scholars have pointed out a strand of opinion among some top level leaders within the Congress who were Hindus, and various Hindu leaders outside the Congress fold, subscribing to the Two-Nation theory of M A Jinnah, which formed the basis of the Partition. However, far less attention has been paid to such divergences within the leadership of the Muslim community. Shamsul Islam takes up the problem head on and conclusively demonstrates that the genesis of the Two-Nation theory was traceable long into the past and that the notion of fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the Hindus and the Muslims was first propounded by several protagonists of what they projected as the Hindu cause. It was reinforced again and again by several leaders within and outside the Congress who have since become national icons: Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, V D Savarkar, M S Golwalkar. In the end, among those who strongly supported the idea of Partition were C Rajagopalachari and Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, Congress leaders of the highest rank.

The *Two-Nation* theory transformed several of the leading figures on the Muslim side too, among them M A Jinnah and poet Mohammad Iqbal, who were both the most fervent champions of composite culture in their earlier avatars, so much so that in

popular imagination it came to be identified with them, especially the former. That political mobilisation mixed with religious frenzy can have such disastrous consequences has been demonstrated again and again throughout human history; yet its subsidence is nowhere in sight. We are now witnessing the current articulation of the mix of religion and politics: virulent in the Middle East and Pakistan, slightly more moderate in India.

The great significance of Shamsul Islam's book is in bringing to the fore that claims of leaderships to be sole representatives of their communities are often based upon very shaky grounds. He brings this out forcefully in the case of the Muslim League led by M A Jinnah. The challenge to the League's divisive politics came from Allah Bakhsh's "Azad Muslim Conference," which was determined to keep the country united. That the challenge was not marginal is established by the mass mobilisation behind this organisation, far more numerous than the League's. Shamsul Islam has used the term "Patriotic Muslims" for them, in preference to the usual "Nationalist Muslims", which he finds problematic in view of the inversion of meaning when applied to "Hindu Nationalists".

Yet, the Muslim League carried the day. Shamsul Islam asks the question why and gives a very substantive answer. Besides the usual techniques of terrorising opponents into silence, applied in this case by the Muslim League members and sympathisers which included the assassination of the young Allah Bakhsh, more significant was the attitude of accommodation of the League by the Congress than of the Azad Muslim Conference. For, the Congress' own approach to communalism was at best ambivalent, with too many leaders within with sympathy for the exclusivist Hindu cause. It is remarkable that the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha had no problem joining hands and forming coalition governments in some of the provinces, but each was dead set against the inclusive stance of Allah Bakhsh's party. That party seems to have become the greater enemy than the others, for, Allah Bakhsh was challenging the premise of both. The Congress for ever refrained from joining hands with him and his party or from putting its weight behind him. The country was partitioned by an agreement among the colonial regime, the Muslim League

and the Indian National Congress as if this was the national consensus.

The book teaches us several lessons that are repeated again and again through all history, yet never learnt: that political mobilisation is a cynical pursuit where principles and slogans are weapons of gathering support and then forgotten; that it is the elites who take decisions in which the masses have no role except as fodder for the leaders' cannon, and it is always the masses who pay the heaviest price for decisions they had never taken. How many of the leaders were among the lakhs killed on the trains going to and from India and Pakistan in August 1947? And how many lost their homes, belongings and life's savings?

Shamsul Islam has done a great service to scholarship and hopefully to society by bringing to the surface a more or less hidden facet of our history and challenging the widely accepted notion that all Muslims of India favoured the Partition of India and the creation of Pakistan and all Hindus stood for India's unity. His book has the hallmark of in-depth research and admirable passion. His passion and his dream is to live in a society where religion is a purely personal engagement with God for those who have faith in religion and God. A dream facing the most severe threat today, more than ever before.

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PREFACE

It is true that India was partitioned in 1947 due to Muslim League's demand for a separate homeland for Muslims. And there is no denying the fact that the Muslim league was able to mobilise a huge mass of Muslims in favour of its demand. But it is also true that large sections of Muslims and their organisations stood against the demand for Pakistan. These Muslims against Partition challenged the Muslim League theoretically and confronted the latter on streets. Such Muslims fought heroically, many times paying with their lives. Allah Bakhsh was one of such heroes. The purpose of this book is to revisit the forgotten legacy of these Muslims against Partition. Unfortunately, their contribution has not been acknowledged except in the writings of Professor Mushirul Hasan. I have tried to collect facts by going through the contemporary newspapers, periodicals and memoirs in Urdu, English and Hindi, many of which were in a brittle state.

This work was sponsored by the University Grants Commission, Delhi under major research project category. I am grateful to the UGC for grant and facilities made available to me.

Anil Nauriya, a dear friend, must be credited for inspiring me to take up this work. I am grateful to Professor Ian Talbot, Professor Sarah Ansari, and Professor C. M. Naim for their valuable suggestions. I am thankful to Dr. Zafarul-Islam Khan, Dr. Rakesh, Dr. Pragya, Dr. Abdul Malik Rasoolpuria, Dr. M. Zakir Hussain, Dr. Ahmad Sajjad, Ms. Farida Dossani, Dr. Goura Kudesia, Dr. Badrul Islam, Mr. Farid Dossani, Maulana Azizur Rehman Ludhianvi, Ms. Mona Das, Ashfaque Hussain Ansari, Anmol Rattan, Rahul Singh and Maulana Mohammad Usman Rehmani for their constant support and encouragement. I am also grateful to Dr. Khalid Ashraf and Dr. Sajjad Husaini for helping me with Urdu poetry. My special thanks to Mr. Khadim Hussain Soomro, Dr. Amir Abbas Soomro and Dr. Rashid Ashraf from Pakistan for procuring documents on Allah Bakhsh and making the same available to me.

I am grossly indebted to Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed who initially helped me to find important sources and with him to Professor Harbans Mukhia (who also was kind enough to write Foreword

for the book), Dr. Ram Puniyani and Mr. Anand Patwardhan for making valuable suggestions to the manuscript.

My wife, Neelima Sharma, as a critic of the work and brilliant organiser has been the greatest source of strength to me. I remain profoundly indebted to her. As always, I am deeply appreciative of Shirin and Sameer Dossani, my daughter and son-in-law who have been the first readers of my works and have always helped me with their critical appraisal. They enriched my thought-process with their brilliant ideas and deserve true thanks. Friends from Nishant, the street theatre group with which I have been associated since 1970, have been generous with their moral support, and I thank them all, too.

I must also take this opportunity to extend my heart-felt thanks to the ever helpful staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, Ratan Tata Library, Ajoy Bhawan Library, Qaumi Ekta Kendra Trust Library, Gandhi Memorial Library, Vallabh Bhai Patel Memorial Library, National Archives, Central Secretariat Library, Jamia Millia Islamia Library, Jamia Hamdard Library, Mahmoodia Library, Satyawati College Library (all in Delhi), British Library (London), Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library (Patna), National Library (Calcutta), Raza Library (Rampur), Shibli Academy Library (Azamgarh), Shiekhul-Hind Library (Deoband) and Library of Congress (Washington, DC) for meeting my ever increasing demands. Last but not the least, the physical production of this book is the result of tireless work of Ms. Bhawana Shishupal Prajapati. I thank her for her contribution, especially processing documents which were in brittle state. This book also contains an exhaustive bibliography of English, Hindi and Urdu literature available on the subject. All translations from the Hindi and Urdu sources are mine. Any mistakes and shortcomings are solely my responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION

*Humko batlao tau kiya matlab hae Pakistan kaa
jis jagah iss waqt Muslim haen, najis hae kiya who ja.
Nesh-e-tohmat se tere, Chishti kaa seenna chaak hae
jald batla kiya zameen Ajmer kee na-paak hae.¹*

[Tell me, what does Pakistan mean? Is this land, where we Muslims are, any less pure? Your slur has wounded Chishti's breast; Quick, tell me, is Ajmer impure?]

There is a standard narrative around the role of Muslims in India's independence. The crux of this portrayal is that led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League, Indian Muslims played a traitorous role. They proposed, fought for, and eventually won the concession from the British government that India should be partitioned into two nations—India and Pakistan—the latter being a homeland for India's Muslims. Thus they undermined the nationalist movement for a united and secular India.

The above narrative is factually incorrect and is at best a gross oversimplification as will emerge from the contemporary documents referred to in this book. This book attempts to challenge the premise that all Muslims favored the creation of Pakistan while all Hindus stood for a sovereign, secular and democratic India. Historical documents prove that the majority of Indian Muslims opposed the concept of Pakistan as much as the Hindu population did. These Muslims have often been described as Nationalist Muslims. However, in my opinion, Muslim nationalism—like Hindu nationalism—usually refers to a sectarian and communal view of nationalism. Therefore I will use the term 'patriotic Muslims' for those Muslims who opposed the Partition. The phrase 'nationalist Muslims' will be retained when referring to the work of others. Those Muslims who favoured the formation of Pakistan will be referred to as 'anti-patriotic'.

¹ First two couplets of Shamim Karhani's poem in Urdu written in 1942 titled 'Pakistan chahne walon se' [To those who desire Pakistan] in Akhtar, Jaan Nisar (ed.), *Hindustan Hamaraa* 2, Hindustani Book Trust, Mumbai, 1973, pp. 305-306.]

To elucidate further, there were elements among the Hindu leadership who identified as “Hindu Nationalists” or proponents of Hindutva. These individuals and organizations very much believed in a version of the two-nation theory as we shall see. As such they were anti-patriots, as traitorous as the Muslim League, though the mainstream narrative tends to ignore their guilt.

Moreover, there were significant elements among Muslims—including Muslim leadership—who were opposed to two-nation theory and worked together with the Congress and other secular elements to prevent the Partition of India. Though these patriotic Muslims were not small in number—it should be remembered that a huge number of Muslims stayed in India—their contributions have largely been ignored by history books. It is this oversight that this book seeks to address, through the story of Allah Bakhsh Soomro and others.

It is true that Muslim League’s juggernaut under the stewardship of Muhammad Ali Jinnah was successful in achieving its objective of dividing India on communal lines. The Muslim League was able to secure the support of a large number of Muslims and won most of the Muslim seats in the provincial assembly elections of 1946. However, the Muslim League enjoyed in abundance the support of Muslim elites and its electoral victory became possible due to the advantage it enjoyed under the prevalent restricted franchise. It won handsomely due to “the restricted franchise established by the Sixth Schedule of the 1935 Act, which excluded the mass of peasants, the majority of small shopkeepers and traders, and countless others from the rolls through tax, property and educational qualifications. Only 28.5 percent of the adult population of the provinces could vote in the provincial assembly elections of early 1946...Economically and socially depressed portions of the population were virtually disenfranchised by the terms of the 1935 Act.”² For example, in Bihar the electorate consisted only of 7.8 percent of the total

² Austin, Granville, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, OUP, Delhi, 2014. pp. 12-13.

population.³ The same reality prevailed throughout the British India where elections were held.

Just evaluation of the contribution of patriotic Muslims is yet to be done. There is no organised contemporary record of the activities of Muslims against Partition available, despite Mushirul Hasan's pioneering work in the field. This book is an attempt in this direction. This book revisits the freedom loving heritage of patriotic Muslims in general and Allah Bakhsh in particular. It has not been easy to collect contemporary material scattered in libraries and private collections. In order to comprehend the role of patriotic Muslims it was essential to look at the original sources of the period. This book is the result of this search and is based on the contemporary documents in Urdu, Hindi and English.

Chapter 1 deals with the dilemma which Indian Muslims faced at the time of the Partition and defines patriotic Muslims who are often referred to as nationalist Muslims. Chapter 2 discusses terrible happenings of Partition and links it to the practice of two-nation theory. Chapter 3 discusses the origin of two-nation theory and its development into Hindu and Muslim variants. Chapter 4 studies the times of India's First War of Independence of 1857 when Hindus and Muslims together challenged the might of the greatest imperial power of the times. It also discusses how in the post-1857 period two-nation theory came into existence. Chapter 5 discusses how under the leadership of Allah Bakhsh, Azad Muslim Conference of 1940, which was organised in Delhi to counter the Pakistan scheme of Muslim League took shape and proceeded. Chapter 6 discusses how Allah Bakhsh challenged the British rulers in 1942 by renouncing British titles which cost him his premiership of Sind. Chapter 7 includes details of his murder by the Muslim Leaguers and why he needed to be liquidated. Chapter 8 discusses in detail the contribution of Patriotic Muslim individuals and organisations who challenged the two-nation theory and sectarian politics of the Muslim League with words and deeds. Many times paying a heavy price for their commitment for building a united and all-inclusive India. Muslims against Partition used Urdu poetry as a strong tool to oppose divisive politics of

³ Ghosh, Papiya, *Muhajirs and the Nation: Bihar in the 40s*, Routledge, Delhi, 2010, p. 79.

Muslim League and its scheme of Pakistan. Sadly, despite this fact Urdu has been described as a motivating force behind Pakistan. This Urdu poetry is discussed in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 discusses the reasons for failure of the patriotic Muslims and their organisations in averting Partition. The annexure carries the significant resolutions passed by the Independent Muslim Conference of 1940. Interestingly, the resolutions not only dealt with communal issues, but also plight of the weavers in India, condemned apartheid regime in South Africa and decried imperialistic World War.

This book contains long quotes as it tends to chronicle the documents of the period under scrutiny.

CHAPTER 1

DILEMMA OF INDIAN MUSLIMS

The Partition of India created a serious identity crisis for Indian Muslims. As historian Muhammed Mujeeb noted, after Partition Muslims “became a much smaller minority in India, physically not less, but more vulnerable, by the creation of the separate state of Pakistan, with their loyalties obviously open to suspicion and doubt, and their future nothing but the darkness of uncertainty.”¹ Mushirul Hasan notes that for Muslim communities in India, “Partition was a nightmare...The so called Islamic community in India, which had no place in Jinnah's Pakistan, was ‘fragmented’, ‘weakened’ and left vulnerable to right wing Hindu onslaughts.”² Despite the creation of a separate Homeland for Muslims, India remained home to a large number of Muslims. Those who remained in India have consistently had their loyalty to India questioned by the Hindu Right or Hindutva camp. The Bible for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh cadres, *Bunch of Thoughts*, the compilation of the writings of RSS ideologue MS Golwalkar, contains a long chapter titled, ‘Internal Threats’, in which the Indian Muslims are described as threat number one.³ This chapter opens with the following statement: “It has been the tragic lesson of the history of many a country in the world that the hostile elements within the country pose a far greater menace to national security than aggressors from outside.”⁴ Golwalkar goes on to tell that,

Even to this day there are so many who say, ‘now there is no Muslim problem at all. All those riotous elements who supported Pakistan have gone away once for all. The remaining Muslims are devoted to our country. After all, they have no other place to go

¹ ‘Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial system of control 1920-1932’ in Page, David & others, *Partition Omnibus*, Oxford UP., Delhi, 2011, p. xxxi-xxxii.

² *Ibid*

³ According to Golwalkar's categorisation Christians and Communists are threat number 2 and 3 respectively.

⁴ Golwalkar, M. S., *Bunch of Thoughts*, Sahitya Sindhu Prakashana, Bangalore, first edition 1966, p. 177.

and they are bound to remain loyal'...It would be suicidal to delude ourselves into believing that they have turned patriots overnight after the creation of Pakistan. On the contrary, the Muslim menace has increased a hundredfold by the creation of Pakistan, which has become a springboard for all their future aggressive designs on our country.⁵

According to Golwalkar all Indian Muslims are fifth columnists or agents of Pakistan:

Within the country there are so many Muslim pockets, i.e., so many 'miniature Pakistans'...Such 'pockets' have verily become the centers of a widespread network of pro-Pakistani elements in this land...The conclusion is that, in practically every place, there are Muslims who are in constant touch with Pakistan over the transmitter...⁶

Describing the situation after independence, Golwalkar wrote:

Right from Delhi to Rampur and Lucknow, the Muslims are busy hatching a dangerous plot, piling up arms and mobilizing their men and probably biding their time to strike from within when Pakistan decides upon an armed conflict with our country.⁷

No Muslim was trustworthy as "Muslims whether in high positions of the Government or outside, participate openly in rabidly anti-national conferences. Their speeches carry the ring of open defiance and rebellion."⁸ So Indian Muslims were seen as disloyal and posing a serious threat to independent India. The RSS went so far as to plan to "cleanse" Muslims in certain areas not far from Delhi. The following passage from the autobiography of the first Home Secretary of United Province (now Uttar Pradesh), Rajeshwar Dayal, ICS, is a living testimony to this kind of nefarious views and activities of the RSS. The quote is long but is being reproduced in full due to the shocking nature of what it describes:

I must record an episode of a very grave nature when the

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

procrastination and indecision of the UP Cabinet led to dire consequences. When communal tension was still at fever pitch, the Deputy Inspector General of Police of the Western Range, a very seasoned and capable officer, B. B. L. Jaitley, arrived at my house in great secrecy. He was accompanied by two of his officers who brought with them two large steel trunks securely locked. When the trunks were opened, they revealed incontrovertible evidence of a dastardly conspiracy to create a communal holocaust throughout the Western districts of the province. The trunks were crammed with blueprints of great accuracy and professionalism of every town and village in that vast area, prominently marking out the Muslim localities and habitations. There were also detailed instructions regarding access to the various locations, and other matters which amply revealed the sinister purport.

Greatly alarmed by those revelations, I immediately took the police party to the Premier's [Those days chief minister was known by this designation] house. There, in a closed room, Jaitley gave a full report of his discovery, backed by all the evidence contained in the steel trunks. Timely raids conducted on the premises of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) had brought the massive conspiracy to light. The whole plot had been concerted under the direction and supervision of the Supremo of the organization himself. Both Jaitley and I pressed for the immediate arrest of the prime accused, Shri Golwalkar, who was still in the area.

Pantji [G. B. Pant; the then Premier of the United Province] could not but accept the evidence of his eyes and ears and expressed deep concern. But instead of agreeing to the immediate arrest of the ringleader as we had hoped, and as [Rafi Ahmad] Kidwai would have done, he asked for the matter to be placed for consideration by the Cabinet at its next meeting. It was no doubt a matter of political delicacy as the roots of the RSS had gone deep into the body politic. There were also other political compulsions, as RSS sympathizers, both covert and overt, were to be found in the Congress Party itself and even in the Cabinet. It was no secret that the presiding officer of the Upper House, Atma Govind Kher, was himself an adherent and his sons were openly members of the RSS.

At the Cabinet meeting there was the usual procrastination and much irrelevant talk. The fact that the police had unearthed a

conspiracy which would have set the whole province in flames and that the officers concerned deserved warm commendation hardly seemed to figure in the discussion. What ultimately emerged was that a letter should be issued to Shri Golwalkar pointing out the contents and nature of the evidence which had been gathered and demanding an explanation thereof. At my insistence, such a letter if it were to be sent, should be issued by the Premier himself to carry greater weight. Panditji asked me to prepare a draft, which I did in imitation of his own characteristic style. The letter was to be delivered forthwith and two police officers were assigned for the purpose.

Golwalkar, however, had been tipped off and he was nowhere to be found in the area. He was tracked down southwards but he managed to elude the couriers in pursuit. This infructuous chase continued from place to place and weeks passed.

Came January 30, 1948 when the Mahatma, that supreme apostle of peace, fell to a bullet fired by an RSS fanatic. The tragic episode left me sick at heart.⁹

The above narrative clearly shows that these were not only Hindutva camp followers who doubted loyalty of Muslims but a section of top Congress leaders too sided with those who doubted patriotic credentials of Indian Muslims as a community. The Premier of the Central Province, Pandit Ravishankar Shukla, a senior Congress leader, while addressing Hindustan Sevadai members at Nagpur in the first week of June 1947, went to the extent of declaring that there was a possibility that in post-independent India Indian Muslims would be "losing their rights of the citizenship in Hindustan and being treated as any other foreign national."¹⁰ This statement created ripples in the country. A leading English national daily in an editorial described it as a 'Regrettable Statement', and described it as,

an unwarranted suggestion and more regrettable because it emanates from a responsible Congress leader no less, indeed than the Premier of an important Indian Province. It is wrong, it is

⁹ Dayal, Rajeshwar, *A Life of Our Times*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1998, pp. 93-4.

¹⁰ *The Bombay Chronicle*, June 9, 1947.

unjust and it is dangerously harmful to the country itself. Where has he got the justification for a such hint?...Statements like the one attributed to Pandit Shukla are likely to injure the cause of Indian unity.¹¹

If on the one hand the Muslim League led by Jinnah constantly claimed that it represented all Muslims of India and was the sole guardian of interests of Muslims, on the other those communal Hindus who doubted Indian Muslims' patriotism also believed that Muslims as a monolithic whole supported the demand for Pakistan. This reductionist notion of Muslims as a single category flies in the face of common sense. Muslims in India, like elsewhere, were divided socially, politically, economically and even in terms of religious sect. Often differences in these spheres went to extremes. It was not a monolithic community with common interests and aspirations rather a 'disparate, differentiated and stratified segment of society'.¹²

The idea of a monolithic Muslim community was belied by the idea of Partition itself—a divisive scheme whose debate led to sharp divisions among Muslims. A very substantial section of Indian Muslims not only differed but opposed the scheme of Pakistan. Mushirul Hasan says that,

The exclusive application of the label 'Nationalist Muslims'¹³ conjures a false image of a largely communally-oriented community, with only a handful integrated with the dominant nationalist trend. (Notice that the expression 'Nationalist Hindu' is not used to distinguish the activities of Gandhi, Nehru, Das and Bose from those of Lajpat Rai, Malaviya, Jayakar and Kelkar). It also needs to be emphasised that the dividing line between a professed nationalist and a so-called communalist was often

¹¹ Editorial in *The Bombay Chronicle*, June 9, 1947.

¹² Hasan, Mushirul, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence*, C. Hurst & Co, Delhi 1997, p 6, 98, 236, 52.

¹³ Though Hasan uses the term "nationalist Muslims" to describe those who fought against partition, I prefer the term "patriotic Muslims". This is simply to distinguish the concept from terms like "Hindu nationalism" and "Muslim nationalism" which connote sectarian and communal notions of religious nationalism.

blurred.¹⁴

The leading Hindu nationalist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya, M. S. Aney, B. S. Moonje, M. R. Jayakar and N. C. Kelkar, Swami Shardhanand etc. (many of whom were also Congress leaders) did not subscribe to an all-inclusive India but were committed to the building of an exclusive Hindu nation. They believed that India was primordially a Hindu nation and should be nurtured as one. Nevertheless, they went around as great Indian 'Nationalist' leaders. In fact, the majority community had the advantage of disguising their communalism under the cloak of nationalism. Take one glaring example, Madan Mohan Malviya. While he was President of the Indian National Congress which stood for a composite India, in 1909, 1918 and 1933 he also presided over the sessions of Hindu Mahasabha in the years 1923, 1924 and 1936. He was the originator of the most divisive slogan 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindusthan'.¹⁵ Despite his history of spreading communal hatred he continues to be known as a great Indian nationalist leader.

If Muslim leaders can be distinguished on the basis of whether they believed in a multi-religious India or in the creation of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims, then the same distinction should apply to Hindu leaders. When we study Indian nationalism we are generally told that all Hindus were nationalists whereas there were few patriotic Muslims and the rest were with the anti-national Muslim League. In order to clear the air we need to define what nationalism meant in Indian context. If Indian nationalism had been about creating a multi-religious, secular nation state, only those who shared this commitment would be called nationalist or patriotic. But this is rarely the case when we discuss communal Hindus or Hindu nationalist leaders. Despite their being decidedly against a multi-cultural India, they are still held up as nationalist icons. The truth is that they were decidedly anti-patriotic or anti-national, in precisely the same way as the Muslim League was.

¹⁴ Cited in Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, Delhi, 2010, p. 206.

¹⁵ Gangadharan, K. K., *Indian National Consciousness: Growth & Development*, Kalamkar, Delhi, 1972, p. 97.

Patriotic Muslims

In the same way that not all Hindu leaders were patriotic by this standard, not all Muslims were anti-patriotic. A large number of Muslim individuals and mass-based Muslim organisations opposed the two-nation theory and the creation of Pakistan with all their resources, often laying down their lives. Muslims against Partition or patriotic Muslims were an outcome and creation of Indian freedom struggle.

Most nationalist Muslims were associated with the national movement from the days of the Rowlatt Satyagraha, though the expression became current only in mid-1920s...The label nationalist Muslims is valid in describing the ideology and politics of those committed to Indian nationalism, to the Congress movement and who were not motivated by narrow sectional and community concerns.¹⁶

There were many categories of patriotic Muslims. There were many Muslim patriots who were recognised as outstanding and sincere Islamic scholars, but whose appeal has been not only to Muslims but to the whole India. Such have been several of the country's most prominent Congressmen. These included Hakim Ajmal Khan, M. A. Ansari and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.¹⁷

Another type of patriotic Muslims were the persons who might or might not have been 'good Muslims.' These were to a greater or lesser extent secular individuals of Muslim background. Such were the Muslim lawyers and other professionals like Saifuddin Kitchlew, Asaf Ali, Abbas Tayyabji and Yusuf Mihir Ali.

Some patriotic Muslims learnt lessons of Indian nationalism through their religion; others despite it. According to Smith,

¹⁶ Hasan, Mushirul, "Congress Muslims and Indian Nationalism: Dilemma and Decline 1928-1934", Occasional Papers on History and Society XXIII, NMM&L, Delhi, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Victor G. Ltd, London, 1946, p. 211.

they have been nationalist and they have been Muslims. Some of them have been nationalist because they were Muslims: they deduced their Indian nationalist ardor from their interpretation of Islam—for instance, of Islam as a religion of freedom and equality, of justice, of co-operation with and respect for all mankind. Others have been Indian-nationalist in spite of being Muslim: they have heard Muslim League propaganda and despised its communalism, and have determined that they themselves at least would choose Indian freedom and world progress rather than Islamic reaction.¹⁸

Then there were Muslim patriots who were Muslim in the sense that they were born into a Muslim community; but in fact had been anti-religious. In this category were,

young Muslim intellectuals and students [who] were not seduced by the communalists but turned rather to Marxist thinking, or in any case attacked religion as retrogressive and divisive and would have none of it.¹⁹

Patriotic Muslims were led by a philosophy of co-existence and a non-sectarian understanding of their faith. They,

wanted to be led by persons who would represent not communalism but faith, not numbers but values, not multitudes but effectiveness. They firmly believed that the experience of living together had moulded the Hindus and Muslims into a common nationality, and that they needed to accept the logic of fact and history and fashion their destiny accordingly.²⁰

Some patriotic Muslims were also linked to the Wahabi Movement and First War of Independence of 1857. Muslims against Partition did not put forward any prerequisite for taking part in the struggle for national independence. These deeply religious Muslims believed that once they were free from the foreign yoke they could settle internal disputes and shape the common destiny. “Nationalist Muslims further stood for social revolution after the country had achieved its freedom because they believed that such a

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 212-3.

²⁰ Hasan, Mushirul & Rakhshanda Jalil, *Partners in Freedom: Jamia Millia Islamia*, Niyogi Books, Delhi, 2006, p. 164.

revolution alone would help in improving the lot of Muslim masses in India."²¹ These patriotic Muslims condemned the idea of Pakistan because it would disintegrate the solidarity of Muslims in India as well as the country as a whole and because it would prevent India from playing an international role in politics, helping Muslim countries round her.²²

According to the prominent patriotic Muslim leader, Asaf Ali, the division of India was wholly impracticable and opposed to the ultimate interests of Indian Muslims themselves. According to him patriotic Muslims should not indulge in negative politicking by simply criticising the Muslim League but "have a complete blueprint, which will secure not merely the fullest autonomy to the Muslim majority provinces but will also secure every conceivable safeguard for the Muslims in the Hindu majority provinces and in the Federal Government."²³

Patriotic Muslims were those Indian freedom fighters who,

incurred the wrath of both the extremist Hindus and the extremist Muslims. The former held them suspect as fifth columnists of the Muslim League and the latter characterized them as the camp-followers of the Hindus. Extremist Hindus inside the Congress missed no opportunity of impugning their nationalism every time a genuine difference of opinion was expressed. Difficult as their position was nationalist Muslims made every conceivable sacrifice for their country's freedom, and showed the courage of their convictions under sorely trying conditions. They faced the underserved taunts and accusations of prejudiced critics without ever deviating from their honestly chosen path, treating with contempt every jibe and every venomous attack.²⁴

The patriotic Muslim regarded the whole of British and the Indian India,

as much the imprescriptible and inalienable home of the Indian Mussalmans [*sic*] as that of the Hindus or of the others who live in. He bitterly resents any suggestion that India is the ancient and

²¹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, October 15, 1945.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *The Bombay Chronicle*, September 3, 1945.

²⁴ *The Bombay Chronicle*, August 8, 1942.

exclusive home of the Hindus and the Muslims are only alien interlopers who must look for favours and grace from the rest of the population. He wants to see the country freed from foreign domination and he has made and is prepared to make every sacrifice to achieve that end. To him freedom does not mean the collective freedom of one section and the subordination of any minority; but the fullest freedom and equality of every Indian national. He believes not merely in political, religious and social, but also economic freedom which means freedom from want and exploitation. Subject to these fundamentals he wants a free political Union of the whole country...²⁵

Patriotic Muslims dissociated themselves from both Hindu and Muslim advocates of a new imperialist order based on vague or even vicious scheme. They wished unborn generations to inherit a peaceful, strong and prosperous India in which Hindus, Muslims and others would live as brothers and equals, and enjoy the fruits of their labour and the commonwealth of their country in the fullest measure.²⁶

The indisputable patriot Maulana Abul Kalam Azad declared that,

the very term Pakistan goes against my grain. It suggests that some portions of the world are pure while others are impure. Such a division of territories into pure and impure is un-Islamic and a repudiation of the very spirit of Islam. Islam recognizes no such division and the Prophet says, 'God has made the whole world a mosque for me'.²⁷

He went on to emphasise that,

as a Muslim, I for one am not prepared for a moment to give up my right to treat the whole of India as my domain and to share in the shaping of its political and economic life. To me it seems a sure sign of cowardice to give up what is my patrimony and content myself with a mere fragment of it.²⁸

²⁵ *The Bombay Chronicle*, August 8, 1942.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam *Words of Freedom: Ideas of a Nation*, Penguin, Delhi, 2010, p. 32.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Referring to the composite Indian civilisation the great doyen of Indian nationalism Allah Bakhsh underlined the fact that,

as Indian nationals, Muslim and Hindus and others inhabit the land and share every inch of the motherland and all its material and cultural treasures alike...It is a vicious fallacy for Hindu, Muslim and other inhabitants of India to arrogate to themselves an exclusively proprietary right over either the whole or any particular part of India. The country as an indivisible whole and as one federated and composite unit belongs to all the inhabitants of the country alike and is as much the inalienable and imprescriptible heritage of the Indian Muslim as of other Indians. No segregated or insolated regions, but the whole of India is the Homeland of all the Indian Muslim and no Hindu or Muslim or any other has the right to deprive them of one inch of this Homeland...We are equal partners with the Hindus and the other inhabitants of our country in the whole of this country in every sphere and in every walk of life to the measure of our just requirements, and no power and no false or artificial sentiment unwisely propagated can alter this position. No power on earth can rob anyone of his faith and convictions, and no power on earth shall be permitted to rob Indian Muslims of their just rights as Indian nationals. As Indians we have both equal rights and responsibilities with our fellow nationals, and we shall neither suffer the slightest curtailment of our rights, nor for a movement shirk any of our responsibilities to the country.²⁹

The fact that there was such diversity among Muslims who opposed Partition should tell us something. The story we are told that Jinnah and the Muslim League represented all the Muslims in India, is a lie. There were Muslims from all walks of life and from across the political spectrum who opposed the Partition of British India. And as we will see in the next chapters, it was not just the Muslim League which believed that India was an unnatural amalgam of two distinct nations but there were also large number of Hindu co-travelers who subscribed to the two-nation theory.

²⁹ *The Hindustan Times*, April 28, 1940.

CHAPTER 2

PARTITION OF INDIA: TWO-NATION THEORY IN ACTION

The Indian sub-continent has historically been home to followers of many religions, including Hindus and Muslims. By and large, followers of these religions have lived together in peace, and despite rulers with Muslim names ruling much of India for more than five hundred years, most Indians continued to be Hindus. This is not to downplay the tensions and skirmishes between members of the two communities, but it was never Hindus vs Muslims at the national level.

In the pre-modern India if Hindus and Muslims together did not form a single nation, they “did not form homogenous communities either.”¹ It is to be noted that despite strong religious identities, the social set-up was such that,

an upper class Muslim had far more in common culturally with an upper class Hindu than he had with a lower class Muslim. Or that a Panjabi [*sic*] Hindu stood closer culturally to a Panjabi Muslim than to a Bengali Hindu; and of course, the same was true of a Bengali Muslim in relation to a Bengali Hindu and a Punjabi Muslim.²

In fact, affinity of class or status overrode religious loyalty. If Muslims were more a multiplicity of interests than a community, Hindus were no less divided than Muslims especially due to the rigorous, arbitrary and sometimes cruel divisions of the Caste system. Muslim officials and landlords as part of the ruling elite had stronger connections with the Hindu elite than with ordinary Muslims, “Muslims had little in common with each other apart from their religion; Hindus were fundamentally divided even by their faith.”³

¹ Bipin Chandra, “Historians of modern India and communalism,” in Romila Thapar and others, *Communalism and the Writings of Indian History*, PPH, Delhi, 1999, p. 41.

² *Ibid.* p. 53.

³ Francis Robinson in Bipin Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, Vikas, Delhi, 1984, p. 14.

But this was set to drastically change with the defeat of Indians in the War of Independence of 1857-59. The process of bifurcation of Indian nationalism into Hindu and Muslim variants started in the third quarter of 19th century. It was, to a great extent, an unfortunate fallout of the defeat in the War of Independence. Hindus and Muslims had rallied together against British rule, fought together heroically, but lost miserably. This defeat set into motion two divergent but interlinked trends. First, elites of both communities, who had been largely working in tandem, entered into a competitive mode for securing a favourable place in the eyes of the victor. Second, the colonial masters also realised that Hindu-Muslim unity could shake the very foundation of their rule and needed to be broken. They began to pursue with more vigour the 'divide and rule' policy. These two trends hampered the growth of the nascent secular Indian nationalism and create a scenario in which only competitive Hindu and Muslim varieties of nationalism could flourish.

This competitive communalism of the two major communities gave birth to the two-nation (or two-nations) theories among both Hindus and Muslims. A leading Hindu nationalist, Bhai Parmanand (1876-1947) took resort to history to prove that Hindus and Muslims were two different nations. Underlining the irreconcilability of Hindus and Muslims he wrote,

in history, the Hindus revere the memory of Prithvi Raj, Pratap, Shivaji and Beragi Bir, who fought for the honour and freedom of this land (against the Muslims), while the Mahomedans look upon the invaders of India like Muhammad Bin Qasim and rulers like Aurangzeb as their national heroes.⁴

The Muslim League did not lag behind. Its leader, Mohammad Ali Jinnah almost borrowing the language of Bhai Parmanand argued,

the Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literature[s]. They neither intermarry nor inter-dine together, and indeed they belong to two

⁴ Bhai Parmanand in a pamphlet titled "The Hindu National Movement," cited by B.R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India* (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1990), 35-36, first published December 1940, Thackers Publishers, Bombay.

different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects on life, and of life, are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Mussalmans derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, their heroes are different, and different episode[s].⁵

The Muslim League's insistence on the two-nation theory and its demand for Pakistan won the day and India was partitioned on August 14-15, 1947, making room for a supposed homeland for Muslims. It is to be noted that Pakistan was the only state apart from Israel which was created in the name of religion. The independence of India and creation of Pakistan should have been a moment of great joy and celebration for citizens of the respective countries. But it was overshadowed by unparalleled violence and savagery due to Partition on the basis of two-nation theory. According to historian Yasmin Khan,

even by the standards of the violent twentieth century, the Partition of India is remembered for its carnage, both for its scale—which may have involved the deaths of half a million to one million men, women and children—and for its seemingly indiscriminate callousness. Individual killings, specially in the most ferociously contested province of Punjab, were frequently accompanied by disfiguration, dismemberment and the rape of women from one community by men from another...The killings bridged the barbaric and the calculatedly modern, they were both haphazard and chillingly specific. A whole village might be hacked to death with blunt farm instruments, or imprisoned in a barn and burned alive, or shot against walls by impromptu firing squads using machine-guns. Children, the elderly and sick were not spared...alongside systematic looting and robbery clearly carried out with the intention of ruining lives. It seems that the aim was not to kill, but to break people.⁶

During Partition the Indian sub-continent witnessed “sexual savagery: about 75,000 are thought to have been abducted and

⁵ Full version of Jinnah's address is available at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/txt_jinnah_la_hore_1940.html

⁶ Khan, Yasmin, *The Great Partition: The Making of India & Pakistan*, Penguin, Delhi, 2007, p. 6.

raped by men of religions different from their own..."⁷ One witness of the savagery during Partition, Shaikh Abdul Majeed described the horror in the following words:

Killing is no murder, looting no robbery, setting fire no arson, encroachment no illegal possession, forcible conversion no interference with religion; massacre of innocent men, women and children has lost its horror in the eye of the custodian of law and order. Brutalities, bestialities, butcheries, barbarities and unspeakable atrocities are justified as acts of retaliation. About a million must have been murdered, maimed or injured. Property worth several millions has been destroyed; villages, towns and fine city quarters consumed by flame; and two generations cannot completely rebuild what has been wiped out. Several millions have been rendered homeless refugees and many more millions are ready to flee in all directions for safety...And this is called the freedom of Hindustan and the freedom of Pakistan.⁸

Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who were living side by side in villages, towns and cities for centuries, seemed to have gone mad turning into beasts. The violence was,

unique, a cataclysm without precedent, unforeseen in magnitude, unordered in pattern, unreasoned in savagery. For six terrible weeks, like the ravages of a medieval plague, a mania for murder would sweep across the face of northern India. There would be no sanctuary from its scourge, no corner free from the contagion of its virus.⁹

Partition caused one of the largest displacements of people in world history. Some 12 million people were displaced in the divided Punjab alone, and some 20 million in the subcontinent as a whole, making it one of the largest displacements of people in the twentieth century.¹⁰ This unprecedented transfer of population

⁷ Butalia, Urvashi, *The Other Side of the Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, Penguin, Delhi, 1998.

⁸ Cited in Candidus, "Indian Political Notes: Aftermath of mass killings", *The Times of India*, September 25, 1947, p. 6.

⁹ Lapiere, Dominique, Larry Collins, *Freedom At Midnight*, Vikas, Delhi, 2012, p. 439.

¹⁰ Zamindar, Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali, *The Long Partition: And the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*, Penguin, Delhi, 2008, p. 6.

took place despite assurance by leaders of all parties and the British rulers that there would be no transfer of population.

India was partitioned in order to avoid communal killings but it caused murder on a grander scale than what could have been imagined. According to Ram Manohar Lohia,

women, children and men were killed, often with such lunacy that killers seemed to be experimenting with a view to achieving yet newer forms of murder and rape...This was probably the greatest migration, forced or willing, in all history.¹¹

How the mindless killers were experimenting with newer forms of murder and rapes can be known from the following first person account of a perpetrator. It is from autobiography of a senior RSS pracharak (preacher or whole-timer), Krishna Gopal Rastogi titled, *Aap Beeti*. While describing an incident in which he personally led a mob of armed Hindus against Muslims in Kaliar town situated between Roorkee and Haridwar (now in Uttar Pradesh) went on to state without any remorse how he did not spare even a young Muslim girl. According to Rastogi's heart-chilling version:

It was an old locality inhabited by the Muslims. They, armed with daggers, spears, guns were fully prepared to meet any situation. When I learnt of their intentions to attack some Hindu areas, I organised 250 people including some known gangsters and raided Kaliar. Then a strange thing happened. While we had been killing men in one of the houses, we spotted a very beautiful young girl. The assailants led by me were instantly enamoured. They even started fighting among themselves to take possession of the girl. I faced an extremely awkward situation and did not know what to do. I tried my best to get the assailants to focus on real issues. I abused and threatened them but they would not listen to me. And suddenly the solution came. The girl was after all causing this trouble and had to be eliminated. I took my gun and shot her. She died. My associates were shocked and returned to the work. Though it was against our principle to assault a woman, but it was

¹¹ Lohia, Rammanohar, *Guilty Men of India's Partition*, BR Publishing, Delhi, 2012, p. 44.

done in an emergency and I still regret it.¹²

These were innocent common people who suffered. They were not 'guilty' of Partition. Ishtiaq Ahmed in his seminal work on the Partition of Punjab writes,

It must be stressed that the decision to Partition the Punjab was taken not by the Punjabi masses or even their elite, but at the central level, by the colonial government at Delhi, the high commands of the Indian National Congress, and the Muslim League...¹³

It was incompetence and shortsightedness of the colonial masters, especially Lord Mountbatten and his advisors, which made the situation worse and aggravated the violence. Cyril Radcliff, who was especially called by Mountbatten to divide India, did his work in a highly unprofessional manner. Radcliff "muddled through the details in their haste to meet Mountbatten's improbable deadlines, and in which the peoples of Bengal and the Punjab were mere pawns in the endgames of empire."¹⁴ Where was India and where was Pakistan? Who was Indian and who was a Pakistani? Nothing was clear. The Partition of territories was done in highly haphazard and irresponsible manner. Certain areas kept on changing states thus creating more confusion and bloodshed.

¹² Cited in Khushwant Singh's Weekly Column, *Hindustan Times*, Delhi, May 12, 2001. This autobiography was released with a laudatory preface by K. S. Sudarshan, the then head of the RSS. Incidentally, Rastogi was appointed in two committees of the Human Resource Development Ministry of the Government of India headed by Murl Manohar Joshi during NDA rule (2002) despite protests from more than 50 MPs.

¹³ Ahmed, Ishtiaq, *The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed*, Rupa, Delhi, 2011, p. xxxv. Professor Ishtiaq's book is a forceful indictment of the Partition. His groundbreaking work based on empirical studies shows that Punjab bore the brunt of the Partition violence and ugliest features of the Partition were played out in the Punjab. This book also corroborates the fact that all over Punjab there were patriotic Muslims in large numbers in the Congress Party or other anti-British parties such as the *Khaksars* and *Majlis-e-Ahrar*. This book also highlights the fact that the Punjab Unionist Party too was against the Partition of India and how Jinnah and the Muslim League bullied Sir Khizr Tiwana Premier of Punjab who was opposed to Partition.

¹⁴ Chatterji, Joya, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-67*, Cambridge UP, Delhi, 2008, p. 20.

According to Yasmin Khan,

the real line would not be presented to the public until two days after the new states had come into existence, on 17 August, and would be hurriedly marked on maps using censuses of 'minority' and 'majority' populations. The border would be devised from a distance; the land, villages and communities to be divided were not visited or inspected by the imperial map-maker, the British judge, Cyril Radcliff, who arrived in India on July 8 to carry out the task and stayed in the country only six weeks.¹⁵

Two such examples out of hundreds, one from western India and the other from eastern India were; Preet Nagar (a few kilometers away from Amritsar) and Malda district in Bengal. These were first declared to be part of Pakistan, thus most of the non-Muslims vacated the areas. After a few days both were declared to be part of India thus causing reverse migrations. This delay and confusion caused more bloodshed and agony.¹⁶

The Partition was affected in order to solve the communal problem but Radcliff's division left over five million Muslims in West Bengal (out of total population of 21 million) and 11 million Hindus in the eastern part of Pakistan (out of total population of 39 million).¹⁷ The Partition of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan on the basis of a religious divide was a classic example of a 'refugee generating process.' It left millions of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims on the 'wrong' side of the fence and led to an exodus unparalleled in history.¹⁸

W. H. Auden (1907-73) a left-leaning Anglo-American poet brilliantly satirised the job of partitioning India as undertaken by Cyril Radcliff in the following poem:

Unbiased at least he was when he arrived on his mission,

¹⁵ Khan, Yasmin, *The Great Partition: The Making of India & Pakistan*, Penguin, Delhi, 2007, p. 3.

¹⁶ Hasan, Mushirul (ed.), *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom*, vol. 1, Roli Books, 2012, p. 35.

¹⁷ Chatterji, Joya, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-67*, Cambridge UP, Delhi, 2008, p. 57.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Having never set eyes on the land he was called to Partition
 Between two peoples fanatically at odds,
 With their different diets and incompatible gods.
 'Time,' they had briefed him in London, 'is short. It's too late
 For mutual reconciliation or rational debate:
 The only solution now lies in separation.
 The Viceroy thinks, as you will see from his letter,
 That the less you are seen in his company the better,
 So we've arranged to provide you with other accommodation.
 We can give you four judges, two Muslim and two Hindu,
 To consult with, but the final decision must rest with you.'
 Shut up in a lonely mansion, with police night and day
 Patrolling the gardens to keep the assassins away,
 He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate
 Of millions. The maps at his disposal were out of date
 And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,
 But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect
 Contested areas. The weather was frightfully hot,
 And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the trot,
 But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided,
 A continent for better or worse divided.
 The next day he sailed for England, where he could quickly forget
 The case, as a good lawyer must. Return he would not,
 Afraid, as he told his Club, that he might get shot.

But it is also true that despite this bloody reign of murder, rape
 and rapine there were exceptions too. Punjabi poet Amarjit
 Chandan thus relates one such story.

In the total madness, there were some sane voices around. The
 Punjabi communists of Sikh, Hindu and Muslim backgrounds
 were actively involved in peace committees trying to save the lives
 of innocent people. Comrade Gehal Singh was one of them.
 Instigated by some Sikh leaders of Akāl Sena who were behind the
 butchering of Muslims in the district of Amritsar, Gehal Singh was
 abducted in a jeep one evening while he was cycling back home.
 He was tortured in Burj Phoola Singh; his hair was cut and his
 body was hacked into pieces and later it was said to have been
 thrown in the burning furnace in the *langar* community kitchen
 of the Golden Temple. That was the end of a great humanitarian—a
gurmukh—a true Sikh. The known culprits were never brought to

justice.¹⁹

The tragedy of Indian Partition was man made. The ideology which forced Partition was the toxic two-nation theory. Religion-based nationalism played havoc with an old civilisation. Victims crossed the new borders and those who suffered had no role in the decision of Partition. They were not guilty but paid the price heavily for some others' crimes. Further compounding the tragedy was that those guilty of Partition—those who raised the banner of two-nation theory or those who succumbed to the theory thus causing the unprecedented mayhem and bloodshed—were also destined to rule on both sides of the new border.

¹⁹ Chandan, Amarjit, 'Gehal Singh: A Martyr Of The Supreme Cause', <http://www.sacw.net/article9597.html>

CHAPTER 3

TWO-NATION THEORY: ORIGIN AND HINDU-MUSLIM VARIANTS

The flag-bearers of two-nation theory claim that religion provides an individual's fundamental identity. According to this view religious differences are natural, fundamental and primordial. Hence Hindus and Muslims (or Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Christians) inhabiting India belong to different nations. As many have explained¹ any nationalist discourse tends to rely on some

¹ The thesis that nationalism was a 'natural' phenomenon was contested by Tagore too. His criticism was not limited to this particular aspect alone. He went to the extent of advocating total discard of the very concept of nationalism. "The idea of the nation is one of the most powerful anesthetics that man has invented. Under the influence of its fumes the whole people can carry out its systematic programme of the most virulent self-seeking without being in the least aware of its moral perversion, in fact, feeling dangerously resentful if it is pointed out." [Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism* (London: Macmillan, 1950), 42- 43.]

We saw in 20th century that the most uncompromising of reactionaries became the most ardent nationalists. It was soon realised by big business and propertied classes that the national state could be of immense help for not only survival but also for expansion. To give an overview of the adverse impact of nationalism on the world as a whole, it would be helpful to consider its criticism by Harold J. Laski, a great liberal political scientist of the era of the World Wars and the rise of totalitarianism. He noted with alarm that human civilisation was witnessing a world of competing nation-states, each of which was a law unto itself, and was producing a civilisation incapable of survival. He was of the opinion that the law between these states was the law of the jungle which was led by the instincts of hate, fear and insecurity. [Harold J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), 218-240.]

E. J. Hobsbawm, while referring to Renan, who said: 'Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation' argued that nationalism required too much belief in what was patently not so. For him nationalism which gained ground so rapidly from the 1870 to 1914 was the creation "of both social and political changes, not to mention an international situation that provided plenty of pegs on which to hang manifestos of hostility to foreigners. Socially, three developments gave considerably increased scope for the development of novel forms of inventing 'imagined' or even actual communities as nationalities: the resistance of traditional groups threatened by the onrush of modernity, the novel and quite non-traditional classes and

strata now rapidly growing in the urbanising societies of developed countries, and the unprecedented migrations which distributed a multiple diasporas of peoples across the globe, each strangers to both natives and other migrant groups, none, as yet, with the habits of conventions of co-existence.” [E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1990, p. 109.] According to Hobsbawm, the invention of tradition is an essential part of the construction of nationalism. The invention of public ceremonies and mass production of public monuments remains the top priority. “Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.” [Hobsbawm, E. J. & Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1983, p. 1.] These were so recent that ‘historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond historical continuity, either by semi-fiction [...] or by forgery.’ [Ibid. 7.] This can be corroborated in the case of Indian nationalism, where the early flag-bearers of Hindu nationalism invented religious ceremonies and demanded the construction and restoration of religious monuments. In fact, myth creation is part of this process of invention of tradition. Myth plays highly crucial role in ‘constructing’ or spreading nationalist sentiments. According to Hosking and Schopflin, who have done pioneering work on this theme, “myth is one of a number of crucial instruments in cultural reproduction. It acts as a means of standardisation and of storage of information. It provides the means for the members of a community to recognize that, broadly, they share a mindset, they are in much the same thought-world. Through myth, boundaries are established within the community and also with respect to other communities. Those who do not share in the myth are by definition excluded.” [Geoffrey Hosking and George Schopflin (eds.), *Myths of Nationhood*, Hurst and Co., London, 1997), pp. 19–20.]

Thus, myth becomes an important tool in identifying or constructing a nation. It is referred to as myth because it is not a historical truth but perceptions of the community about itself: “Myth creates an intellectual and cognitive monopoly in that it seeks to establish the sole way of ordering the world and defining world-views. For the community to exist as a community, this monopoly is vital, and the individual members of that community must broadly accept the myth. Note here that myth is not identical with falsehood or deception. Members of a community may be aware that the myth they accept is not strictly accurate, but, because myth is not history, this does not matter. It is the content of the myth that is important, not its accuracy as a historical account. [Ibid. 25.]

Myth is a deliberate creation of the given leadership in a collective. It is resourced through top to bottom. It is the work of “the political and intellectual elites in the community, those who are able to gain the ear of society, those who control the language of public communication politicians, the monarch, the bureaucracy, perhaps the priesthood, writers and so on.” [Ibid. 25.] Here, however, we should not lose sight of a fact that not everything can be turned into a myth. Only that myth can succeed which

form of oversimplification. The myth of the nation-state—that there is one homogenous culture within a state's borders—is always false and nation-states can only survive by catering to the needs of elites while suppressing the interests of much of the population. The curious aspect of the two-nation theory is that it defines the national myth exclusively in terms of religion.

Muslim Variant of Two-Nation Theory

The theory that Muslims are a separate nation within India took almost a decade to develop. In the first phase it was claimed that Muslims constituted an exclusive nationality with fundamental differences from Hindus and required safeguards against the

can prove to be “effective in organising and mobilising opinion, it must, however, resonate. A myth that fails to elicit a response is either alien to the community, or inappropriate at the time when it is used, or, conceivably, evokes a response only in a small number of those addressed.”[*Ibid.* 25–26]

How a myth is used effectively can be understood by seeing the call by the nationalists to return to a ‘golden age’, a trait shared by many kinds of nationalism, especially those in which nationalism became synonymous with religious revivalism. The myth of the ‘golden age’ also helped in overcoming some fundamental theoretical infirmities of these nationalists. First, it satisfies the quest for authenticity; second, it establishes a sense of continuity, between the generations; and third, it reminds the members of the community of their past greatness or dignity. This ‘golden age’ acts ‘as a guide and model for national destiny’.[Anthony Smith, “The “Golden Age” and National Renewal’ in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schopflin (eds.), *Myths of Nationhood*, Hurst & Co., London, 1997, p. 59.]

Karl Marx, in his prominent work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), though not directly dealing with the issue of nationalism, explained how history tended to be turned into an important tool by ruling classes for justifying their present subjective aspirations. He wrote: “The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.” [Marx, Karl, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Karl Marx–Frederick Engels Collected Works, vol. 11, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979), p. 130.] Thus it can be argued that nationalism and two-nation theory are modern constructs despite its claim of being historic.]

majority. In this phase there was no demand for a separate homeland for Muslims.

In the second phase it was argued that since Muslims were a separate nation they had every right to have their homeland, i.e., Pakistan. The notion behind the demand for Pakistan was that the Muslims were not a minority community in India but a distinct nation and therefore they must have a national state of their own.²

Muhammad Iqbal's contribution to two-nation theory

The poet and philosopher, Sir Muhammad Iqbal set the ball rolling when delivering the presidential address to the 25th Session of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad (December 29, 1930), where he said: "We are 70 million and far more homogeneous than any other people in India. Indeed the Muslims of India are the only Indian people who can fitly be described as a nation in the modern sense of the word."³

With this given reality, he argued,

the Muslim demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is, therefore, perfectly justified. The resolution of the All-Parties Muslim Conference at Delhi is, to my mind, wholly inspired by this noble ideal of a harmonious whole which, instead of stifling the respective individualities of its component wholes, affords them chances of fully working out the possibilities that may be latent in them. And I have no doubt that this House will emphatically endorse the Muslim demands embodied in this resolution.⁴

Iqbal was referring to the All-India Muslim Conference which in its Delhi session in January 1929 had demanded a federal system with adequate safeguards for Muslims in the new Constitution. The most crucial part of his speech was when he demanded Muslim majority provinces in the western part of India to be

² For an elaborate discussion of the issue see, Ansari, Shaukatullah, *Pakistan: The Problem of India*, Minerva, Lahore, 1944.

³ Cited in Naim, C. M (ed.), *Iqbal, Jinnah and Pakistan*, Jinnah Publication House, Delhi, 1982, p. 205.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

amalgamated into one unit having self-government. According to him,

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, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India. [*Italics as in the original*]⁵

While claiming that Muslims were a nation, Iqbal was aware of the pitfall that Muslims were not a homogenous whole. According to him Muslim community was losing its

herd instinct. This [loss] makes it possible for individuals and groups to start independent careers without contributing to the general thought and activity of the community. We are doing today in the domain of politics what we have been doing for centuries in the domain of religion.⁶

It is to be noted that when Muhammad Iqbal presented his historic address in 1930 declaring Muslims to be a separate nation "the meeting at Allahabad did not even have its quorum of 75 members."⁷ Moreover, "when this clarion call was made from the Muslim League platform no one took any notice of it and no one moved any resolution in the session approving the scheme enunciated at Allahabad."⁸

The general perception is that the theory of two-nation and the idea of Pakistan took birth in the above address of Iqbal. This is not completely correct. He did talk of Muslims as a separate nation but "was not advocating Partition and by autonomy he did not mean full independence. He was thinking primarily of Muslim

⁵ Cited in Naim, C. M (ed.), *Iqbal, Jinnah and Pakistan*, Jinnah Publication House, Delhi, 1982, pp. 195-6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁷ Hasan, Mushirul, "Congress Muslims and Indian Nationalism: Dilemma and Decline 1928-1934," NMM&L Occasional Papers on History and Society XXIII. This paper was presented at the international conference held at the Department of History, University of Sydney on 13-15 February 1985.

⁸ Khaliqzaman, Choudhry, *Pathway to Pakistan*, Longman, Lahore, 1961, pp. 108-9.

consolidation. But he did not propose that the Muslim State should break away from the rest of India. He kept silent about Muslims of the eastern India.”⁹Iqbal, however, was of the firm opinion that a “homogeneous India will lead to civil war.”¹⁰

Rahmat Ali’s idea of Pakistan

It was in 1933 that two-nation theory of Muslims took a concrete shape. A Punjabi Muslim and an under-graduate student at Cambridge, Choudhary Rahmat Ali propounded the idea that the Punjab, NWFP, (Afghan Province), Kashmir, Sindh, and Baluchistan, should be formed into a separate Muslim State called Pakistan. In an appeal (also published as a pamphlet) *Now or Never*, dated January 28, 1933, Rahmat Ali for the first time put forward his scheme of Pakistan. Rahmat Ali’s idea of Pakistan differed with that of Iqbal’s as the latter proposed the amalgamation of those provinces into a single State forming a unit of the All-India Federation whereas Rahmat Ali proposed that these provinces should have an independent federation of their own. Rahmat Ali did not stop here. He kept on issuing pamphlets demanding Bangistan, Haideristan, Osmanistan, Siddiqistan, Faruqistan, Maplistan etc. He even demanded that the Indian sub-continent should be rechristened as ‘continent of Dinia’. He also founded *The Pakistan National Movement*, *The Haideristan National Movement* and *All-Dinia Milli Movement*. According to his idea the Islamic states should have no minorities. He also started a weekly newspaper namely *Pakistan*.¹¹

According to Rahmat Ali’s vision,

Our religion, culture, history, tradition, literature, economic system, laws of inheritance, succession and marriage are fundamentally different from those of the Hindus. These

⁹ Ansari, Shaukatullah, *Pakistan: The Problem of India*, Minerva, Lahore, 1944, p. 3.

¹⁰ *The Tribune*, December, 31, 1930.

¹¹ Rahmat Ali published 3 pamphlets titled *The Millat and the Mission* (1942), *The Millat and Her Minorities* (1943) and *The Millat and Her Ten Nations* (1944)

differences are not confined to the broad basic principles. Far from it. They extend to the minutest details of our lives. We, Muslims and Hindus, do not inter-dine; we do not intermarry. Our national customs and calendars, even our diet and dress are different. In the presence of these incontrovertible realities to try to unite us politically and physically by destroying the Pakistani nationhood would be the most grievous disasters'.¹²

Rahmat Ali disliked patriotic Muslims who, according to him were, "pro-Hindu but anti-British. Their policy is subservient to Hindu Capitalism and Hindu Nationalism."¹³ Interestingly, he stood for a "democratic and socialistic" system of government in Pakistan.¹⁴

No notice taken of Rahmat Ali's pamphlet

The Now or Never pamphlet issued by Rahmat Ali was ignored by almost all Muslim organisations at the time. The scheme was declared as "chimerical and impracticable" by a Muslim delegation to the Parliamentary Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms in August 1933.¹⁵ It was described as "only a student's scheme" which was not put forward by "responsible people."¹⁶ Halide Edib, the Turkish author who interacted with Rahmat Ali directly, was of the opinion that Pakistan National Movement was supported by a small section of Punjabi Muslim students who stayed abroad.¹⁷

Even a prominent Muslim League leader, Khaliqzaman did admit that "no one took any notice of it [Rahmat Ali's scheme of Pakistan]...I felt sad that a man of his caliber and attainment was being reviled by his own people in India...as a British stooge."¹⁸

¹² Cited in Edib, Halide, *Inside India*, George Allen & Unwin, London. 1937, pp. 361-62.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

¹⁵ Talbot, Ian, *Freedom Cry: The Popular Dimension in the Pakistan Movement and Pakistan Experience in North-West India*, OUP, Karachi, 1996, p. 5.

¹⁶ Proceedings of the Parliamentary Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms 1933 cited in Farooqi, M., *Pakistan: Policies that Led to Break-up*, CPI, Delhi, 1972, pp. 16-17.

¹⁷ Edib, Halide, *Inside India*, George Allen & Unwin, London. 1937, p. 362.

¹⁸ Khaliqzaman, Choudhry, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

Rahmat Ali called partition of Punjab and Bengal in 1947 as great betrayal. He even wrote a pamphlet, *The Great Betrayal*. After the creation of Pakistan when he came there from London to settle down he was not welcome and police kept on tracking him. He was forced to leave Pakistan and died in London on February 3, 1951, *unsung*.¹⁹

Rahmat Ali lived a controversial life. It was common knowledge that Rahmat Ali, who was not pursuing any specific course of studies at Cambridge, had no obvious means of support. But he had ample funds for his somewhat luxurious entertainment of celebrities and propaganda activities. He derived his inspiration and funds from the India Office. He was glorified as a representative of Indian Muslims by the Churchill-Lord Lloyd group of the Conservative Party.²⁰

There was no further movement on Rahmat Ali's scheme, but pro-Muslim Leaguers continued producing literature underlining the fact that Muslims were a separate nation. Abdul Latif of Osmania University (Hyderabad State) patronised by Muslim League came out with two titles, *The Cultural Problem of India* (1938) and *The Muslim Problem in India* (1939) in which the idea of composite Indian nation was repudiated. He argued that communal problem in India was not political, but cultural.²¹

The idea got further crystalised in October 1938 at the Sind Provincial Muslim League, presided over by Jinnah. It was resolved that it was absolutely essential

in the interests of abiding peace of the vast Indian continent and in the interests of unhampered cultural development, the economic and social betterment and political self-determination of the two nations, known as Hindus and Muslims, that India may be divided into two federations, viz., Federation of Muslim States and Federation of non-Muslim States."²²

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1961, p. 201.

²⁰ Ansari, Shaukatullah, *Pakistan: The Problem of India*, Minerva, Lahore, 1944, pp. 6-7.

²¹ Sherwani, Latif Ahmed, *The Pakistan Resolution*, Quaid-i-Azam Academy, Karachi, 1986, p. 8.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

The idea developed when Working Committee of the League met in September 1939. It resolved that prevalent constitutional system had resulted in,

the domination by the Hindus over the Muslim minorities, whose life and liberty, property and honour are in danger, and even their religious rights and culture are being assailed and annihilated every day under the Congress Governments in various provinces. While Muslim India stands against exploitation of the people of India and has repeatedly declared in favour of a free India, it is equally opposed to domination by the Hindu majority over the Musalmans and other minorities and vassalisation of Muslim India, and is irrevocably opposed to any federal objective which must necessarily result in a majority community rule under the guise of democracy and parliamentary system of government. Such a constitution is totally unsuited to the genius of the peoples of the country, which is composed of various nationalities and does not constitute a national state.²³

Jinnah on two-nation theory

By the end of the 1930s Jinnah and the Muslim League had completely abandoned the concept of 'our country' and 'common motherland'. Now Muslims were not a 'minority' but a full-fledged nation.²⁴ Delivering the presidential address at the Lahore Session of Muslim League on March 22, 1940, he said:

The problem in India is not of an inter-communal character, but manifestly of an international one, and it must be treated as such...If the British Government are really in earnest and sincere to secure [the] peace and happiness of the people of this sub-continent, the only course open to us all is to allow the major nations separate homelands by dividing India into 'autonomous national states'.²⁵

²³ Cited in Ansari, Shaukatullah, *Pakistan: The Problem of India*, Minerva, Lahore, 1944, p. 11.

²⁴ Sherwani, Latif Ahmed, *The Pakistan Resolution*, Quaid-i-Azam Academy, Karachi, 1986, p. 14.

²⁵ Visit following Link for full version of Jinnah's address: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/txt_jinnah_lahore_1940.html

According to him Hinduism and Islam were not two different religions but,

in fact, different and distinct social orders; and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality; and this misconception of one Indian nation has gone far beyond the limits and is the cause of more of our troubles and will lead India to destruction if we fail to revise our notions in time. The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literature[s]. They neither intermarry nor interdine together, and indeed they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects on life, and of life, are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Mussalmans derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, their heroes are different, and different episode[s]. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other, and likewise their victories and defeats overlap. 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...²⁶

Revising his opinion he declared that,

Mussalmans are not a minority as it is commonly known and understood...Mussalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homelands, their territory, and their state. We wish to live in peace and harmony with our neighbours as a free and independent people. We wish our people to develop to the fullest our spiritual, cultural, economic, social, and political life, in a way that we think best and in consonance with our own ideals and according to the genius of our people.²⁷

The whole argument revolved round the logic that "Hindus and Muslims were two different nations with entirely irreconcilable worldviews, sense of history and destiny."²⁸

It is interesting to note that until October 1937, Jinnah himself talked of Muslims as a minority community and not as 'a nation.'

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Ahmed, Ishtiaq, "The 1947 Partition of India: A Paradigm for Pathological Politics in India and Pakistan," *Asian Ethnicity*, vol. 3, Number 1, March 2002.

At the Lucknow Session of the League he had said: "The All-India Muslim League certainly and definitely stands to safeguard the rights and interests of Musalmans and other minorities effectively." And again: "In order to strengthen the solidarity of the Muslim community and to secure for the Muslims their proper and effective share in the Provincial Governments it is essential that the Muslims should organize themselves as one party."²⁹

Jinnah's address did not deal with the issue of Pakistan directly. The Pakistan scheme was made explicit in the 'Pakistan Resolution' passed on March 23, 1940 at Lahore conference. It read:

Resolved that it is the considered view of this Session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this 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 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 and zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'Independent State' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.*³⁰[Emphasis added]

The Madras session of the Muslim League in 1941 made it clear that the Muslim League would not accept anything less than partition of the country as Jinnah declared:

We do not want under any circumstances a constitution of an All-India character with one Government at the Centre. The ideology of the League is based on the fundamental principle that the Muslims of India are an independent nationality and that any attempt to get them to merge their national and political identity and ideology will be resisted.³¹

Jinnah while addressing the 31st Session of the All-India Muslim League at Karachi equated demand of Pakistan with oneness of the

²⁹ Ansari, Shaukatullah, *Pakistan: The Problem of India*, Minerva, Lahore, 1944, p. 19.

³⁰ Naim, C. M (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 208.

³¹ Ansari, Shaukatullah, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

Qur'an and God. He told the large gathering: "It is the great book Qur'an that is the sheet-anchor of Muslim India. I am sure that as we go on and on, there will be more and more of oneness - one God, one book one prophet and one nation."³²

It was at the convention of the Muslim League legislators held at Delhi on April 8-9, 1946 that Muslim League's final plan of partition of India was unveiled. It resolved:

Whereas the Muslims are convinced that with a view to saving Muslim India from the domination of Hindus, and in order to afford them full scope to develop themselves according to their genius, it is necessary to constitute a sovereign independent State comprising Bengal and Assam in the north-east zone and the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the north-west zone. (These areas were to be known as Pakistan).³³

It is to be noted that until 1930 the idea of Pakistan or even two-nation theory was not an issue. Iqbal, who initiated the debate, was himself a new convert to the idea. He was "an ardent Indian nationalist. His early poems, *Himalaya*, *Naya Shiwala*, and many others are expressive of his [Indian] patriotism."³⁴ Iqbal's forceful preaching of the two-nation theory did not appeal to large sections of Indian Muslims. Even the Muslim League did not take notice of it. Jinnah's case was no different. He started as a Congress ideologue and remained committed to composite nationalism for a long time. He converted to two-nation theory only in late 1930s. His conversion played a major role in popularising the concept. However, he was soon to realise that a movement run on sheer sentimentalism had in-built limitations. On the eve of Partition while addressing a gathering of Muslim League members of the Indian Union Constituent Assembly Jinnah emphasised that sentimentalism would not help the Muslims. They should not be

³² *The Bombay Chronicle*, December 27, 1943.

³³ Cited in Naim, C. M (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 209-210.

³⁴ Manzooruddin Ahmad cited in Naim, C. M (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 50.

swept away by sentiments but take decisions with discretion.³⁵ It was late arrival of wisdom; the damage had already been done.

Hindu Variant of Two-Nation Theory

Origin

The fact should not be overlooked that long before the appearance of Muslim advocates of the two-nation theory, Hindu nationalists had propounded this idea. Muslim League practitioners of the two-nation theory were late comers. In fact, they borrowed heavily from the Hindutva school of thought. The ball was set rolling by Hindu nationalists at the end of the 19th century in Bengal. These were Raj Narain Basu (1826–1899), the maternal grandfather of Aurobindo Ghosh, and his close associate Naba Gopal Mitra (1840–94) who can be called the co-fathers of two-nation theory and Hindu nationalism in India. Basu established a society for the promotion of national feelings among the educated natives which in fact stood for preaching the superiority of Hinduism. He organised meetings proclaiming that Hinduism despite its Casteism presented a much higher social idealism than ever reached by the Christian or Islamic civilisation. Basu not only believed in the superiority of Hinduism over other religions but also was a fervent believer in Casteism. He was the first person to conceive the idea of a Maha Hindu Samiti (All India Hindu Association) and helped in the formation of Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, a precursor of Hindu Mahasabha. He believed that through this organisation Hindus would be able to establish an Aryan nation in India.³⁶ He visualised a powerful Hindu nation not only overtaking India but the whole world. He also saw,

the noble and puissant Hindu nation rousing herself after sleep and rushing headlong towards progress with divine prowess. I see this rejuvenated nation again illumining the world by her knowledge, spirituality and culture, and the glory of Hindu nation again

³⁵ *The Bombay Chronicle*, August 4, 1947.

³⁶ Singh, Nagendra K., *Encyclopaedia of the Indian Biography*, APH Publications, Delhi, 2000, pp. 588–590.

spreading over the whole world.³⁷

Nabha Gopal Mitra started organising an annual Hindu Mela (fête). It used to be a gathering on the last day of the Bengali year and highlighted the Hindu nature of all aspects of Hindu Bengali life and continued uninterrupted between 1867 and 1880. Mitra also started a National Society and a National Paper for promoting unity and feelings of nationalism among Hindus. Mitra argued in his paper that the Hindus positively formed a nation by themselves. According to him, "the basis of national unity in India is the Hindu religion. Hindu nationality embraces all the Hindus of India irrespective of their locality or language."³⁸

R. C. Majumdar, a keen observer of the rise of Hindu nationalism in Bengal, had no difficulty in arriving at the truth that "Nabha Gopal forestalled Jinnah's theory of two nations by more than half a century."³⁹ And since then "consciously or unconsciously, the Hindu character was deeply imprinted on nationalism all over India."⁴⁰

The Arya Samaj in northern India aggressively preached that Hindu and Muslim communities in India were, in fact, two different nations. Bhai Parmanand (1874–1947), a leading light of the Arya Samaj in northern India, who was also a leader of both Congress and Hindu Mahasabha, produced enormous anti-Muslim literature, highlighting the differences between the two in the past. One of the pamphlets thus described the irreconcilability of Hindus and Muslims:

In history, the Hindus revere the memory of Prithvi Raj, Pratap, Shivaji and Beragi Bir, who fought for the honour and freedom of this land (against the Muslims), while the Mahomedans look upon the invaders of India like Muhammad Bin Qasim and rulers like Aurangzeb as their national heroes.⁴¹

³⁷ Cited in Majumdar, R. C., *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. I, Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 295–6.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 8.

³⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

⁴¹ Parmanand, Bhai in pamphlet titled, 'The Hindu National Movement', cited in B.R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, Government of

Long before V. D. Savarkar (1883-1966) and M. S. Golwalkar (1906-73), who laid down elaborate theories of Hindu *Rashtra* allowing no place for minorities, it was Bhai Parmanand who declared in the beginning of the twentieth century that followers of Hinduism and Islam in India were two different peoples because Muslims followed a religion which originated in Arab lands. Bhai Parmanand specialised in writing popular literature in Urdu in which the main emphasis would be on Hindus being true sons of India and Muslims as outsiders.⁴² As early as 1908-9, Bhai Parmanand called for the total exchange of Hindu and Muslim populations in two specific areas. According to his plan, elaborated in his autobiography,

The territory beyond Sind should be united with Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier Province into a great Musalman kingdom. The Hindus of the region should come away, while at the same time Mussalman in the rest of India should go and settle in this territory.⁴³

Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), a renowned leader simultaneously of Congress, Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj, “long before Mohammad Ali Jinnah pronounced his poisonous two-nation theory in 1939 and demanded a ruinous partition of India in 1940, had openly advocated this theory...”⁴⁴ In 1899, Lajpat Rai published an article on the Indian National Congress in the *Hindustan Review* in which he declared that “Hindus are a nation in themselves because they represent all their own.”⁴⁵

By 1924 he was more articulate in summarising his two-nation theory. He wrote:

Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States: (1) The Pathan Province of the North Western Frontier (2) Western

Maharashtra, Bombay:, 1990, pp. 35-6 (first Published December 1940, Thackers Publishers, Bombay).

⁴² Parmanand, *Hamare Qaumi Hero*, Hindu Bookshop, Lahore, n.d.

⁴³ Parmanand, Bhai, *The Story of My Life*, S. Chand, Delhi, 1982, p. 36.

⁴⁴ Noorani, A. G., “Parivar & Partition,” *Frontline*, Chennai, August 22, 2014, p. 52.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Punjab (3) Sindh and (4) Eastern Bengal. *If there are compact Muslim communities in any other part of India, sufficiently large to form a Province, they should be similarly constituted. But it should be distinctly understood that this is not a united India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India*⁴⁶[Italics as in the original]

Lajpat Rai proposed the partition of Punjab in the following words,

I would suggest that a remedy should be sought by which the Muslims might get a decisive majority without trampling on the sensitiveness of the Hindus and the Sikhs. My suggestion is that the Punjab should be partitioned into two provinces, the Western Punjab with a large Muslim majority, to be a Muslim-governed Province; and the Eastern Punjab, with a large Hindu-Sikh majority, to be a non-Muslim-governed province.⁴⁷

It may not be off the mark to believe that Muslim flag-bearers of two-nation theory had fair knowledge of theories propounded by Lajpat Rai and others and followed in their footsteps only.

Dr. B. S. Moonje was another prominent Congress leader (who equally dabbled in organising the Hindu Mahasabha and later helped the RSS in its formation) who carried forward the flag of Hindu separatism long before Muslim League's Pakistan resolution of March 1940. While addressing the third session of the Oudh Hindu Mahasabha in 1923, he declared:

Just as England belongs to the English, France to the French, and Germany to the Germans, India belongs to the Hindus. If Hindus get organised, they can humble the English and their stooges, the Muslims ... The Hindus henceforth create their own world which will prosper through *shuddhi* [literally meaning purification, the term was used for conversion of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism] and *sangathan* [organisation].⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Rai, Lala Lajpat, "Hindu-Muslim Problem XI", *The Tribune*, Lahore, December 14, 1924, p. 8.

⁴⁷ Cited in A. G. Noorani, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁴⁸ Cited in Dhanki, J. S., *Lala Lajpat Rai and Indian Nationalism*, S Publications, Jullundur, 1990, p. 378.

Lala Har Dayal (1884–1938), a well-known name in the Ghadar Party circles, too, long before the Muslim League's demand for a separate homeland for Muslims, not only demanded the formation of a Hindu nation in India but also urged the conquest and Hinduisation of Afghanistan. In a significant political statement in 1925, which was published in the *Pratap* of Kanpur, he stated:

I declare that the future of the Hindu race, of Hindustan and of the Punjab, rests on these four pillars: (1) Hindu *Sangathan*, (2) Hindu Raj, (3) *Shuddhi* of Muslims, and (4) Conquest and *Shuddhi* of Afghanistan and the Frontiers. So long as the Hindu Nation does not accomplish these four things, the safety of our children and great grandchildren will be ever in danger, and the safety of Hindu race will be impossible. The Hindu race has but one history, and its institutions are homogenous. But the Mussalman and Christians are far removed from the confines of Hindustan, for their religions are alien and they love Persian, Arab, and European institutions. Thus, just as one removes foreign matter from the eye, *Shuddhi* must be made of these two religions. Afghanistan and the hilly regions of the frontier were formerly part of India, but are at present under the domination of Islam [...] Just as there is Hindu religion in Nepal, so there must be Hindu institutions in Afghanistan and the frontier territory; otherwise it is useless to win *Swaraj*.⁴⁹

Contribution of Savarkar and Golwalkar

All such ideas of declaring India as a Hindu nation and excluding Muslims and Christians from it were crystallised by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his controversial book *Hindutva* as early as 1923. According to his definition of the Hindu nation Muslims and Christians remained out of this nationhood because they did not assimilate into Hindu cultural heritage or adopt Hindu religion. Savarkar decreed:

Christians and Mohamedan [*sic*] communities, who were but very recently Hindus and in majority of cases had been at least in their first generation most willing denizens of their new fold, claim though they might a common fatherland, and an almost pure Hindu blood and parentage with us cannot be recognised as

⁴⁹ Cited in Ambedkar, B. R., *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1990, p. 129.

Hindus; as since their adoption of the new cult they had ceased to own Hindu *Sanskriti* [culture] as a whole. They belong, or feel that they belong, to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and their hero-worship their fairs and their festivals, their ideals and their outlook on-life, have now ceased to be common with ours.⁵⁰

Savarkar, the originator of the politics of Hindutva, later developed the most elaborate two-nation theory. While delivering the presidential address to the 19th session of Hindu Mahasabha at Ahmedabad in 1937, Savarkar unequivocally declared,

as it is, there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India, several infantile politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so. These were well meaning but unthinking friends who take their dreams for realities...Let us bravely face unpleasant facts as they are. India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Muslims, in India.⁵¹

This politics of two-nation propagated by the Hindutva camp got impetus with the appearance of M. S. Golwalkar's *We, Or Our Nationhood Defined* in 1939. Total assimilation or ethnic cleansing was the *mantra* prescribed by Golwalkar to deal with the problem of minorities in India. According to him, older nations solved their minorities' problem by not recognising any separate elements in their polity. Muslims and Christians, who were 'emigrants', must get themselves naturally assimilated into the principal mass of population, the 'national race'. Golwalkar while declaring the determination to cleanse minorities from India on the models of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy where Jews had been almost annihilated warned:

If they do not do so, they live merely as outsiders, bound by all the codes and conventions of the nation, at the sufferance [*sic*] of

⁵⁰ A Maratha [V. D. Savarkar], *Hindutva*, VV Kelkar, Nagpur, 1923, p. 88.

⁵¹ Savarkar, V. D., *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya: Hindu Rashtra Darshan*, [Collected works of Savarkar in English] vol. 6, Maharashtra Hindu Sabha, Poona, 1963, p. 296.

the nation and deserving of no special protection, far less any privilege or rights. There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only sound view on the minorities' problem. That is the only logical and correct solution. That alone keeps the national life healthy and undisturbed. That alone keeps the nation safe from the danger of a cancer developing into its body politic of the creation of a state within the state. From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt. We are an old nation; let us deal, as old nations ought to and do deal, with the foreign races, which have chosen to live in our country.⁵²

Ambedkar on Two-Nation theory

So there is no doubt that two-nation theory was not monopoly of Muslims. Chronologically, Hindu variant appeared first and Muslim variant followed it. B. R. Ambedkar, a keen observer and critic of competitive Hindu-Muslim communal politics in pre-independence India, was candid in his belief that,

Strange as it may appear, Mr. Savarkar and Mr. Jinnah instead of being opposed to each other on the one nation versus two nations issue are in complete agreement about it. Both agree, not only agree but insist that there are two nations in India—one the Muslim nation and the other Hindu nation. They differ only as regards the terms and conditions on which the two nations must live.⁵³

⁵² Golwalkar, M. S., *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, pp. 47-8.

⁵³ B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1990 (reprint of 1946 edition), p. 142.

While describing Savarkar's designs about Indian Muslims as 'illogical', Ambedkar said,

Mr. Savarkar admits that the Muslims are a separate nation...He allows them to have a national flag. Yet he opposes the demand of the Muslim nation for a separate national home. If he claims a national home for the Hindu nation, how can he refuse the claim of the Muslim nation for a national home?⁵⁴

Ambedkar warned that according to Savarkar's Hindutva rhetoric,

Hindu nation will be enabled to occupy a predominant position that is due to it and the Muslim nation made to live in the position of subordinate co-operation with the Hindu nation.⁵⁵

When the past is discussed in India and we assign blame to those who subscribed to the two-nation theory and thereby divided India, we should not forget that those who pursued this end were both Hindu and Muslim communalists; the former leading the charge and setting the agenda. But it is also a fact which we will observe in the following chapter that Hindu-Muslim divide touted as the primordial one was not even one hundred year old.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 4

1857 WAR OF INDEPENDENCE: TWO-NATION THEORY DEFIED

The flag-bearers of communal politics and preachers of two-nation theory in our country claim that Hindus and Muslims were never united in the past. They insist that historically both of them have been two separate nations. But when the Indian people arose en-masse in revolt against the British rule in 1857 this was not the reality. In the First Indian War of Independence (1857-59), described as the 'Great Mutiny' by the British, a different scenario prevailed, at variance from the communal divide setting that followed. The official documents of the period of revolt like gazetteers, reports, memos, personal narratives and newspapers available in different parts of the globe, tell a fantastic story of Hindu-Muslim unity in this War.¹ These documents, again and again, underline the reality that broader sections of these two communities were firmly united against the East India Company rule; they fought with united determination and laid down their lives together.

Even V. D. Savarkar (who later on became a protagonist of Hindu separatism and agreed to help the British rulers in their game of 'Divide and Rule')² admitted that there was great Hindu-Muslim unity in 1857. His work on the 1857 uprising, *The Indian War of Independence*, penned in 1907, elaborated the fact that Hindus and Muslims were conscious that unity amongst them was a prerequisite for the liberation of the Motherland.

His work on 1857 was dedicated to the 'Martyrs of 1857' and the list included names of Mangal Pandey, Rani Laxmi Bai, Nana Saheb, Maulvi Ahmad Shah, Azimullah Khan, Tatia Tope, Bahadurshah Zafar, Begum Zeenat Mahal and many others—both Hindus and Muslims. Savarkar was all praise for the policies of Nana and Azimullah which aimed at uniting Hindus and Muslims

¹ In this anti-colonial liberation war Sikhs also played a significant role. See, Islam, Shamsul, *Rebel Sikhs in 1857*, Vani Prakashan, Delhi, 2008.

² For more details see Islam, Shamsul, *Savarkar: Myths and Facts*, Media House, Delhi, 2006.

so that both of them could fight “shoulder to shoulder for the independence of their country and that, when freedom was gained, the United States of India should be formed under the Indian rulers and princes.”³

He gave full credits to Azimullah Khan, a close confidant of Nana and a great military strategist for preparing a blueprint of resistance to the East India Company rule in the following words:

Of the important characters in the Revolutionary War of 1857, the name of Azimullah Khan is one of the most memorable. Among the keen intellects and minds that first conceived the idea of the War of Independence, Azimullah must be given a prominent place. And among the many plans by which the various phases of the Revolution were developed, the plans of Azimullah deserve special notice.⁴

Savarkar not only hailed the unity of Hindu-Muslim freedom-loving revolutionaries, he went to the extent of praising the *Jehadi* spirit of Maulvi Ahmad Shah. He wrote:

The great and saintly Ahmad Shah had woven fine and cleverly the webs of the *Jehad*—the War of Independence—through every corner of Lucknow and Agra. Kumar Singh, the hero of Jagadishpur, had taken the leadership of his province and, in consultation with Nana, had been busy gathering materials for war. The seeds of the *Jehad* had taken such root in Patna that the whole city was a regular haunt of the Revolutionary party. Moulvies, Pundits, Zemindars, farmers, merchants, vakils, students of all castes and creeds, were ready to give up their lives for the sake of Swadesh and Swadharma.⁵

What do the the contemporary documents tell?

The degree of communal unity among the rebels can be known by going through the Rebel Anthem of 1857, penned by Azimullah Khan. It was in Urdu and read:

³ V. D. Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence 1857*, Rajdhani, Delhi, 1970, p. 76.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

*Hum haen iss ke malik, Hindoostan hamaaraa
Paak watan hae qaum kaa Jannat se bhee piyaaraa.*

[We are its owners, it belongs to us. It is our holy land, lovelier than paradise.]

*Yeh hamaari milkiat Hindoostan hamaaraa
iss kee roohaniyat se roshan hae jug saaraa.*

[It is our Hindustan, our owned. The whole world sparkles with its spiritualism.]

*Kitnaa qadeem kitnaa naeem, sab duniyaa se niyaraa
kartee hae zarkhez jisse Gang-o-Juman kee dhaaraa.*

[It is old as well as comfortable, it is unique in the world. Ganga and Jamuna irrigate its lands.]

*Ooper barfeela parvat pehre-daar hamaaraa
Neeche sahil per bajta sagar kaa naqqaaraa.*

[On top snow clad mountain guards us. On the lower end you can hear roaring of sea.]

*Iss kee khaanen ugal raheen sona, heera, paaraa
iss kee shaan shaukat kaa duniyaa maen jaikaaraa.*

[Its mines produce gold, diamond and mercury. Its greatness is renowned throughout the world.]

*Aayaa Firangee door se, aisa mantar maaraa
loota donon hathoon se piyaaraa watan hamaaraa.*

[The British came from far away, played a trick. Our dear land was looted with both hands.]

*Aaj shahidon ne tumko, abl-e-watan lalkaaraa
Todo ghulamee kee zanjeeren barsao angaaraa.*

[Martyrs are calling you, country-fellows. Break shackles of slavery, spit fire.]

*Hindoo-Mussalmaan-Sikh hamaaraa bhai piyaaraa-piyaaraa
yeh hae azaadi kaa jhanda isse salaam hamaaraa.*

[Hindu-Muslim-Sikh are our dear brothers. This is the flag of independence, salute to it.]⁶

⁶ It was a yellow and green flag. See Islam, Shamsul, *1857 kee Herat Angez Dastane*, Vani Prakashan, Delhi, 2008.

The present day flag-bearers of the communal politics in India need to be told that on May 11, 1857 the revolutionary army which declared Bahadur Shah Zafar as the independent ruler of India, consisted of more than 80 percent Hindus. Nana Saheb, Tatia Tope and Laxmi Bai played prominent role in this decision. If there had been any ill-will between these two communities, it would not have been prudent on the part of a predominantly Hindu army to choose a Muslim as its ruler. It may be of interest to know that the command of the revolutionary army was in the hands of Bakht Khan, Sirdhari Lal, Ghaus Mohammed and Heera Singh, a joint team of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.

This fact of solid Hindu-Muslim unity during this revolt did not escape the attention of British officials who worked hard to suppress this 'Mutiny'. Thomas Lowe, a senior military officer who played an important role in defeating Rani Jhansi at Gwalior, admitted that,

the infanticide Rajput, the bigoted Brahmin, the fanatic Mussalman, and the luxury loving, fat-paunched ambitious Maharattah [*sic*], they all joined together in the cause; the cow-killer and the cow-worshipper, the pig-hater and the pig-eater, the crier of Allah is God and Mohommed [*sic*] his prophet and the mumblor of the mysteries of Bram [Brahma].⁷

William Howard Russell came to cover the 'Mutiny' for *The Times*, London. He was with the British army, for more than a year, during its campaign to capture Oudh where Birjes Qadar, a Muslim was declared to be the king by the rebels. Russell in a dispatch dated March 2, 1858, underlining the ground unity of Hindus and Muslims wrote:

There are, it is said, at least 60,000 regulars of all sorts, and about 70,000 nujeebs [irregulars], militia, and matchlock-men. All the great chiefs of Oudh, Mussalman and Hindu, are there, and have

⁷ Lowe, Thomas, *Central India During the Rebellion of 1857 and 1858: A Narrative of Operations of the British Forces from the Suppression of Mutiny in Aurangabad to the Capture of Gwalior under Major General Sir Hugh Rose, GCB and Brigadier Sir C. Stuart, KCB*, Longman, London, 1860, p. 324.

sworn to fight for their young king, Birjeis Kuddr [*sic*], to the last. Their cavalry is numerous, the city is filled with people, the works are continually strengthened. All Oudh is in the hands of the enemy, and we only hold the ground we cover with our bayonets.⁸

The 'Mutiny' documents in archives are full of instances when both Hindus and Muslims fought as one. Charles John Griffiths, a leading commander of the British army which captured Delhi in September 1857 admitted that Hindus and Muslims were fully united against the British during the 'Mutiny'. According to his biography:

The passions aroused during the struggle, the fierce hate animating the breasts of the combatants, the deadly incidents of the strife, which without intermission lasted for nearly two years, and deluged with blood the plains and cities of Hindostan [*sic*], have scarcely a parallel in history. On the one side religious fanaticism, when Hindoo [*sic*] and Mohammedan, restraining the bitter animosity of their rival creeds, united together in the attempt to drive out of their common country that race which for one hundred years had dominated and held the overlordship of the greater portion of India.⁹

M. R. Gubbins was the revenue chief of Oudh during the rebellion. His narrative too confirms the fundamental Hindu-Muslim unity in the area. Relating an incident he wrote:

On June 1, 1857 the British army was confronted by the rebel sepoys outside Mainpuri in which latter were victorious. Those members of the British army who escaped narrated the fact that commander of the rebels while addressing his sepoys just before the battle commenced, proclaimed that "Hindoos [Hindus] and Mussulmans [Muslims] were all one, and the King of Delhi was their sovereign and to him they would march."¹⁰

⁸ Russell, William Howard, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, (Edited by Miachel Edwardes with an essay on the Mutiny and its consequences), Cassell & Company, London, 1957, p. 52.

⁹ Griffiths, Charles John, *A Narrative of the Siege of Delhi with an account of the Mutiny at Ferozepore in 1857*, John Murray, London, 1910, p. v.

¹⁰ Gubbins, M. R., *The Mutinies of Oudh*, M. R. Bentley, London, 1858, p. 30.

It is through him we come to know that, the Oudh rebel army of young Brijes Qadar which encircled the British forces at Lucknow in mid-1857 was led by Ghumandee Singh.¹¹

General Fred Roberts who rose to be the chief of the British armed forces in India was present when the British forces attempted to capture Lucknow in 1857. His narration of a battle which took place at the outskirts of Lucknow described how Hindu-Muslim rebels fought together and died together. Despite defeat they were courageous, united and did not lose heart. According to Roberts, after the battle on November 25, 1857, there were 2000 rebels both Hindus and Muslims,

on the ground dead or dying. I never saw such a sight. They were literally in heaps, and when I went in were a heaving mass, some dead, but most wounded and unable to get up from the crush. How so many got crowded together I can't understand. You had to walk over them to cross the court. They showed their hatred even while dying, cursed us and said: 'if we could only stand, we would kill you'.¹²

Hindu-Muslim Unity: Central India and Rajasthan

Rani Laxmi Bai's fierce fight and great sacrifice is a household story. But what generally is not known is that the commander of her artillery was a Muslim, Ghulam Ghaus Khan, and her infantry was led by another Muslim, Khuda Bakhsh. Both of them were martyred on June 4, 1858, defending the fort of Jhansi against a combined force of the *Firangees* and the Scindias of Gwalior. The Rani's personal security officer was a Muslim lady, Mundar [Munzar]. She could always be seen fighting next to the Rani in the battles of Jhansi, Koonch and Kalpi. She died with the Rani on June 18, 1858 in the battle of Kotah-ki-Sarai, Gwalior.

Malwa region in the then Central Province (now Madhya Pradesh) was another war theatre where big and crucial battles were fought against the British hegemony. It was the joint

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹² Roberts, Fred, *Letters Written During the Indian Mutiny*, Macmillan & Co., London, 1924, pp. 103-104.

command of Tatia Tope, Rao Saheb, Laxmi Bai, Ferozshah and Moulvi Fazal Haq, a renowned scholar, which was able to mobilize a huge revolutionary army numbering around 70-80 thousand fighters. This Indian army led by them won innumerable battles against the British and their henchmen. However, in a crucial battle at Ranod on December 17, 1858, when due to the treachery of stooge princes the revolutionary army led by Tatia Tope, Ferozshah and himself was encircled Moulvi Fazal Haq stood as a rock in the way of advancing British troops. He and his 480 companions laid down their lives but were able to save the main force which included Tatia Tope, Rao Saheb and Ferozshah. Thus saved by the supreme sacrifice by Moulvi Fazl Haq and his comrades, Tatia Tope continued to wage war till the beginning of 1859 and it was due to the treachery of Man Singh, ruler of Narwar, that the British were able to capture him and subsequently hang him on April 18, 1859. Rao Saheb (Pandurang Sadashiv, nephew of Nana Saheb) too continued to wage the struggle and could be captured only in 1862 betrayed by a Maratha chief in Jammu region. He was later hanged in Kanpur. Ferozshah, fought the longest, was never captured and travelled to west Asia in search of help from Muslim rulers for India's freedom. Disheartened by their apathy went to Mecca where he died in 1887.

Kota state (now in Rajasthan) was ruled by a Maharao subservient to the British. The leading courtier of this state was, Lala Jaidayal Bhatnagar, a great literary figure who was equally conversant with Persian, Urdu and English. When it was found that Maharao was collaborating with the British he joined hands with the army chief, Mehrab Khan and established a revolutionary government in the state. When Kota was captured by the British forces with the help of stooge neighbouring princes, they together continued fighting in the region till 1859. Betrayed by an informer both were hanged at Kota on September 17, 1860.

Haryana

Hansi town (now in Haryana) presents another heart-warming example of how Muslims and Jains fearlessly challenged the foreign rule and did not hesitate in sacrificing their lives together.

In this town lived two close friends, Hukumchand Jain and Muneer Beg. They were known for literary works and love for mathematics and joined the revolt in the earlier phase itself. The revolutionary government of Bahadurshah Zafar chose them as advisors and appointed them as commanders in the region of west of Delhi which is known as Haryana today. They led many successful military campaigns in the area but due to the treachery of rulers of Patiala, Nabha, Kapurthala, Kashmir and Pataudi were defeated in a crucial battle and captured. The British were extremely worried and horrified with this kind of unity of the people of two religions that they decided to kill them in a most horrendous and sickening manner. After hanging them on the same tree in Hansi on January 19, 1858, Hukumchand Jain was buried and Muneer Beg was cremated against the custom of their respective religions. It was done with the obvious purpose of making fun of the unity of these two revolutionaries belonging to different religions and show hatred towards their comradeship. Another unspeakable crime committed by the British was that when 13 year old nephew of Hukamchand Jain protested to this treatment he too was hanged, although there was no sentence passed against him.

Rohilkhand

Rohilkhand (present day Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Badaun etc.) was the area which was a strong hold of revolutionaries from the very beginning. Immediately after the announcement of an independent Indian government at Delhi on May 11, 1857, Khan Bahadur Khan was appointed as the viceroy of Mughal emperor there. Khan soon after assuming charge appointed a committee of eight members consisting both Hindus and Muslims to conduct the affairs of the state. His deputy was Khushi Ram. This government forbade cow-killing in deference to the sentiments of local Hindus as was done in Delhi by the orders of General Bakht, chief commander of the revolutionary army. Khan and Khushi Ram led troops defeated the British and their stooges in many battles but were defeated in a crucial battle at Bareilly after remaining in office for almost a year. They continued with the struggle and withdrew towards Nepal but were captured. Both of them were brought to Bareilly and

hanged with hundreds of their followers outside old Kotwali on March 20, 1860.

Western United Province

Hindu-Muslim unity during the First Indian War of Independence was not confined to one area or one section of the population. This unity pervaded the whole country at all stratum. It was a ground reality and fact of life with which, naturally, women also did not remain untouched. In a small town, Thana Bhawan, situated in Muzaffar Nagar district (now in western Uttar Pradesh) 11 brave women belonging to different religions and castes were hanged together or burnt alive for taking up arms against the repressive British rule. The names and heroic deeds of some of them are as follows. Asghari Begum, 45 years old, belonged to a well-to-do family and was burnt alive for organizing rebellion in the area. Another revolutionary woman was, 28 years old, Asha Devi, who belonged to a Hindu Gujar family and was hanged. Another martyred woman was young Bhagwati Devi, born into a Tyagi family of farmers who fought in many battles against the *Firangee* rule. 24 year old, Habeeba, belonging to a Muslim Gujar family, fearlessly fought in many battles to liberate neighbouring areas from the British tyranny. She was captured while resisting a British attack and was executed on gallows in 1857. Another brave woman from this area was named Mam Kaur who belonged to a family of shepherdess and was hanged at the young age of 25 years. 26 years old, Umda was another gallant woman from this area, born into a Jat Muslim family who sacrificed her life resisting the British invasion. Raj Kaur born in 1833, hailed from a Sikh family and made the supreme sacrifice fighting against the British in Thana Bhawan area only.

Delhi

British made it a prestige issue to recapture Delhi (which the revolutionaries got liberated from the British rule in May 1857 and declared it to be the Capital of an Independent India). They rightly thought that if once they were able to re-capture Delhi, the centre of anti-British activities, then it would not be difficult to suppress

the rising tide of rebellions in other parts of the country. During June-September 1857, the British army encircled Delhi with all their might but could not break into Delhi which was valiantly being defended by the revolutionary army, which was mocked by the British as *poorabia sena* (army from Eastern India). The majority of this revolutionary army consisted of Hindus and was jointly led by Mchammed Bakht Khan, Singhari Lal, Ghaus Mohammad and Hira Singh, Khan being the Commander-in-Chief. The contemporary British documents show that despite all their attempts to create communal divide through spies in the city among the ranks of revolutionary army and residents of Delhi, the Indians stood as one in defence of their Independent India's capital. In order to maintain communal peace and not let the British spies succeed in creating communal conflict amongst Delhites, General Bakht Khan, C-in-C of the revolutionary army issued a proclamation prohibited cow slaughtering in Delhi.

What kind of communal amity existed in Delhi under siege and how Hindus-Muslims co-existed with each other in these times of grave crisis would be further known by the following example. In order to enhance the capacity to attack the British positions outside the city walls, a huge canon of Shahjahan's times which was lying unused was taken out, repaired and made useable. It was mounted on the *Faseel* or boundary wall of Shajahanabad but before firing the first canon, in the presence of Bahadur Shah Zafar and other army officials, Hindu priests performed *Aarti*, garlanded it and blessed it with Vedic hymns.

Ayodhya

After the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 by the Hindutva fraternity, Ayodhya continues to be a great irritant between the two communities. But in 1857 it was a different scenario. It was in Ayodhya and its vicinity that not only common Muslims and Hindus but also the religious leaders of both the communities jointly arose in revolt and sacrificed lives together. Maulana Amir Ali was a well-known mauvi of the area and when the chief priest of Hanuman Garhi, Baba Ramcharan Dass, took up arms against the British invasion, the former joined it immediately. Both fought gallantly against the British, inflicting heavy loses on them. They

were made prisoners in a battle near Ayodhya and hanged together from a tamarind tree at Kubeer Teela in Ayodhya.

Achhan Khan and Shambhu Prasad Shukla were the other two great friends who organised armed resistance to the British onslaught in the Ayodhya region of Oudh. They led the revolutionary army of Raja Debi Baksh in the region. They were able to defeat the invading army in many battles but were caught due to the treachery of a British spy. They were subjected to prolonged torture and the British commander ordered them to be butchered publicly, so as to terrorise those Hindus and Muslims of the area who were jointly fighting the British.

As we have seen, there is a never-ending list of united struggles and joint sacrifices during this War. The stories being retold here have been collected from the official papers of the period.¹³ How then do we account for the fact that within a century of this shared struggle Muslim and Hindu leaders were bitterly claiming that members of these two religions constituted two different nations? The foundations of the two-nation theory rest on the claim that Hindus and Muslims have historically and primordially constituted two separate nations. It's a pretty weak claim if one only has to go back 150 years to find evidence of the two communities acting as one.

At the time separatism between the two was not an issue. Maridula Mukherjee is absolutely right when she says that "The behaviour of Hindus and Muslims in the revolt of 1857 was a reflection of the non-communal nature of pre-colonial Indian society."¹⁴

¹³ For further details see Islam, Shamsul, *1857 kee Herat Angez Dastane*, Vani Prakashan, Delhi, 2008.

¹⁴ *The Indian Express*, May 4, 2007.

CHAPTER 5

ALLAH BAKHSH LEADING MUSLIMS AGAINST PAKISTAN

The search for the real culprits behind the Partition of India in 1947 still continues. This is despite the fact that there is no dearth of writings on the Indian freedom struggle and Partition. The standard narrative is that the Muslim League, led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was fundamentally responsible for this tragic Partition which became a kind of license for both Hindu and Muslim communal and criminal elements to indulge in mass butchery of innocent children, women and men, large-scale rape and other gruesome crimes. Those who subscribe to the Hindutva school of thought cover up the fact that they—like Muslim League—subscribed to the two-nation theory and wanted to have an exclusive ‘Hindu Rashtra’ similar to the ‘Islamic State.’ Unfortunately, this kind of discourse is becoming more acceptable among the Hindu middle classes with the recent upsurge of anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Hindutva bandwagon. This view does not have place for the concept of the patriotic Muslim, those Muslims who risked their lives to fight for a united and secular India.

One such example is of Allah Bakhsh, who was born into the Soomro clan of Sind. He belonged to a family which owned large tracts of land and was in the contract business. His political career started in 1923 when he was elected a member of Sukkur District Board, later becoming its president. In a major boost to his political career he was elected member of the Bombay Legislative Council in 1926 and led the movement for the separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency. He formed the Sind People’s Party in 1934, which later came to be known as ‘*Ittehad*’ or unity Party.

After the separation of Sind from Bombay in 1936 he continued to be elected as Sind Assembly member. Allah Bakhsh was a prominent politician of Sind who served as the *Premier* for two terms, starting from March 23, 1938 to April 18, 1940 and March 7, 1941 to October 14, 1942. In October 1942 Allah Bakhsh renounced his titles of Khan Bahadur and O.B.E. as a protest against the British government’s policy of repression. He was

removed from office. Thus Allah Bakhsh became the first Premier of an Indian province to be removed from office. He was murdered in May 14, 1943 by professional assassins. We will discuss these two happenings later in the book.

He was known for his humble life style and democratic thinking. He never hoisted a flag, a symbol of power, on his official car.¹ Allah Bakhsh defended rights of zamindars against unjust orders of irrigation department. He denounced the inhuman treatment meted out to political and general prisoners.² He believed that the greater the police, the more crime would spread. He said:

If we knew that the people who enter the police service would do so for the sake of serving the people, then I would certainly say, 'appoint as many as you like'. But these people do not enter the service to serve the people, but to rob them. That's the material from which they are recruited.³

According to KR Malkani, he habitually wore khadi [hand spun cloth]. He withdrew the magisterial powers from the *vaderas* [big landlords]. He followed the Congress line and fixed 500 rupees as a minister's salary. During his governments nominations to local bodies were ended. On one occasion when flood-waters threatened Shikarpur, he breached the canal to flood his own lands—and saved the city. But above all he was non-communal and nationalist.⁴

The most crucial and historic contribution of Allah Bakhsh was organising Indian Muslims against the two-nation theory and scheme of Pakistan as propagated by the Muslim League. He seemed to be a possessed man when it came to oppose the Partition demand of Muslim League. He not only laid down the principles of anti-Pakistan movement but also organised patriotic Muslims of India under one umbrella organisation to challenge and oppose the divisive politics of the Muslim League. Azad Muslim Conference

¹ See Soomro, Khadim Hussain, *Allah Bux Soomro: Apostle of Secular Harmony*, Sain Publishers, Sehwan Sharif Sind, 2006.

² See Bright, Jagat S., *India's Nationalist No 1: Mr Allah Bux*, Hero Publications, Lahore, 1943, p. 28.

³ Bright, Jagat S., *India's Nationalist No 1: Mr Allah Bux*, Hero Publications, Lahore, 1943, pp. 31-2.

⁴ Malkani, K. R. *The Sindh Story*, Allied, Delhi, 1984, p. 119.

(Independent Muslims' Conference) was his brain child. This Conference initiated a process of rejuvenating and energising vast sections of Muslims of India who offered great sacrifices in opposing the politics of Muslim League.

Azad Muslim Conference

Allah Bakhsh organised an effective and massive nationwide opposition to the divisive designs of Muslim League in pre-Partition days. The greatest contribution of Allah Bakhsh against the communal two-nation politics preached by the Muslim League was when he joined hands with dozens of nationwide mass-based Muslim organisations and prominent patriotic Muslim leaders who claimed to represent a majority of Muslims on one platform named as Azad Muslim Conference (Independent Muslims' Conference). 'Independent' signified the fact that it had a separate entity independent of Muslim League and Congress. Significantly, this anti-Pakistan Conference was called into session almost within one month of Muslim League passing 'Pakistan Resolution' at Lahore. It was the largest amalgamation of Muslim lower Castes and working class against the scheme of Pakistan. The then British press, which was mainly pro-Muslim League had to admit that it was the most representative gathering of Indian Muslims.⁵

It held its session in Delhi between April 27-30, 1940 (it was to conclude on April 29 but was extended by one day due to tremendous participation and pressure of work) with 1,400 delegates from almost all parts of India attending it.⁶ The major Muslim organisations represented in this conference were All India Jamiat Ulama, All India Momin Conference, All India Majlis-e-Ahrar, All-India Shia Political Conference, Khudai Khidmadgars, Bengal Krishak Proja Party, All-India Muslim Parliamentary Board, the Anjuman-e-Watan, Baluchistan, All India Muslim Majlis and Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadees. The Azad Muslim Conference was attended by duly elected delegates from United Province, Bihar, Central Province, Punjab, Sind, NWF Province, Madras, Orissa,

⁵ *The Statesman*, Calcutta, May 2, 1940.

⁶ *The Hindustan Times*, April 25, 1940.

Bengal, Malabar, Baluchistan, Delhi, Assam, Rajasthan, Delhi, Kashmir, Hyderabad and many native states thus covering the whole of India.⁷ Wilfred Cantwell Smith agreed that there was no doubt that these delegates represented a “majority of India’s Muslims.”⁸

The contemporary press reported that,

scenes reminiscent of Khilafat days, two decades ago, were seen today on the eve of the Muslim Conference. Bands of Muslim volunteers in bright uniforms are going about the city in buses with big placards; ‘Freedom Is Our Birthright’ and signing patriotic songs. The arrival of large number of leaders has naturally led to informal consultations. Organisers of the conference are immensely satisfied with the response from all over the country. ‘The response has been tremendous. It has surpassed all my expectations’, said Dr. Ashraf [a leading Nationalist Muslim leader] in the course of a talk. The first great success lies in the fact that all important Muslim organisations all over the country with the exception of the Jinnah League have enthusiastically identified themselves with the conference and its objects.⁹

The whole of the city was decorated with gates artistically designed to give a rousing reception to participants and Allah Bakhsh, the President of the All India Independent Muslim Conference, and his party. Arrangements were made to take out a procession from the historic Jama Masjid.¹⁰ A large number of Muslim students of theology from different parts of the country attended the conference. They also held a conference of their own with a view to establishing an Independent Muslim Students’ Conference. A large number of students of the Arabic College,

⁷ According to records available with the reception committee of the Conference, the number of delegates from major provinces was as follows: United Provinces 357, Punjab 155, Bihar 125, Bengal 105, N.W.F. Province 35, Sind 82, Baluchistan 45, Bombay 60, C. P. 12, Madras 5, Orissa 5, Ajmer-Mewar 12, Assam 25, Delhi 112, Indian States 12. *The Hindustan Times*, April 28, 1940.

⁸ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Victor G. Ltd, London, 1946, p. 231.

⁹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 27, 1940.

¹⁰ *The Tribune*, Lahore, April 23, 1940.

Delhi, offered their services as volunteers to the All India Azad Muslim Conference¹¹ More than 50 students from Aligarh Muslim University arrived to participate in the Conference.¹²

So far as anti-Pakistan euphoria about the Conference was concerned, thousands of delegates and participants started arriving even before the inauguration of the Conference from various parts of the country. According to a press report the Conference was “sure to be a tremendous success and which promises to create a fresh wave of genuine nationalism and political thought among the Muslims of India.”¹³ It was reported that the Muslim League planned to greet Allah Bakhsh with black flags on his arrival but after witnessing the mammoth support of Muslims to the Conference, the idea was dropped.¹⁴

The Reception Committee rented three large hotels to accommodate delegates. Invitations were issued to the independent Muslim members of various provincial and Central Legislatures and a large number of them had intimated their intention to join the Conference.¹⁵ The old boys’ body [alumni] of the Jamia Millia Islamia decided to organise a meeting of the old boys, many of whom were expected to be in Delhi in connection with the Conference. At a meeting of the Arabic students of Delhi, a resolution was unanimously passed sympathising with the object of the Conference and volunteering their services to make the Conference a grand success. An appeal was issued to Muslim ladies to attend the Conference, and a large attendance of them was expected. Special arrangements were made for the purpose in the pandal to accommodate about 5,000 ladies.¹⁶ Great political significance was attached to the deliberations at the All India Independent Muslim Conference in which decisions of far-reaching importance in regard to the position and the status of the Muslim

¹¹ *National Herald*, April 23, 1940.

¹² *The Hindustan Times*, April 28, 1940.

¹³ *National Herald*, April 21, 1940.

¹⁴ *The Bombay Chronicle*, Bombay, April 27, 1940.

¹⁵ *The Tribune*, April 24, 1940.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

community and the part they were going to play in the struggle for freedom were taken.¹⁷

According to *The Hindustan Times*,

A mammoth procession, the first of its kind in Delhi, was taken out on 26th April afternoon through the streets of Delhi to enable the public to do honour to Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh, the President-elect of the Conference who was dressed in 'khaddar'. The procession terminated at Jama Masjid, in front of which a public meeting was held and was addressed by the President-elect, who assured the audience that the Conference would give a right lead to the Muslims of India. He was glad to see that the Muslims were in no way behind their Hindu brethren and were equally keen to achieve freedom for India. Scenes reminiscent of the old Khailafat agitation days were witnessed throughout the entire route of the procession, which was tastefully decorated by the Muslim public. On a modest estimate, about 50,000 Muslims participated in the procession at one place or other and many more, including a large number of women, watched it from the balconies of the houses on the route. Despite the scorching sun, it was a huge sea of human heads that was seen to welcome Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh.¹⁸

After the conclusion of the huge procession Allah Bakhsh commented:

The enthusiastic scenes of the procession indicate that the major section of the Mussalmans of India is equally anxious to break the bondage of slavery like their Hindu brethren.' Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh exhorted the people to rise to the occasion and hoped that the Azad Muslim Conference will give the correct lead.¹⁹

In the light of the tremendous response of the Muslim masses towards the Conference it was decided to enlarge the pandal which was originally constructed to accommodate 50,000 persons.²⁰

¹⁷ *The Hindustan Times*, April 26, 1940.

¹⁸ *The Hindustan Times*, April 27, 1940.

¹⁹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 27, 1940.

²⁰ *The Tribune*, April 24, 1940.

According to another leading English daily:

The procession passed through more than two dozen gates. The Muslims shopkeepers of Turkman Gate, Chawri Bazar, Hauz Qazi, Lal Kuan and Chandni Chowk decorated their shops with buntings and pictures, and national flags were also seen at places. The entire Muslim population of Delhi displayed remarkable enthusiasm, despite the efforts of a prominent Muslim League leader to dissuade them from joining in the programme. The processionists shouted slogans like Inqilab Zindabad [Long live revolution], Hindustan Azad [Independent India], Pakistan Murdabad (down with Pakistan), and Allah Bakhsh Zindabad [Long live Allah Bakhsh]. While one end of the procession was at the Jama Masjid the other end had reached as far as Lal Kuan. In view of the persistent request from the Muslims of Dariba Kalan the procession also passed through Esplanade Road and reached the Jama Masjid at about 4.45 p.m., where it converted itself into a huge mass meeting in the park outside the Jama Masjid: Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh was given a tremendous ovation when he came to the meeting to address a few words to the huge gathering. On one side of the Khan Bahadur a national flag was flying prominently.²¹

The All-India Independent Muslims Conference, which opened on April 27, 1940 in Delhi if judged from the number of delegates and the visitors attending the Conference and the popular Muslim enthusiasm displayed on the occasion, was a much more representative organisation of Muslim opinion all over the country than the Muslim League session held a month back at Lahore. This was the general Muslim feeling inside and outside the pandal. The whole ground in the Queen's Garden presented an animated scene, with a huge array of Gandhi caps and khadi-wearers. The pandal, which was constructed under the supervision of Maulana Abdullah, an old and energetic nationalist worker of Delhi, had three gates, which represented the Mogul Indo-Saracenic architectures. The main gate was decorated with calligraphic quotations from the holy Qur'an. The inside of the pandal was artistically decorated with patriotic verses.

²¹ *The Hindustan Times*, April 27, 1940.

According to *The Hindustan Times*, which covered the Conference extensively,

At 6 p.m. when the proceedings commenced the pandal was packed to suffocation. A separate enclosure for women was reserved. A huge crowd that could not get admission into the pandal on account of its being regulated by tickets was following the proceedings from outside which were being broadcast through microphones. The crowd inside and outside the pandal that listened to the speeches of the Chairman and the President consisted of more than 50,000 Muslims...The proceedings commenced with the recitation of poems. The well-known national poet Saghar Nizami's poem on the motherland's patriotic call to Indian Muslims was particularly received with thunderous cheers.²² The climax was reached when the poet declared that they would give a royal battle to those who were attempting to vivisect their beloved motherland.²³

According to another press report very animated scenes were witnessed at the opening. Long before the arrival of the President, K.B. Allah Bakhsh, thousands of delegates and visitors, coming from every part of the country, had gathered at the beautifully decorated pandal. A striking feature of the Conference, was the presence of a large number of ladies in the purdah enclosure. 'Freedom through national unity', the keynote of the Conference, was powerfully brought out in the very mottos inscribed in bold letters over the dais and on the sides. 'We are Indians and India is our home,' 'The freedom of Islamic countries depends on the freedom of India' and similar sayings met one's eyes as one entered the pandal.

For well over an hour, poems and songs full of patriotic fervour were sung from the dais, which evoked great enthusiasm in the huge gathering. These songs paid homage to the motherland and expressed the determination to strive for unity and freedom and fight those who wanted the vivisection of the country. One song which was warmly applauded included a couplet which said that even in the darkest and most difficult days of Islam and Prophet had not thought of creating Pakistan. One young boy in his song

²² For text of the poem and other similar poems, please see annexure 3.

²³ *The Hindustan Times*, April 28, 1940.

said that those who talked of dividing the country were really aiming the postponement of freedom for mother India who had given birth to them.²⁴

After the poems, Mohammad Jan, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, rose to deliver his speech and called upon Muslims to end the system of separate electorates drawing huge applause. He was again cheered when he characterised the Partition scheme as utterly impracticable and absurd. Then rose Asaf Ali, a member of the Congress Working Committee, to welcome Allah Bakhsh, on behalf of the citizens of Delhi. Asaf Ali expressed his pleasure on the unique gathering in the pandal. He pointed out that it was after a very long period that such a large number of representative Muslims had gathered there on a common platform. It had a special significance inasmuch as it indicated the present trend of Muslim thought and feeling. It, undoubtedly, answered the call of the time. The Muslims were passing through a critical period. There was unrest and excitement all around. The spirit of the time was demanding of them to close their ranks once for all, unite on a common platform and, after due deliberation, take a bold and wise step so that they might secure an honourable place in India and the world. No single individual could solve such a knotty problem. The whole body of delegates would have to give proof of their wisdom and statesmanship. The decisions of the Conference, asserted Asaf Ali, would reflect the united voice of the whole community. It would be the decision of the crores of Muslims, whose representatives had assembled there.²⁵

Shaukat Ullah Ansari, a leading personality behind the Conference, then read the 200 or so messages received specially from Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Congress President, Sharif ex-Minister, C.P., the Burmese delegation and Zahid Ali, the son of the late Maulana Shaukat Ali, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, Mohammed Bhoj Rowjee, an ex-Sheriff of Bombay and a member of the Aga Khan Supreme Council and Jamiat Ulama, Assam. Maulana Azad urged for the communal unity and appealed to the Muslims to remove the blot that they are standing in the way of

²⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, April 28, 1940.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

India's constitutional progress. He wished for the success of the Conference and hoped that deliberations would be fruitful for the great cause of the country and the Muslims.

Mr. Rowjee's message said:

The forces of communalism and narrow-minded bigotry supported by Mr. Jinnah and his comrades of the Muslim League deserve no quarter. If they are allowed to parade the country unchecked, the result is bound to be disastrous for the country as a whole and for the Muslims specially. In the name of 'Islam in Danger' they have been exploiting the masses till now and playing havoc with the sentiments of innocent Muslim public. It is therefore, the duty of every true and self-respecting Muslim to come forward to do his duty and denounce the communal bogey with one voice and shake off the claim of Mr. Jinnah and his Muslim League to speak on behalf of the whole Muslim India.

The message of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, Assam, said that due to assault on president, secretary and members by the Leaguers they were unable to attend the Conference but wished all success to it.²⁶

The leading politicians from Bengal Humayun Kabir, Nawabzada Hasan Ali Choudhury, Dr. Ahmad, K. M. Zakaria, ex-Mayor of Calcutta, and several others in a joint congratulatory message after wishing success to the Conference said that,

a conference such as this must declare that Indian civilisation of today is the creation of the joint efforts of Muslims and Hindus, and any attempt at disrupting the unity of its spirit is a betrayal of the history of a thousand years. The Muslim League's scheme or partitioning India, if taken literally, is against the true spirit of Islam...²⁷

A contemporary press report noted that,

All previous records of public gatherings at Delhi were broken on the second day of the open session of the Independent Muslim Conference itself. The spacious pandal presented a spectacle of a vast concourse of humanity. The attendance was not less than 75,000...This conference was truly representative of Indian

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, April 27, 1940.

Muslims who desire to secure the fullest freedom of the country consisting of delegates and representatives of every province.²⁸

Presidential address of Allah Bakhsh

This historic conference was presided over by Allah Bakhsh who declared at the outset that “it is this conference and this conference alone today, which is in a position to evolve a constructive scheme to bring the political deadlock to an end.”²⁹ Calling upon Indians belonging to different faiths Allah Bakhsh said:

Whatever our faiths we must live together in our country in an atmosphere of perfect amity and our relations should be the relations of the several brothers of a joint family, various members of which are free to profess the faith they like without any let or hindrance and all of whom enjoy equal benefits of their joint property.³⁰

He lamented the fact that Muslims were being made a scapegoat by the British rulers for not granting independence to India. According to him,

Britain should be the last to challenge India’s right to exist as a sovereign and completely independent state and should, therefore, not obstruct its people if they desire to frame their own constitution. Sooner or later this principle on which the whole of that civilisation is based and for whose preservation millions of English men and Frenchmen are ready to lay down their lives cannot fail to be recognised by Britain.³¹

While criticising the Muslim League, he said:

by the unwise action of the All India Muslim League, however, England, for the time being has found it possible to bring the Indian Muslims to the fore and has declared that since the Congress, whose representative position in eight out of eleven Provinces cannot be constitutionally questioned, has not yet made

²⁸ *Ibid.*, April 29, 1940.

²⁹ *The Sunday Statesman*, April 28, 1940.

³⁰ *The Sunday Statesman*, April 28, 1940 & *The Hindustan Times*, April 28, 1940.

³¹ *The Sunday Statesman*, April 28, 1940.

its peace with the Muslim League the encashment of the Dominion Status cheque must be deferred indefinitely.

Allah Bakhsh reminded the British rulers that,

no Mussalman with the slightest sense of realism and self-respect can possibly tolerate for a moment that he should be made political scapegoat and that the evil consequences of the process should be allowed to react unfavourably on his own and his coming generation's political and material future. The proposal, if not promptly and authoritatively repudiated by representative gathering like this is calculated to cause infinite harm to our Indian co-religionists throughout the Muslim and non-Muslim parts of the world and mean more so at home.³²

While contesting the claim of the League to be the sole representative body of Indian Muslims, he said that,

the representative character of the Congress as a political party with a majority in seven, and controlling power in the eighth, provinces was comprehensive. But what credentials beyond public meetings does the League present to be recognised as the representative of the majority of Indian Muslims? The only way to test its representative character would be to send the League to the polls on the specific issue of the policy it has declared at Lahore. For, whatever may have been its support before in the Provinces, where the Muslims are in a minority, it has definitely injured it beyond repair by suddenly throwing the minority Muslims overboard and propounding a wholly impracticable scheme of creating a sovereign state of some 10,000,000 Punjabi, Sindhi, Pathan and Baluch Muslims in the north west and another of about 25,000,000 Assamese and Bengali Muslims in the north-east, separated by over 1,000 miles.³³

Consider Allah Bakhsh's prophetic words on eastern Pakistan when he said that,

North-East Pakistan is ten times more fantastic and a hundred times more fragile. In the conception of the North-Western Pakistan, or the Punjab there is at least a possibility of its being linked up with more powerful Afghan, or Russian, Muslim

³² *The Sunday Statesman*, April 28, 1940.

³³ *Ibid.*

neighbours, but Bengal and Assam Pakistan will be an isolation quarantine, with no superfluity of martial races to its credit, and which, therefore, may not take long to be quickly absorbed by its more enterprising neighbours.³⁴

Countering the supporters of the two nation theory and scheme of Pakistan he said:

A majority of the 90,000,000 Indian Muslims who are descendants of the earlier inhabitants of India are in no sense other than the sons of the soil with the Dravidian and the Aryan and have as much right to be reckoned among the earliest settlers, of this common land. The nationals of different countries cannot divest themselves of their nationality merely by embracing one or another faith. In its universal sweep Islam, the faith, can run in and out of as many nationalities and regional cultures as may be found in world.³⁵

Referring to the grotesque and ill-conceived two-nation theory Allah Bakhsh underlined the fact that,

as Indian nationals, Muslims and Hindus and others inhabit the land and share every inch of the motherland and all its material and cultural treasures alike according to the measure of their just and fair rights and requirements as the proud sons of the soil. Even in the realm of literature one finds common classics like Heer Ranjha and Sassi Pannu, written by Muslim poets, equally and proudly shared by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the Punjab and in Sind; to quote but only one example. It is a vicious fallacy for Hindu, Muslim and other inhabitants of India to arrogate to themselves an exclusively proprietary right over either the whole or any particular part of India. The country as an indivisible whole and as one federated and composite unit belongs to all the inhabitants of the country alike and is as much the inalienable and imprescriptible heritage of the Indian Muslim as of other Indians. No segregated or insulated regions, but the whole of India is the Homeland of all the Indian Muslims and no Hindu or Muslim or any other has the right to deprive them of one inch of this Homeland. Those who talk of separate and limited homelands for certain sections of the Indian Muslims are free, if they so choose,

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *The Sunday Statesman*, April 28, 1940.

to divest themselves of the right to live as Indian nationals. By far the vast majority of Indian Muslims who live in every part of India, and who have the right to choose to live whenever they like in the country, will definitely, positively and peremptorily reject such a preposterous and suicidal proposal and continue to claim the fullest possible rights of Indian nationals throughout and in the remotest nooks of their Homeland. No majority, Hindus or others, of the regions in which even one Muslim resides or chooses to reside or carry on business shall ever have the right to deprive him of one lot a of the plenary rights enjoyed by all other Indian nationals, and quite obviously every Hindu and every other Indian shall have the same rights of equal citizenship even if he happens to be just one in the midst of millions of Indian Muslims anywhere in India. We are equal partners with the Hindus and the other inhabitants of our country in the whole of this country in every sphere and in every walk of life to the measure of our just requirements, and no power and no false or artificial sentiment unwisely propagated can alter this position. No power on earth can rob anyone of his faith and convictions, and no power on earth shall be permitted to rob Indian Muslims of their just rights as Indian nationals. As Indians we have both equal rights and responsibilities with our fellow nationals, and we shall neither suffer the slightest curtailment of our rights, nor for a moment shirk any of our responsibilities to the country. I am confident, gentlemen, that we who are assembled here are all agreed that our country has to be helped to occupy a free and an honourable position in the world and we are all determined to see it arrive at this goal without any further delay.³⁶

Allah Bakhsh reminded the huge gathering that every Muslim going for pilgrimage to the holy Mecca was invariably described as a Hindu by Arabs and all Indian Muslims were similarly known as Hindustani in Iran and Afghanistan and as Indians throughout the world. After describing the bonds that knitted the Hindus and the Muslims in the various walks of human life, Allah Bakhsh asserted that,

no segregated or isolated region but the whole of India was the homeland of all the Indian Muslims and no Hindu or Muslim of any other country had the right to deprive them of an inch of

³⁶ *The Hindustan Times*, April 28, 1940.

their home land.³⁷

Referring to the World War situation, Allah Bakhsh described the contemporary war as the birth pangs of a new world order. He said that the aggressor had been condemned by all right thinking men as a menace to human freedom and civilisation. He warned:

Where ultimately all this will lead none can clearly foresee yet, but one thing is certain beyond a shadow of doubt that unless the brutal and ruthless methods of the aggressor are checked, and also the ambitious maps of all the empires are rolled up whether they are based on democratic or totalitarian ideologies, the peace and prosperity for which the vast bulk of mankind has been pining will not come into sight.³⁸

Allah Bakhsh smelt a design of empire building in Jinnah's call for Pakistan and was categorical in rejecting empire building by the leaders of any creed. According to him,

Not service but rule, not fruitful co-operation but domination, not a general elevation of the level of common prosperity and material benefits but the enrichment of a few individuals at the cost of millions of their supporters...It means Hindu and Muslim masses to grovel in the dust and squalour of their villages and urban slums, these have been the main aspects of the history of all the Hindu, Muslim and British empires in the world up to now."

He reminded Jinnah that Islam did not permit empire building. It did not prevent anyone from developing his natural gifts to the full and enjoying the fruits of his skill and labour. It forbade exploitation in all shapes and forms and all parties concerned must note that any attempt to found a structure of government in which domination, coercion or exploitation of the Muslim masses was reality could not be permitted.³⁹

Muslims like Allah Bakhsh who opposed the Muslim League and challenged its communal politics had done thorough homework as will be clear from the contents of a presidential address delivered by him in Hindustani. He advanced historical

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

arguments to counter the positions of the Muslim League and invited its leadership to respond to the ideological issues raised. While decrying the concept of a theocratic state he made a highly significant statement which said that,

it was based on a false understanding that India is inhabited by two nations, Hindu and Muslim. It is much more to the point to say that all Indian Mussalmans are proud to be Indian Nationals and they are equally proud that their spiritual level and creedal realm is Islam. As Indian nationals—Muslims and Hindus and others, inhabit the land and share every inch of the motherland and all its material and cultural treasures alike according to the measure of their just and fair rights and requirements as the proud sons of the soil.

It is a vicious fallacy for Hindus, Muslims and other inhabitants of India to arrogate to themselves exclusively proprietary rights over either the whole or any particular part of India. The country as an indivisible whole and as one federated and composite unit belongs to all the inhabitants of the country alike, and is as much the inalienable and imprescriptible heritage of the Indian Muslims as of other Indians. No segregated or isolated regions, but the whole of India is the Homeland of all the Indian Muslims and no Hindu or Muslim or any other has the right to deprive them of one inch of this Homeland.⁴⁰

He made it clear that communalism was the creation of ruling Castes and classes among Muslims and Hindus:

These feelings and ambitions among those who hope to constitute the ruling caste among Hindus or Muslims, as successors of the present Imperial Rulers, revive and invent excuses for popular consumption from historical or other sources, and by securing the support of groups, manoeuvre themselves into a position to play the political chess, which promises a possible prospect of success in their aim of becoming the rulers of the masses either integrally of the entire country or of a delimited region.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Private papers of Hafiz Mohammed Ibrahim.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Posing a question to the Muslim League regarding a theocratic state, he said:

Had the imperialistic structure of society been a guarantee of the prosperity of the Muslim masses and had empires not carried the germs of their own decay in them, then the mighty Omayyad, Abbasid, Saranic, Fatimid, Sassanic, Moghal and Turkish empires would never have crumbled, leaving 1/5th of the human race, who live by Islamic faith in the condition in which they find themselves today-disinterested and destitute in the bulk. Similarly, those Hindus who entertain similar dreams, and who out of tendentiously written pages of history or out of the stimulating examples of the modern imperialists select ingredients for the nourishment of their imperial dreams, or dreams of exploitation, imposition and domination will be well advised to discard such ideals.⁴²

Allah Bakhsh in his address strongly defended the composite Indian culture,

when they talk of Muslim culture they forget the composite culture which the impact of Hindus and Muslims has been shaping for the last 1000 years or more and in which is born a type of culture and civilisation in India in the production of which Muslims have been proud and active partners. It cannot now merely by creating artificial States be withdrawn to segregated areas. To art and literature, architecture and music, history and philosophy and to the administrative system of India, the Mussalmans have been contributing for a thousand years, their share of coordinated, composite and syncretic culture which occupies a distinctly distinguished place in the types of civilisations which hold a prominent place in the world. It would be a disastrous loss to civilisation if it was proposed to withdraw all this to two corners of India and leave nothing behind the ruins and debris of this contribution. Such a proposal can only emanate from defeatist mentality. No, gentlemen, the whole of India is our motherland and in every possible walk of life we are co-sharers with other inhabitants of the country as brothers in the same cause, viz., the freedom of the country, and no false or defeatist sentiment can possibly persuade us to give up our proud position

⁴² *Ibid.*

of being the equal sons of this great country.⁴³

Allah Bakhsh was candid when talking to a press reporter he said: "It is better to put the communalists in a cage so that they may not spread the hymn of hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims."⁴⁴ Allah Bakhsh, winding up the proceedings, declared that the Pakistan Scheme was impracticable. The conference, he said, had provided him with an opportunity to see that for the first time in recent years seven influential Muslim organisations had come on the same platform and given expression to their views on problems affecting their communities. He held out an assurance that Muslims had nothing to fear in a free India and freedom would be theirs only when Hindus and Muslims reached an understanding. Finally, he reaffirmed that the system of joint electorates was conducive to cordial and harmonious relations between the different communities and exhorted all to strive their utmost to attain their goal.⁴⁵

Allah Bakhsh, while calling upon the people to guard against communalism, declared that the goal of the anti-communal movement must be, "to build up a vigorous, healthy, progressive and honoured India enjoying its well-deserved freedom." These prophetic words of Allah Bakhsh hold key to the salvation of India even today. He was right in complaining (which also throws light on how Muslim League got prominence) that, "Indian Mussalmans have a legitimate cause of complaint against the Congress on the ground that it has not found it possible so far to confer with them for a settlement of the communal issue."⁴⁶

Asaf Ali presenting vote of thanks said that a handful of people with no sacrifices to their credit were misleading the Muslims by holding out false promises that could never be realised. He asked the leaders on the platform and others whether they were not largely responsible for this deterioration, as they had neglected their duty towards the Muslims. He was convinced that the present trend in Muslim politics was the result of their inaction.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, April 27, 1940.

⁴⁵ *The Statesman*, May 2, 1940.

⁴⁶ Private papers of Hafiz Mohammed Ibrahim.

They had left the field open for those who were misleading the

They had left the field open for those who were misleading the Muslims politically. He was, however, glad that the freedom-loving Muslims met on a common platform in Delhi. He hoped that the movement they had started in Delhi would spread to the nine crore Muslims.

Concluding, Asaf Ali said that every inch of land in India belonged to them. Indian civilisation and culture was the common heritage of the Muslims and Hindus of this country, the result of their co-existence during the last one thousand years. The Conference concluded at about 3:30 a.m. in the morning amidst shouts of Allah-o-Akbar and Inquilab Zindabad [God is great and long live revolution].⁴⁷

It was also announced at the end of the conference that an intensive propaganda would be made throughout the country in support of the resolutions passed by the conference at Delhi by holding provincial and district conference. A regular office was opened in Delhi with Shaukat Ullah Shah Ansari as secretary. It was also decided that Azadi Day (Independence Day) should be Muslim masses.

The Azad Muslim Conference ended at a note of great enthusiasm and hope. According to *The Hindustan Times*,

Enthusiastic scenes marked the concluding stage of the All-India Independent Muslim Conference which ended its deliberations after a four-day session in the Gandhi Grounds yesterday morning [May 1] at about 3-30 a.m. More than a lakh of Mohammedans from Delhi and outside attended the Conference. Keen interest was maintained throughout the session on account of the high level of the debates. Despite the odd hours during which the open session of the Conference met on all the four days, the attendance went on increasing day by day.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *The Hindustan Times*, May 2, 1940.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

One significant aspect of the Conference was that it did not stop at exposing the unsoundness of the Partition scheme and the dangers inherent in it. It went further and did something positive by bringing all Muslim organisations together and putting forward jointly a common scheme for preserving national unity and winning freedom, with due regard to Muslim interests.

A section of the Muslim press raised the issue of representative character of the Conference arguing that Muslim League was not invited.

We have been particularly taken to task for not inviting the representatives of the All India Muslim League to the Conference. It is, therefore, contended by some publicists that the All parties Independent Muslim conference is unrepresentative of the Indian Muslim opinion and uncalled for in the present circumstances.

Jafri Mohammed in a forceful response explained the reasons why Muslim League was not invited. Firstly, it was not participating in the freedom struggle. Secondly, it stood for partitioning of the country as it believed in the two-nation theory. Thirdly, it represented 'haves' of the Muslim society only.

It is on such vital and decisive issues that the organisers of the Conference invariably find themselves at variance with the leaders and promoters of the All India Muslim League and it is to define these objectives in concrete terms that the All Parties Independent Muslim Conference is being convened in Delhi.⁵⁰

The Muslims against Partition stressed the fact that Muslim organisations which joined hands under Azad Muslim Conference were individually weaker than the League as separate entities. But the position reversed with their joining hands under Azad Muslim Conference. The Muslim League was naturally alarmed and attacked it from the day of its inception.⁵¹ In fact holding of this Conference was itself,

⁵⁰ Jafri M., "Independent Muslims' Conference and Its Critics," *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 25, 1940.

⁵¹ Humayun, Kabir, *Muslim Politics 1906-42*, Gupta, Rahman & Gupta, Calcutta, 1943, p. 36.

a challenge to the League and threatened the position of Mr Jinnah and his satellites. It also checked the lying propaganda of British imperialists who sought to represent to the world outside the opinion of the League as the voice of Mussalmans of India. For both these achievements the main credit goes to Mr Allah Bakhsh.⁵²

Leading newspapers from four corners of the country commented editorially on the conference. *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi, in an editorial described the conference as,

a far more representative gathering of Indian Muslims than the Lahore Conference whose decision has been the provocation for its being convened. By trying to comrait Indian Muslims to a cause so fatal as the division of the country on communal lines the Lahore session of the League has roused all the latent feelings of patriotism and love of liberty within the community of which today's conference has become the focussing point. Sponsored by seven powerful organisations of Muslims and attended by delegates from all over the country, today's conference is more competent to reflect the minds of the masses of Indian Muslims than the gathering of Nawabs and Knights reactionaries and self-seekers toadies at Lahore, which has brought dishonour on the community and given a handle to British Imperialists to perpetuate foreign rule. The insensate lengths to which Mr. Jinnah and his colleagues have carried their hatred of the Congress has brought about its inevitable reaction and it will not be long before the better mind of the community rises up in revolt and repudiates a leadership which has subordinated the interests of the community and country alike to feelings of personal rancour and spite.⁵³

According to *Hitvada*, Nagpur,

The All India Independent Muslim Conference which met at Delhi is an event of great political significance...Though it could not be claimed that the Conference was fully representative of the Muslims of India, yet it cannot be denied that it was at least representative of those Muslims of India who were outside the influence of the Muslim League. Important Muslim organisations

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 41.

⁵³ *The Hindustan Times*, April 27, 1940.

like the Bengal Krishak Proja Party, the Jamiat Ulama, the Majlis-e-Ahrar and the Momins were represented in Conference. The Presidential address of the Conference, delivered by Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh, ex-Premier of Sind, was a fitting reply to the recent propaganda of the Muslim League. The resolutions passed by the Conference state the political standpoint of the Independent Muslims without ambiguity or equivocation.⁵⁴

Independent India edited by M. N. Roy wrote,

We welcome the mobilization of Muslim opinion against the anti-national scheme for the partitioning of the Indian nation...From all reports it appears that the Azad Muslim Conference held recently at Delhi was a very successful conference.⁵⁵

Commenting on the Conference *The Bombay Chronicle* wrote in an editorial that,

Rarely has there been in Delhi so huge a gathering displaying mass enthusiasm on a scale among Muslims which was known only in the Khilafat days. There was practically no opposition to the official resolution—in fact the opposition such as it was from the young radicals who wished to go much further than the resolutions themselves. After this conference it can no more be claimed by the Muslim League that it represents Muslim opinion. Whatever may be the nature and extent of the following behind Mr. Jinnah, it has now been made clear that there is vast body of Muslims and Muslim organisations who think differently...One could see at the conference that all provinces in the country were represented. In fact all the important Muslim organisations in the country, with the exception of the Muslim League, were identified with the objects of the conference. Naturally Congress Muslims, though they did not keep away from it, refrained from taking any prominent part, for they were anxious that independent Muslim organisations which were for the first time trying the experiment of joint discussion should take the lead. The discussion showed that Muslim opinion was only waiting for an opportunity to assert itself. The blunder committed by Mr. Jinnah in forcing the Pakistan issue served to unite Muslim ranks in solid opposition to

⁵⁴ *Hitvada*, May 3, 1940

⁵⁵ *Independent India*, May 12, 1940.

the threatened disruption of the country.⁵⁶

Anand Bazar Patrika of Calcutta underlined the fact that Muslim League was used to making claim of being the sole presentative body of the Muslims and sole custodian of their rights and privileges. However, the deliberations of Azad Muslim Conference had proved that the latter was far more representative body of Muslims and a far more zealous advocate of Muslem rights and interests. Decrying the British attitude towards patriotic Muslims it wrote:

It is quite possible that the British Government will ignore the opinion of the Azad Conference, as they did regarding the claims of the Nationalist Muslims to be represented at the Round Table Conference, even by one person. Already Lord Zetland has given the certificate of sole agency for Indian Mussalmans to the League, and there is little doubt that there will be no change in the old tactics. But we may all take it for granted that the British Government will not be convinced. They will further be strengthened in their attitude by the Pact that Sir Subhas Chandra Bose has made with the Muslim League, letting down the Nationalist Muslims.⁵⁷

The Searchlight from Patna wrote that in Azad Muslim Conference,

Mr. Jinnah has got his reply. The deadly blow he had aimed at the motherland has at last recoiled on his own head. In the madness of his vanity and in the frenzy of his arrogance, he had sought veritably to betray his motherland and his community. That has received a check. He had sought to sully the honour of the brave and patriotic Mussalmans of India for the sake of his own exaltation to the status of the supreme dictator by exposing his community to the world as enemies of the freedom of their own country. As an inevitable reaction he has himself been exposed to others. His claim has been repudiated. The voice of the Nationalist Mussalmans of India has spoken through the Azad Muslim Conference at Delhi and it has spoken repudiation of all that

⁵⁶ *The Bombay Chronicle*, May 2, 1940.

⁵⁷ *Anand Bazar Patrika*, May 2, 1940.

Mr. Jinnah has been saying. This voice is unmistakable, for it is in tune with one of the noblest sentiments that God has implanted in the heart of man. Say what Mr. Jinnah's hypnotised henchmen may, the Nationalist Muslims who have found their voice will no more be silenced by their coax or cajole. The death-knell of Muslim reactionaryism has begun to ring. It is also the herald of the birth of a new League—a truly representative organisation of the Mussalmans as an integral component of the Indian nation which will strive to unite and not disrupt the forces that have united in a stigmatic whole through the centuries that have gone by.⁵⁸

Lauding the nationalism of Azad Muslim Conference it said:

The resolution that has been adopted by the Azad Muslim Conference at Delhi leaves absolutely no room for ambiguity. It is the clearest reiteration of the reality of Indian nationhood. It is a ringing demand for the independence of India as a whole. It is a clarion call to the Mussalmans of India to merge themselves in the bigger life of the nation and to fight shoulder to shoulder with all others who inhabit this country for freedom of them all.⁵⁹

It lauded the leadership of Allah Bakhsh and suggested that the leaders of the Delhi Conference should now go to the masses and help them to recognise their own strength.

Despite a promising and historic Azad Muslim Conference of April 1940 the tempo could not be built in the coming couple of years. Many factors were responsible for it. Involvement of Allah Bakhsh in local Sind politics which was inherently unpredictable and intriguing always, kept away this master brain of the project of Muslims against Partition confined to Sind. He was appointed Premier of Sind on March 7, 1941. Simultaneously, hostile attitude of the British rulers, non-cooperative response from the Congress and attacks by the Hindutva camp made this movement almost non-functional. Allah Bakhsh admitted in February 1942 that "unforeseen circumstances" had made the whole movement

⁵⁸ *The Searchlight*, April 30, 1940.

⁵⁹ *The Searchlight*, April 30, 1940.

inactive but assured that a meeting of the Board would be called on February 27 and 28 at Calcutta.”⁶⁰

This meeting could take place in Delhi in November 1942 only. It came out with a resolution which read:

This meeting of the Azad Muslim Board calls upon the people of India to realise their duty to the country and community in this grave crisis and concentrate all their efforts towards the consolidation of inter-communal unity and trust. India is the common motherland of Hindus, Muslims and others. All have the duty to promote and secure its welfare. It is, therefore, the special responsibility of Mussalmans and their organisations to expose the utter hollowness of the British plea that Indian Muslims don't want independence and national Government. This is the more incumbent on them when it is remembered that the menace of war threatens more imminently the provinces with a Muslim majority. This meeting of the Azad Muslim Board therefore appeals to Mussalmans to mobilise public opinion effectively to press the demand for a declaration of independence with immediate transfer of power to the people and the establishment of a Provisional Coalition Government.⁶¹

The Azad Muslim Board also passed a resolution to the effect that a deputation be sent to the United Nations, Britain, United States, Russia and China, to acquaint them with the Indian situation. By another resolution the Board condemned the dismissal of Allah Bakhsh as Premier of Sind “in spite of the enjoyment of confidence of a majority of the members of the Sind Legislature.”⁶²

The Azad Muslim Board reiterated the fact that it represented the vast majority of Muslims who were artisans and socially depressed.⁶³ When Lord Amrey, Secretary of State of India doubted the credentials of Azad Muslim Conference the following statement was issued by Shaukatullah Ansari, Secretary of the All-India Independent Muslim Conference:

⁶⁰ *The Bombay Chronicle*, February 12, 1942.

⁶¹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, November 14, 1942.

⁶² *Ibid.*, November 12, 1942.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, September 14, 1942.

The cabled report of Mr. Amery's reply to M/s. Sorenson and Silverman, M.P.'s relating to the Independent Muslim Parties' Federation commonly known as the All-India Azad Muslim Conference is more misleading than it appears to be...It is true that the League voices the political opinion of a considerable body of Indian Muslims even today. But the Azad Muslims' Federation claims to voice the political and religious opinion of a more considerable body of Muslims.⁶⁴

The Azad Muslim Conference was the biggest conclave of Indian Muslims held against the two-nation theory and divisive politics of the Muslim League. Importantly, it happened immediately after Muslim League's passing of Pakistan resolution at Lahore. This Conference proved once again that a large section of Muslims did not subscribe to the two-nation theory and they were ready to challenge the politics of Muslim League actively.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, March 14, 1942.

CHAPTER 6

ALLAH BAKHSH CONFRONTS BRITISH RULERS

Apart from leading the Indian Muslims for an all-inclusive united India against the communal politics of Muslim League, Allah Bakhsh chose to challenge the totalitarian British rule in India. The Congress call to the British to Quit India in August 1942 stirred the whole nation. Allah Bakhsh was the Premier (those days chief minister was known by this designation) of Sind during the eventful days of Quit India Movement of 1942 as head of the Ittehad Party (Unity Party) which represented all communities and sections of Sind. Allah Bakhsh and his party were not part of the Indian National Congress but when British Prime Minister Winston Churchill made a derogatory reference to the Indian freedom struggle and the Quit India Movement in a speech in the British Parliament, Allah Bakhsh renounced in protest all titles conferred by the British Government.

Allah Bakhsh in a letter dated September 19, 1942 informed Viceroy, Linlithgow (Victor Alexander John Hope Governor-General and Viceroy of India 1936-1943) that he had decided to renounce his titles of Khan Bahadur and Order of the British Empire (OBE). His communication read:

I beg to inform Your Excellency that I have decided to renounce both the honours I hold from the British Government as I feel I cannot consistently with my views and conviction retain them any longer.¹

It further said:

India has been struggling for the national freedom for a long time past. Upon the outbreak of the present war it was hoped that under the very principles and ideology, in defence of which Allies were waging in a titanic conflict, India would be made free and participate in the world struggle as a free country. Convinced as

¹ *The Times of India*, 28 September 1942 & Singh, Durlab (ed.), *Famous Letters and Ultimatums to the British Government*, Hero Publications, Lahore, 1944, p. 96.

I am that India has every right to be and that the people of India should have conditions in which they could live in peace and harmony, the declarations and actions of the British Government have made it clear that, instead of giving their cooperation to the various Indian parties and communities in settling their differences and parting with power to the people of the land and allowing them to live happily in freedom and mould the destinies of their country according to their birthright, the policy of the British Government has been to continue their imperialistic hold on India and persist in keeping her under subjugation, use the political and communal differences for propaganda purposes, and crush the national forces to serve their own imperialistic aims and intentions.²

Allah Bakhsh concluded the letter with the following words:

The latest speech delivered by Winston Churchill in the House of Commons has caused the greatest disappointment to all men of goodwill who wish to see rendered to India justice which is long due to her. As that hapless pronouncement withholds such justice from India and adds to the volume of evidence that Britain has no desire to give up her imperialistic hold on India, I feel I cannot retain the honour I hold from the British Government which in the circumstances have arisen I cannot but regard as token of British imperialism.³

Allah Bakhsh's above letter was in response to the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's speech in the House of Commons delivered on September 10, 1942, denouncing the Quit India Movement and Congress led by MK Gandhi. According to Churchill:

The Indian Congress Party does not represent all India; it does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organisation built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests...The Congress Party has now abandoned the policy in many respects of non-violence...and has come into the open as a revolutionary movement designed to paralyse communications by rail and telegraph and generally to promote

² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

disorder, looting of shops and sporadic attacks on the Indian police accompanied from time to time by revolting atrocities—the whole having attention or at any rate effect of hampering the defence of India against the Japanese invader who stands on the frontiers of Assam and also upon the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal.⁴

He went on to the extent of alleging that,

these activities by the Congress Party have been aided by Japanese fifth column work on a widely extended scale and with special direction to strategic points. It is noteworthy, for instance, that communications of the Indian forces defending Bengal, the Assam frontiers have been specially attacked. In these circumstances the Viceroy and the Government of India with the unanimous support of the Viceroy's council, the great majority of which are Indians patriotic and wisemen—have felt it necessary to proclaim and suppress the central and provincial organs of this association which has become committed to hostile and criminal courses. Mr. Gandhi and other principal leaders have been interned...⁵

Churchill further declared that “Many martial races, divided by unbridgeable gulfs from Hindu Congress, will never consent to be ruled by it.”⁶

There is no doubt that the British rulers were shocked by this public pronouncement of Allah Bakhsh. Since Allah Bakhsh did not resign from his office, it made it a more complicated issue for the British rulers. For them it was ‘tiresome’, ‘a nuisance’, ‘unfortunate’ and ‘embarrassing’. They wanted to dismiss him immediately. But the problem was, “all this will look a little unreal if the world hears that a Prime Minister has been dismissed for returning his O. B. E.”⁷ Sind Governor Hugh Dow tried to coerce Bakhsh to resign. When the latter did not oblige, Dow finally

⁴ Singh, Durlab (ed.), *Famous Letters and Ultimatums to the British Government*, Hero Publications, Lahore, 1944, p. 98.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁶ Bright, Jagat S., *India's Nationalist No 1: Mr Allah Bux*, Hero Publications, Lahore, 1943, pp. 41-42.

⁷ Mansergh, Nicholas, (ed.), *Transfer of Power in India, 1942-47: Reassertion of Authority, Gandhi's Fast and the Succession to the Viceroyalty, September 21, 1942-June 12, 1943*, vol. 3, (*Constitutional Relations Between Britain & India*), Her Majesty's Stationery Office Books, London, 1971, p. 98.

dismissed him on October 10 declaring that Bakhsh no longer possessed the Governor's confidence. It was the only instance during the British rule in India when head of a provincial government was removed for renouncing his titles.

The dismissal of Allah Bakhsh created an embarrassing situation for the British Government in the House of Commons. Amery replying to a question in the House of Commons regarding the displacement of the Muslim Premier of Sind, Allah Bakhsh, recalled the communique issued by the Governor of Sind on October 10th, adding

I had of course been consulted on the situation created by the Premier's publication made in September of his letter to the Viceroy and had agreed as to the impropriety in the light of it, of his continuing in office, but the final decision to dismiss him was taken by the Governor only after a personal discussion, which owing to the Premier's absence from Sind could not take place until October 10.⁸

When asked by the Labour M. P. Sorensen whether the reason for the dismissal of this particular Muslim Premier was the return of the titles conferred upon him. Amery replied:

No. That was an indication of his general attitude which was one of direct disapproval of the measures taken by the Government of India to restore order in a grave crisis and the complete identification in his published statement of himself with the attitude of the Congress.⁹

Even the press in Britain expressed its anger on this brazen removal of Allah Bakhsh. This action of the Sind administration was described as staggering. Two prominent British papers *New Statesman* and *Nation* wrote editorials decrying the abjectly subordinate position of provincial ministries which turned ministries into British puppets.¹⁰ The Indian press welcomed the daring decision of Allah Bakhsh. It was regarded as an impressive expression of the growing hostility in India to British imperialism.

⁸ *The Bombay Chronicle*, October 16, 1942.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *The Hindustan Times*, May 16, 1943.

According to an editorial in *The Bombay Chronicle* it was no personal vendetta but in national cause that Allah Bakhsh surrendered the titles:

As President of the Azad Muslim Conference he had been bitterly disappointed at the British Government's failure to give India the freedom for which they claimed to wage the present war. But their declaration to India and their doings here thereafter made it clear to the Premier that instead of giving their co-operation to various Indian parties and communities in setting their differences and parting with power to the people of the land the policy of the British Government has been to use political and communal differences for propaganda purposes and crush the national forces to serve their own imperialist aims.¹¹

The dismissal of Allah Bakhsh Government in 1942 and his subsequent murder in 1943 paved the way for entry of Muslim League in Sind. It is not known generally that after the dismissal of Allah Bakhsh government in 1942 in Sind, the British Governor appointed a coalition of Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha which was led by VD Savarkar at that time to form a new government in Sind. In fact, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha ran coalition governments in Bengal and NWFP also in the same period. In Sind one could see the open ganging up of the British rulers, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha in achieving the political liquidation of Allah Bakhsh and his kind of anti-communal politics. The British rulers admitted that removal of Allah Bakhsh as Premier of Sind paved the way for growth of Muslim League in Sind. "There has undoubtedly been a great extension of League membership in Sind since the discomfiture of Allah Bakhsh."¹²

¹¹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, September 28, 1942.

¹² Mansergh, Nicholas, (ed.), *Transfer of Power in India, 1942-47: Reassertion of Authority, Gandhi's Fast and the Succession to the Viceroyalty, September 21, 1942-June 12, 1943*, vol. 3, (*Constitutional Relations Between Britain & India*), Her Majesty's Stationery Office Books, London, 1971, p. 946.

CHAPTER 7

MURDER OF ALLAH BAKHSH

Allah Bakhsh was murdered on May 14, 1943 by professional killers. According to the First Information Report, Allah Bakhsh was killed on the outskirts of Shikarpur town of Sind Province, when he was returning to his house in a tonga (horsecart) from the small Begari Canal, where he had gone to see a certain pir (holy man) who was found to be absent. He was accompanied by his friends Nabi Bakhsh Phulpoto and Ghulam Rasul Jhulan. A group of three assailants fired upon the tonga when it entered the town. Allah Bakhsh received two revolver shot wounds in the chest and died on his way to hospital while some of his companions were hurt.

The funeral of the late Allah Bakhsh took place in Shikarpur on May 15, 1943. A procession of more than 10,000 persons, including members of all communities, accompanied the body to the burial ground. Shikarpur and other towns of Sind observed *hartal*. Several local newspapers did not take out their editions as homage to the deceased.

He twice became Premier of Sind. He first became Premier in 1937 after the defeat of the Hidayatullah Cabinet and he continued to be Premier until the beginning of 1939. Toward the end of the same year he came back in the Ministry of Mir Bundeh Ali Khan Talpur as a minister as a result of the Azad Pact. At the beginning of 1940 the Mir Ministry fell and, Allah Bakhsh again became Premier with the support of the Congress Party. He continued till he was removed from office for renouncing his titles in 1942.

Allah Bakhsh's murder created a sensation not only in Sind but throughout the country. *The Hindustan Times* described him as one of the,

finest of Sindhis, one of the truest of Musalmans, one of the noblest sons of India who loved his peasants for he loved the land; and he used to wear khaddar even in the twenties, for he loved the poor. Both the Hindus and Muslims looked up to him as a leader. With an ability unusual for a Sindhi Muslim, he was a great Finance Minister, and could play with his figures like a juggler. He had an all-India mind and in the midst of division and strife,

pinned his faith on an independent united India, and dreamt the dream of the united State of Asia in the years to come. He was the first President of the Azad Muslim Conference and laboured for a united Muslim front for the freedom of the country. He was the first Premier to challenge the arbitrary exercise of the Governor's power and the first to be dismissed for honest expression of opinion. During the last six months he led a quiet life, hoping for better days to come. But he had made many enemies and knew that he was shadowed. He had been warned several times, but with a rare courage, born of a good and fearless heart, he went about unattended and alone wherever he was called. But no one had imagined that the end would be so soon.¹

In an editorial his murder was described as a 'national calamity'. According to the editorial,

Allah Bakhsh was a firm nationalist in his convictions. After he was freed from the shackles of office he threw himself with even greater zeal into the task of promoting national unity and counteracting the separatist tendencies of communally-minded organisations...Had he lived, he would have undoubtedly been of great service to his province and to his country in this task of bringing the different communities, together."²

This was the second time that an attempt was made to murder Allah Bakhsh, the first having been made by an untraced assailant at Hardoi, in the U.P. in March, 1940. He was 43 years old at the time of murder. Incidentally, Allah Bakhsh was the third Sind M.L.A. to be shot dead. The other two were H.S. Pammani, who was killed near Sukkur, and Sitaldas Perumal, who was shot dead in his village near Mirpurkhas.

The Times of India recalled that Allah Bakhsh

created a country-wide sensation last September when he renounced his titles of Khan Bahadur and O.B.E. as a protest against the British Government's policy in India. Mr. Allah Bakhsh was later removed from his office of Premier by the Governor as he no longer had the Governor's confidence.³

¹ *The Hindustan Times*, May 16, 1943

² *Ibid.*

³ *The Times of India*, May 15, 1943.

A prominent English Daily from eastern India editorially wrote:

Mr. Allah Bakhsh was one of the most vigorous personalities, endowed with a high sense of duty and rare courage of conviction, who easily commanded the respect and admiration of all, even of those who differed from him on some or other public questions...If an intercommunal settlement is reached it could only be through the efforts of men like Mr. Allah Bakhsh who have the courage to do the right thing and the backbone to face opposition...A life so full of promise has been cut short. And India is much poorer today by the death of the youngman of 42 whose sturdy patriotism and devotion to duty would be cherished long after the present unhappy situation has ended and India has come into her own. The manner of his death, mourned by all sections of his countrymen, should serve, as a warning to all as to the serious danger of seeking to inflame the fanatical passions of the multitude by the threat of bloodshed to political opponents, as was unfortunately done at the last Delhi session of the Muslim League...Allah Bakhsh is dead, but the sincerity of his conviction lives and Indian unity and freedom can only be built on respect for that quality.⁴

Homages came pouring in from friends and foes. C. Rajagopalachari in his message said:

Numberless friends all over the country will feel the grief along with the bereaved family. We have to remember that sometimes public service gets paid in this manner. India has lost one of her most ardent and self-sacrificing spirits; one who may have probably played a great part in her future.⁵

Ghulam Hussain Hidayatallah, Premier of Sind remembered him as "colleague and friend" and "one of the cleverest men in Sind" who would play a very important part in the destinies of this province. "He had a great future before him still which, unfortunately, has come to a tragic close..."⁶

Saifuddin Kitchlew, a prominent patriotic Muslim said:

At this critical period of the freedom movement in the country the

⁴ *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, May 17, 1943

⁵ *The Times of India*, May 15, 1943.

⁶ *Ibid.*

death of a man like Mr. Allah Bakhsh is a thundering blow to the forces of nationalism. Mr. Allah Bakhsh was a thorough going nationalist. Mr. Allah Bakhsh is dead but his work will remain.⁷

S. A. Barelvi, editor of *The Bombay Chronicle* treated his death as national loss. According to him Allah Bakhsh in a very short time, had achieved much and his death at the age of 42 had cut short a career of increasing usefulness in the service of the country.⁸ Dr Khan Saheb, ex-Premier of NWFP paid homage to him as a great nationalist and not only of Sind but the whole of India.⁹

R. K. Sidhwa, a renowned Sind Congress leader who had worked with Allah Bakhsh recalled that,

Allah Bakhsh possessed remarkable qualities. Honest, straight forward, he sincerely believed in Hindu-Muslim unity...He had no special educational qualifications but he had plenty of acumen, intelligence and commonsense. He was a first-class parliamentarian and was a match in debate to any trained legislator...¹⁰

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, editor of *Zamindar*, a prominent Urdu journal from Lahore described murder of Allah Bakhsh as an act of terrorism by intolerant forces. He said:

It was a duel between the argument and the bullet. Extraordinary efforts should be made in this connection because if a person can be murdered on the basis of difference of views and creeds then the other leaders also cannot escape the revolver, for if once argument gives place to bullet then the leader of no party can be safe. If this terrorism, of which the beginning has been made with this tragedy, is not stopped, its end would prove a permanent menace.¹¹

Kiran Sankar Roy, leader of Bengal Congress remembered him as one of the important Muslim leaders to question the claim of the Muslim League to be the only organisation to speak on behalf of

⁷ Cited in Bright, Jagat S., *India's Nationalist No 1: Mr Allah Bakhsh*, Hero Publications, Lahore, 1943, pp. 58-59.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰ *The Bombay Chronicle*, May 23, 1945.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

the Muslims of India.¹² A political rival of Allah Bakhsh and a prominent Muslim League leader of Sind, Khan Bahadur Muhammad Ayub Khuhro (Revenue Minister, Sind), who was alleged to have planned Allah Bakhsh's murder, also came out with a condolence message. Which read:

Mr. Allah Bakhsh's death is a definite loss as it removes from the political field a man of exceptional ability and unusual charm. The dastardly deed that snatched him from his dear ones and friends deserves to be thoroughly condemned and the heartfelt sympathy of every one will go to the members of the bereaved family.¹³

Pro-British and Muslim League press was quick to declare that "there is nothing communal or political in the murder. It is believed that the crime was the culmination of a personal quarrel."¹⁴ It was emphasised that since during Allah Bakhsh premiership Syed Sibghatullah Shah Pir Pagaro, leader of Hurs was hanged, these were his followers who murdered Allah Bakhsh out of revenge. However, there were contrary facts available which made it clear that it was Sind Muslim League which organised this murder as Allah Bakhsh was proving to be a great hurdle to its politics at the All India level.¹⁵

There were reports in the contemporary press which linked the murder to the Muslim League. According to Hindi daily *Prabhat* Allah Bakhsh's was a political murder. "The foes of Allah Bakhsh depicted him as the enemy of Islam. This murder is lit by communal madness."¹⁶ Another newspaper, *Vir Bharat* wrote, "whether this is a political murder or not, the fact cannot be ignored that the hymn of hate sung by Mr. Jinnah is responsible for such happenings."¹⁷ The prominent English daily from Lahore, *The Tribune* (May 15, 1943) was specific to state that,

¹² *The Bombay Chronicle*, May 15, 1943.

¹³ *The Hindustan Times*, May 16, 1943.

¹⁴ *The Statesman*, May 15, 1943.

¹⁵ Khadim Hussain Soomro has done pioneering work on this issue. See Soomro, Khadim Hussain, *Allah Bakhsh Soomro: Apostle of Secular Harmony*, Sain Publishers, Sehwan Sharif Sind, 2006.

¹⁶ Cited in Bright, Jagat S., *India's Nationalist No 1: Mr Allah Bakhsh*, Hero Publications, Lahore, 1943, p. 61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

late Mr. Allah Bakhsh was the most powerful opponent of the League in Sind and, consequently, it becomes difficult to dissociate the foul outrage which has sent a chill throughout the country, from the latter-day tendency of the League leaders to condemn their co-religionists who differed from them not merely as opponents but as traitors to the community. Such preaching can have only one effect and the murder of Mr. Allah Bakhsh is a crime for which many besides those who actually took part in the murder have to answer.¹⁸

In the light of the linkages of the Muslim League leaders with the killers of Allah Bakhsh the Sind British administration had to initiate Second Allah Bakhsh Murder Case against Muslim League leader Muhammad Ayub Khuhro, his brother, Haji M. Nawaz and three others. They were charged under Section 120-B read with Section 302 Indian Penal Code (IPC) with having been parties to a criminal conspiracy to commit the murder of Allah Bakhsh. They were also charged under Sections 109 and 302 IPC with having abetted the commission of the said murder. It was tried by sessions judge B. B. Paymaster. While acquitting all the accused he made the following significant observation in his judgment (August 3, 1945),

no criminal offence has been proved against any of the accused, though I do not agree with them that the whole prosecution case is necessarily false and concocted. I have only held the charges to be not proven and have given the accused the benefit of the doubt.¹⁹

As regards Khan Bahadur Ayub Khuhro, Judge Paymaster's conclusion in the judgment was that though the prosecution case against him had not been proved beyond reasonable doubt the trial had not completely cleared him of all suspicion of complicity in the crime. The judgment went on to mention certain items of evidence against him which had not been satisfactorily explained by the defence.²⁰ Thus despite the fact that the prosecution case was not "necessarily false and concocted" and Khuhro was not

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-2.

¹⁹ Paymaster, B. B., "Some experiences of a civilian," *The Public Administration*, Silver Jubilee Number, n.d., p. 109.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

clear of "all suspicion of complicity in the crime", the Muslim League leaders were acquitted.

The prosecution story was, briefly, that Khan Bahadur Khuhro and his brother Mohamad Nawaz conspired to have Allah Bakhsh murdered by the Hurs because of keen political rivalry. The Khuhro brothers, it was alleged, entrusted the job to Daresh, head of Khan Bahadur Khuhro's servants about two years before the murder, promising to pay a reward of Rs 12,000 to Hurs if the murder was carried out. Daresh summoned a Hur gang headed by absconder Mohabat—on whose head there was still a prize of Rs 500. The conspiracy was hatched in one of Khan Bahadur Khuhro's fields and, according to Daresh's statement, he communicated to the Hurs Khan Bahadur Khuhro's offer.

Daresh is said to have told the Hurs that Allah Bakhsh was an enemy of Khan Bahadur Khuhro and the latter would pay Rs 12,000 if Allah Bakhsh was done away with. The Hurs accepted the offer and killed him. The persecution further alleged that after the murder, Daresh was sent into hiding at the instance of the Khuhro brothers. The political motive alleged by the prosecution rested on the theory that Allah Bakhsh, although in a small minority in the legislature, was in the opinion of Khan Bahadur Khuhro, still capable of overthrowing the League Ministry and that Khan Bahadur Khuhro, being a strong devotee of the Muslim League, would be interested in getting Allah Bakhsh out of the way. This political motive was refuted by Khan Bahadur Khuhro in his statement in which he said that he and Allah Bakhsh were on the best of terms socially and used to dine together when they visited each other.

The judge was of the opinion that despite a strong prosecution case there were no independent witnesses to prove the conspiracy. Delivering the judgment Judge Paymaster said that the prosecution had not been able to produce sufficient evidence against the accused that they conspired with Daresh, their servant, to get Allah Bakhsh killed. Adding that the approver's evidence was not truthful while corroborative evidence of the other witnesses was weak, the judgment brought to an end one of the most sensational

conspiracy trials in Indian criminal history, a political motive having been alleged as the moving factor in the case.²¹

The pro-Muslim League press naturally hailed the judgment. The pro-Congress and anti-Khuhro press emphasised the adverse remarks contained in the judgment against Khuhro and *The Sind Observer* of Karachi demanded in an editorial that Khuhro was unfit to hold political office again and should retire from public life. However, he served as a minister again for several years in various governments.²²

It is true that linkages of the murderers to Muslim League, though well-known, could not be legally proved in the court of the sessions judge. Surprisingly, the state did not go in for appeal against this judgment in higher courts. However, the British rulers who had better access to information, were convinced of the complicity of Ayub Khuhro in the crime. Archibald Wavell Viceroy of India (1943-1947) in a secret communication to Secretary of State of India and Burma, Leo Amrey on July 11, 1944, described Sind Muslim League leader Muhammad Ayub Khuhro as "a somewhat disreputable Minister who is generally supposed to have had a good deal to do with the murder of Allah Bakhsh."²³

Wavell hinted at the involvement of Muhammad Ayub Khuhro once again while referring to a discussion of his with the Governor of Sind in his diary dated August 24, 1945. He wrote:

We spoke of the acquittal of his ex-minister Khuhro, who will now probably become Premier before long, to be suspected of murdering one's enemies, or even to be known to have done it, is a qualification rather than a hindrance in Sind politics.²⁴

The Viceroy in another secret communication to Pethick-Lawrence, another Secretary of State for India and Burma, wrote:

²¹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, August 4, 1945.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

²³ Mansergh, Nicholas (ed.), *Transfer of Power in India, 1942-47: The Post-war Phase: New Moves by the Labour Government, 1 August 1945—22 March 1946*, v. 6, (*Constitutional Relations Between Britain & India*), Her Majesty's Stationery Office Books, London, 1976, p. 1080.

²⁴ Moon, Penderel (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, OUP, London, 1973, p. 164.

In Sind the acquittal of Khan Bahadur Khuhro, an ex-minister who was charged with complicity in the murder of Allah Bakhsh, a former Premier, seems to have caused a sensation; and it is reported in the newspapers that the present Premier, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, and his colleagues met Khuhro at the railway station on his arrival in Karachi and took him out in a procession. Sind politics are most peculiar and although Khuhro is well known to be a scoundrel, he may easily be included in a Ministry again.²⁵

There is a meaningful parallel between the acquittal of the pro-Muslim League accused in the Allah Bakhsh Murder Case in 1945 and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's acquittal in the Gandhi Murder Case in 1949. These were Khan Bahadur Khuhro and his brother Mohammed Nawaz (both leaders of Muslim League) who were discharged of the accusation of conspiring to kill Allah Bakhsh.

In the Allah Bakhsh Murder Case, despite the statements of two approvers (Daresh and Mohammed Khan) and in the Gandhi Murder Case, despite Digambar Badge's testimony (that it was Savarkar who played the most important role in the conspiracy to kill Gandhi), the persons who were accused of conspiring were released because there was no 'independent evidence' to prove the conspiracy. The law demanded that when conspiracy was being hatched, and if it was to be proved in a court of law, there should be corroboration by some independent witness. Of course, it would be an impossible task to find an 'independent evidence' when conspiracies are hatched in the utmost secret surroundings. However, this was the law and persons accused of conspiring to kill Gandhi (Savarkar) and Allah Bakhsh (Khuhro brothers) were let off.

Allah Bakhsh needed to be eliminated because he was able to muster massive support from common Muslims throughout India against the scheme of Pakistan. Moreover, Allah Bakhsh as a great secularist with massive support in Sind and opposed to the formation of Pakistan could prove to be the greatest stumbling block in the physical formation of Pakistan as without Sind, the

²⁵ Mansergh, Nicholas, (ed.), *op. cit.*, v. 6, p. 31.

'Islamic State' in the west of the country could not have materialised. His ideas against religious nationalism were a cause of serious concern for Muslim League. Only his murder could silence him.

CHAPTER 8

MUSLIM PATRIOTIC INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS

There were a large number of patriotic Muslim organisations and individuals who fought against the divisive politics of the Muslim League in order to build an all-inclusive India. Some of them are listed below.

Shibli Nomani (1857-1914)

Shibli was a true patriot who stood for composite nationalism. He believed that education was a strong tool to imbibe the nationalist spirit among young people. With this aim he established in 1883 a school named as National School at Azamgarh. It is significant that Shibli named the institution as national school when Indian nationalism was just taking shape and Congress was not even born. Today this national school has evolved into a magnificent Shibli National College.¹

Shibli Nomani was among the most influential exponents of the idea of cooperation with Hindus in general and the Congress, in particular. In a series of essays published in 1912, he berated the Muslim League's political methods and the short-sightedness of its leaders. Whereas the Congress pursued a comprehensive and constructive economic and political programme, the League seemed solely interested in a larger share for Muslims in government services and in the extension of separate electorates to municipalities and district boards. In drawing yet another point of contrast, Shibli pointed out that the Congress leaders were not drawn from the titled and landed gentry, whereas the League was in their hands. Such people could not sacrifice their own material interests by taking a firm stand against the government. Above all, the eminent *alim* of Nadwa reminded readers of the bonds of unity which had prevailed between the two communities during

¹ Khan, Javed Ali, *Muhammad Shibli Nomani*, Darul Musannefin, Azamgarh, 2004, p. 36.

medieval rule in India.²

Shibli on Muslim League and Hindu-Muslim unity

Shibli's views on Muslim League and Hindu-Muslim unity are contained in his long essay in Urdu titled *Mussalmano kee political karvat* [Political change of stance of Muslims]. In this essay Shibli lamented the fact that Muslims, especially of northern India, were disinterested in politics. He held Aligarh movement led by Sir Syed responsible for such apathy as it opposed Muslims' association with Congress or participation in politics. It propagated a scare that if Muslims joined politics or Congress, the former's existence would be at stake as happens with small rivers which fall into the sea. Shibli criticised the anti-democratic stance of Sir Syed's belief that by joining competitive politics of the type of Congress the low classes would rule the gentry.

Shibli held Muslim League in low esteem in comparison to Congress. According to him Muslim League was an organisation of a section of Muslims which worshipped 'wealth and power' and for 'the post of president, secretary, members and district office-bearers it looks for gold-platted persons'. Muslim League danced to the tune of '*dast-e-karam*' or moneyed people. "We know that many honourable people have demanded that for Muslim League's membership prior permission of the Collector Bahadur should be taken".³ According to Shibli, Muslim League "day and night shouts; every day the belief which is propagated, the emotion which is instigated is Hindus are suppressing us and we must organise ourselves. This is the only real element of Muslim League".⁴

For Shibli, Hindu-Muslim unity was not a matter of the past but even today "go to the villages and see for yourself the brotherly feelings that exist between Hindus and Muslims, and the two communities participate in each other's functions as if they were related to each other by family ties." In order to avoid communal competition between Hindus and Muslims he agreed

² Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, p. 59.

³ Nomani, Shibli, *Maqalat-e-Shibli*, vol. 8, Shibli Academy, Azamgarh, 2000, p. 168.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

with the proposal of Maulvi Amir Ali that "on the issues of concern to both Hindus and Muslims a joint forum should be formed and whenever a delegation goes to the Viceroy equal number of people from both the communities should join."⁵

Shibli's Poetry against Muslim League

Shibli was basically an essayist but he penned powerful and popular verses against Muslim League in Urdu. His poems titled 'Muslim League', 'Problem of League's prolonged illness', 'League with suitable' and 'Suitable self-government' exposed subservience of the Muslim League to the British masters and disconnect with the Muslim masses. Some of the couplets are:

*Hae government kee bhee usper inayat kee nigah
Nazr-e-lutf-e-raeesaan khush anjaam bhee hae*

[It is patronised by the government and it is popular with the moneyed people]

*Mukhtasar iss ke fazayal koi pooche tau yeh haen
Mohsin-e-qaum bhee hae Khadim-e-hukkam bhee hae*

[If somebody asks about its qualities, it is patron of the community and also sub-servient to the rulers]

*Janab-e-League se mae ne kaha ke aey Hazrat
Kabhee tau jaa ke hamaraa bhee majra kabiye*

[I asked the League to sometime convey to rulers status of our plight]

*Daraaz dasti-e-police kaa kijiye izzhaar
Muqaddmaat ke halaat-e-fitna zaa kehiye*

[Tell them about police high-handedness and cases which are creating restlessness]

*Guzar rahee hae jo ke kashtkaron per
Yeh dastaan-e-alam-naak wa gham fiza kehiye*

[Tell them about the terrible life of peasants which they have to live]

*Janab-e-League ne sab kuch yeh sunn ke farmaya
Mujhe tau khoo hae ke jo kuch kaho bajaa kabiye*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

[After listening League said, it is my nature to say only nice things.]⁶

Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari (1880-1936)

Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, physician by profession, a prominent Congress leader and companion of M. K. Gandhi, was one of the persons who laid the foundation of anti-two-nation theory movement among Muslims in India. In his hectic and short life he stood as a rock against communalism of all hues and was an uncompromising advocate of single nationhood.⁷ He was the finest example of a patriotic Muslim. While delivering presidential address at the 1927 session of Congress at Madras (now Chennai) he said, "The swaraj, for which we are fighting, will neither be Hindu rule nor Muslim rule. It will be a joint rule."⁸

According to him "there is no war between Hindus and Muslims but the personal fights amongst leaders has spoiled the whole movement."⁹ He emphasised the fact that Islam as a religion was not incompatible with nationalism. Ansari's message was straightforward,

The destiny of the Indian Muslims was inextricably linked with their fellow countrymen with whom they had everything in common except religion...The debate whether a Muslim was loyal to the country first or his faith bore no relevance, for Islam and nationalism were compatible in the Indian, as indeed in any other situation...Nationalism represented the true and genuine aspirations of the people generally; so the Hindus and Muslims, with their shared common historical experiences and a common destiny, had to forge a united front to create a secular and

⁶ Nadvi, Syed Sulaiman, *Kulliyat-e-Shibli*, Darul Mussannefein, Azamgarh, 2012, pp. 131-4.

⁷ Edib, Halide, *Inside India*, George Allen & Unwin, London. 1937, p. 325.

⁸ Cited in Ludhianvi, Azeezur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Abrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, p. 141.

⁹ Cited in Ludhianvi, Azeezur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Abrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, pp. 181-2.

democratic polity.¹⁰

Recalling the 1857 Rebellion, he reminded Muslims of India that,

the Mussalmans have fought the battle of India shoulder to shoulder with their Hindu brethren, their political programme has come in line with that of the Hindus, the Hindu-Muslim rapprochement entered into at Lucknow [Lucknow Pact 1916] has, year after year, gained strength and vitality and I believe that as time goes on we shall understand each other better and any cause of friction that remains shall cease to exist. It is my firm conviction that a true Mussalman is always a good nationalist.¹¹

He took a significant initiative with Hakim Ajmal Khan to co-author a manifesto underlining the fact that fate and future of Muslims and Hindus were interlinked. The manifesto released in March 1922 said that the Hindus are our natural friends as,

they love our country as we do, the country is theirs as well as ours to love. And they suffer with us and for us in the common cause Indians have made to win freedom by non-violent non-cooperation. Together we will win Swaraj—a Swaraj that will enable us to secure justice for Islam. Our enemies seek daily to divide us but let us not fear their intrigues.¹²

Ansari believed that communalism posed greatest danger to the Indian society and was a major impediment to the cause of freedom so,

communalism is too harmful to be left to itself in the hope that it will die a natural death some day in the definite future...Your first duty, therefore, is to carry on a relentless crusade against communalism as an active guiding principle of Indian political life."¹³

According to him human society's partition based on race or religion was artificial and arbitrary everywhere and India was no

¹⁰ Cited in Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, pp. 279-80.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

¹³ Ansari in *Modern Review*, July 1929, p. 104.

exception.¹⁴ He, in association with Maulana Mahamudul Hasan, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Maulana Mohammad Ali dreamt of and succeeded in building a Muslim educational institution based on secular and composite ideology which came to be known as Jamia Millia Islamia. To him,

The college was much more than an experiment in basic education...He wanted the Jamia to be a model Muslim educational centre and hub of nationalist activities to serve his ideal of promoting Hindu-Muslim integration.”¹⁵

Jamia aimed at developing among youth a deep love for motherland to make Hindu children learn something of Islam as also to make Muslim children learn something of Hinduism thus facilitating the free flowing united Indian nationalism.¹⁶

Jamia was founded in Aligarh on October 29, 1920 (later shifted to Delhi) and “the Jamia collared the Muslim public’s affection and imagination within a few months...”¹⁷ Jamia was an epitome of Muslim urge to repudiate the two-nation theory. This ideological stance brought it into direct confrontation with the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). “By the early 1940s, the two competing ideas [AMU & Jamia] had consolidated their identity and advanced steadily towards confrontation, especially after Jinnah put forward, much against the grain of Jamia’s *biradari* [fraternity], the two-nation theory.”¹⁸ This ideological division was visible in the different social bases of the two institutions. “A typical Aligarh [AMU] student belonged to the *ashraf* class—land owning or services—and therefore suave and refined in manners. His counterpart in Jamia often came from a less privileged background and could, consequently, be coarse and rustic.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Edib, Halide, *Inside India*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1937, p. 1.

¹⁵ Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi’s Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, pp. 131-2.

¹⁶ Hasan, Mushirul & Rakhshanda Jalil, *Partners in Freedom: Jamia Millia Islamia*, Niyogi Books, Delhi, 2006, p. 67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Jinnah and the Muslim League, naturally, hated Jamia. Its establishment was described as a ploy to Hinduize the Muslim youth and elite. They argued that,

the object of the Jamia Millia is to make Muslims as much Hindus in outlook and in every other respect as possible...For example, [the young children] are taught the slogan 'The Muslim League is dead, the Congress is good.' With grown up Muslim boys, more subtle methods are used. The aim is to make their inside Hindus and let their outside remain Muslim.²⁰

Jamia continued to be proud of its legacy which aimed at educating the youth on their own cultural heritage without rejecting what was true and useful in the culture of others.²¹

Ansari laboured hard to build the All India Nationalist Muslim Party in 1929 and till his death was zealously working to turn it into a mass based Muslim party. It was "his last and potentially most significant contribution to politics. Here was a heroic attempt to mobilise all Muslims, rich or poor, landlords or peasants, merchants or professionals, the *ulama* or the artisanate, on a common nationalist platform."²² According to Francis Robinson activities of Muslim personalities like Ansari and Azad during the Indian freedom struggle were testimony to the fact that in a region increasingly beset by communalism there were Muslims who worked for the highest secular ideals.²³ Azad Muslim Conference was, in fact, the continuation of the legacy of Dr. Ansari.

Shaukatullah Ansari

Shaukatullah Ansari, nephew of Dr. Ansari, was a true inheritor of latter's heritage. He became a leading nationalist Muslim leader in

²⁰ A Muslim League leader cited in Hasan, Mushirul & Rakhshanda Jalil, *Partners in Freedom: Jamia Millia Islamia*, Niyogi Books, Delhi, 2006, p.165.

²¹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 7, 1940.

²² Historian Ravinder Kumar in Foreword to Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, p. 13.

²³ Cited in Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, p. 16.

post-Ansari period. Shaukatullah not only became a leading figure in organising the movement against two-nation theory but also became a prominent ideologue of the movement for composite nationalism. In one of his important writings, titled *Pakistan: The Problem of India*,²⁴ he discussed in-depth the issue of Pakistan in a simple and popular style. He dealt with the historical development of the theory of two-nation, one chapter presenting case for Pakistan and another one presenting case against Pakistan. It was a handbook on Pakistan and must read for all those who wanted to be familiar with the meaningful debate on the issue. It contained all arguments which a staunch supporter of Pakistan could produce and also all possible arguments against Pakistan were available in this book. The book contained 26 arguments against Pakistan which became instant hit with all those who opposed Muslim League and its demand for Partition of India.

According to the book the Pakistan demand was not put forward "by the majority of Muslims and the All India Muslim League is not the only authoritative and representative political organisation of the Muslims of India...League is weakest where Muslims are in a majority and where Pakistan is to be established."²⁵ Moreover, Pakistan demand was not the demand of the Muslim masses. The League was raising this demand in the interests of landlords and the middle classes who would have better chances "for exploitation and aggrandisement in a Muslim State."²⁶ The book also argued that the Pakistan scheme would not solve the communal problem but further aggravate it.²⁷ Shaukatullah pointed out that the economic interests of Muslims and Hindus were not different from each other. According to him,

Muslim capitalists support Pakistan in order to diminish competition of Hindu capitalists and to have freedom to exploit the [Muslim] masses. The economic improvement of Muslims is

²⁴ Ansari, Shaukatullah, *Pakistan: The Problem of India*, Minerva, Lahore, 1944. It also appeared in Urdu titled as *Pakistan* (published by Kapoor Publishers, Lahore, nd.)

²⁵ Ansari, Shaukatullah, *Pakistan: The Problem of India*, Minerva, Lahore, 1944, p. 116.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-7.

possible not by separation but by vigorous programme of a socialistic economy throughout India.²⁸

He argued that if Partition of India was allowed it would not be the end but initiate a process of further divisions in the region. History has proved him right. Shaukatullah was elected general secretary of All India Azad Muslim Conference in 1940.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988)

In the North Western Frontier Province also known as the Frontier, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* (Servants of God), led by the charismatic figure of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, were at the head of a patriotic and socially progressive movement. The movement was also nicknamed as 'The Red Shirts' due to the colour of uniform it used for its cadres. Their presence was first noticed at the Lahore Congress in 1929 and within two years of its creation the *Khudai Khidmatgar* party claimed a membership of 200,000. Quotation from the Qur'an against slavery served as a rallying point for nationalist enthusiasm and the struggle to liberate the country from foreign rule became the holy war of *Khudai Khidmatgars*. "No section of India," observed W. C. Smith in 1943, "has been more thoroughly nationalist"²⁹ than the *Khudai Khidmatgars*.

It always treated itself as part of Congress and justifying the linkage, Khan said,

People complain against me for having joined the Congress by selling my nation. The Congress is a national and not a Hindu body. It is a *jirgah* composed of Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, Parsis and Muslims. The Congress as a body is working against the British. The British nation is the enemy of the Congress and of the Pathans. I have therefore joined it and made common cause with the Congress to get rid of the British.³⁰

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²⁹ Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, pp. 208-9.

³⁰ Cited in Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, p. 208.

The Frontier under the leadership of Khan participated in all movements of Congress and made great sacrifices. The intensity of civil disobedience was reflected in the number of prosecutions and convictions.

Until September 1932, the figure was 5,557 in a total population of 25 lakh... Towards the end of 1932, out of 1500 civil disobedience prisoners in Peshawar, 5 were Hindus, 2 Sikhs, the rest being Muslims. The Haripur (Hazara district now in Pakistan) central jail housed 1938 Muslims and 24 Hindus. In the province as a whole over 90 percent of the civil disobedience prisoners were Muslims.³¹

Khudai Khidmatgars exhibited the spectacle of a surging and powerful and religiously motivated united struggle for freedom. It demanded better distribution of land and decried the large estates.³² Khan wanted to build a socialist society.³³ Moreover, Ghaffar Khan was a great secularist. "It was in Punjab jail that he formed friendship with Hindus and Sikhs and studied the holy scriptures, especially the Gita and the Granth Saheb, the Holy Books of the Hindus and the Sikhs respectively."³⁴ He stood for a united India. According to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan,

to many the story of the North has been a dual phenomenon—the complete individuality of the Pathan and yet his unity with the rest of India towards the attainment of a common goal. This finds adequate manifestation in the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement growing out of the very soil of the Frontier Province and slowly finding a place in the larger Freedom Movement of a big sub-continent. In this connection it is significant to note that while Pathans are intensely freedom-loving and resent any kind of subjugation, most of them are beginning to understand that their freedom can well harmonize with the conception of Indian Freedom, and that is why they have joined hands with the rest of their countrymen in a common struggle, instead of favouring the

³¹ Home Poll. File No. 3/7, 1934, NAI, cited in Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, p. 209.

³² Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Victor G. Ltd, London, 1946, pp. 222-3.

³³ Edib, Halide, *Inside India*, George Allen & Unwin, London. 1937, pp. 339-40.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

scheme of breaking up India into many States. They have come to realise that the division of India will result in all-around weakness in the modern world, where no part of it will have sufficient resources and strength to preserve its own freedom.³⁵

Khan vehemently protested against Congress when in June 1947 it agreed to the partition of the country.

The decision about Partition and referendum in the Frontier Province was taken by the High Command without consulting us...Sardar Patel and Rajgopalachari were in favour of Partition and holding referendum in our province. Sardar said I was worrying over nothing. Maulana Azad was sitting near me. Noticing my dejection he said to me, 'you should now join the Muslim League'. It pained me to find how little these companions of ours had understood what we had stood for and fought for all these years.³⁶

Abdul Ghaffar Khan told Gandhi in June 1947 after a CWC meeting, "We Pakhtuns stood by you and had undergone great sacrifices for attaining freedom. But you have now deserted us and thrown us to the wolves"³⁷

Abdullah Barelvi

Syed Abdullah Barelvi editor of the *The Bombay Chronicle*, a prominent English daily from Bombay worked tirelessly for Hindu-Muslim unity and organising Muslims against Pakistan in different parts of the country. He launched the Congress Muslim Party on July 8, 1929, to induce Muslims to join the Congress with the support of urban-based politicians, such as Yusuf Meharally (1903-50), editor of the English weekly *Vanguard*, Abbas Tyabji (1854-1936), a lawyer with long-standing association with the Congress movement, and M. C. Chagla (1900-82), also a lawyer who came to the forefront as a vociferous champion of the Nehru Report. Motilal Nehru sent the following message to the president

³⁵ Khan, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Words of Freedom: Ideas of a Nation*, Penguin, Delhi, 2010, pp. 19-20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

of Congress Muslim Party, Bombay Province, Syed Abdullah Brelvi: "I heartily welcome the formation of Congress Muslim Party and wish it great success...I have no hesitation in saying that success of Congress depends on the selfless service of patriotic Muslims."³⁸ This patriotic Muslim Party, in spite of stiff opposition from Shaukat Ali and his followers among the Urdu-speaking Muslims, established its hold in Bombay city. Barelvi, backed by several Muslim mercantile associations in Bombay, led a mile-long procession on June 2, 1930, and presided over a meeting of about 10,000, which called upon Muslims to join the civil disobedience movement.³⁹ This march became talk of the town and even the Viceroy took note of it. The Viceroy in a letter to Secretary of State wrote:

Conspicuous amongst organisers of procession and speakers at meeting were certain Maulanas and Muslim propagandists from other provinces. To this extent, the procession must be regarded as success of Congress propaganda and it must be admitted that during the last fortnight many Muhammadans have been gathered into the Congress fold.⁴⁰

It was reported that with this historic march "Mussalmans have returned to the old fold to take their place side by side with their Hindu, Sikh and Parsi brethren...and all talk of minority suspicions is merely a clumsy justification of Divide and Rule."⁴¹

The Bombay Chronicle under his editorship became the most prominent organ of Muslims against Partition. In order to prepare ideological ground against the politics of communalism and division he ran a lengthy series under the title 'How To Solve The Communal Problem' in which prominent persons of all parties, intellectuals and literary figures were asked to respond to the following questions. (1) What is your constructive suggestion for the immediate solution of the communal problem? (2) What do you think of the Partition proposal made by the Lahore session of

³⁸ *Awadh Akhbar*, Lucknow, July 25, 1929.

³⁹ Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, pp. 210-11.

⁴⁰ Cited in Hasan, Mushirul, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

⁴¹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, June 5, 1930.

the All-India Muslim League? Does the proposal, in your view, offer a solution of the communal problem?⁴²

This debate contained in the pages of *The Bombay Chronicle* is perhaps the largest collection of opinions on the issue of Partition. It is a treasure for researchers who are working on communal politics in India and the issue of two-nation theory and Partition.⁴³

Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind

Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind (Organisation of Indian Scholars), founded in 1919 by a group of leading Muslim scholars which included Maulana Mehmood Hasan Deobandi, Maulana Syed Hussain Ahmad Madani, Maulana Ahmad Saeed Dehlvi, Mufti Kifayatullah Dehlvi, Mufti Muhammad Naeem Ludhianvi, Maulana Ahmad Ali Lahori, Maulana Bashir Ahmad Bhatta, Maulana Syed Gul Badsha, Maulana Hifzur Rehman Seoharvi and Maulana Abdul Bari Firangi Mehli was the biggest Indian Muslim organisation which opposed the two-nation theory and scheme of Partition propagated by the Muslim League. It was a mass based organisation whose organisational structure was spread to almost all parts of the country. Though it was an organisation of Islamic scholars it had the capacity to mobilise large sections of Muslims on its calls. This opposition often led to street fight with Muslim Leaguers.⁴⁴

One of its founders and head of Darul-Uloom ('House of Knowledge' or Deoband seminary), Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani (1879-1957) was a great Islamic scholar, freedom fighter and supporter of composite Indian nationalism. The commitment to Indian nationalism of Hussain Ahmad Madani was the outcome

⁴² *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 24, 1940.

⁴³ *Madina* of Bijnore, a prominent Urdu bi-weekly, was a prominent paper committed against Muslim League and scheme of Pakistan. It ran a series of articles in 1938-39 on Muslim League, Pakistan and two-nation theory. In order to educate Muslims on these issues the same articles were reprinted by Madina Book Depot in 1939 in the form of a book titled, *Musalman Kiya Karen?* (What should Muslims do?). It is one of the finest collections carrying debate on the above mentioned issues.

⁴⁴ Khan, Yasmin, *The Great Partition: The Making of India & Pakistan*, Penguin, Delhi, 2007, p. 40.

of his interpretation of Islam as a religion of freedom and equality, of justice, of cooperation with, and respect for, all mankind.⁴⁵ He was interned with others at Malta for four years (1916-20) for conspiring against the British Empire.⁴⁶ He was a thorough and committed patriot who with his companions aggressively challenged the two-nation theory being propagated by Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and RSS both at the ideological and ground levels.

He was not only a great organizer and a sharp polemicist but also a prolific author who produced some of the finest literature in defence of composite nationalism and against the two-nation theory in Urdu, the lingua franca of North India. His most significant book *Muttahida Qaumiyat aur Islam* on the issue of composite nationalism published in 1938 seemed to be the work more of a political scientist than an Islamic scholar. It was the outcome of his bitter polemic with Sir Mohammad Iqbal who believed in the two-nation theory. Madani in a statement in 1937 had said that "in the current age, nations are based on homelands, not religion."⁴⁷ According to him despite being culturally, linguistically and religiously different, people professing different religions residing in the territorial boundaries of India were one nation. Any effort to divide them on the basis of caste, colour, creed, culture and religion were a ploy by the British rulers to perpetuate their hegemony.⁴⁸

Iqbal reacted very angrily to this idea of composite nationalism by penning three Persian verses mocking at Madani and making fun of his knowledge of Arabic language and Islam. It was a,

scandalous slander. It suggested quite simply that Maulana Madani,

⁴⁵ Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, p. 207.

⁴⁶ See his narrative of Malta jail, *Asir-i-Malta* (Prisoner of Malta), published in Urdu, 1923

⁴⁷ Madani, Hussain Ahmad (Translated by M. A. Hussain & Hasan Imam with Introduction by Barbara D. Metcalf), *Composite Nationalism & Islam*, (Originally written in Urdu as *Muttahida Qaumiyat aur Islam* in 1938) Manohar, Delhi, 2007, p. 37.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

a resident of the non-Arab world or *Ajam*, did not know Arabic—and this about someone who had had the highest training in the classical Arabic discipline, was Principal of the most respected seminary in India, and a scholar...who had long been resident in the Prophet's own Arab city of Medina...Worst of all, it implied that Maulana Madani...was far from the prophet.⁴⁹

The controversy revolved round the meaning of *qaum* (nation) and *millat* (community). In response to Iqbal hitting below the belt, Madani decided to author a book on the subject while lamenting the fact that despite outstanding qualities of Iqbal, "it is not surprising for a man to fall prey to the enchantment of British magicians."⁵⁰ He refused to accept Iqbal's thesis that "any counsel of composite nationalism to Indian Muslims is unethical and un-Islamic".⁵¹ He laid out in "uncompromising terms, the Islamic sanction for Muslims to work and live with non-Muslims in a shared polity, and, specifically, to embrace the secular democracy..."⁵² To counter Iqbal's argument that it was un-Islamic to interact with Hindus, Madani quoted extensively verses from the Qur'an where non-Muslims and Muslims had been addressed as one nation.

According to Madani composite nationalism was practised by Prophet Mohammad in Madina. The same is applicable in the Indian situations also, "the people of India as Indians, as a nation united (despite religious and cultural diversity) should become one solid nation and should wage war against the alien power that has usurped their natural rights."⁵³ For Madani composite nationalism was the greatest tool in the hands on Indians to fight against a barbaric regime and throw off the shackles of slavery.

⁴⁹ Barbara cited in Madani, Hussain Ahmad (Translated by M. A. Hussain & Hasan Imam with Introduction by Barbara D. Metcalf), *Composite Nationalism & Islam*, (Originally written in Urdu as *Muttahida Qaumiyat aur Islam* 1938) Manohar, Delhi, 2007, pp. 38-9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Referring to the ideas and activities of persons like Iqbal and Jinnah, Madani wrote:

Aversion to composite nationalism was instilled in the hearts and minds of Muslims. They were persistently told that this would destroy the spirit of their religion, culture, religious education, unity, etc...The *ulama* engaged in the service of mankind are labelled 'Possessed Bishops'. Interestingly, persons whose practical life did not manifest any religion and religiosity commented sarcastically on those who served Islam and whose life was a model of religiousness.⁵⁴

Mass literature of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind against scheme of Pakistan

The Jamiat took lead in ideologically challenging the scheme of Pakistan by producing mass literature in Urdu in order to educate common Muslims against its pitfalls.⁵⁵ This literature was written in a polemical style and countered arguments, both religious and political, put forward by Muslim League in favour of having a separate homeland for Muslims. The scheme of Pakistan was opposed for religious as well as practical reasons. This literature challenged two-nation theory of Muslim League by putting forward the concept of a composite nation.

If Jinnah while outlining the scheme for a separate homeland described the differences between Hindus and Muslims in the following words:

The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literature[s]. They neither intermarry nor interdine together, and indeed they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects on life, and of life, are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Mussalmans derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, their

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁵⁵ Some of the important publications many of which were penned by Husain Ahmad Madani, were: 2 *Fatwe*, *Muslim League kee 8 Muslim-kash Siyasee Ghaltiyan*, *Muslim League Kiya hae? Muslim League aur Congress kee Mukhtasar Haqeeqat aur unke Farwaid aur Nuqsaanaat Per*, *Muttahada Qaumiyaat aur Islam*, *Pakistan kee Cheestan aur Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind aur Jawaz-e-shirkat-e-Congress aur Izala-e-shakook yaani majmooa-e-Fatawi wa Irshadaat*.

heroes are different, and different episode[s]. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other, and likewise their victories and defeats overlap. 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.⁵⁶

The Jamiat literature countered by putting across the facts that,

Muslims co-exist with Hindus since they settled in India. Till Muslims stay in India they have to live together with Hindus. They co-exist in markets, houses, railways, tramways, buses and lorries, in steamers and at stations. They are found together in colleges, post offices, police stations, in courts and councils, assemblies and hotels. Is there a place in India where they do not meet? If you are a landlord, is not it a fact that your cultivators are Hindus or vice versa? If you are a trader, isn't it a fact that your customers are Hindus or vice versa? If you are a lawyer, are your clients not Hindus?⁵⁷

The Jamiat literature also exposed Muslim League for hypocrisy towards Muslims of provinces where they were in a minority and numbered more than three crore. Muslim League had mobilised Muslims of these provinces very aggressively for Pakistan but now restricted their demand to Muslim majority provinces. Three crore Muslims were left in a lurch and their rights and security threatened. The Muslim League argument was that these Muslims should make a sacrifice for six crores of Muslims of majority provinces. While rubbing salt into their wounds Jinnah offered minority Muslims to migrate to Pakistan. It was asked, "If Pakistan had nothing to do with Muslims of minority provinces then why in last so many years the plight and persecution of Muslims of these areas were made a big issue?"⁵⁸ There was much weight in this argument as the most vociferous support to the idea of Pakistan was organised in the United Province and Bihar where Muslims were in a minority.

⁵⁶ *Jinnah's presidential address 1940.*

⁵⁷ *Muslim League Kiya hae? Muslim League aur Congress kee Mukhtasar Haqeeqat aur unke Farwaid aur Nuqsanaat Per*, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁸ *Pakistan kee Cheestan aur Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind*, p. 8.

It questioned the credentials of Muslim League for fighting for freedom of India. The Muslim League talked of getting free from Hindu dominance but kept silent about freeing India from the clutches of foreign rule. By raising the bogey of Hindu hegemony Muslim League was simply weakening the struggle against British imperialism. "The slogans of Muslim India and Hindu India are being raised to divided people of India so that the British rule continues."⁵⁹ Since Muslim Leaguers called patriotic Muslims stooges of Hindus and even brought out *fatwas* that any association with Hindus was against the *Shariah*, Jamiat literature countered by presenting incidents from the life and times of Prophet Muhammad where agreements with non-Muslims were entered into and wars were waged in association with them.⁶⁰

Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani penned a popular pamphlet describing eight crucial anti-Muslim political mistakes which, in fact, were anti-India also.⁶¹ These mistakes showed how the Muslim League leadership, including Jinnah, betrayed the cause if Indian Muslims while negotiating with British rulers in the course of Round Table Conferences.

He also wrote "An Open Letter to Muslim League" in 1946 asking questions regarding its subservience to British colonial interests, dividing Indians on communal basis and betrayal of Muslim interests.⁶² Muslim League always avoided direct debate with the Jamiat. In 1947 when Hifzur Rehman, Central Secretary of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind invited the former to a round table conference of representatives of various Muslim organisations in the country to discuss the future of the Muslims of India, Jinnah out-rightly rejected the proposal.⁶³

It was in May 1930 that the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind came around to accepting Gandhi's leadership in the Civil Disobedience Movement and remained part of the Congress-led freedom movement. A Jamiat conference in Amroha (1930) called upon

⁵⁹ *Pakistan kee Cheestan aur Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind*, p. 11.

⁶⁰ See 2 *Fatwe*.

⁶¹ *Muslim League kee 8 Muslim-kash Siyasee Ghaltiyan*.

⁶² Madani, Hussain Ahmad, *An Open letter to Muslim League*, Dewans Publications, Lahore, 1946.

⁶³ *The Bombay Chronicle*, May 6, 1947.

Muslims to join Congress and appointed a committee to prepare a programme of action for attaining freedom. By mid-June, the Jamiat enrolled 15,000 volunteers and over 100 of its leading members languished in jail. In Delhi, Jamiat volunteers secured pledges from Muslims that they would discard the use of foreign cloth. Kifayatullah, president, and Ahmad Saeed, secretary and director of the 'War Council' were arrested on October 11, 1930 and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. In the mid-1930s, Madani defended joint and individual Muslim participation in the freedom struggle by advancing a theory of territorial nationhood. In the opinion of the Jamiat the best interests of Indians in general and the Muslims in particular could be served by securing independence from the British rule. The freedom of India implied the freedom of Muslims, their religion, culture and civilisation.⁶⁴

The Jamiat vehemently criticised the Partition Plan presented by Mountbatten on June 3, 1947. In a statement it said, "Imperialism does not depart without a parting kick" and Partition amounted to the same.⁶⁵ When Congress agreed to the Partition scheme paving the way for establishment of Pakistan, it was Jamiat which refused to fall in line. All India Congress Committee (AICC) held a special meeting to consider it at Delhi. Govind Vallabh Pant presented a resolution in support of Partition seconded by Azad. The most vocal dissenting voice was of patriotic Muslim Hifzur Rahman Seoharvi, who was also known as Mujahid-e-Millat (warrior of the community) and a prominent leader of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind. In a hard hitting short speech he begged to differ with Congress leadership and told them:

With all respect to our leaders I would like to state that the result of the Partition of India will be far more dangerous than the complications and pressure of situations which are being presented to support Partition of India. If today the scheme of Partition of India is accepted at the Congress platform, it would mean that we are rubbing off with our own hands, whole of our history and our beliefs and pronouncements. We are surrendering to two-nation

⁶⁴ Working Committee meeting of the Jamiat at Delhi, *The Bombay Chronicle*, March 23, 1945.

⁶⁵ *The Bombay Chronicle*, June 7, 1947.

theory.⁶⁶

In a face-to-face talk with the Cabinet Mission members Stafford Cripps and A. V. Alexander on April 16, 1946 Husain Ahmad Madani told them that the withdrawal of British power was essential. He also demanded joint electorate for the country.⁶⁷

The Jamiat organised huge public gatherings of Muslims in different parts of the country. One such programme in the form of a rally was held in Delhi coinciding with the convention of Muslim League legislators which was addressed by Jinnah and Firoz Khan Noon. The patriotic Muslims held the rally in Urdu Park under the leadership of Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani. It attracted more than 100,000 Muslims. It was addressed by Nehru and leaders of non-League parties like Ahrar, Jamiat Ulama-e-Hindi and the Muslim Majlis. This rally could be compared in size and representative character to the All-India Azad Muslim Conference held in Delhi in 1940 under the presidentship of Allah Bakhsh. Syed Atta Ullah Shah Bukhari the great mass orator, kept the audience spell-bound for more than six hours. His speech lasted from midnight to 6 a.m. Muslim Leaguers dared not create any trouble at the meeting. According to a press report,

Those who attended this meeting as well as the public meeting held earlier under the auspicious of the Muslim League say that the

⁶⁶ AICC Papers (1st part) G56/1947 NMML and Adrawi, Aseer, *Tebreek-e-Azadi aur Musalman*, Darul Maualefeen, Deoband, 2000 (6th edition), p. 348. Saifuddin Kitchlew, a prominent patriotic Muslim and president of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee reacting to the AICC decision said that he and others like him "who spent a whole life-time fighting for nationalism could not now see that very nationalism go to pieces.", *The Hindu*, Madras, June 16, 1947. Another patriotic Muslim leader Ansar Harvani who also happened to be the AICC member moved an amendment against acceptance of partition by the AICC on June 14, 1947. His amendment read: "The AICC reaffirms its faith in free and united India and consequently rejects in toto the latest British plan of June 3, 1947, as a treacherous design not only to vivisection India into Hindustan and Pakistan on the basis of communalism but into numerous independent princely states." Of course, he with 28 others could not stop Congress from accepting the Partition. AICC Papers (1st part) G56 (part 2)/1947 NMML

⁶⁷ Mansergh, Nicholas, (ed.), *Transfer of Power in India, 1942-47: The Cabinet Mission, March 23-June 29, 1946*, v. 7, (*Constitutional Relations Between Britain & India*), Her Majesty's Stationery Office Books, London, 1977, pp. 286-87.

attendance at the Nationalist meeting was about five times the attendance at the League meeting.⁶⁸

Momin Conference

The All India Momin Conference (first conference held at Calcutta in 1928) was one of the largest representative bodies of northern and eastern Indian Muslims in pre-Partition India. It mainly represented backward sections of Muslim artisans specially weavers. Momin conference represented the voice of the oppressed and the downtrodden amongst the Muslim masses. It was the organisation of artisans and craftsmen, people who were in the lower rung of Muslim society. They were at the receiving end from the British Empire as well as from the high Caste fellow Muslims. The East India Company in quest to sell its products from Manchester and Liverpool was determined to destroy the Indian cloth industry. As a result, the ones who were the backbone of this industry were feeling the wrath. It also challenged Casteism within Muslim society which was divided on Ashraf-Arzal (noble-labour class) caste lines. It protested against the oppression which was meted out to them by the so called upper-Caste Muslims. The speeches made in its sessions and resolutions passed constitute a highly vocal set of documents demanding annihilation of Caste among Muslims in India.⁶⁹ The Momin Conference tried to unify other Muslim labouring classes or lower Castes like *Rayeens* (vegetable growers and sellers), *Mansooris* (cotton carders), *Idrisis* (tailors) and *Quaraishis* (butchers).⁷⁰

Organisationally it covered whole of northern India, which can be known by the fact that its annual conferences were held in

⁶⁸ *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 18, 1946.

⁶⁹ Salim, Tanvir, "Forgotten saga of the Momin Conference," http://twocircles.net/2013jun05/forgotten_saga_momin_conference.html

⁷⁰ Ghosh, Papiya, *Muhajirs and the Nation: Bihar in the 40s*, Routledge, Delhi, 2010, p. xxviii.

places like Calcutta, Kanpur, Lahore, Ambala, Delhi, Gorakhpur and Gaya.⁷¹

It was one of the first major Muslim organisations to challenge the two-nation theory. The All India session of the Momin Conference in 1939 at Gorakhpur proved to be historic in this context. This session under the presidentship of Zaheeruddin turned into a political body and unequivocally decided to participate in the freedom struggle with Congress and oppose two-nation theory propounded by Sir Mohammad Iqbal and Choudhary Rahmat Ali. It declared:

It is undeniable fact that Momin Conference demands full independence. It wants freedom and supports political unity of Hindus and Muslims and their joint activity. Those who oppose unity on any pretext must be condemned.”

It also decided to establish a Momin Parliamentary Board to participate in the freedom movement. The future sessions of the Momin Conference were testimony to the fact that its opposition to the two-nation theory got steadier.⁷²

The 8th session of the Momin Conference in 1943 at Delhi was mainly focussed against two-nation theory. It was natural, as this was the period in which Muslim League had launched aggressive propaganda for Pakistan. Zaheeruddin as president also questioned Muslim League about its claim to represent Muslims of India. He told the huge gathering that Muslim League only represented the Casteist and feudal elements among Muslims and had nothing to do with the interests and rights of downtrodden Muslims of India. While referring to Pakistan he said:

We are against scheme for Pakistan. So far as our common sense tells us it is about a few geographical sectors which will be accorded right to self-determination. Nobody tells us why Muslims who do not reside in those areas should support Pakistan...Pakistan scheme is a mirage which is taking us towards destruction. It will lead us to death and mayhem and rapine. We

⁷¹ The Momin Conference had some 500 committees in districts and villages particularly in the U.P. and Bihar, where the bulk of the community was concentrated. *The Bombay Chronicle*, May 1, 1943.

⁷² Ansari, Ashfaq Hussain (ed.), *Momin Conference kee Dastavezi Tareekh*, Momin Media, Delhi, 2000, p. 317.

should not forget that a Muslim farmer in Punjab has more in common with a Hindu farmer than with a Muslim from outside...By demanding Pakistan Muslim Leaguers are only causing great harm to friendly relations and brotherhood which exists between Hindus and Muslims in rest of the country.⁷³

An important aspect of 1943 session was that women were present in thousands. It was attended by more than two thousand delegates and attendance exceeded 15,000. The first resolution passed reiterated the fact that Momin Conference was the only representative organisation of 4.5 crore Momins. Thus no other organisation had the right to represent them. With this fact in mind there could be no political or constitutional solution acceptable to Momins which was not concurred by Momin Conference. In another resolution it was demanded that in face of acute shortage of cotton yarn the hand weavers should be provided yarn at mill rate. The Conference also expressed anguish that despite boom in the weaving sector due to the war, most of the benefits were going to the capitalists. It called upon Momins to form self-help groups to get justice.⁷⁴ The Delhi session passed a resolution against Partition of the country and demanded immediate freedom for India. It read:

Having considered the Lahore resolution of the Muslim League demanding the Partition of India in all its aspects and bearings and keeping in view all the arguments and reasoning advanced in favour of the resolution as also the statements of Mr. Jinnah and other League leaders in this regard, the Momin Conference is of opinion that the Partition scheme of India is not only impracticable, unnecessary and unpatriotic but altogether un-Islamic and unnatural because the geographical position of the different provinces of India and the intermingled population of the Hindus and Muslims are against the proposal and because the two communities have been living together for centuries and they have many things in common between them. It is certain that they will live in complete peace and harmony after India is free. Patriotism and nationalism of the Indian Mussalmans will never tolerate the

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 346-7. By 1934 Momin Conference had more than 500 committees in Bihar and U.P. only. See Ghosh, Papiya, *Muhajirs and the Nation: Bihar in the 40s*, Routledge, Delhi, 2010.

⁷⁴ Madina, Bijnor, April 28, 1943.

vivisection of their dear Motherland into several hostile states...This Conference of the Momins, therefore, emphatically declares that the Momin community will not tolerate even the idea of Partition of India and if efforts are made to enforce the scheme the entire community will oppose it tooth and nail with all their strength.⁷⁵

The Momin Conference did not restrict itself to domestic issues. In a significant resolution it condemned apartheid regime of South Africa, which through its racist regime was denying basic human rights to vast African majority.⁷⁶ The president of Momin Conference in a post-conference press statement said that internal problems could not be solved as long as Indians were slaves. While referring to the attitude of Muslim League he stated that it was creating terrible hindrances in the path of national independence. It was a party which consisted of mostly people who were title awardees of the British, nabobs and landlords with no contacts with masses. They were not expected to work for independence as a free India would be against their interests. He supported the constitutional scheme in which all provinces enjoyed autonomous governments under one centre.

Zaheeruddin also made an important revelation that last November (1943) when Azad Muslim Board was meeting at the house of Mr. Shaukatullah Ansari,

Mr Rajgopalachari came there and asked the Board members to agree to Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. But the board members did not agree to the suggestion. They held that if there was a compromise between Hindus and Muslims they would welcome but they would not agree to any compromise of Congress with ML. This would be injustice with crores of Muslims who did not agree with ML. He said it was surprising when crores of Muslims consider scheme of Pakistan highly harmful for the nation, some Hindu friends were thinking of accepting it and working for its fulfillment.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *Searchlight*, April 23, 1940.

⁷⁶ Sajjad, Ahmed, *Banda-e-Momin kaa Haath yaa Tarikh All India Momin Conference Sawanb-e-Umri Ali Husain Aasim Bihari*, Markaz-e-Adab-o-Science, Ranchi, 2011, pp. 519-20.

⁷⁷ *Madina*, Bijnor, May 5, 1943.

Zaheeruddin pleaded for adult franchise. According to him if “adult franchise is accepted for elections in assembly most of the seats would go to Momins. The present status of representation in assembly was not the true reflection of Momins’ strength due to limited franchise”. He informed that last year Momin Conference had a membership of two lakh which was expected to go up to fifty lakh in future.⁷⁸

The British administration in league with the Muslim League tried to make this conference a failure. Momins were forced to change dates of the conference and were not allowed to hold a public rally. It was attempted, more than once, by the Muslim Leagues to set the huge pandal of the conference on fire.⁷⁹

Momin Gazette, organ of All India Momin Conference played a significant role in propagating against two-nation theory. It continued publishing articles against Muslim League. One such piece penned by Maulana Abu Umar Zakaria read:

League is a cradle of communalism where hatred and intolerance take birth. League is a slaughter house where poor are slaughtered for selfish motives. League is a poetry recitation machine which will praise the mighty and rulers. It is a stage where high castes and capitalists discuss their nefarious interests. League is the spokesperson of the propertied and well-off sections which have united to keep India under bondage.⁸⁰

Muslim League passed the scheme for Pakistan on March 30, 1940 at Lahore. Momin Naujawan Conference was one of the first Muslim organisations which vocally opposed this scheme citing elaborate reasons and arguments in its Patna session (April 19-22, 1940).⁸¹

In the inaugural session itself, presided over by Moinuddin, the Momin Youth Conference unequivocally declared that the Momins would suffer greater disabilities if such a scheme came

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Sajjad, Ahmed, *Banda-e-Momin kaa Haath yaa Tarikh All India Momin Conference Sawanb-e-Umri Ali Husain Aasim Bihari*, Markaz-e-Adab-o-Science, Ranchi, 2011, p. 521.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 497.

into being and, therefore, they should declare, with one voice, that their community was definitely opposed to the two-nation theory. It underlined the shocking reality that in the Muslim majority provinces, the Momins and other working-class Muslims were placed in the category of low-class and exploited by the so-called high Caste-high-class Muslims. It meant that creation of Pakistan with Muslim League as ruling party which represented only the interests of *Ashrafs* or high Castes among Muslims would only aggravate the situation. It condemned the pro-Muslim league elements who tried to disrupt the Conference.

At the end of the Conference a resolution was adopted which said, "proposal for the division of India mooted by the Muslim League is highly injurious and impracticable." The Conference, by another resolution, decided to form a permanent youth organisation of the Momin community to be known as the all India Momin Naujawan Conference.⁸² One important aspect of the deliberations of this youth conference was that younger leadership of Momins severely criticised the Pakistan scheme and characterised it as un-Islamic, un-natural, un-patriotic and absolutely impracticable. As the provinces were geographically situated, the various communities inhabiting the country were much intermingled and the social and the cultural life of all was common and hence it was madness to talk of vivisectioning India.⁸³

Momins came out strongly against the two-nation theory in the first session of Bihar Provincial Momin Conference in the third week of April 1940, also presided over by noted Momin leader Abdul Qaiyum Ansari. Ansari pointed out that the whole scheme of Partition was absurd, impracticable and against the true conception of Islam. He said those who wanted to cut up the country into parts were traitors. He countered the Muslim League claim that all Muslims culturally were same. He asked what Indian Muslims had in common culturally with the Muslims of Arabia or Turkey. Likewise, Bengali Muslims had no cultural similarities with the Muslims of North-West Frontier. On the contrary, Muslims of Bengal had common culture with Hindus of Bengal. He emphasised the fact that racially they were much the same.

⁸² *National Herald*, April 23, 1940.

⁸³ *The Searchlight*, April 23, 1940.

They spoke the same language, they dressed alike, they lived alike and they partook of much the same food.

The Momin Bihar Provincial Conference also raised the issue of Muslim holy places which would be left in India if Pakistan materialised. On the economic front if the Pakistan scheme came to be realised the Muslim States would have to depend upon India (which, according to Muslim League, was Hindu India) as most of the materials for the key industries such as iron coal, mica, etc., would fall in the territory of India. The resources of the Pakistan States would be so limited that they would not be able to meet the expenditure for defence and railways, etc. The conference stressed that the Pakistan scheme was injurious to the cause of Muslims and Islam. It was simply designed to serve the purpose of those capitalist Muslims who wanted to dominate the Muslim masses and who could thrive only on Hindu-Muslim hatred and rank communalism.⁸⁴ At the end of the Conference a resolution against Partitioning of the country was passed which read:

the Partition scheme was not only impracticable and unpatriotic but altogether un-Islamic and unnatural, because the geographical position of the different provinces of India and the intermingled population of the Hindus and Muslims are against the proposal and because the two communities have been living together for centuries, and they have many things in common between them.⁸⁵

Momins were allergic to Muslim League for latter's social world-view also. The Muslim League represented and led by high Caste sections of Indian Muslims known as *Ashrafs* believed in Casteism. Momins were aware of the fact that once Muslim League came to power it would be the rule of Muslim high-caste oligarchy as they were continuously persecuted socially. The Bihar Provincial Momin Conference also discussed Caste persecution in detail. The speakers drew graphic picture of the oppressions that were perpetrated on the Momins by the high class Muslims. They were not allowed to lead decent life of a man; they were treated like cattle and were subjected to gross humiliation. It was highlighted that this persecution increased with the awakening that had come

⁸⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, April 26, 1940.

⁸⁵ *The Bombay Chronicle*, April, 23, 1940.

to the poor and down-trodden Muslims, the Momins. In order to cover up the Caste persecution the Muslim League had raised the bogey of Islam in danger. But Islam was never in danger it but was the League leadership that was in danger. The Conference condemned in strong words the incident at Tappa Deoraj in the Bettiah Sub-division of Bihar where the graveyards of Momins were desecrated and dirt and night soil was thrown on them. It was done to hurt the feelings of the Momins. When the Momins protested they were told by the high class Muslims that the action was defensible as the graves belonged to lower-class Muslims and could not receive the same treatment as those of the high-class Muslims. It also discussed the contents of the text books approved by the government which contained offensive expressions in regard to Momins and other backward Castes. It demanded that the Bihar textbook committee should not accept such textbooks which denigrate backward Castes.⁸⁶

It is to be noted that immediately after Muslim League's Lahore resolution for Pakistan Momins responded with a series of meeting denouncing it. A leading English daily from Patna commented:

Uncompromising opposition to the Pakistan stunt was the keynote of the proceedings of the various Momin conferences held here last week-end. The conferences were an undoubted success, judging from the number of delegates and of visitors as well as from the manner and the matter of the deliberations. From small beginnings the Momin movement has grown in volumes and momentum...⁸⁷

Momin Conference held the firm opinion that Muslim League as an organisation was based on faulty principles, its circle was limited and by nature it was coward so it was not possible for it to unite Muslims.⁸⁸ "The party [All-India Momin Conference] has been opposed to the League, to Mr. Jinnah, and to Pakistan. It has felt that the League would have little sympathy for backward

⁸⁶ *The Searchlight*, April 24, 1940.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1940.

⁸⁸ Sajjad, Ahmed, *Banda-e-Momin kaa Haath yaa Tarikh All India Momin Conference Sawanb-e-Umri Ali Husain Aasim Bihari*, Markaz-e-Adab-o-Science, Ranchi, 2011, p. 426.

sections of the Muslim 'community' ..."⁸⁹ The Working Committee of the All-India Momin Conference decide to jointly call All-India Independent Muslims' Conference at Delhi to consider the question of Pakistan.⁹⁰

Momin Conference vehemently denounced Congress when it agreed to the Partition of the country. It described the resolution in support of the Partition put before the Congress Working Committee as communal, anti-national and ruinous to the country. It declared that the CWC resolution had placed the patriotic Muslims in a very difficult and awkward position.⁹¹

Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Islam

Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Islam (assembly for freedom of Islam) commonly known as Ahrars was one of the prominent mass based Muslim organisations which stood for a united India and opposed two-nation theory propagated by the Muslim League fervently. It was organised in 1929 by a group of Punjabi Muslims who had seceded from Khilafat committees and drew support from the well-to-do peasantry and the lower middle classes of Muslims. Though its major support base was in Punjab, it had substantial support in northern and western India too.

They expressed something of the old Khilafat movement tradition; an ardent and explicit enthusiasm for freedom. Like the Khudai Khidmatgars, they steadily, fervently and inspiredly plunged into the civil disobedience movement [1930] and went to jail in large numbers.⁹²

Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi (1892-1956),⁹³ one of the founders and most prominent ideologue of the organisation, who

⁸⁹ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Victor G. Ltd, London, 1946, pp. 228-29.

⁹⁰ *The Hindustan Times*, April 28, 1940/ *Bombay Chronicle*, Bombay, 27 April, 1940.

⁹¹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 23, 1947.

⁹² Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, p. 211.

⁹³ He hailed from a family of Muslim scholars who played leading role in the 1857 Rebellion. Maulana Abdul Qadir, the great grandfather of Maulana

represented a group of Muslim scholars known as 'Ludhianvi Ulama', explained his vision of independent India, which was akin to that of Indian socialists, in the following words:

The solution to all problems of India is to organise peasants and workers and establishment of a government by poor instead of a capitalist government. Though I am a Congressman and have always worked under the banner of Congress but have no hesitation in saying that the result of all labour and sacrifices of the Congress can be nothing else but Indian government getting out of hands of the British and going into the hands of capitalists. It can be checked only when peasants and workers forcefully capture Congress and all capitalist elements are thrown out of Congress. That's how the complete independence resolution passed by Congress in Lahore can be accomplished.⁹⁴

Ahrars played a steady, fervent and inspired role in the united fight for India's freedom. It always stood for Hindu-Muslim unity.

They have been resolutely anti-British, and socially have been remarkably radical. They developed a large and important following throughout the Punjab and in neighbouring areas...For a time, too, it was well organised, and was the premier Muslim party in the north-west.⁹⁵

When the World War II broke out in September 1939, the Ahrars was the first organisation in India to declare it as a purely imperialistic struggle. The Ahrars with the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind suffered greatly from governmental repression because politically they often followed the same line as Congress.⁹⁶ Between September 1939 and May 1943 Ahrars put up significant resistance against World War II. Nearly eight thousands of its members were awarded 3-5 years of rigorous imprisonment and more than fifty of

Habeebur Rahman, was the cleric who delivered a fatwa against the British in 1857 and led a parallel rebel government for few days in Ludhiana.

⁹⁴ Presidential address to the Ahrar conference on July 11, 1931 cited in Ludhianvi, Azeezur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Ahrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, p. 155.

⁹⁵ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Victor G. Ltd, London, 1946, pp. 225-6.

⁹⁶ Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Penguin, Delhi, 2010, p. 433.

its leaders were put under house arrest for participating in anti-war activities.⁹⁷ Habeebur Rahman spent ten and half years of 64 years of his life in jail.⁹⁸ Despite general amnesty after Gandhi-Irwin Pact, he was the only prisoner who was not released and had to complete the term of the sentences.⁹⁹

Anti-colonialism was the essence of Ahrar's politics and the British rulers singled him out for this trait of his. For instance,

When complete independence resolution came for discussion at 1931 Congress Session, Gandhiji insisted that we should express our sympathies with the Viceroy and condemn those who threw bomb on him. It caused a serious debate with Gandhiji. I was the first person to second the point raised by Jawaharlal Nehru that to tag a paragraph of sympathy with the Viceroy with the complete independence resolution would symbolize our weakness and mental slavery.¹⁰⁰

He stood for close cooperation with those Muslim organisations which were against the concept of Pakistan. With this aim he became a member of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind and remained so till his death.¹⁰¹ Habeebur Rehman helped Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind to join Civil Disobedience Movement of Congress. While in Ludhiana jail he requested Ataullah Bukhari to attend Amroha session of Jamiat to help pass a resolution to join Civil Disobedience Movement, a proposal put before Jamiat by its young leader Maulana Hifzur Rahman. When this matter came before the session there were many opponents to the proposal but with the support of Shiekhul-Islam, Maulana Syed Hussain Ahmad Madani and a seven-hour long speech of Ataullah Bukhari in support, the resolution was passed. The session was attended by more than one thousand ulama and above 50,000 people.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Ludhianvi, Azeezur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Ahrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, p. 212.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

The Ahrars were firmly against Partition of India. He was a leading figure in organising Azad Muslim Conference in 1940 at Delhi which challenged the Muslim League's politics of vivisection of India. Moving the resolution condemning the Partition scheme, he said that since the nationalist movement became virile in India, the enemies of India's freedom had been trying to create divisions among the Hindus and Muslims. He wanted them to dispel from their minds the dreams of a Hindu Raj, Muslim Raj, or Sikh Raj. He declared that no sane Muslim could accept the Pakistan scheme which was positively dangerous to their interests. The speaker told the audience that the sponsors of the Pakistan scheme were the same old allies of British imperialism namely the Muslim League. After his speech, resolution against Partitioning of the country was passed unanimously.¹⁰³ He described the announcement of Partition of India as a time bomb which would cause terrible violence and retribution.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Habeebur Rehman's prophecy proved right.

The Ahrars questioned the claim of the Muslim League that the latter represented the Muslims of India. Whatever support it received was due to playing with sentiments of Muslims. Joining Muslim League and not joining Muslim League was made the basis of comparison between Islam and infidelity. Moreover, limited right to vote ensured success to it.¹⁰⁵ The Ahrars in their meeting with the Cabinet Mission demanded adult franchise as due to highly restrictive electoral system the Muslim League had been winning without mass Muslim support.¹⁰⁶

The Ahrars not only opposed division of India but also rejected Hindu Mahasabha's call for a unitary Akhand Bharat and some

¹⁰³ *The Hindustan Times*, April 30, 1940.

¹⁰⁴ Ludhianvi, Azeezur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Abrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ The working committee of All India Majlis-e-Ahrar resolution against Pakistan, March 28, 1946, in Ludhianvi, Azeezur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Abrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, pp. 283-85.

¹⁰⁶ Mansergh, Nicholas, (ed.), *Transfer of Power in India, 1942-47: The Cabinet Mission, March 23-June 29, 1946*, v. 7, (*Constitutional Relations Between Britain & India*), Her Majesty's Stationery Office Books, London, 1977, pp. 286-87.

politicians' call for Azad Punjab. It stood for a federal India where people of all religions would stay together enjoying equal rights.¹⁰⁷

Habeebur Rehman's commitment to a secular India remained steadfast even during the times of grave crisis when his and his family's life was threatened due to Partition. During the Partition carnage, since there was no safe place for Muslims to stay in the Indian Punjab, he had to leave for Lahore. He could have stayed there but came back to India to stay at Delhi.¹⁰⁸

Prominent Ahrar leader from Punjab, Afzal Haq in his book *Pakistan and Untouchability* which he penned in 1940 while under imprisonment at Rawalpindi jail under Defence of India Rules, gave a new dimension to Ahrar's opposition to the formation of Pakistan. He demanded that every country must have equal distribution of wealth and Untouchability should have no place. Coming down heavily on the capitalist and feudal Muslim League leadership he wrote: "Musalmans of high houses want a Pakistan where they may exploit and rule the lower classes of the Hindus and Musalmans."¹⁰⁹

According to Haq, Muslim League leadership consisted of idlers and parasites who, like Casteist Hindus, believed in Untouchability. Bringing in the issue of class he wrote:

Partition of India is, in fact, the cry of upper classes of all the three communities. It is not a communal demand as some people think but a stunt in order that the poor classes may not concentrate their thoughts and energies on all important questions of social and economic justice.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ *The Bombay Chronicle*, May 1, 1943.

¹⁰⁸ Mahashay Krishan, editor of Urdu daily *Pratap* (Lahore) cited in Ludhianvi, Azeedur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Ahrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, p. 35.

¹⁰⁹ Haq, Afzal, *Pakistan and Untouchability*, Maktab-e-Urdu, Lahore, 1941, p. 162.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

All-Parties Shia Conference

All-Parties Shia Conference also known as All-India Shia Political Conference was another important Muslim organisation which repudiated the claim of the Muslim League that the latter was the sole guardian of interests of Indian Muslims. Shia Conference mainly represented Shias of India, who were generally well-off so far as education, wealth and social status was concerned. It took principled stand against two-nation theory propagated by Muslim League. It entered into a united front against the scheme of Pakistan with Sunni organisations thus heralding an era of cooperation with leading Sunni organisations. In fact, most Shias had allegiance to Shia Political Conference.¹¹¹ Shia Conference was described as a "Constituent Assembly" of Shia Muslims of India and it was open to all shades of opinion among the Shias.¹¹²

Shia Conference was one of the conveners of Azad Muslim Conference at Delhi in 1940 which was held by patriotic Muslims to challenge the scheme of Pakistan propagated by the Muslim league. Mirza Zafar Hussain, General Secretary, All-India Shia Political Conference, in a communication to Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh, President of the All-India Independent Muslim Conference explained the reasons for joining the Conference:

I believe the Nationalist Muslims have a duty to perform at the present political crisis in the country. They should strive hard to bring about complete communal unity and banish all Hindu-Muslim difference which are in my opinion more imaginary than real.¹¹³

Shia Conference stood for Hindu-Muslim unity. In an interaction with the Cabinet Mission delegation Hossenibhai, president of the Shia Conference, said as a result of their long residence in India, the Muslims and Hindus shared so many things and lived together

¹¹¹ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Victor G. Ltd, London, 1946, p. 229.

¹¹² Hossenibhai Laljee, President of the Shia Conference cited in *The Bombay Chronicle*, October 20, 1945.

¹¹³ *The Hindustan Times*, May 3, 1940.

as one people.¹¹⁴ Shia Conference remained totally committed to a composite and united India. A resolution stating that the Shias would not support the Muslim League demand for Pakistan was adopted at the meeting of the Council of Action of the All Parties Shia Conference presided by Hossenibhai Laljee. The council feared that the establishment of Pakistan would surely result in the establishment of the *Hanafi Shariat* in the area, a *Shariat* which was fundamentally different from the *Shariat Jaffri* or *Imamia* Law, which was followed by Shias. The Lahore resolution of the Muslim League, wherein it was stated that provision would be made in the constitution for adequate and effective protection of the religious, cultural, economic and political rights of the minorities, did not make clear whether the Shia community would be recognised as a minority in the constitution. On the contrary, the attitude of the Muslim League high command refusing to recognise the Shias as a separate, important Muslim minority to be governed by its own Shariat, made the Shias skeptical of the demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan and the council thought that it was not possible for the Shias to support the Muslim league demand.¹¹⁵

Shia Conference entered into interesting correspondence with Jinnah. Syed Ali Zaheer, president of the Shia Political Conference, wrote a letter to Jinnah on July 25, 1944 demanding clarifications about the status of Shias in the scheme of Pakistan. It demanded following assurances:

- (1) That there will be no encroachment on their religious freedom and observances in the Pakistan, and no innovations which will hurt their religious susceptibilities will be inflicted.
- (2) That during elections there should be no propaganda directly against the religious beliefs or practices of a Shia and if there is any such propaganda then irrespective of the proof whether it has affected result of the election or not the election will be set aside at the instance of the Shia candidate. It may be necessary to give a guarantee that the election rules will be amended to give effect to this assurance.

¹¹⁴ Mansergh, Nicholas, (ed.), *Transfer of Power in India, 1942-47: The Cabinet Mission, March 23-June 29, 1946*, v. 7, (*Constitutional Relations Between Britain & India*), Her Majesty's Stationery Office Books, London, 1977, p. 286.

¹¹⁵ *The Bombay Chronicle*, December 28, 1944.

- (3) That the Shias should be guaranteed sufficient number of seats in the Ministries. Legislatures and all elected bodies as well as to all Judicial and Executive posts which should be definite proportion of the Muslims who are appointed to these places. The proportion must necessarily vary in different Provinces and will have to be fixed in consultation with the representatives of the Shias in these Provinces.

The letter concluded with the following words:

These are the most important points which have so far kept the Shia Political Conference and the majority of the Shias outside the Muslim League. I hope that as soon as a satisfactory understanding is arrived at on these questions there will probably be no difficulty left in two bodies working in harmony with each other.¹¹⁶

In response to Ali Zaheer's letter, Jinnah replied on August 31, 1944. The answer refusing to give any assurance stated:

I regret I cannot discuss the points raised by you through and by means of correspondence...I am confident that the majority of Shias are with the Muslim League and such of them as are still outside the League under some sort of misapprehension are, in my opinion unwise in not joining the Muslim League without any reservation in the interest of the Shias as well as of Muslim India generally. The Muslim League stands for justice and fair play and will always stand for these fundamental principles, and there is no need for the Shias to think that they will not be justly treated by the All-India Muslim League I think it is a great disservice to the Muslim cause to create any kind of division between the Mussalmans of India, and I do not see any real cause or occasion for it. Our organisation is now in a position to meet [mete] out justice to every individual and recognise the merits wherever we have any voice or power to do so... The Muslim League cannot recognise any other political organisation. Besides, most of the points that you have raised are matters for the Mussalmans themselves to deal with internally and some of them are totally irrelevant and are raised under a misapprehension and not in accordance with facts.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ *The Bombay Chronicle*, October 16, 1944.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The Shia Conference had a lengthy discussion on Jinnah's reply and "unanimously adopted a resolution characterising Mr. Jinnah's reply to their President's letter as unsatisfactory."¹¹⁸ Syed Ali Zaheer condemning the Muslim League said:

One wonders how long will the Mussalmans take to realise the futility of the propaganda of hatred and animosity against the Congress and the Hindus generally which is the underlying plank of the entire appeal of the Muslim League High Command. After all the Muslims and Hindus have to live as neighbours throughout the country and must sooner or later evolve a philosophy of toleration and good will towards each other. Is it wise to continue to harp on this song of animosity and bitterness, and continue the present state of slavery and domination by a foreign nation?...The entire conception [of Pakistan] is not only absurd, but merely an attempt to deceive the common Mussalman, who is not fully aware of its implications...Mussalman can only be Azad if Hindustan is Azad.¹¹⁹

It is true that there were prominent Shia personalities with Muslim League but the issues raised by the Shia Conference about security of religious rights of Shias were critical. The Shia Conference had the foresight to demand assurances on these issues. The later happenings in Pakistan proved its fears true.

All India Muslim Majlis

Muslim Majlis (Assembly of Muslims) was established in June 1943 though some patriotic Muslims under this banner had participated in the Independent Muslims' Conference in 1940 at Delhi. The idea was to have an all India organisation, centralised and comprehensive, which beside working for Hindu-Muslim agreement would work to present a full-fledged case against Partitioning India.¹²⁰ A prominent leader from Bengal, Shaikh Mohammad Jan, while announcing the formation of the Majlis declared that it had been formed to educate Muslims about the

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, October 23, 1944.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, November 26, 1945.

¹²⁰ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Victor G. Ltd, London, 1946, p. 232.

game Jinnah was playing. Majlis was committed to work in co-operation with other parties to achieve independence for India politically and economically and “to oppose Partition of India as, it is not only impracticable and negative to India’s Independence but also against the interest of the Musalmans of India”¹²¹

Its manifesto declared that demand for Pakistan was a ‘political blunder’. Calling Jinnah reactionary and selfish it described him as one who has,

blocked the way to the goal of freedom and national unity. As long as such leaders are allowed to reign supreme there is no chance of any compromise among the two great communities in India, and there is no chance of attaining the freedom of the country. This reactionary leadership is a powerful weapon in the hands of the British Government to resist the aspiration of 400 million people in their struggle for freedom.¹²²

Its president, Abdul Majid Khwaja, played an important role in organising Muslims against the creation of Pakistan. The Majlis worked for building a strong, united front, especially with the Congress, against divisive politics of the Muslim League.¹²³ He became an ideologue of Muslims against Partition emphasising the fact that there was a large section of Muslims which did not believe in the scheme of Pakistan. According to him electoral victories of the Muslim League were fake as a minuscule section of Muslims was allowed to vote. Like other patriotic Muslims he stood for universal franchise.¹²⁴

Khwaja had earlier confronted Gandhi when he felt that Gandhi was compromising on core issues. When Gandhi agreed to compromise on separate electorates, Khwaja wrote a strongly-worded protest letter to Gandhi, which read:

¹²¹ *The Bombay Chronicle*, June 15, 1943.

¹²² *The Bombay Chronicle*, August 2, 1943.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, September 21, 1945.

¹²⁴ Mansergh, Nicholas, (ed.), *Transfer of Power in India, 1942-47: The Cabinet Mission, March 23-June 29, 1946*, v. 7, (*Constitutional Relations Between Britain & India*), Her Majesty’s Stationery Office Books, London, 1977, pp. 286-7.

It means that you are prepared to surrender the Congress Muslims who have fought the battles of the country side by side with you to those Mussalmans who have done nothing except for themselves, their seats, their posts, their salaries and their lunches and dinners at the Government Houses...So far they [Congress Muslims] have fought against the Government and against the self-seekers of their own community...If now they are thrown overboard by the Congress or by you, they must either clear out of the field altogether or must henceforth fight against the Congress.¹²⁵

Khawaja opposed both separate electorates and communal representation as he felt that the salvation of Muslims lay in the salvation of the motherland and the salvation of the motherland in its turn lay in the mutual trust and goodwill of the two great communities.¹²⁶

The Majlis was established to provide an active political platform to those Muslims who stood for united India and believed in Hindu-Muslim settlement. They supported direct talks between Congress and Muslim League to resolve the communal issue and were disappointed when Gandhi-Jinnah meeting in 1944 failed. The Majlis had some prominent leaders who played a significant role in leading Muslims who were against Partition.¹²⁷ It refused to fall in line with Congress when in June 1947 the latter agreed to Partition.

Krishak Praja Party Bengal

It was predominantly a Muslim secular organisation. It grew out of the peasantry's fight for agrarian rights in Bengal. Its goal was agrarian revolution through parliamentary and constitutional methods. This party did well at the polls in 1937 and routed Muslim League in Bengal. Its leader, Fazlul Haq, became Premier

¹²⁵ *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 21, 1931

¹²⁶ Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, Delhi, 2010, p. 224.

¹²⁷ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Victor G. Ltd, London, 1946, p. 233.

of a coalition in Bengal (though he ditched the party later).¹²⁸ The main plank of the Praja Party was the abolition of landlordism. It was not surprising that politically conscious and progressive sections among Bengal Muslims shunned Jinnah and his League and gathered around Krishak Praja Party.¹²⁹ It stood for unity of Hindu-Muslim small farmers and poor peasantry. It defeated a prominent Muslim communalist, and one with a title, too, Sir Nizamuddin of Dacca, in the elections.¹³⁰

It was one of the major participants in the Azad Muslim Conference of 1940 in Delhi. Abdullah Altafi of the Bengal Krishak Praja Party supporting the resolution against Partition of India and Muslim League's scheme of Pakistan declared that the Muslims of his province were totally opposed to the scheme of Partition which was detrimental to the political and economic interests of the Muslims. The speaker expressed the apprehension that division of the country instead of solving the communal problem would further aggravate it. He declared that according to his party whole of India was a holy or *Pak* land and the whole conception of Pakistan was 'unholy' and designed to perpetuate India's slavery.¹³¹

Ahl-e-Hadees

Ahl-e-Hadees [The people of Hadees], a reformist as well as conservative sect of Sunnis took active interest for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. It had an all India presence. It generally supported Congress programmes of agitation. *Ahl-e-Hadees*, the Urdu weekly of this sect published from Amritsar under the heading 'National movement's aim is independence', wrote that Congress was fighting for independence and both Hindus and Muslims should work for national independence jointly. It lamented the fact that Hindus and Muslims were fighting with each other on non-issues instigated by selfish elements in both the

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹²⁹ Kabir, Humayun, *Muslim Politics 1906-42*, Gupta, Rahman & Gupta, Calcutta, 1943, p. 10.

¹³⁰ Edib, Halide, *Inside India*, George Allen & Unwin, London. 1937, p. 342.

¹³¹ *The Hindustan Times*, April 30, 1940.

communities. If this state of affairs continued then there was “a likelihood that we all would become ineligible for freedom.” It further said:

Today the biggest question is whether the Hindu-Muslim issue will be resolved? We can say without any hesitation that once people of both the communities realise that infighting is not to their benefit as Shiekh Saadi said: *dau murgh jang kunand faida teergar* [two roosters fight to benefit the hunter], we hope soon both the communities will realise it and embrace each other and say jointly: *yeh sab kebne kee bataen haen hum unko chhaur bethe haen/jab aankhen chaar hoti haen mohabbat aabee jati hae* [it has not true that we have parted company/when we look into each-other's eyes love resurrects]¹³²

This group participated in the 1940 conference of the independent Muslims also.

Anjuman-e-Watan (Baluchistan)

Muslim League claimed to represent Indian Muslims but, ironically, its presence was minimal in the areas which it claimed for Pakistan. Baluchistan was one such province. The most popular organisation in Baluchistan was Anjuman-e-Watan [Association of the Nation] led by Khan Abdul Samad Khan who was also known as Ballauchi Gandhi. Anjuman stood for close coordination with patriotic Muslim organisations and the Congress. According to Ballauchi Gandhi, the Muslim League in Baluchistan—a predominantly Muslim province—was dominated by a few titled Muslims with no programme or policy and had no following among the Muslim masses. Elaborating it further, he said that the Muslim League “had to celebrate the Pakistan Day in their office and could not dare to face the public with Pakistan programme. The people had no regard for the Muslim League and its programme. Last time when Mr. Jinnah visited Quetta the only reception that he got in that province was from the British Resident or other officials and he stayed for about a week as the

¹³² *Ahl-e-Hadees*, Urdu weekly, Amritsar, November 6, 1925.

guest of a high official.¹³³ Anjuman-e-Watan was an active participant in all all-India patriotic activities. It sent 45 delegates to the Azad Muslim Conference in 1940. In a joint statement with Jamiat Ulama-e-Hindi, All-India Momin Conference, All-India Muslim Majlis, the Krishak Praja Party of Bengal, Nationalist Party of Baluchistan and Sind, the Khudai Khidmatgars and other patriotic Muslim organisations, it said that “the Muslim League is composed of reactionary elements and title holders, and that the Muslim Leaguer’s cry of Pakistan is misleading and meaningless. The League is anxious to translate into practice the British dream of keeping India in perpetual bondage.”¹³⁴ Thus the Anjuman opposed the Partition Plan vehemently.

Anti-Pakistan movement in South India and abroad

The activities of Muslims against Partition were not confined to northern India only. South Indian Anti-Separation Conference was organised at Kumbakonam (now in Tamil Nadu) in the first week of June 1941. It was inaugurated by Maulana Obeidullah Sindhi, a prominent leader of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind. Referring to Pakistan and similar schemes, Sindhi said,

if such schemes were considered realistically, it would be apparent at once how damaging they would be not only for Indian Muslims but for the whole Islamic world. The experiment of using the Ottoman Empire as a political lever had been tried.¹³⁵

Mohammed Yusuf Shareef, ex-minister of the Central Provinces, presiding over the Conference said,

the division of India into Muslim and Hindu states instead of pacifying and strengthening India will create an internal cauldron eternally on the boil, both with passionate recriminations and internecine wars and how long will the independence of such a country last? No, in the division of India there is no salvation either for the country as a whole or for any community. The more India thinks in terms of separate communities the more will

¹³³ *The Bombay Chronicle*, August 1, 1944.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, October 20, 1945.

¹³⁵ *The Bombay Chronicle*, June 10, 1941.

mutual suspicions be accentuated.”¹³⁶

This Conference also repudiated the claim of the Muslim League to represent the entire Muslim community saying that “a major section of the Muslim community has never been with All India Muslim League.”¹³⁷

Muslims in Britain did not lag behind in condemning the scheme of Pakistan and divisive politics of Muslim League. Syed Amir Shah, President of All Britain Jamiat-ul-Muslim addressing the annual convention of Indian Congressmen in Great Britain said:

I am going to tour all over Britain and I hope to meet 5,000 Muslims resident in this country to discuss Pakistan. I have already received letters from Muslims from Great Britain and India about their unalterable opposition to Pakistan. 99 per cent of the Muslims in Great Britain are opposed to Pakistan and support our move for unconditional alliance to the Indian National Congress. We shall inform Mr. Jinnah in no uncertain terms how hateful is the whole idea of Pakistan.¹³⁸

Birmingham in UK is the city with largest concentration of Indians. Muslims of this city passed a resolution denouncing the Pakistan scheme, the ‘reactionary policy’ of the Muslim League and Jinnah for ‘unpatriotic attitude’. The meeting was held under the auspices of the National Muslim Committee which claimed to have 5,000 adherents in Britain. The meeting was presided over by Chowdhary Akbar Khan and the resolution was proposed by Niamat Ali Noor who declared that the Muslim League “consisted mostly of people who wanted the British to remain in India. The League has never fought for Indian freedom. For the most part it has assisted British Imperialism.”¹³⁹

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, June 9, 1941.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, June 12, 1941.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, October 25, 1944.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, September 4, 1945.

CHAPTER 9

URDU POETRY OF PATRIOTIC MUSLIMS

The patriotic Muslims used Urdu poetry as a forceful tool to convey messages of Hindu-Muslim unity and their opposition to the scheme of Pakistan. This fact counters the allegation that Urdu created Pakistan. It was in fact an astonishing allegation. Urdu has been singled out for communal reasons. We should not blame languages for their uses by concerned persons. Urdu was the language of those patriotic Muslims who challenged the Muslim League. Some of the verses are reproduced here.

‘Pakistan chahne walon se’ (To those who want Pakistan) by Shamim Karhani

*Humko batlao tau kiya matlab hae Pakistan kaa
Jis jagah iss waqt Muslim haen, najis hae kiya who ja.*

[Tell me, what does Pakistan mean? Is this land, where we Muslims are, an unholy land?]

*Nesh-e-tohmat se tere, Chishti kaa seena chaak hae
jald batlla kiya zameen Ajmer kee na-paak hae.*

[Your slur has wounded Chishti’s breast; Quick, tell me, is Ajmer impure?]

*Kufr kee vaadi maen imaan kaa nageena kho gaya
Hai kiya khak-e-najis maen shah-e-meena kho gaya.*

[Can you say the precious jewel of Islam ‘Shah Meena’ is lost in the unholy valley of Infidelity?]

*Deen kaa Makhdoom jo Kaliyer kee abaadi maen hae
Aah! Uskaa aastana kiya najis vaadi mae hae.*

[Is the place of high dignity at Kaliyar where Makhdoom (master of deen-religion) is resting in an unholy valley?]

*Haen imamon ke jo roze Lucknow kee khaaq per
Ban gaye kiya tauba-tauba khiitta-e-napak per.*

[Whether the mausoleums and Shrines of Imams at Lucknow are built on impure land?]

*Baat yeh kaisee kabee tu ney kee dil ne aab kee
Kiya zameen tabir nabeen dargah-e-Noorullah kee.*

[A deep sigh came out over your statement. Can you say the Shrine of Noor-ul-lah (at Agra) is not clean?]

*Aah! Iss pakeezah Ganga ko najis kehta hae tu
jis key paanee se kiya Muslim shahidon ne wazoo.*

[Alas! You call the holy Ganga water impure, which was used by martyrs for ablution (wazoo).]

*Nam-e-Pakistan na le gar tujhko pas-e-deen hae
Yeh guzishta nasl-e-Muslim kee badi tauheen hae.*

[Don't take the name of Pakistan if you have the least respect for your faith because demanding Pakistan is immense disrespect to our Muslim predecessors.]

*Tukre-tukre ker nahin sakte watan ko ahl-e-dil
Kis tarah taraj dekhen gey chaman ko ahl-e-dil.*

[Those who have a sensible heart cannot split the country and how will they dare to see a ruined and plundered motherland?]

*Kiya yeh matlab hae ke hum mahroom-e-azadi rahen
Munqasim ho ker Arab kee tarah faryadi rahaen.*

[Do you want us to remain devoid of freedom and lament like the divided Arabs?]

*Tukre-tukre ho kay Muslim khasta-dil ho jayegaa
Nakhl-e-jamiat sarasar muzmahil ho jayegaa.*

[By division Muslims will be desprited and the tree of community will wilt.]¹

'Paigham-e-amal' (Message for action) by Saghar Nizami

*Uth ae mashbriq aur apne haqq-e-fitrat kee hifazat ker
Jo azaadi tera maqsoom hae uskee bimayat ker.*

[Arise! O people of the Orient and defend your natural right. Freedom is your destiny, support it.]

¹ "Pakistan chahne walon se" by Shamin Karhani in Akhtar, Jaan Nisar (ed.), *Hindustan Hamaraa 2*, Hindustani Book Trust, Mumbai, 1973, pp. 305-6.

*Faza per ghaur ker her cheez ko haasil hae azadi
Buland apni nazar, apni tabiyat, apni fitrat ker.*

[Take stock of the situation, everything needs freedom. Raise your vision, character and self.]

*Hila de zor-o-istabdaad kee sangeen buniyadaen
Ghulami ke buton ko gurz-e-burriyat se gharat ker.*

[Dismantle the foundation stone of tyranny and exploitation. Destroy gods of slavery with arms of freedom.]

*Agar bedaar bakhtee kee sanad leni hae duniya maen
Tasahul ko mitaa aur insidad-e-khwwab-e-ghaflat ker.*

[If you want to be recognised for your wakeful fortune by the world, don't be lazy and check carelessness.]

*Ghulami mustaqil la'nat hae aur taubeen-e-insaan hae
Ghulami se ribaa ho aur azadon mae shirkat ker.*

[Slavery is a curse forever and a dishonour for a human being. Get freedom from slavery and be counted among the free.]

*Tera mazhab bhee deta hae tujhe taleem-e-azadi
Agar dawa-e-mazhab hae to mazhab kee itaa-at ker.*

[Even your religion teaches you to be free. If you are a true believer then follow it.]

*Teri qurbanian zinhaar zaya jaa naheen sakteen
Magar peda dil-e-be-kaif maen kaif-e-shahadat ker.*

[Your sacrifices can never go waste. Create a taste for pleasure of martyrdom in your pleasureless heart.]

*Jo mustaqbil mae fikr-e-ehitimam-e-surkhroi hae
Tau apne khoon se rangeen beyaz-e-mulk-o-millat ker.*

[If you want to be recognised in future, shed your blood for the country and community.]

*Qadam haen chandd baqi hadd-e-manzil tak pahonchne maen
abhi kuch aur koshish ker abhi kuch aur himmat ker.*

[A few steps are left to reach the destination. You must try more, with more courage]

*Qareeb airwan-e-azadi hae kiyon mayoos hota hae
tabassum kamyabee kaa mujhe mahsoos hota hae.*

[The palace of freedom is nearby, why do you get disappointed? I can feel the smile of success.]²

‘Hindustani Musalmanon se appeal’ (Appeal to Indian Muslims) by Munawwar

*Janm jis arz-e-muqqaddas pe liya hae tu ne
Doodh jis maa kee mahabbat kaa piya hae tu ne.*

[The holy land in which you have taken birth. The mother whose milk of love you have drunk.]

*Jis kee aaghosh mae pall ker he charba tu parwan
Jis ke saaye mae Khuda ne tujhe bakhshi thee aamaan.*

[In whose lap you have grown up. Under whose patronage God bestowed safety on you.]

*Jis ke phal-phool se kee tu ne ziyafat apni
Jis ke khirman se barhaae hae jasamat apnee.*

[Whose fruits and flowers you have been relishing. Whose harvest has helped you grow physically.]

*Rooh se jiss kee tere jism mae jaan aayee hae
Noor se jiss ke teri aankh mae benayee hae.*

[Whose soul has passed life in your body, whose divine light has given sight to your eyes.]

*Uss kee tehqeer ko hargiz na gawara karna
Uss kee azmat mae tammul naa Khuda raa karna.*

[Never tolerate insult to her. For God’s sake never hesitate in glorifying her.]

*Uss kee izzat jo karegaa tau Khuda khush ho gaa
Aan per uskee maregaa tau Khuda khush hogaa.*

[If you respect her, God will be happy. If you die for her honour, God will be happy.]³

² “Paigham-e-amal” by Saghar Nizami in Akhtar, Jaan Nisar (ed.), *Hindustan Hamaraa* 2, Hindustani Book Trust, Mumbai, 1973, pp. 168-9.

³ *Awadh Akhbar*, Lucknow, December 15, 1929.

'Dawat-e-Amal' (Call For Action) by Zafar Ali Khan

Agar haq se hae tum ko kuch lagao

Tau batil ke aa-gay naa garden jhukao.

[If you have any connection with the Almighty don't bow your heads before worldly powers.]

Hukumat ko tum ne liya aazmaa

Ab apne muqqaddar ko bhee aazmaa.

[You have tested the (British) government, now try your fate.]

Ho tum jis ke zarre woh hae khak-e-Hind

Chhupe haen jo iss maen woh jauhar dikha-o

[You are born of the Indian soil; show the talent that can't go unnoticed.]

Falak per meh-o-mehar pad jayen maand

Zameen per iss anadaz se jagmaga-o.

[Shine on earth in such a way that in front of you brightness of the sun and moon would fade.]

Himala bhee gar aa-jaye gar raah maen

Tau thukera ke aa-gay se usko hatao.

[Kick the hurdles if they are as sturdy as Himalaya and move forward.]

Kare tum se Ganga bhee gar be-rukhi

Palat ker ulat dau tum uskaa bahaa-o.

[Even if the Ganga is indifferent to you, reverse its flow.]

Zamane mae roshan karo name-Hind

Her iqleem maen iss kaa sikka jama-o.

[Shine the name of India all over the globe; establish its authority in the entire world.]

Her ikk mulk kaa haath maen le-ke dil

Her ikk qaum maen apnee izzat karao.

[Be so noble that every country likes to have affinity with you and pay great respect.]

Paseena gire Hinduon kaa jabaan

wahan tum Musalmano kaa khoon bahao.

[If Hindus sweat for the country, Muslims should give their blood in sacrifice.]

*Zameen ho jab iss khood se lala-zaar
tau us per bisat-e-ukhoowat bichao.*

[Thus the Hindu-Muslim unity should be strengthened by such sacrifice of blood.]⁴

*Aaee hain aasman se chal ker who quwatan
Jo Muslim-o-Hunood ko sheer-o-shakar karen.*

[Heavenly forces have come down to unite Hindus and the Muslims as one.]⁵

⁴ "Dawat-amal" by Zafar Ali Khan in Akhtar, Jaan Nisar (ed.), *op/ cit.*, pp. 153-4.

⁵ Zafar Ali Khan's couplet cited in Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide*, Manohar, 2010, p. 113.

CHAPTER 10

WHY PATRIOTIC MUSLIMS FAILED

Despite patriotic Muslims organising a formidable resistance to the Muslim League's agenda, the fate of united India was ultimately sealed when the British rulers struck a deal with Congress and the Muslim League. In analysing why they failed we must consider three main factors. In the first instance, the Muslim League (sometimes with the complicity and active support of the British) was vicious with their enemies, and they saw Muslims against Partition as enemy number one. The Muslim League left no stone unturned in terrorising and suppressing the voice of patriotic Muslims. Secondly, Hindu nationalist forces (including those within Congress) left very little room for negotiation with those demanding reasonable rights and protections for minorities; they wanted a status quo in India with high-caste Hindus in charge. Lastly, Congress itself was complicit in the establishment of Pakistan in multiple ways; perhaps its biggest crime was in choosing to negotiate with the Muslim League as if they were the only representative voice of Indian Muslims.

Muslim League's Reign of Terror

The patriotic Muslims were committed to a united India and it was not an easy job in the face of an adversary like the Muslim League. The former opposed the two-nation theory with the belief that religion could not be the basis of a nation. Thus they were in direct confrontation with the might of the Muslim League which believed that Muslims were a separate nation and it was the prerogative of Muslim League and its leader Jinnah to represent Muslims alone. For Muslim League the two-nation theory and this prerogative were beyond negotiation. According to Farzana Shaikh,

those who challenged it were ruthlessly suppressed. They included Muslims who had thrown in their lot with Congress (so called 'nationalist Muslims') and strongly resisted Jinnah's idea of equating the civilisational unity of Muslims with Indian Muslim

nationhood. But they also included Muslim regional leaders, especially in the Punjab and Bengal who sought to chart a difficult course between Muslim separatism and the demands of their local constituencies, which included significant non-Muslim minorities.¹

The Muslim League created in 1931 a special quasi-military body, Muslim National Guards (MNG) in order to browbeat and terrorise the opponents. MNG was ostensibly created by the Muslim League to build a force committed to discipline, truthfulness and social service but it was used to instill fear among opponents and even kill and maim the opponents who in most of the cases were patriotic Muslims. The commander-in-chief of the force, Siddique Ali Khan claimed that it was 300,000 strong. However, the British intelligence agencies believed it had a membership of around 120,000 which was not a small number. Ostensibly, it was used for ceremonial purposes but it was increasingly involved in popularising the Pakistan scheme. It was used to suppress any opposition to Pakistan or Jinnah and even opened fire on opponents. It was alleged to have stockpiled weapons.²

Patriotic Muslims were special targets of attack for Muslim League. According to a contemporary document,

It is painful to describe how respected nationalist *ulama* (scholars) and leaders throughout the country were treated by the Muslim League. It was despicable, heartbreaking and inhuman. In villages, towns and cities meetings of nationalist were showered with stones and attacked regularly in the most criminal manner. MNG, the volunteer force of ML indulged in unspeakable violence against nationalist Muslims. It was difficult for nationalist Muslims to travel as they were attacked ferociously while undertaking journeys. All those opposing Muslim League were scared and if any dared to challenge them had to bear terrible consequences.³

¹ Shaikh, Farzana, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, Hurst & Co, London, 2009, pp. 39-40.

² Talbot, Ian, *Freedom Cry: The Popular Dimension in the Pakistan Movement and Pakistan Experience in North-West India*, OUP, Karachi, 1996, pp. 69-70.

³ Cited in Adarawi, Aseer, *Tehreek-e-Azadi aur Musalman*, Darul Maualefeen, Deoband, 2000 (6th edition), p. 341.

Muslim Leaguers used to become wild after seeing a patriotic Muslim and the latter were publicly humiliated and attacked. In 1945 only, they tried to kill Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani at Saidpur and attacked Maulana Azad at Aligarh. At Calcutta Maulana Abdul Razzaque was attacked with a dagger, Maulana Muhammad Qasim Shahjahanpuri and Maulana Ismail Sambhali were cornered in a mosque and an attempt was made to kill them. Maulana Hifzur Rehman was stoned and attacked at Lahore and Jullundur railway stations. Maulana Syed Muhammad Nasir lost one of his hands due to a dagger attack on him.⁴ Muslim League spread hatred under the garb of 'Islam is in danger'. In the name of Islam they disrobed respected scholars of Islam. Muslim Leaguer's plucked their beards and beat them up:⁵

Muslims with Congress whether Abul Kalam or Hussain Ahmad Madani were branded as stooges [of Congress] or anti-Islam. Assume that these allegations did not cut ice then the turn of dagger or club would come. To penalize a *murtad* [apostate] every penalty was allowed, there were no limits to punishment. It is no exaggeration but a fact witnessed by me many times at many places.⁶

The hitlist of the Muslim League was endless,

Hazrat Shiekhul-Islam Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani was attacked in most uncivilized manner in Bareilly and Bihar [by Muslim Leaguers], despite these attacks Congress High Command continued with talks with Muslim League.⁷

According to prominent Ahrar leader Habeebur Rahman,

When on the advice of Congress, Ahrar volunteers which included myself, also went to Kanpur to make successful the procession of Hafiz Ibrahim, the procession was showered with stones and lathi-

⁴ Adrawi, Aseer, *Tehreek-e-Azadi aur Musalman*, Darul Maualefeen, Deoband, 2000 (6th edition), pp. 339-40.

⁵ Ansari, Ashfaque Hussain (ed.), *Momin Conference kee Dastavezi Tareekh*, Momin Media, Delhi, 2000, p. 371.

⁶ Ludhianvi, Azeezur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Ahrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, p. 198.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

charged by Muslim Leagues. The situation so much worsened that Hafiz Ibrahim and I would have been killed. Those were Ahrar volunteers who saved us and took severe beatings and got hurt.⁸

According to Muslim League propaganda independent Muslim *ulama* belonging to Ahrar and Jamiat Ulama were paid agents of Congress and Hindus.⁹ Jinnah publically expressed hatred for Patriotic Muslims. When Jinnah and Azad both came to meet Wavell (May 5, 1946) for negotiations, "Jinnah began by refusing to shake hands with Azad, who was obviously annoyed."¹⁰ In his talks with Wavell (March 18, 1946) Jinnah declared Azad as a "puppet of Congress".¹¹ Jinnah while talking to Viceroy Wavell (June 18, 1946) described nationalist Muslim leader Zakir Hussain as a 'quisling' or collaborator of the Congress.¹² In a meeting with the Cabinet Mission delegation Jinnah while referring to nationalist Muslim organisations said that those were "only a few Quislings bought over by the Congress with lakhs of rupees."¹³ Jinnah in a statement dated June 27, 1946 said that patriotic Muslims were henchmen of Congress kept there for the purpose of window dressing.¹⁴

Jinnah refused to respond even to a communication from Azad which the latter had sent to Jinnah in his capacity as President of the Congress. Jinnah was highly intolerant when responding through a public statement he said:

Your telegram cannot reciprocate confidence. I refuse to discuss with you by correspondence or otherwise, as you have completely forfeited the confidence of Muslim India. Can't you realise that

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

¹⁰ Moon, Penderel (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, OUP, London, 1973, p. 257.

¹¹ Mansergh, Nicholas, (ed.), *Transfer of Power in India, 1942-47: The Cabinet Mission, March 23-June 29, 1946, v. 7, (Constitutional Relations Between Britain & India)*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office Books, London, 1977, p. 17.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 971.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 1061.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1072.

you are made a Muslim Show Boy by Congress President to give it a colour that is national and deceive foreign countries? You neither represent Mussalmans nor Hindus. If you have self-respect, resign at once. You have done your worst against the League so far. You know you have hopelessly failed. Give it up.¹⁵

Maulana Azad was a special target of attack by Muslim Leaguers. He was referred to as *kaneez* (slave) of Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha.¹⁶ The Muslim League press published derogatory poems against him as we will see in the following. Penned by Rais Amrohvi and titled as '*Maulana Abul Kalam Azad ke naam*' (To Maulan Abul Kalam Azad) it read:

*Aaj tu hae aastan-e-Wardha per sijdaarez
tere saghar mae hae Gandhi kee sharab tand-o-tez.*

[You bow at the house of Wardha (Gandhi Ashram) and you drink wine of Gandhi]

*Congress kee bazm mae hae naam ko Azaad tu
Aaeene ke samne hae tuti-e-ustad tu.*

[In Congress you are a fake Azad (independent), you are his master's voice]

*Aaj teri fikr-e-roshan zulmaton mae hae aseer
zang khuurda ho gaya hae tera wujdan-o-zameer.*

[Your thinking is prisoner of darkness, your intuition and conscience are rusted]

*Ban gaya hae tu mughanni Congress ke saaz kaa
Aah yeh anjaam tere khushnuma aaghaz kaa.*

[You sing to the tune of Congress. Alas, this sorry end to your nice beginning]

*Kar farma hae tere parde maen ghairon kaa dimaagh
teri peshani hae naqsb-e-bandagi se daagh-daagh.*

[You are led by the brain of others, your forehead is disfigured due to bowing down (before Congress)]

*Mehram-e-manzil nahin, begaana-e-manzil hae tu
Ram Raji walwalon kaa mazhar-e-kamil hae tu.*

¹⁵ *The Bombay Chronicle*, July 13, 1940.

¹⁶ ML leader cited in Urdu Daily *Awadh Akhbar*, Lucknow, July 24, 1931.

[You are off the path of destination, you symbolise those who stand for Ram Rajya]

*Tujh ko rakkha hae hamaari aazmaish ke liye
yaani ek jadoo kaa putla hae numaesht ke liye.*

[You are there to test us, you are a magic doll for exhibition]¹⁷

There were innumerable incidents of attacks on patriotic Muslims by the Muslim Leagues. According to a contemporary press report,

while Maulana Azad was addressing the crowd which had gathered round his compartment to greet him at Delhi railway station, some Muslim Leaguers tried to shout down the Congress President and raised counter slogans. They were warned by the Ahrar volunteers to stop shouting slogans. Later they again appeared in large numbers and challenged the Nationalist Muslims with a threatening attitude. A clash followed and the railway police restored order.¹⁸

The Muslim League was specially targeting major Muslim patriotic organisations like Momin Conference, Ahrars, and Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind in order to enthrone its cadres. Abdul Qaiyum Ansari, vice-president, All-India Momin Conference, perturbed by the continuous attacks on Momin gatherings came out with the following statement:

We Momins, though a very peaceful lot, do not follow the Gandhian principle of non-violence. We are believers too in the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for tooth and we cannot stand this nonsensical campaign of slander, abuse and violence carried on by Muslim League hooligans.¹⁹

Recalling various instances in which League was found obstructing Momin meetings, Ansari, while asking Muslim League to “hands off Momins”, said,

I warn that if League goondas would try in any way to interfere with and disturb Momin meetings, they would have to pay very

¹⁷ Cited in Urdu Daily *Awadh Akhbar*, Lucknow January 26, 1942.

¹⁸ *The Bombay Chronicle*, June 18, 1945.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, October 21, 1945.

dearly for it and bear the consequences of their mischief. Not only they, but their leaders too, would be held responsible for anything that might happen then or afterwards...The Leaguers should know that everything has its limit.²⁰

The volunteers preparing for Azad Muslim Conference at Delhi in 1940 were attacked. The Muslim League formed squads to beat up patriotic volunteers who were fulfilling different tasks connected with the Conference. Many of the volunteers were seriously injured in these attacks.²¹ When Assam provincial Jamiat-Ulama in observance of Hindustan Day was holding a meeting at Sylhet it was attacked by Muslim Leaguers. Some Jamiat leaders were injured by brickbats. Despite this attack a resolution disapproving of the Partition scheme was passed by the meeting.²² At Amritsar the Muslim League cadres did not allow an anti-Muslim League meeting at Sheikh Khair Din's mosque after Friday prayers.²³

Maulana Hifzur Rehman, General Secretary, All-India Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, reacting to violence unleashed by the Muslim League cadres on the patriotic Muslims said:

During the tours I have been reading details of the disgraceful and derogatory attitude of the responsible Muslim League leaders towards the President of the Jamiat Ulama Hazrat Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani. These highly provocative demonstrations are almost surpassing the limits of decency and toleration. In view of the extremely deep feelings growing among the Muslims, I, as Secretary of the Jamiat-Ulama with full sense of responsibility beg to warn Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League High Command that unless they take care to improve attitude under their influences and revert to Islamic ways of civil manners immediately they and they alone will be held responsible for the consequences.²⁴

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Hindi daily *Hindustan*, April 23, 1940

²² *The Times of India*, April 20, 1940. A meeting organized by Ahrars at Jhansi (now in Uttar Pradesh) against scheme of Pakistan was attacked by members of Muslim League. *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 26, 1940.

²³ *The Tribune*, April 21, 1940.

²⁴ *The Bombay Chronicle*, October 21, 1945.

He also asked the British Government to take appropriate measures against the "hooliganism indulged in by followers and supporters of Muslim League against the Nationalist Muslims."²⁵

The Muslim Leaguers also attempted to burn the central office of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind in late August 1946 at Delhi. Three young men were reported to have set upon the guard who was asleep, tied him, hand and foot, removed the cash and other articles of value and attempted to set fire to the office. It was reported that about a week ago an anonymous letter was received by Maulana Ahmad Sayeed, vice-president, All India Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, warning him and other Jamiat leaders that if they did not come into the Muslim League fold their life would be in danger and their office would be set fire to.²⁶

In Bengal, the car in which noted patriotic Muslim leader Syed Jalaluddin Hashemy, ex-Deputy Speaker of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, was proceeding on an election campaign was waylaid and badly damaged on Friday by persons shouting Muslim League slogans. Hashemy demanding protection sent the following telegram to the Governor of Bengal: "Muslim Leaguers damaged my car badly. Hooligans prevented me proceeding to address meeting. Immediate protection, freedom of speech and fair election prayed."²⁷ In Sind, Moula Bux, patriotic Muslim member of the Assembly and brother of the deceased Allah Bakhsh was attacked by League supporters while the latter was leaving the Assembly premises.²⁸

Bengal witnessed large number of attacks on patriotic Muslims. Prominent Muslim leaders from Bengal namely, Maulvi Shamsuddin Ahmad, former Minister of Bengal and Secretary of the Muslim Parliamentary Board, Bengal, Professor Humayun Kabir, Syed Badruddoza, M.L.A., former Mayor of Calcutta and Secretary of the Progressive Parliamentary Party, Bengal, Maulana Ahmad Ali, President, Muslim Majlis, Khan Bahadur Mohammad Jan, M.L.C., Secretary, Muslim Majlis, Maulana Manruzzaman M.L.A. and Maulana Abdul Razzaque, M.L.A. condemned the

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, August 27, 1946.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, December 11, 1945.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, March 30, 1946.

rising incidents of hooliganism of Muslim League cadres in Bengal.²⁹

During 1946-47 Muslim League became very aggressive against patriotic Muslims. It was not safe for them to travel by train as they were attacked while travelling. Once while Azad and Saifuddin Kitchlew were travelling together from Amritsar to Lahore, the Leaguers attacked them and Azad got hurt.³⁰

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan referring to incidents of violence unleashed by the Muslim League in the NWF Province wrote in July 1947:

The Muslim Leaguers are daily taking out processions, raising highly objectionable slogans. They call us *kafirs* (infidels) and resort to abusive language. I have been personally hooted...Another matter which is causing serious concern to us is the presence in our province of a large number of Punjabis who openly incite people to violence. Not only that, they have also gone to the length of suggesting in public meetings that the top leaders of the Red Shirts should be done away with. They also proclaim openly that after Pakistan has been established...all of them who are called traitors will be hanged.³¹

A murderous attack was made on Saifuddin Kitchlew on March 5, 1937 by Muslim Leaguers when he was visiting city of Multan (now in Pakistan). His host, a renowned businessman of the city, Kalyan Das was murdered. Kitchlew was seriously injured and his life was saved due to timely arrival of some sympathisers and army. The attackers wanted Kitchlew to sign a pledge in favour of Muslim League. Kitchlew was subsequently flown to Amritsar.³²

The Muslim League cadres did not hesitate even killing opponents. Momin Conference had its volunteer force known as Momin Scouts. One of its active members, Abdullah was killed by

²⁹ *Ibid.*, December 5, 1945.

³⁰ Kitchlew, Taufeeque, *Saifuddin Kitchlew: Jalianwala Bagh kaa Hero*, NBT, 1987, p. 99.

³¹ Khan, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Words of Freedom: Ideas of a Nation*, Penguin, Delhi, 2010, pp. 55-6.

³² *The Tribune*, March 14, 1947.

Muslim Leaguers at Kanpur during 1938 elections.³³ In Kashmir a river procession in honour of Maulana Azad, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was taken out by the National Conference with the permission of the District Magistrate. In a part of the city adherents of the Muslim Conference (Muslim League allies) started throwing stones on the procession in which several persons were seriously injured. One injured person belonging to the National Conference subsequently died in hospital.³⁴

Ataullah Khan, nephew of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's wife, his servant and friends were killed by Muslim Leaguers when the former raised objection to some of the utterances in a Muslim League meeting in a mosque at a village in NWF Province. One Kirman Khan, a prominent Leaguer, was arrested for firing.³⁵ The Muslim League supporters attacked a meeting of Khaksars, on the parade ground in Kanpur in which a Khakasars was killed.³⁶

Hindutva Politics of Polarisation

The aggressive anti-Muslim campaign by Hindu communal individuals and organisations created a scenario in which organisations like the Muslim League were the direct beneficiary at the cost of patriotic Muslims. The Hindu communalists opposed any attempt for political unity between Hindus and Muslims. Balakrishna Shivram Moonje (1872-1948), a prominent leader of Hindu Mahasabha as well as Congress, declared that instead of wasting time on Hindu-Muslim unity, the need of the hour was to organise Hindus and impart military training to them. He advocated the formation of Ram Senas throughout the country for the protection of the interests of the Hindus. According to him once the Hindus were organised the question of Hindu-Muslim

³³ Sajjad, Ahmed, *Banda-e-Momin kaa Haath yaa Tarikh All India Momin Conference (Sawanb-e-Umri Ali Husain Aasim Bihari)*, Markaz-e-Adab-o-Science, Ranchi, 2011, p. N.

³⁴ *The Bombay Chronicle*, August 3, 1945.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, June 11, 1946.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, October 21, 1945.

unity would become irrelevant.³⁷ By this he meant that Hindus by turning into a mighty force would be able to subjugate any minority.

Moonje went to the extent of declaring that "the Hindu nationalism is the only nationalism of India which stands for Hindu rule and Hindu kingdom. To achieve this, the Hindu Mahasabha rightly believes that violence is the effective weapon."³⁸ Thus for Moonje Hindus were the only people to claim right over India. V. D. Savarkar delivering the presidential address at Bhagalpur session of Hindu Mahasabha warned Muslims they must learn to live like a minority.³⁹ He also declared that Hindustan belonged to Hindus only as they form an overwhelming majority and Muslims "must remain satisfied with whatever reasonable safeguards other minorities in India are offered."⁴⁰

According to Savarkar only Hindus formed a nation in India since they hailed from the same Aryan race, belonged to a common civilisation and adored 'Hindustan' as their Fatherland and Holyland. Muslims and Christians remained out of this nationhood because they did not assimilate into Hindu cultural heritage or adopt Hindu religion. According to Savarkar's argument,

Christians and Mohamedan [*sic*] communities, who were but very recently Hindus and in majority of cases had been at least in their first generation most willing denizens of their new fold, claim though they might a common fatherland, and an almost pure Hindu blood and parentage with us cannot be recognised as Hindus; as since their adoption of the new cult they had ceased to own Hindu Sanskriti [culture] as a whole. They belong, or feel that they belong, to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and their hero-worship their fairs and their festivals, their ideals and their outlook on life, have now ceased to be common with ours.⁴¹

³⁷ *The Hindustan Times*, May 1, 1940.

³⁸ *The Bombay Chronicle*, December 26, 1940.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, December 25, 1941.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, December 30, 1942.

⁴¹ Savarkar, V. D., *Hindutva*, V. V. Kelkar, Nagpur, 1923, p. 88.

Moonje and Savarkar did not spare even patriotic Muslims and regarded them as part of communal Muslims. According to Moonje, Muslims masquerading as patriotic Muslims were basically Muslim communalists, who were trying to infiltrate the Congress in large numbers in order to exert pressure from within.⁴² Savarkar branded patriotic Muslims who had organised anti-Pakistan Azad Muslim Conference in 1940 “as mercenaries demanding their pound of flesh.”⁴³ Commenting on the Azad Muslim Conference, Savarkar stated he could not find any noticeable difference between the demands put forth by Jinnah on behalf of the Muslim League and those contained in the speeches and resolutions passed at the Nationalist Muslim Conference at Delhi.⁴⁴

Savarkar also concurred with the Muslim League on the issue of two-nation theory. While delivering presidential address at the 19th Hindu Mahasabha session at Ahmedabd in 1937, Savarkar unequivocally declared:

As it is, there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India, several infantile politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so. These were well meaning but unthinking friends taking their dreams for realities. That is why they are impatient of communal tangles and attribute them to communal organisations. But the solid fact is that the so-called communal questions are but a legacy handed down to us by centuries of cultural, religious and national antagonism between the Hindus and Muslims...Let us bravely face unpleasant facts as they are. India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Muslims, in India.⁴⁵

⁴² Moonje to Jayakar, July 31, 1926, Moonje Diaries, National Library, Kolkata.

⁴³ *The Hindustan Times*, May 3, 1940.

⁴⁴ *The Bombay Chronicle*, May 6, 1940.

⁴⁵ Savarkar cited in Savarkar, V. D., *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya: Hindu Rashtra Darshan*, vol. 6, Maharashtra Prantik Hindusabha, Poona, 1963, p. 296.

This kind of propaganda by Hindu communalists made the job of Muslim League easier. B. R. Ambedkar warned that this kind of rhetoric of Hindu communalists was “creating a most dangerous situation for safety and security of India.”⁴⁶ Ambedkar wrote that danger of breaking up of India was not far off as,

Mr. Savarkar will not allow the Muslim nation to be co-equal in authority with the Hindu nation. He wants the Hindu nation to be the dominant nation and the Muslim nation to be subservient one. Why Mr. Savarkar, after sowing the seed of enmity between Hindu nation and Muslim nation should want that they should live under one constitution and occupy one country, is difficult to explain.⁴⁷

Muslim intelligentsia sympathetic to Muslim League was naturally alarmed and conveyed the message to common Muslim that their religion and community was under attack. Congress and patriotic Muslims seemed to be no match to Hindutva propaganda as many of the attackers were Congress leaders. Islam was in danger became a popular slogan as we will see in the following verse of Zafar Ali Khan, which appeared in 1942.

*Sangathanion ke dil mae yehee ek khrwahish hae
keh Muslamaan kee iss desh mae basti na rabe.*
[The only wish Hindu Mahasabhites have is
Muslims should not exist in this country.]

*Rab-e-K'aba kaa jahan naam liya jaata ho
Kishwar-e-Hind mae essee koi basti naa rabe.*
[The place where God of Mecca is worshipped,
No such locality should exist in the land of India]⁴⁸

Savarkar claimed that Hindu was a synonym for an Indian while Moonje declared that a nation must have only one religion, one language and one culture. It naturally became a crucial issue for common Muslims. Their identity was under attack. As against this the Muslims had no alternative but to seek an escape from Hindu

⁴⁶ Ambedkar, B. R., *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1990 (reprint of 1946 edition), p. 144.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁴⁸ *Madina*, Bijnor, August 13, 1942.

domination—political, cultural, religious and social—by raising the cry of a separate nation. According to Rammanohar Lohia, the Hindutva organisations through their high-pitched anti-Muslim propaganda prepared ground for helping the Muslim League to gain popularity among the Muslims as saviour of the community. The Hindu communalist who shouted loudest for *Akhand* or united Bharat,

helped Britain and the Muslim League Partition the country... They did nothing whatever, to bring the Muslim close to the Hindu within a single nation. They did almost everything to estrange them from each other. Such estrangement is the root cause of Partition.⁴⁹

Both the Muslim League and the Hindutva camp instead of fighting the British rulers created a situation in which it was a fight between Islam and Hinduism. It was the period when the Hindutva camp produced two highly controversial books titled *Hindutva* (by V. D. Savarkar in 1923) and *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (by M. S. Golwalkar in 1939). These two books declared Muslims and Christians as “foreigners” who deserved no rights in the holy land of Hindus.⁵⁰

In such a scenario patriotic Muslims were relegated to secondary position. It became difficult for saner ideas to be attractive in the face of the polarizing, competitive politics of both Hindu and Muslim communalists.

Congress Vacillation and Betrayal

Congress’s attitude towards the politics of patriotic Muslims, who were often referred as Congress Muslims, went a long way in marginalising them. In the 1920s Congress worked hard to garner electoral support from Muslims. However, later,

they did not receive the strong ideological and political backing

⁴⁹ Lohia, Rammanohar, *Guilty Men of India’s Partition*, BR Publishing, Delhi, 2012, p. 2.

⁵⁰ See Islam, Shamsul’s *Savarkar: Myths and Facts*, Media House, Delhi, 2008 and *Golwalkar’s We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Pharos Media, Delhi, 2011.

from the Congress. They were merely used on occasions, given decorative positions in the Congress hierarchy and loudly proclaimed as selfless and devoted leaders. At the same time, their point of view was often disregarded with undeserved contempt...they were treated at best as bargaining counters; when not so, they could easily be stored in the deep freeze.⁵¹

Patriotic Muslim organisations like Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind and Majlis-e-Ahrar were often regarded as communal organisations by an influential section of the Congress leadership. Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani (1888–1982), secretary of Congress was invited to Lucknow session of Majlis-e-Ahrar in April 1937. He sent his regret saying that he was sick, but added that even if he was fine he would not have attended it as Ahrar was a communal organisation. According to him, it was not only Ahrar, but all patriotic Muslim organisations were communal. He held this opinion despite the fact that these very ‘communal’ organisations were always with Congress and helped it to grow among Muslims.⁵² Infact,

Hindu Congress leaders of Punjab treated Ahrars as great danger. Dr Gopichand Narang’s group, specially, attempted to stop entry of Ahrars in Congress. Therefore, when it came to choose delegates for Karachi session, Hindu Congressmen, which included top leaders, left no stone unturned to see that Ahrar leaders and members were not chosen as delegates...Ahrar leaders could participate as observers only.⁵³

Leading Muslim patriot and Ahrar leader Habeebur Rahman, perturbed by Congress leadership entering into dialogue with communal Muslims, commented that when it came to demand work and sacrifice, independent (patriotic) Muslims were needed. However, when it came to enter into dialogue and agreement the pro-British Muslims were chosen. The result was that those Muslims who were treated as representatives of Muslims by the

⁵¹ Hasan, Mushirul, *M. A. Ansari: Gandhi’s Infallible Guide*, Manohar, Delhi, 2010, pp. 223-4.

⁵² Ludhianvi, Azeezur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Ahrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, p. 186.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-7.

British, Congress too, by entering into dialogues with them made them representatives of Muslims.⁵⁴

There were instances when even leading Congress leaders were found practising Untouchability in relation to patriotic Muslims. M. A. Ansari, narrating one such incident to Habeebur Rahman, told that,

During Gandhi-Irwin talk all Congress members [of CWC] stayed at my bungalow [at Darya Ganj]. Non-vegetarian members used to eat with me at the same dining table whereas vegetarian members were staying in those rooms of the bungalow which faced Jamuna river. Food for them used to be cooked in my kitchen and served in their rooms. The vegetarian members of CWC used to collect this food in buckets and throw the same in Jamuna with the help of servants, and used to consume food which was sent by Chandiwala.⁵⁵

A well-known Ahrar leader from Punjab who was in jail with renowned Congress leader Madan Mohan Malviya narrated how Malviya followed a strict regime of Casteism. "I have been with Malviyaji in Delhi jail. He was kind and considerate but awfully tough a Brahman [*sic*]. What to speak of a Musalman he would not like to see even a shadow of a Hindu in his dining place."⁵⁶

According to Maulana Azad, Gandhi's approach to Jinnah after 1943 was a "great political blunder". It gave a new and added importance to Jinnah which he later exploited fully. According to Azad,

Jinnah had lost much of his political importance after he left the Congress in 1920s. It was largely due to Gandhiji's acts of commission and omission that Jinnah regained his importance in Indian political life. In fact, it is doubtful if Jinnah could have ever achieved supremacy but for Gandhiji's attitude. Large sections of Muslims were doubtful about Mr. Jinnah and his policy but when

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁵⁵ Cited in Ludhianvi, Azeedur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Ahrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961 pp. 140-1

⁵⁶ Haq, Afzal, *Pakistan and Untouchability*, Maktab-e-Urdu, Lahore, 1941, p. 126.

they found that Gandhiji was continually running after him and entreating him, many of them developed a new respect for Jinnah. They also thought that Jinnah was perhaps the best man for getting advantageous terms in the communal settlement.⁵⁷

In fact it was Gandhi who first gave currency to the title Qaid-i-Azam, or great leader, as applied to Jinnah. According to Azad,

Gandhiji had in his camp a foolish but well intentioned woman called Amtus Salam. She had seen in some Urdu papers a reference to Jinnah as Qaid-i-Azam. When Gandhiji was writing to Jinnah asking for an interview, she told him that the Urdu papers called Jinnah Qaid-i-Azam and he should use the same form of address. Without pausing to consider the implications of his action, Gandhiji addressed Jinnah as Qaid-i-Azam. This letter was soon after published in the press. When Indian Muslims saw that Gandhiji also addressed Jinnah as Qaid-i-Azam, they felt that he must really be so.⁵⁸

Patriotic Muslims believed that Gandhi was sympathetic to Jinnah and demand for Pakistan. Protesting against Gandhi, Habeebur Rahman wrote him a letter (August 14, 1945) which read:

Yesterday, I read your statement. You are again ready to give Pakistan to Jinnah. The fact is that since Jinnah is a Gujarati, you love him and cannot forget him. You want to see him victorious despite his being wrong. This kind of gentle behavior has strengthened the reactionary forces. Since Muslim League has passed Pakistan resolution you have been saying that if Muslims want it they could be given Pakistan.⁵⁹

The patriotic Muslims felt humiliated and their credibility among Muslims diminished when Congress decided to negotiate with their Muslim rivals on issues fundamental to patriotic Muslims. When Gandhi conveyed his willingness to compromise on the issue of separate electorates (patriotic Muslims stood for joint

⁵⁷ Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam, *India Wins Freedom*, Orient Blackswan, Delhi, 2012, pp. 96-7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁵⁹ Ludhianvi, Azeezur Rahman, *Raees-ul-Abrar Maulana Habeebur Rahman Ludhianvi aur Hindustan ki Jang-e-Azadi*, Talimi Samaji Markaz, Delhi, 1961, p. 263.

electorates and adult suffrage) A. M. Khwaja, a prominent nationalist Muslim leader indignantly wrote a letter to Gandhi on March 12, 1931 which read,

It means that you are prepared to surrender the Congress Muslims who have fought the battles of the country side by side with you to those Mussalmans who have done nothing except for themselves, their seats, their posts, their salaries and their lunches and dinners at the Government Houses. So far they (Congress Muslims) have fought against the Government and against the self-seekers of their own community...If they are overthrown overboard by the Congress or by you, they must either clear out of the field altogether or must henceforth fight against the Congress⁶⁰

Another great Muslim patriot Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (known as "Frontier Gandhi") told Gandhi in June 1947,

We Pakhtuns stood by you and had undergone great sacrifices for attaining freedom. But you have now deserted us and thrown us to the wolves...The decision about Partition and referendum in the Frontier Province was taken by the High Command [Congress] without consulting us...Sardar Patel and Rajgopalachari were in favour of Partition and holding referendum in our province. Sardar said I was worrying over nothing. Maulana Azad was sitting near me. Noticing my dejection he said to me, 'you should now join the Muslim League'. It pained me to find how little these companions of ours had understood what we had stood for and fought for all these years.⁶¹

With Congress suddenly agreeing to Partition, patriotic Muslims felt cheated. Saifuddin Kitchlew, a prominent patriotic Muslim and president of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, reacting to the Congress decision of accepting partition of India echoed the sentiment of almost all patriotic Muslims when he said that he and others like him "who spent a whole life-time fighting for

⁶⁰ Cited in Hasan, Mushirul, "Congress Muslims and Indian Nationalism: Dilemma and Decline 1928-1934," Occasional Papers on History and Society XXIII, NMM&L, Delhi, pp. 44-45.

⁶¹ Khan, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Words of Freedom: Ideas of a Nation*, Penguin, Delhi, 2010, pp. 41-42.

nationalism could not now see that very nationalism go to pieces."⁶²

The cause of the patriotic Muslims also suffered due to 'epidemic of death' to quote Humayun Kabir. The sudden death of Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr M. A. Ansari in 1928 and 1936 respectively and then murder of Allah Bakhsh in 1943 meant disappearing of the stalwarts in the thick of the struggle. The greatest loss was murder of Allah Bakhsh who was a charismatic leader who had all India appeal. With his death the Muslims against Partition lost the leader who was a cornerstone of the whole movement.⁶³

⁶² *The Hindu*, Madras, June 16, 1947.

⁶³ Humayun, Kabir, *Muslim Politics 1906-42*, Gupta, Rahman & Gupta, Calcutta, 1943, p. 9.

CONCLUSION

The fact that patriotic Muslims failed in their quest to ensure that India was not divided marks a turning point in the history of South Asia. Realistically speaking, they could not but have failed given that they were against all three of the dominant forces of the time—the British, the Congress and the Muslim League. Though we still do not know exactly what percentage of Muslims was opposed to Partition, they were nowhere near as organised or as well armed as these forces and they could not have won. It's worth reiterating that the nail in the coffin for patriotic Muslims was the decision of Congress to negotiate with the Muslim League as the only representative of Indian Muslims thus falling into the British trap. In doing so they wrote patriotic Muslims out of the story completely.

One could have anticipated the existence of Muslims who were anti-Muslim League would receive no attention in Pakistan. After all, Jinnah and the Muslim League founded that nation and are revered in the national mythology. What they stood for as believers in the two-nation theory—a homeland for Muslims—was diametrically opposed to what patriotic Muslims stood for—one homeland for everyone.

Yet even here in India, where notions of secularism and pluralism were preached from the early days of independence, the legacy of the patriotic Muslims is all but forgotten. Hardly any patriotic Muslims are part of the pantheon of freedom fighters as taught in the history books. Those who are mentioned were closely allied with the Congress party; it's as if the wide ideological range of patriotic Muslims that we have discussed here (from Communist Muslims to Wahabi Muslims) could all be subsumed by one category—a small branch of the Congress Party.

The historical revisionism has led to dangerous situations on both (now all three) sides of the border. In the case of Pakistan, the fact that all role models are communalists has led to a lack of diversity in public discourse. One cannot easily talk of the plight of minority communities (Dalits, Christians and even Ahmadis and Shia Muslims) without being accused of being anti-national.

This is so even at the best of times, and much worse now given the recent Talibanisation of the Pakistani discourse.

Bangladesh has gone a similar route, though perhaps less advanced on the Muslim communal road than Pakistan. The only saving grace is that theoretically Bangladesh remains committed to an all-inclusive nation. However, religious bigotry is playing havoc with the secular fabric. The secular organisations and individuals are being bombed and annihilated in a systematic manner. Within a span of few months secular intellectuals namely Ahmad Rajib Haider, Avijit Roy, Washiqur Rahman and Ananta Bijoy Das were hacked to death in full public view.

If the situation is sad in Pakistan and Bangladesh, it is much sadder in India. Despite our commitment to a democratic-secular state, two-nation theory continues to raise its ugly head. The RSS, whose child Bharatiya Janata Party is ruling the country, is engaged in a nationwide conversion campaign called “ghar wapsi”, or home coming, which aims at converting all non-Hindus, especially Muslims and Christians, to Hinduism; the only religion to be allowed to flourish in the country. All this while simultaneously seeking to pass laws that would reduce or eliminate one’s right to change one’s religion. (The irony of campaigning against conversion while simultaneously organising mass conversions seems to be lost on them.)

One would be tempted to dismiss this as foolishness, were the stakes not so high. Every decade since the 1980s has seen at least one communal pogrom against a minority community. In the case of Muslim minorities, a misunderstanding of history is part of the problem. Because some teach the notion that all Muslims sided with the Muslim League, others also teach that Muslims to this day remain threats to the state. The notion that all Muslims are actual or potential traitors has been allowed to fester by some governments and actively encouraged by others.

Aside from being wrong, this notion is overly simplistic. This vision of a secular and united India was shared by many people across all divisions of class, caste, and creed. And doubtless there were some from each category who opposed these and took the more narrow view that India belonged more to one community than to another; and there were even those who openly sided with

the British. But one does not (or, at least most of us, do not) accuse all Rajputs of being anti-India even though many Rajput leaders sided with the British during the national liberation struggle.

Why is it then acceptable in some circles to accuse (or assume) that all Indian Muslims were in league with those who fought for the creation of Pakistan? The answer to this is two-fold. In the first case, the story of patriotic Muslims such as Allah Bakhsh did not sit well with those who ruled the country after independence. It is much easier to tell a story that is oversimplification to the point of falsehood, that Jinnah and his Muslim League are to be blamed entirely for the creation of Pakistan. A story where the Congress Party tried its best to build a united front, but ultimately the forces of Hindutva were proven right by the treachery of Indian Muslims led by the Muslim League.

But the truth is a different story, one where Congress had the option to build a united front and chose instead to negotiate with communal forces, with the RSS (and its precursors) cheering the increasing polarisation between Hindus and Muslims that resulted (and that they helped bring about) in Partition. For this reason—because the truth is much less flattering to those in power—most people have no idea of the actual history.

Secondly, over the last twenty or thirty years we have seen a rise of Hindutva forces. They have an open agenda which largely remains unchanged from the time of Partition. They see India as a Hindu state and will go to any lengths to ensure that it remains (or becomes) so. They claim that this is patriotism, but for any Indian who remembers the freedom struggle, their vision is anti-Indian. When one travels to a city that they have “cleansed”, for example Ahmedabad in Gujarat, one finds Muslims of different classes, cultures and sects living together in a ghetto. Some of these ghettos are even called “mini-Pakistan”. The vision of Hindutva today is very much the same as that of the 1940’s Muslim League, not surprising given that former were the originators of the two-nation theory. Their treachery is no less foul for their being communal Hindus as opposed to communal Muslims.

Looking forward, one cannot help but feel a sense of doom. The Muslim Right has long been on the ascent in Pakistan and Bangladesh; one suspects that even their founders, Jinnah and

Sheikh Mujibur-Rehman, would be horrified with the sectarian brutality on display. And with the ongoing rise of the Hindutva politics led by RSS in India, one fears that communal elements have won out on all sides of partitioned India.

Our only hope is in remembering the stories of people like Allah Baksh and his companions and in hoping that our children (and their children) will continue to struggle for what they stood for—an India that respects all and excludes none. It is a vision that is perhaps further away today than ever. To realise it will take a deliberate effort to return to the discourse initiated by the patriotic Muslims for a democratic-secular and egalitarian society and state.

ANNEXURE

Resolutions passed by Azad Muslim Conference (Delhi), April 1940

Goal of Indian Muslims is Complete Independence

This Conference, representative of Indian Muslims who desire to secure the fullest freedom of the country, consisting of delegates and representatives of every province, after having given its fullest and most careful consideration to all the vital questions affecting the interests of the Muslim Community and the country as a whole declares the following:

India will have geographical and political boundaries of an indivisible whole and as such is the common homeland of all the citizens irrespective of race or religion who are joint owners of its resources. All nooks and corners of the country contain hearths and homes of Muslims who cherish the historic eminence of their religion and culture which are dearer to them than their lives. From the national point of view every Muslim is an Indian. The common rights of all residents of the country and their responsibilities in every walk of life and in every sphere of human activity are the same. The Indian Muslim by virtue of these rights and responsibilities is unquestionably an Indian national and in every part of the country is entitled to equal privileges with that of every Indian national in every sphere of governmental, economic and other national activities and in public services. For that very reason Muslims own equal responsibilities with other Indians for striving and making sacrifices to achieve the country's independence. This is a self-evident proposition the truth of which no right-thinking Mussalman will question.

This Conference declares unequivocally and with all the emphasis at its command that the goal of Indian Muslims is complete independence along with protection of their religion and communal rights, and that they are anxious to attain this goal as early as possible. Inspired by this aim they have in the past made great sacrifices and are ever ready to make greater sacrifices.

The Conference unreservedly and strongly repudiates the baseless charge levelled against Indian Muslims by the agents of

British imperialism and others that they are an obstacle in the path of Indian freedom, and emphatically declares that the Muslims are fully alive to their responsibilities and consider it inconsistent with their traditions and derogatory to their honour to lag behind others in the struggle for independence.¹

Muslims demand a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of Adult Franchise

It is the considered opinion of this Conference that the future constitution of India should be framed by a constituent assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage. In that constitution the safeguards for protecting the rights and interests of Muslims should be determined by the Muslim members of the constituent assembly. The representatives of other communities of any foreign power shall have no right to interfere in that decision.²

Safeguarding the Rights of Muslims

Whereas in the future constitution of India it would be essential in order to ensure stability of Government and preservation of security that every citizen and community should feel satisfied. This Conference considers it necessary that a scheme of safeguards as regards vital matters mentioned below should be prepared to the satisfaction of Muslims this conference appoints a Board consisting of 27 persons. This Board should after the fullest investigation, consultation and consideration make its recommendation for submission to the next session of this conference so that the conference may utilize this recommendation as a means of securing a permanent national settlement to the communal question. This recommendation should be submitted within two months. The matters referred to the Board are the following:

- (1) Protection of Muslim culture, personal law and religious rights;
- (2) Political rights of Muslims and their protection;
- (3) the formation of future constitution to be non-unitary and federal with absolutely essential and unavoidable powers for the Federal Government; and
- (4) provision of safeguards will include economic, social and cultural rights of Muslims and their share in the public services.

¹ *The Statesman*, April 29, 1940.

² *Ibid.*, May 1, 1940.

The Board will be empowered to fill up any vacancy in a suitable manner. The Board will have the right to co-opt other members. It will be empowered also to consult other Muslim bodies and, if it considers necessary any responsible organisation in the country. The 27 members of the Board will be nominated by the president. The quorum for the meeting of the Board will be nine.

Since the safeguards of the communal rights of different communities will be determined in the constituent assembly referred to in the resolution, which this conference has passed, this conference considers it necessary to declare that Muslim members of this constituent assembly will be elected by Muslims themselves.”³

On Handloom Weaving Industry

This Conference notes with regret the depressed state of handloom weaving industry and in order to encourage and stimulate this industry appeals to all Indians generally, and Muslims particularly, that they should only use cloth that is hand-woven.⁴

Opposing Muslim League Partition Scheme

This Conference considers any scheme which divides India into two—a Hindu India and a Muslim India—as impracticable and harmful to the country's interest generally and those of Muslims in particular. This Conference is convinced that the inevitable result of such a scheme will be that obstacles will be created in the path of Indian freedom and British Imperialism will exploit it for its own purposes.⁵

Resolution on World War

This Conference is strongly of the opinion that the present European war is the outcome of the imperialist tendencies of the European nations. Moreover the treatment of subject nations by the British and French democracies themselves since this war has made it absolutely clear to India that even these democratic countries, in spite of their declaration to the contrary, have clearly shown up their imperialist nature by their refusal to recognise the

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, May 1, 1940.

⁵ *Ibid.*, April 30, 1940.

right to independence and self-determination by India. A war of this nature is evidently contrary to the legitimate interests of the down-trodden poor masses of people.

This Conference is of opinion that in this war the European Imperialist powers are making special effort to use the people in Islamic countries as tools to gain their own ends, as is evident from the activities of these Powers in Egypt, Morocco, Palestine and Syria.

In these circumstances this Conference is clearly of opinion that Muslims in India should remain neutral in this war and dissociate themselves from any support to imperialism but should help not only their own country but also other subject countries. They should fully participate in the struggle for freedom and be prepared to offer every kind of sacrifice.⁶

Forward Policy in Waziristan Condemned

The Conference is deeply pained to note that the situation on the border of Waziristan has gone from bad to worse during the past year. The Conference is convinced that the Government's forward policy and the driving of strategic roads into Waziristan had long been responsible for the situation in Waziristan, and has resulted in a terrible waste of money and life and the sufferings of the independent Waziris. This Conference, therefore, condemns this policy and demands that the Khudai-Khidmatgars' conciliatory deputation should be allowed to go to Waziristan without delay.⁷

⁶ *The Statesman*, May 1, 1940.

⁷ *Ibid.*

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