

Noor Rehman\*

Aman Ullah Khan\*\*

## **“Maro Hindu Ko” (Kill the Hindus): Communal Violence in Peshawar City: A Historical Perspective**

### **Abstract**

*The main argument of this article is that negligence in responsibilities and struggle for power created Hindu-Muslim divide in the city of Peshawar—currently the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a Pakistan’s province and close to the Afghan border—which resulted in communal violence. I have selected two episodes of violence, 1910 and 1947, to argue that how did political interests build our perceptions and violate the very norms of social relationships. To explain, how cordial Hindus and Muslims were with each other, I give an overview of social relationships between two communities since the sixteenth century. However, negligence on the part of British and the quest for political control widened the gulf between the communities and led to the violence in the city of Peshawar. These episodes of violence deeply affected the discourses of Muslim nationalism and Pashtun nationalism in a sense that “Hindu” is identified as other or not discussed at all.*

**Keywords:** British India, Peshawar, Violence, Communalism

The city of Peshawar due to its geographical location always remained prominent for various Central Asian and Indian empires. The city is located on the extreme north west of India. It was the first city of India for those who come from Central Asia and the last major city for Indians on their north-west border. This inland location had great contribution in making a multicultural society in the city as mentioned in various English travelogues.<sup>1</sup> This paper, in the first place argues that the Hindu community in Peshawar always maintained their religious and cultural identity. The depiction of the city as show by various travelers like MounsturantEliphstone, Mohan Lal, Shahamat Ali and H G Raverty establish this fact that Peshawar had a multi-cultural and religious society where various groups live with their own cultural and religious identity.<sup>2</sup> A city where one can find people from Central Asia, India, Tribal Areas and Kashmir but each community was strictly attached to their religious and cultural values. Hindko speaker Muslims constituted the largest ethnic group of the urban population followed by Hindu and Sikh. According to 1881 census report the total population of the city was 79,982 where 18,105 were Hindu, 1465 Sikh, 3 Jains, 57,378 Muslim and

---

\* Noor Rehman, PhD Candidate Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad

\*\* Dr. Aman Ullah Khan, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

3,031 other religion<sup>3</sup>. In fact, Pashtun were the largest ethnic group of the region, but they were settled in the rural areas. However, they retain political supremacy of the city till the arrival the Sikh rule in 1834.

Nationalist historian and leaders of India argues that colonial authorities divided Indian society through a well-defined mechanism of “divide and rule”. Contesting colonial position that long before the establishment of British raj, Indian society was already divided on different grounds. They argue that colonial “divide and rule” policy destroyed the national synthesis and the native society was forced towards communalism.<sup>4</sup> The codification of law, political system, western education, and the establishment of institutions divided the native society on communal line. Colonial reforms not only changed political and administrative structure rather it inculcated the sense of *others and us*. Scholars who contest this argument and support colonial idea of Indian society argues that Indian society was already divided based on socio-political, cultural and religious identities. Communalism or communal violence was not the product of British policies or institutions.<sup>5</sup> Colonial institutions gave new spaces to the downtrodden classes in those domains which were earlier fixed for few groups. This was the reason that after the establishment of British rule in India communalism remained one of the most important and effective force both for the ruler and the ruled. The former used it to for the smooth running of administrative system while the later used it to achieve their political, economic, social, and religious targets.

Communalism led to communal violence almost in all parts of India and later divided sub-continent in 1947. Even, after the partition communal hatred between the two states still reflects in various forms. The city of Peshawar which was located on the North West Frontier periphery of British India did not escape from the curse of communal violence. The 1910 communal riots had multiple impacts on Peshawar. Pre-colonial history of the city provides some details of clashes and violence however, those clashes were limited to few individuals or specific groups.<sup>6</sup> In all previous disturbances the state played a mediatory role and tried to avoid any disturbance on communal level by satisfying the demands of the people. Comparatively to the rest of NWFP and tribal areas, the city of Peshawar remained a peaceful abode for the non-Muslim communities. Prior to colonial rule there were some minor cases of violence between Hindu and Muslim like the clash on the ownership of Gohraknat temple where both communities had their claims.<sup>7</sup> The issue became serious when people from both sides started violence. This was the first recorded evidence of communal tension which took place during the time of Sikh governor Avitabile 1834-1839; however, the tension was released by Sikh Governor through constructing a new mosque for the Muslim community. The enmity between the people of Sir Assea and Ganj-i-Khna was continued since long time, however, Sikh governor Avitabile resolved this issue through the construction of a wall that separated these two areas.<sup>8</sup>

1910 communal disturbance was the first time when the whole city was involved in violence and the slogan *maro Hindu ko*<sup>9</sup> (kill Hindus) was raised by the Muslim mobs in all parts of the city. This was the first time when people were killed from both sides, hundreds of shops were broken, and many Hindu families migrated to Punjab due to the fear. Though the local authorities restored law and order, but the rift it created continued and reflected in the violence in 1947.

### **Hindu as other and violence in colonial context,**

Religious, ideological, ethnic, and cultural influences got subjective position in history writings, which changed the whole historical narrative. Making people others and excluding them from national discourse and narratives based on their cultural, religious, political and ethnic identities became one of the dominate trend in history writing after the partition of sub-continent.<sup>10</sup> This new trend did a massive harm to our histories and marginalized the minorities in the historical writings. Both Indian and Pakistani nationalist discourses tried to malign each other in a way suited to their national interest.

In Peshawar, Colonial approach towards communal issue was dependent upon their political interest. The presence of a religious and cultural society in the rural side of the city and the disturbance in various parts of tribal areas colonial authorities always tried to avoid disturbance in the city through pacifying the Muslim demands who constitute the larger communal group. This approach had been visible in colonial dealing with Hindu in city life in incident 1910 violence when the demand of the Hindu for house to house search in the city for the recovery of the stolen goods was put a side by the British on the ground that it may annoyed the Muslim. Similarly, during the time of partition, colonial authorities had an appeasing approach in handling the situation. The authorities were either completely failed to control the situation or they were willing to create disturbance in the city.<sup>11</sup>

### **Relations, Identities and Violence in pre-colonial City**

Hindus and Muslims had cordial relations in pre-colonial period, yet they were aware of their religious identities which were invoked sometimes and resulted into violence. The non-Muslim population of the city did not enjoy Political and administrative positions in Peshawar. However, through their business and trade with Central Asia and India they controlled the economy of the city which forced the surrounding rural population and the ruling class to keep good and cordial relation with them.

The non-Muslims enjoyed complete religious and cultural freedom in the city life. One can imagine this freedom by knowing the fact that during the time of Barakzai Sardar's there was a ban on the slaughtering of cow in the city of Peshawar.<sup>12</sup> The food, dresses and buildings of the city indicate cultural freedom the Hindu enjoyed in the city. The gazetteer argues that “though dwelling in the heart of a bigoted Muhammadan population they retain most of their religious rites and national characteristics undisturbed”.<sup>13</sup> On the religious side one can assume their freedom from the fact that there were nine famous Hindu temples in the city named as, Pancha Tirtha, Pir Rattan, AsmaiMander at (Ander Shahar), Lal Darwaza at Karimpura, Baba Kanshi, Jogan Shah, Sri Chand, Kakaran and Biba Nagar were the main religious places of Hindus where they carried all their religious practices without any interference and fear.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the celebration of Hindus religious and cultural festivals like Dhohseera, Devali, Holi and Baisaki

in the city without any fear and disturbance indicate the freedom they enjoyed in Peshawar<sup>15</sup>.

After the annexation of Peshawar by the British in 1849, a new phase of Hindu Muslim relations began. British authorities as like in other parts of India started to promote two types of propagandas among the urban population of the city and larger Pashtun areas. Firstly, they presented the Sikh rule as the most barbaric and violent and expressed their sympathies with Pashtuns. They criticized the former ruler for their cruelty and the damage they did to Pashtun cultural, social, and economic heritage. They tried to promote anti-Sikh sentiments among the Pashtuns to gain popular support for their newly established rule. Colonial authorities assumed that inculcating anti-Sikh feelings among the Pashtun, will ultimately create loyalty for British among Pashtun. To achieve their objectives, they started to contact with the old tribal Khan's of the region. They released all the khans who were arrested by the Sikh regime and restored their old position. This policy created a good number of khans like the Arbab of Tehkal, the Khan of Landi and other Momand and Daudzai chief who favored the new master and started to promote pro-British sentiments among the Pashtun. This policy was successful in the rural areas and the khans succeeded in creating pro-British sentiments among the natives. One can imagine this from the services provided by the local and trans-border Pashtun offered to the British during 1857 uprising when some 300 Malikdin Afridi came to the cantonment to offer their service to the British.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, the British authorities were sympathizer to the urban non-Muslim population and tried to convince them that they were the victims of Pashtuns' domination in the area. British had a two-pronged agenda. On the first level, this dividing policy would get the support of the larger Pashtuns and on second level it would pacify the urban non-Muslim. The British succeeded in creating a gulf by dividing the local population based on religion and ethnic identities.

The response of the urban non-Muslims and Hindko speaker Muslims towards the new master was more positive as compare to the rural Pashtuns. Hindu businessmen and traders of the city accepted the new master with whole heartedly. They were convinced that economic prosperity and development is possible only if the British took control of the region.<sup>17</sup> The change of master offered them greater political space in the lower level administration and economic opportunities in the form of trade and business. This was the reason that the non-Muslim were very passive in their attitude and response to the British and adopted colonial institutions and ideas imparted by these institutions. They constituted the lower strata of colonial administrative setup. The Hindus and Sikhs of Peshawar were the most beneficiary classes of British colonial rule. Among the Muslims, the Pashtun landed aristocracy like the Khalil Arbab's, the Khan of Zida and the Maliks of tribal areas and the urban Hindko speakers benefitted from the British rule by sending their new generation to English education and acquired various administrative posts. Political stability and the infrastructural development gave a boost to their business and trade. This was the reason that after the establishment of colonial rule they got prominent place in the political and administrative affairs.

The Pashtun of the region were least interested in western education at the start. Besides cultural and religious attachment, the rural settlement of the Pashtun was a main cause of their lack of interest in education. Resistance to western education was showed by the religious circle. Only the khans who were conscious about their political and social status send their children to English schools.<sup>18</sup>

With the arrival of the British and the establishment of colonial institutions, the social and cultural life of Peshawar city started towards a new dimension. Colonial institutions i.e., education, communication, health, judiciary, police and irrigation etc., directly and indirectly had great impacts on the socio-economic and political life of the city. The introduction of these institutions convinced the urban society on the fact that their participation is directly proportional to their future development. As a result, after the establishment of colonial rule, ethnic and communal solidarity within these groups emerged in more visible way. This was one of the probable reasons that their response to colonial rule was very active as compare to the larger Pashtun population of the region. For the control of the rural areas, British authorities started patronization of the Khans and Arbabs by granting them title and lands. After the introduction of the colonial institutions and making the city as the hub of power and politics, the Khans' and Arbabs directly came under the accountability of the state. The Khan's and Maliks realized that in future it is not the tribe or rural population that would define their power and prestige rather it would be the relations with commissioner and governor offices that will define their status and power. This shift in the power structure was one of the main causes that forced the rural elite to move towards the city and adopted colonial ideas and institutions. The emergence of NWFP as a separate province further accelerated their efforts to secure more rights for their community in the governmental level. The fear of Pashtun dominancy over the administrative setup was express by the Hindu leaders on many occasions.<sup>19</sup>

### **1910 Communal Riots**

The first large scale communal riots in Peshawar occurred in 1910. The immediate cause of the riots was religious intolerance on the occasion of Holi and Bara Wafat festival. However, in reality, it was the result of negligence by colonial authorities from their duties and reflecting an appeasing approach towards Muslim.

Mr. W.R.H Merk, Chief Commissioner Peshawar and agent to governor general, in his letter to Secretary to the government of India in the foreign department admits the fact that from 1848 to 1908 there is no major communal outbreak in the city.<sup>20</sup> This letter establish one very important fact that the Pashtuns who were projected by the British as the most warlike and barbaric people in India never involved in communal violence in the region. In 1910 the Muslim festival of Bara Wafat starts from 13<sup>th</sup> March and lasts on 24<sup>th</sup> March. While the Hindu festival of Holi starts from 22<sup>nd</sup> March and end on 25<sup>th</sup> March. On 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1910, a meeting of leading Muslims and Hindu leaders was called by deputy commissioner of Peshawar at the Municipal Hall in which arrangements regarding the upcoming festivals were discussed and a committee was established consisting of prominent leaders from both sides.<sup>21</sup> It was decided in the meeting that the Holi should be celebrated quietly until the 25<sup>th</sup> March. There should be only two processions, namely from the Hindu quarter of Andar Shahr to that of Karimpura

and vice-versa. The Muslim of the city should not join the procession and the troops should celebrate Holi in their lines and some leading men from both sides will supervise the arrangement at Hasting Memorial and other at Clock Tower.<sup>22</sup> On 21<sup>st</sup> March the Deputy Commissioner was informed by deputy superintendent of police Zain ul Abidin that the situation in the city is not good as Hindu brought some musicians from Amritsar and a dancing boy from Hari Pur and they are intending to lead the procession on an unauthorized route. The superintendent of police suggested the deputy commissioner that the Holi should not be allowed as the situations going to create clash. Mr. Blackway sent some Hindu leader to enquire the situation. These Hindu gentlemen assured the deputy commissioner that the situation is friendly and nothing bad is going to be happened. There is no musician with the Holi and it would follow the old route.

At the same time some Muslim leaders reported to the deputy commissioner about the Muslim mob who intended to stop the Holi procession. They also suggested that Holi procession should be stopped to avoid an expected clash between the two communities. However, after the surety of the Hindu leaders that there are no musicians and dancing boys and that the procession is not going on an unauthorized route the deputy commissioner was stuck to follow his old plan. This was the point which was misunderstood and created communal violence in the city. The mob of Muslim was dispersed by their leaders by asking them that the Holi was stopped. Mr. Blackway did not say to stop the Holi nor did he allow the procession to follow the unauthorized route with musicians. The people who were involved to solve the issue not only misguided the deputy commissioner and miscommunicated to the people rather when the situation got worse, they refused to defuse the situation and were of the view that that they could not do anything as the situation is out of control. A regular police force of 4 sub Inspector and 88 constables were deployed on the route to control the situation.<sup>23</sup>

Around 8 pm when the Holi procession at Asa Mai gate was about to depart on the route to Pir Rathan Nath Dharamshala sub inspector Kanhya Lal who was posted at Chita Khuo informed the police head quarter that a mob of Muslim also assembled to stop it and the two mobs started abusing each other. Leaders from both sides tried to control the situation but the people from both sides refused to pay any heed to their leaders. Meanwhile, a Hindu Mahr Singh stabbed a Muslim with knife. Mahr Singh was chased by the mob and captured him at Bara Bazar. At the same time two Muslims Jani and Ahmad were killed by Hindu with knives. Police report for 21<sup>st</sup> March 1911, provides that two Muslim were killed and three wounded while from Hindu side two people were killed and eleven were wounded and eleven shops were broken.<sup>24</sup> The law and order situation was immediately restored by the police, but it causes revulsion in the city.

Next morning, according to the commissioner and police reports the situation in the city was peaceful at the start. However, it got worse when the funeral procession of the Muhammadans entered the city. People with the funeral procession had the intension to move the corpses in the city to create anti-Hindu sentiments among the people. However, the city police brought the corpses to the Kotwali and ousted from the city through Ganj Gate and buried at Akhund Baba graveyard. To avoid disturbance in the city, police stopped people with corpses at Kabuli gate and never allowed to enter the city. When the funeral party was ousted

from the city a riffraff of Muslim consisting of people from trans-border areas and Afghanistan remained in the city that started plundering and broke 285 shops. A violent clash was started in which two Hindus and one Muslim was killed. Besides that, twenty Hindu and four Muslims were injured.<sup>25</sup> At the same time in Karimpura two Hindu LorindMul and Ram Lal were killed by Muslims. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March total twenty Hindu and four Muslims were injured in which one Nasrullah was died later.<sup>26</sup>

The night of 22<sup>nd</sup> March pass peacefully. Police and Military were deployed to have a check and balance and patrolled twice in the areas assigned to them. The next day on 23<sup>rd</sup> March the looting of shops started again. The first case was reported in Ramdas Bazar where the Muslim despite the Military and Police patrolling looted the Hindu shops. A Hindu, reader of Nawab of Landi fired and wounded two Muslim. The local Hindu during investigation denied the fact but Military intelligence reported that he fired and wounded two people. He was arrested and sent on trial under India Penal Code. Two Hindu were killed at Ram Das Bazar. It was also reported that in Mewa Mandi a mob of Afridi and Mohmand tribes started plundering and looted many shops. People from tribal areas were also involved in this looting. 11 shops were broken in Ram Das Bazar that day. Police arrested many people involved in plundering and ousted the trans-border people from the city. The Mountain Military was instructed to check everyone passing through the check posts and arrest all those involved in looting and recover the goods.<sup>27</sup> It was reported that a huge quantity of looting material was recovered from the caravans going to Afghanistan.

There was no disturbance at night, however, the next morning it was reported that a Muslim child was killed by Hindu and a woman was beaten in Rampura. From hospital record it was reported that a Muslim died who was beaten by Hindu. No report of looting shops was received that day. The next day two cases of injuries were recorded from hospital records. People with looted material were arrested in many areas. A large quantity of looted material was found in the street as due to the fear of arrest people throw everything, they looted in the street which was collected by the Mohalladar. Despite the fact, that law and order was restored but still the Hindu community refused to open their shop due to the fear of violence and plundering.

Punishments were given under the Indian Panel Code to all those who were involve in looting. The situation remained peaceful after 25<sup>th</sup> March only few cases of violence were recorded. Army remained in the city till 2<sup>nd</sup> April after that police was deployed to patrol the sensitive areas. A total number of 451 shops were broken who belongs to the Hindu community. The authorities argued that it is not possible to estimate the total lose during these riots. However, the Hindu claimed that the total cost of the looted material was 50 lakhs.<sup>28</sup>

The official records about the events of the day had self-contradictory statements. The starting paragraphs of police and commissioner reports claims that everything was good at the start of the day but after a while the situation was out of control in the whole city. For instance, police reports provides that around 10:00 am, in Karimpura a police constable Chettan Ram was struck on head and the mob at Bara Bazar started the slogan “Maro Hindu Ko”.<sup>29</sup> What it show is that the

situation was tense from the very beginning and it was their negligence that made the situation worse. These contradictory statements in their reports make the officials position more ambiguous in the whole incident.

The response of the officials to the situation proved one fact that there was a great lack of communication between different departments and personal rivalries among the officials. For example, the commissioner of Peshawar Mr. Merk was out of station at the time the crisis. Despite receiving the news of riots, neither had he moved to the city immediately nor did he order the troops through telegram to move to the city<sup>30</sup>. However, for his own negligence he blamed the Deputy Commissioner for his dependency upon the local leaders and the Hindu community for their intolerance. No doubt, deputy commissioner committed the mistakes that on 22<sup>nd</sup> March he did not visit the city personally and secondly, after receiving information about the situation instead of making any arrangement to control the situation he went to Shabqadar to inform chief commissioner. The response of commissioner after the visit of deputy commissioner was again very irresponsible. This negligence and irresponsibility on the part of commissioner and deputy commissioner indicates that there was a great lack of communication between officials and departments.

Another important thing was the response of military, around 11:30 am, Captain Stewart additional Magistrate wrote to the army and called the troops to control the situation. The cantonment lies within a short distance of three miles from the city, but the troops took almost two hours and reached about 1:30 pm. This delay in troops' movement caused a great damage in the city in all aspects. Similarly, during this critical situation police played a very un-professional role. There were two departmental inquires conducted against sub-inspector Mahr Singh and Kanhya Lal which put many questions on the role and objectives of higher authorities.<sup>31</sup>

A petition was submitted by the Hindu to the commissioner of Peshawar which was not entertained by the authorities by making the objection that the signatory of the petition did not include a single prominent leader of the city. The petition says that the deputy commissioner did not make any arrangement to control the situation and acted according to Muslim advice.<sup>32</sup> Muslim officials and leaders helped and motivated the plunderers. The police department which is dominated by the Muslims purposely delayed for three hours to call the troops. They demanded a house to house search to recover the material which was refused by the deputy commissioner on the ground that it will create further problems and even not possible.

Commissioner Peshawar refused to meet the delegation of the Hindu on the grounds that first this delegation did not include any prominent leader from the city and secondly the objectives of the delegation are to discredit the local authorities by making it appear that no action was taken for the protection of Hindus and the punishment for Muslims. Besides, the delegation alleged that no action was taken by the authorities so to create nationalist feelings among the native of the city and to sabotage the good relation between the British and the Muslim.<sup>33</sup>



The Hindu demanded a house to house search for the recovery of the material and punishment for the offenders. A search operation was started which was soon stopped due to the fear that it may cause further problem. Hindu blamed the deputy commissioner for his lack of interest in the affair and negligence in duties. They also blamed Muslim leaders that they motivated the mobs and the police for their biasedness in the riots. However, the British authorities denied all these blames and no further action were taken.

In nutshell, the role of the authorities in this issue was not out of question as they commit many mistakes either consciously or un-consciously. The problem was over; however, it created a huge gulf in the inter-communal relationship. A fear of insecurity prevailed among the non-Muslim which was visible from the application submitted by the Hindus of Peshawar to the Commissioner in 1911 and events in later years. Next year in 1911, the Barawafat and Holi once again came on the same dates. A Hindu delegation submitted an application to the British that due to the love for their Muslim neighbors, the people of the city decided to postpone the celebration of the Holi. The authorities rejected this application on the ground that the application did not include prominent leaders from the city and those who submitted this application are avoiding the responsibilities. In reality, due to the previous year experiences people had lost trust on the British. Later, the son of late Baba Kem Singh<sup>34</sup> was called from Rawalpindi who convinced the people to celebrate Holi festival.

Colonial authorities rejected this application on the ground that the people of the city were motivated by the nationalist from Punjab to show that the British did not allow the Hindus to celebrate a religious festival and to expose the violent nature of the Muslim of North West Frontier people. Both Hindu and Muslim nationalist in Punjab have shown keen interest in the NWFP affairs. Keeping in mind the sensitivity of the Province the government always imposed a very strict censorship on the newspaper and put a ban on the Punjab based newspaper to enter in the frontier province.<sup>35</sup> The committee of leading Hindu leaders was reconstituted and it was made compulsory that every report must be passed through this committee before going to press.<sup>36</sup>

While on the other side the Hindu constructed a self-imagined fear of Pashtun fanaticism. History never supports a single incident where Pashtun on organized level involved in communal violence against the Hindu. The study of communal riots in NWFP shows that in all major riots of Peshawar, Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan it was the urban non-Pashtun Muslim population who involved in riots. Despite this reality both British and Hindu blame and defame Pashtuns for violence. During the 1910 communal violence in Peshawar colonial authorities put all the responsibility of the disturbance on the trans-border Pashtuns.<sup>37</sup>

After the incident of 1910, overall communal relation in the city of Peshawar remained peaceful and there were no major riots till 1947. However, this incident infused communal feelings among the non-Muslim, and thereby they become more conscious about their participation in national affairs and they demanded extra rights in all fields of life.

At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of the KhudaiKhidmagar as a social and later on as a political group not only brought a shift in the political

arena rather its social and educational reforms movement has brought a massive change among Pashtun. The tilt of Pashtuns towards education put an indirect threat to the Hindu interest. At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the monopoly of non-Muslim over the government jobs was gradually reduced with the emergence of the Muslim educated class. This was a serious matter of concern for the non-Muslim which they expressed on many forums. This was one of the main reasons behind the Hindu demand for the introduction of open merit system in government jobs.<sup>38</sup>

After the First World War, British government adopted a new policy towards its north-western borders which stuck the Hindu of NWFP in a strange situation of “fear and trust”. They were fearful from the Pashtuns; however, at the same time, they had no option except to trust on the Pashtun. They were petrified from the influx of Pashtun politicians from their rural areas to urban centers which make Peshawar the hub of all political activities. This political and educational renaissance among the Pashtuns was an indirect threat to the political and economic interest of non-Muslims. Their opposition to constitutional reforms in NWFP was the result of the above fears they had and demanded for the appointment of British civilians as judicial magistrate, deputy commissioner and sub divisional officers indicate their mistrust on the Muslim.<sup>39</sup>

After the incident of 1910 communal violence in Peshawar and the subsequent political development on the national level diverted people energies to constitutional and political struggle. The non-Muslim minorities remained an effective political force in NWFP and played a very important role in the development of the region. The non-Muslim had the opinion that the presence of Khani system would be a great effective force for their security. However, after the emergence of Khudai Khidmatgar as a political force and their non-violence belief had changed their opinion. Throughout in their political career Khudai Khidmatgar struggled and maintained friendly communal relations.

### **The Story of Partition**

Unlike the rest of India, the nature of communal violence in North West Frontier Province and especially in the city of Peshawar was different. It was not the religious orthodoxy and fanaticism of Pashtun that created violence rather it was the result of Muslim League policies to topple the government of Pashtun Nationalist in the province. In 1946 election, Khudai Khidmatgar who had affiliation with Congress and secured the majority seats. Congress established its provincial ministry in NWFP under the leadership of Dr Khan Sahib.<sup>40</sup> Congress ministry was headed by Dr Khan Sahib the elder brother of Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan and had a strong rural support of Pashtun nationalist. Comparatively to the Pashtun nationalist, Muslim League had very little space in politics of North West Frontier. Till the 1937 election, Muslim League had some support in the Hindko speaking urban middle class however, later on its position was strengthen when some Pashtun nationalist leaders who parted their ways from KudaiKhidmatgar and joined Muslim League.<sup>41</sup> However, despite this development still it was not an easy task for Muslim League to mobilize the larger Pashtun population against the KhdaiKhidmatgars. To achieve this target therefore, they used communal card by making alliance with the religious circle of NWFP. They were convinced that the

only way to topple Congress ministries is to start civil disobedience movement. For the mobilization of the masses they utilized religious rhetoric to defame Khudai Khidmatgar. League leadership was convinced that violence against the non-Muslim would be a direct pressure on the Congress ministry in NWFP. The Ulema under the leadership of Pir of Manki started mobilization of the general masses and threatened the government if the violence against Muslim in other parts of India continued, they would start a Jihad against the non-Muslim of NWFP.<sup>42</sup>

Communal situation in NWFP were tense after the election which were further deteriorated by the incidents of violence in Bombay and Bihar. These incidents provided an opportunity to Muslim League to assert a direct pressure on the Congress ministry in NWFP and to popularize its ideology among the larger Pashtun society. The issue of Sikh women abduction and forcefully conversion into Islam in Hazara further ignited this tense situation and was used as an immediate cause for larger communal violence.<sup>43</sup> Muslim League established a “war council” to organized protests against Congress ministry in NWFP. The non-Pashtuns were at the forefront of these agitations. Protests were started in all major cities of NWFP. In Peshawar, a mob gathered and entered Dr Khan Sahib residence and demanded his resignation. The mob was dispersed by force.<sup>44</sup> The mob as a retaliation started violence against the non-Muslim and some seventeen cases of stabbing were recorded. The war counsel of Muslim League was trained by their senior leader like Khurshid Anwar and the workers were advised to destabilize the situation in any way as they can. They were advised to carry their arms openly. The victims of the communal violence were the non-Muslim of urban areas where Muslim League had majority support of the non-Pashtun Muslim. The business and trade of the non-Muslim in Peshawar was destabilized to a great extent. When the situation became out of control in the city of Peshawar the high command of Khudai Khidmatgar ordered Amin Jan to immediately reach to Peshawar along with ten thousand volunteer for the protection of the non-Muslim.<sup>45</sup> Waqar Ali Shah mentioned some ten to twenty thousand volunteers were brought who were deputed on different areas for the safety of the minorities. They were strictly advised to follow the non-violence. Peshawar was rescued from communal violence however, the League turned to other cities like D I Khan, Kohat, and Hazara and continued their anti-Hindu activities.

Abdul Ghafar argue that communal violence in NWFP were the result of British policies. Lord Mountbatten explicitly informed Congress leadership that we will divide Bengal and Punjab on the condition that they will accept referendum in NWFP<sup>46</sup>. The response of colonial authorities during communal violence in NWFP reflect this agenda of British which was only possibly to be achieved through communal violence. They provided free space to the League worker and no strong actions were taken against the violators of law which not only encouraged them to sabotage the Congress ministry rather it had great impacts on their mass mobilization scheme. during those days it became a common practice to release all those who were involved in protest and violence after their arrest. This support from the official’s side encouraged the agitators to kill and loot the non-Muslim.<sup>47</sup>

The rural areas were free from this communal violence first, due to the influence of the Khudai Khidmatgar and secondly, Muslim League had focused on the urban center which put direct pressure on the government. Besides that, Muslim League was popular in the cities where the non-Pashto speaking people were in majority. One of the probable reasons for the popularity of Muslim League among the Hindko speaking urban population was their ethnic identity. Prior to Muslim League, the Khudai Khidmatgar who were Pashtun and their allies Hindu and Sikh dominated over the NWFP politics. Muslim League provided greater political space to the Hindko speaking which they utilized to a great extent.

### **Conclusion**

Colonial and post-colonial sources on the history of NWFP and Peshawar city are one-sided in their approaches. The former studies associated the region with certain stereotypes like violence, fanaticism, and religious orthodoxy etc. for their political objectives. While the problem with the Pashtun nationalist historian is their too much focus on political history. These problems not only marginalized the history of non-Muslim rather misrepresented Pashtuns as well. Colonial authorities and the Muslim non-Pashtun urban middle class used communalism as a tool for their political and administrative objectives. Communal violence in NWFP was an urban product started by non-Pashtun Muslim for their political objective. Colonial authorities had a very pacifying approach towards the Muslim population in Peshawar city which reflect in 1910 and 1947 incidents of communal violence where the authorities shown a very unprofessional and irresponsible attitude in the performance of their duties. Violence at the time of partition was the direct result of political tussle for the control of power. Muslim League backed by colonial authorities, adopted communal violence as an effective tool to topple congress rule in the province.

## Notes & Reference

<sup>1</sup> For detail study see, Mounsturant Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Kabul and its Dependencies* (London: RICHARD BENTLEY, 1839); Mohen Lal, *Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan and Turkistan* (London: 1846.); H G Raverty, *Account of the City and Province of Peshawar* (John Murray, Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society, 1852); Ali Shahamat, *Sikh and Afghan's in Connection with India and Persia, Immediately Before and After the Death of Ranjeet Singh: From the Journal of an Expedition to Kabul, Through the Punjab and Khaibar Pass* (London: 1847).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Gazetteer of the Peshawar District 1883-1884, 224.

<sup>4</sup> On the issue of communal violence in India one groups of scholars argues it was British divide and rule policy that created communal violence and enabled them to establish their Raj in India. Duni Chand, *Divide and Rule*; Nand Gopal, *Saada-i-Hind*.

<sup>5</sup> N Gerald Barrier, “The Punjab Government and Communal Politics 1870-1908,” *The Journal Asian Studies* 27, no. 3 (May 1968): 523-539.

<sup>6</sup> Gopal Das, *Tarikh e Peshawar*, (Lahore: Koh e Noor Publisher, 1931); Hassan Ahmad Dani, *Peshawar: A Historic City* (Lahore: Sang e Meel Publication, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> S M Jaffar, *Peshawar: Past and Present* (Peshawar: S Muhammad Sadiq Khan Publisher, 1945) 82-88.

<sup>8</sup> Ali Shahamat, *Sikh and Afghan's*, 259.

<sup>9</sup> In 1910 during the communal riots in Peshawar city a Muslim mob chanted the slogan “maro Hindu ko” means kill the Hindu. This was the first occasion in the history of the city that Muslim and Hindu come to an open violence on such a large scale where for many days the whole city was completely stuck down. H.G Fitzgerald SP Peshawar, *Police Report* on the disturbance in the city from 21<sup>st</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April, No 154, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 1910. Shimla Foreign Department Frontier, 11-21. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>10</sup> Tahir Kamran, “Hindu as the Other, Pakistan History Textbooks: A Conceptual Analysis,” *Pakistan Dimensions of History*, ed. Syed Jaffar Ahmed (Karachi: Pakistan Study Center, 2013), 115; is a detailed study on state and academic approach towards the Hindu in Pakistan.

<sup>11</sup> Waqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 185-200. Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan, *Zama Zawand o Jadojahd*, 773.

<sup>12</sup> Gopal Das, *Tarikh e Peshawar* (Lahore: Koh e Noor Publisher), 383.

<sup>13</sup> Gazetteer of the Peshawar District 1897-1898, 145.

<sup>14</sup> Ibrahim Shah, *A Short Survey of Hindu Temples in Peshawar* (South Asian Studies, Routledge), 119-132.

<sup>15</sup> Gopal Das, *Tarikh e Peshawar*, 359-360.

<sup>16</sup> Gazetteer of the Peshawar District 1884, 69-70.

<sup>17</sup> Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand Obhrai, *The Evolution of North West Frontier Province* (Peshawar: London Book & Co, 1938), 45.

<sup>18</sup> Gazetteer of the Peshawar District 1897-1898, 145.

<sup>19</sup> Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand Obhrai, *The Evolution of North West Frontier Province*, 127-133.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Mr Merk to Foreign Secretary dated No 634-P., 13<sup>th</sup> May 1910. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Mr. Merk chief commissioner Peshawar to Secretary Foreign department, No 542-P-, dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 1910. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Major D.B. Blackway Deputy Commissioner Peshawar to F.W. Johnston, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner Peshawar, No 294-p dated 6<sup>th</sup> April 1910. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>23</sup> *Minutes of the Judicial and Public Committee Report* 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1911. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>24</sup> Mr. H.G. Fitzgerald Superintendent of Police Peshawar. *Police Report* on the city disturbance from 21<sup>st</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April, IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Chief Commissioner Peshawar to Secretary to the Government of Indian in the Foreign Department, dated 21 September 1910. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Mr. Merk chief commissioner Peshawar to Secretary Foreign department, No 542-p-, dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 1910. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>31</sup> Police Report on the disturbance in Peshawar. IOR/L/PJ/6/100, 11-21.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Hari Chand, Rai Bahadur to Secretary to the Chief Commissioner Peshawar dated 30<sup>th</sup> April, Multan. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Mr. Merk to Secretary Foreign Department, No 141-C., dated 21<sup>st</sup> Sep 1910. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>34</sup> Baba Kem Singh was a very famous political leader and social reformist in Rawalpindi. He was famous for his contribution in promoting English education by establishing various school for the native of the city. He was very popular and respectable among the Hindu community.

<sup>35</sup> Lal Baha, "Struggle of Journalism in the frontier Province 1900-1930," *Islamic Studies* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 1978):217-229.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from DC Peshawar to AC Peshawar dated 30<sup>th</sup> Aug 1927. D.O.A, Deputy Commissioner, list II, Bundle No 14, Serial No 305.

<sup>37</sup> Minutes of the Judicial and Public Committee. IOR/L/PJ/6/100.

<sup>38</sup> Diwan Chand Obhrai, *The Evolution of North West Frontier*, 125.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 125-130.

<sup>40</sup> Sayed Waqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) 1937-1947*. Islamabad: NIHCR, 2015: 160-161

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 186. Waqar Ali Shah mentioned the following prominent Ulama who supported Muslim League, that included Maulana Shakirullah, Pir of Manki, Syed Abdullah Shah, Qazi Shafiud Din, Maulana Usman, Maulana Lutfullah, Maulana Yahya, Maulana Ghani, Maulana Shuaib, Maulana Midrarullah, Maulana Shaista Gul, Badshah Sahib of Bamkhel, Pir Sahib of Zakori and Makhдум Abdul Sattar of Balot, 185.

<sup>43</sup> In 1946, a sikh women in Hazara district was forcefully abducted and converted to Islam and married to a Muslim. The non-Muslim and Sikh community strongly reacted to the issue and demanded her return of the family and punishment for the criminals. The Muslim rejected these allegations and made the plea that she was converted to Islam on her own will. The sensitivity of the issue had great chances to create further communal violence. Provincial government interfered and the women was brought under the custody of Dr Khan sahib. Later on, the women were return to their family. Muslim League leadership used this issue for the mobilization of the masses against the congress ministry. They blamed Dr Khan Sahib that he forcefully returns the women to her family which agist the Islamic Law. Shah., 187-188

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>45</sup> Abdul Ghafar, *Zama Zwand o Jadujahd*, 730.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 731.

<sup>47</sup> Haji Ghulam Rasool, *Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan kay Nazriyati Pairokar Babu Fazal Ilahi (Late)* (Peshawar: Spinzer Printer, 2013), 19; Sayed Waqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) 1937-1947* (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2015), 160-161; Stephen Alan Rittenberg, *Ethnicity,*

*“Maro Hindu Ko” (Kill the Hindus): Communal Violence in Peshawar City: A .....*

---

*Nationalism and the Pashtuns: Independence Movement in India’s North-West Frontier Province*(Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 1988), 130-131.