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Khizr Hayat Tiwana: The Last and Sole Voice of the Unionist Party in the British Punjab

Abstract

This research paper provides a comprehensive description of Khizr Hayat Tiwana's role in the Punjab Politics and also examines briefly the settlement of the Tiwana tribe in Kalra estate of Punjab Province along with his emergence in the political field in detail. The Unionist Party had been enjoying unparalleled and unrivaled pinnacles of popularity with strong power base in the British Punjab since its inception. Further this article delineates the fall of the Unionist Party in the Punjab and gives a detailed account about how it started waning in apolitical hands of Khizr Hayat after Sir Sikandar's death. It was, in fact, a mighty task for Khizr Hayat to steer the party on the magnificent path laid down by his predecessors. This study chiefly encapsulates the incipient role of Khizr Hayat as a Minister of Public Works in Sikandar's cabinet and later as a Premier of the British Punjab. It further traces the Muslim League's disgraceful fall in the provincial elections of 1937 and later its revival under the magnetic and charismatic leadership of Jinnah during the elections of 1946. Besides this, the dual policy and diplomatic approach of the British Government during Khizr's Premiership in the Punjab has been highlighted minutely. The paper includes his significant role as the Premier of the Punjab during WW-II for the fulfillment of the British demands from the Punjab Province. Moreover, it discloses how the British Government deluded Khizr and devastated his political career for their vested interests in general, incompetent and shortsighted apolitical approach of Khizr in the arena of the Punjab Politics in particular. The failure of Khizr-Jinnah talks along with his expulsion from the Punjab Muslim League has been discussed extensively. In addition to this, it sheds light on how Khizr Hayat Tiwana was sandwiched between the tactful British Government and crafty Jinnah that marked his downfall in the Punjab Politics.

Keywords: Khizr Tiwana, Punjab Politics, Unionist Party, Punjab Muslim League, Major Communities, British Government, Khizr-Jinnah Talks, Khizr's failure.

Introduction

With native tribal traits of egoism, cultural distinction and also inherent doggedly persisting facet of personality, Khizr Hayat Tiwana was born in Chak Muzaffarabad of District Sargodha on 7th August 1900.¹ The Muslim subdivision of Tiwanas traces its lineage from Rai Melo Tiwana.² The Tiwana tribe has a history of warfare before and after the colonial era.³ During the War of 1857,

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waged in certain parts of India, Khizr's grandfather raised his own troops and fought by the side of the British.⁴ Khizr, the only son of his parents was considered the sole heirs of his vast paternal property left by his ancestors which had been prominent among the landed aristocracy of the Punjab Province.⁵ Having the vast and largest tracts of land, Khizr rose to the prominence of an influential fief-holder in colonial Punjab which later helped him to gain political limelight.⁶ In 1918, Khizr discontinued his college studies in the second year and was promoted to the rank of Second Lieutenant on 21st November 1919.⁷ At the time of third Anglo-Afghan war of 1919, he escorted the squadron to the front, served as aide-de-camp to General Beynon.⁸ For his extraordinary services, he was awarded with an O.B.E (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) to be the youngest soldier.⁹ Tiwanas held most of the regular Indian commissions in the squadron because of their natural inclination towards recruitment in the British Army.¹⁰ He took retirement from British Army in 1923 as an honorable captain to tend his family estates, Kalra in the Punjab. The military career not only strengthened his doctrine and non-communal outlook but also tinged it with sagacity and surmising tincture of political insight.¹¹

After 1923, Khizr devotedly and unwaveringly performed the role of “*zaildar*” (administrative subdivision officer in the Punjab-semiofficial called *zaildar*) in the Kalra estates. As it was one of the policies of the British to defend the ruler's ascendancy, they adopted multiple strategies by allying with the landed elite of the British Punjab with the supervisory authority. The post of *zaildar* was used as political tool by the British to control and manipulate the minds of local people as per their political agenda through their sharp propaganda.¹² Being a *zaildar*, Khizr was the sole representative and responsible for a circle of villages under his control.¹³ He squandered away many years of his life in overseeing the Kalra estate in the course of 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴ He had an affiliation with Kalra estate as he eulogized the stability and security of these years in his future life. The Kalra estate had been developed in terms of stability and security by a number of public welfare projects which were initiated by his grandfather Malik Sahib Khan.¹⁵ After Khizr had appointed as an Honorary Magistrate of the estate, he showed interest in the political field and took part actively. This regular rhythm of Khizr's life was greatly shaken by his father's insistence that Khizr should enter parliamentary politics for the Punjab Elections of 1937.

Khizr's Entry in Parliamentary Politics of Punjab

The Elections of 1936-37 were first to be held under the Government of India Act of 1935. The conceptualization of provincial autonomy began with the Indian Act of 1935 and turned out the scenario of the Punjab Politics and entered into a new phase. The act transformed Indian politics by flaring the franchise in the elections and introducing the first time a system of substantial ministerial charge in the provincial government.¹⁶ At the same time it also introduced a huge number of rural constituencies which were geographically narrower than under the structure of diarchy. Their boundaries were drafted to concede with the ‘tehsils’ which contained consolidated ‘tribal’ groupings. The British administration verdicts had thus created a commendatory environment for the preponderance of the rural interests which were dedicated to tribal rather than religious identification

in politics.¹⁷ In order to meet the challenges of the new political situation, Sir Fazl-i-Husain (1877-1936), a senior minister in Punjab cabinet, resumed the leadership of the Unionist Party and reorganized the Party position, power and strength in 1936. In April 1936, he opened the headquarters office of the Unionist Party in Lahore to begin and initiate active provincial political organization.¹⁸

As the provincial elections were at hand, the parties catalyzed up their preparations.¹⁹ The Unionist Party in complete contrast to its rivals approached a low key towards masses during the election.²⁰ As Unionists believed that the 'natural leadership' of the rural elite was quietly working for them, therefore, they held no mass rallies.²¹ According to David Gilmartin, in response to Sir Fazl-i-Husain's suggestion, the party enumerated fifteen prominent *pirs* and approached them for support.²² Three important district of Western Punjab;²³ Shahpur, Lyallpur and Multan were the strongholds of the Unionist support and they were considered the safe zones for the Unionists.²⁴ Khizr Tiwana stood for the Khushab constituency (this tehsil covered the western half of the Shahpur District) in the provincial elections of 1937.²⁵ Khizr's father did most of what passed for election campaign, beseeching the landed families of Noons and Tiwanas for their favor. Together, they owned 85000 acres of land in Khushab tehsil of Noon-Tiwana faction. As Awans formed the majority of the 20000 voters, therefore, they embodied a strong opposition against them. The Awans' anticipation to flex their electoral influence was spoiled when Khizr paid Rs. 10,000 to their prominent representative to withdraw too late in the day for a substitute to file his nomination documents by the 23rd November deadline.²⁶ In this way, he was thus elected unchallenged and unopposed from Khushab Rural Muslim Constituency to the Punjab Legislative Assembly.²⁷ Therefore, all the winning candidates in the Shahpur district were the Unionist supporters.²⁸ According to the overall results announced on 1st February 1937, the Unionists had captured 99 out of 175 seats in the Punjab Province. The party had secured 73 out of 75 rural Muslim seats²⁹ and one of the rural Hindu seats in the *Jat* center of the Ambala Division³⁰, whereas, in the towns it got only 1 seat out of 9 Muslim seats.³¹ On 1st April 1937, the Punjab cabinet was organized under the Premiership of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. In order to maintain the balance of communal politics in the Punjab, Sikandar appointed Khizr as a Minister of Public Works and Local Self Government into the cabinet.³² The British Governor Glancy also preferred him over the more experienced and educated members of the Assembly.³³ Although, Khizr was political tyro, his father's reputation and family's political and social importance raised him to the level of ministry in Skindar's cabinet.³⁴

Khizr as a Minister under Sikandar's Premiership

Khizr's contribution as a minister not only ran his own department well but also took part in many important tasks of the political affairs. He was given the charge of home portfolio conducting with law and order and the police.³⁵ As he was highly compassionate with the aim to uplift the communal harmony and unity, he participated in the 'Unity Conference' of Simla in July 1937 which was organized by the Punjab Premier Sikandar Hayat Khan.³⁶ The Sikandar-Jinnah pact irked Khizr and created exasperation between Khizr and Jinnah as he thought Sikandar wanted to secure his position.³⁷ According to Ian Talbot, Khizr as

minister also attended the Zamindara League meeting at Mamdot Villa Lahore by October 1937 for the safety and security of the rights and interests of all the possessors of land, proprietors, peasants and tenants in the Punjab Province.³⁸ Khizr's Ministry actively took part in the agrarian program of Sikandar's rural uplift agenda and to follow the Unionist manifesto introduced 'Agrarian Bills' in 1938.³⁹ In early September 1938, Khizr along with Sikandar and Sir Chhotu Ram attended a conference at Lyallpur⁴⁰ in which more than 150000 agriculturalists demonstrated their agreement for these 'Golden Acts'.⁴¹

Khizr's task was to oversee an improvement of the panchayat system⁴² that was first established by the British aegis in 1912.⁴³ In Khizr's view for increasing the share of peasants in the political life of a country there was no better method than of the panchayats. Khizr with the help of Sir Chhotu Ram introduced the 'Punjab Village Panchayat Bill' for the betterment of the panchayat system. It not only modernized the scheme for the development of panchayats but also reinvigorated their fiscal dynamics, judicial powers and administrative setup.⁴⁴ Khizr's ministership synchronized with the Public Works Department and brought to an end the Assembly Chamber in Lahore with its adjoining civic center.⁴⁵ He launched multiples schemes for the betterment of the Punjab's irrigation and infrastructure.⁴⁶ He strenuously supported Government of India's "Grow More Food Campaign"⁴⁷ during world war-II.⁴⁸ During his ministership, the modern or metaled surface roads were laid in the Salt Range.⁴⁹ By 1942 he had grown in administrative competence but lacked the ability to climb up the greasy pole of office in politics.⁵⁰ After the sudden demise of Sir Sikandar, Khizr Hayat emerged to be the next prominent leader of the Unionist Party.⁵¹

Khizr as a Premier of the Punjab

Among the clash of power for the succession⁵² of the premiership of the Punjab province,⁵³ Khizr was appointed⁵⁴ as a Premier of the Punjab by Governor Glancy on 23rd January 1943.⁵⁵ Khizr's ascendancy to the Premiership was owing to his father's reputation, his own Ministerial record and his credentials as a representative of 'martial castes'.⁵⁶ Khizr (the Premier) confirmed his five teammates including Chhotu Ram (Development Minister), Mian Abdul Haye (Education Minister), Sardar Baldev Singh (Revenue Minister) and Manohar Lal (Finance Minister) from the Cabinet of departed leader (from Sikandar's Cabinet)⁵⁷ in their posts along with Sikandar's son, Shaukat Hayat Khan (Minister of Public Works) to maintain the party unity.⁵⁸ In early 1943, as a first public appearance, he attended meeting of the Punjab Literary League and introduced the two common objectives of his initial years in office. He declared that 'the best way to perpetuate the commemoration of the previous leader of the party (Sir Sikandar) was to sustain the work which was important for him, namely support for the prosecution of the ongoing war and defense of communal harmony.⁵⁹ For communal harmony a committee was established by him in Lahore,⁶⁰ and he himself being a leader of the party and the Premier of the Punjab worked as President of Provincial Communal Harmony Movement.⁶¹ However, the successor of Sikandar Hayat, the new Punjab Premier, Khizr Hayat Tiwana, early in 1943 found himself in an unexpected, increasingly problematic and challenging situation.⁶²

For Khizr, the Premiership of the Punjab was a major headache, and by the beginning of 1943, there was a deficiency of consumer goods.⁶³ The Punjab Government ordered its district officials⁶⁴ to follow the central authorities, and to persuade the release of all additional stocks of foodgrains in the markets⁶⁵ or lying in the villages.⁶⁶ The Punjab's rural population became subject to a wide range of government regulations during the later years of the World War-II. On November 1943, the Punjab Assembly unanimously approved an unofficial resolution to influence that any effort to curtail the price of wheat would fade in front of disgruntled agrarian classes.⁶⁷ Khizr also inherited the war weariness,⁶⁸ as the main recruiting areas for military supply were mostly enlisted from non-martial castes and almost completely exhausted.⁶⁹ The *Patwaris* were ordered to provide details of the certain quota and record of recruits and threatened with suspension if they failed to meet the demands of the government.⁷⁰ Such actions of the government naturally led the opposition against the Unionist Party and the war.⁷¹ In this way, the Unionists had not only carried the unpopular policies of the British Government but also postponed many of their ambitious programs for rural uplift.⁷²

The political condition in the initial days of Khizr's Ministry in the province was not satisfactory due to World War-II,⁷³ including internal political turmoil,⁷⁴ challenges and pressure.⁷⁵ Jinnah took advantage of this changing and alarming situation to lessen Khizr's power in the Punjab.⁷⁶ During this shifting scenario of the Punjab Politics, Khizr faced another rising surge of the rebels within his own party⁷⁷ which included Feroz Khan Noon, Shaukat Hayat Khan and Mumtaz Khan Daultana.⁷⁸ The Unionist Party mainstream leadership and Khizr himself had started to grapple the alternate ways to avoid this status-quo of the Punjab Politics and tried to slow down the rising popularity of the Muslim League in the province.⁷⁹ Neither Khizr nor the Governor Glancy could do much to counteract and seize the momentum of the rising popularity graph of the Muslim League.⁸⁰ On 23rd April 1943, the Viceroy Linlithgow articulated his fears to the Governor that it is quite difficult to restrain the Muslim League and its dominating role in the Punjab Politics.⁸¹ Basically, Khizr was sailing into two boats, his dual loyalty created more problems for him as well as his party and all communities of the Punjab, and he was not able to adjust himself in the present scenario.⁸² However, his twofold character made him a controversial figure and he could not save and secure his position. Firstly, the League and its leadership tolerated him and no strict action was taken against him, but with the passage of time his policies and actions were not acceptable for the League, so these measures put Khizr in a very critical position. Khizr committed many blunders and adopted anti-League policies, thus the alliance between the League and the Unionist came to an end.

Khizr-Jinnah Talks

Khizr after becoming the head of the Unionist Party in 1943 made promise with Jinnah to reorganize the League in the Punjab but failed to fulfill it.⁸³ The breakdown of Khizr-Jinnah talks in 1944 meant that many Muslims in the Unionist Party were now forced to choose between the two parties in the upcoming elections.⁸⁴ In 1944, Khizr clashed publically with Jinnah, and the

Punjab League thereafter waged an increasingly vitriolic campaign against him. He was thus more of a recalcitrant rival of Jinnah and the League. The Premier warned the League leader that in case of split in the Unionist Party, there was a possibility of Governor Raj being enforced in the Punjab.⁸⁵ Khizr's attitude towards the committee was also not cooperative. On account of Khizr's hotline attitude, the League's movement in the Punjab was effectively halted while its opponents were busy carrying out their full-fledged anti-Pakistan campaign.⁸⁶ Although Khizr was well aware that Pakistan was inevitable, but he did not go with the Muslim League and Jinnah.⁸⁷ Parting ways with the Muslim League, Khizr stood to be the last and sole voice of the Unionist Party which eventually led him towards his political decline.⁸⁸ The League, however, got in touch with Khizr through Sir Yameen Khan,⁸⁹ and proposed that if he agreed to League's claim to nominate all Muslims, Jinnah would nominate a Punjabi Muslim with Khizr's consent;⁹⁰ but Khizr did not agree.⁹¹ Khizr's veering away from the agreements was meant to save his dignity and identity to be inundated due to his egoistic tribal nature.⁹²

Khizr's Expulsion from the Muslim League

In April 1944, on the eve of the Second Annual Session of the League which was held in Sialkot, Khizr issued a statement in which he dissociated himself from the Muslim League.⁹³ Rupture of Khizr's solemn pledge resulted in his expulsion from Muslim League on 27th May 1944 thus enervating the Unionist Party.⁹⁴ After the expulsion from the League, he was publically denounced as traitor.⁹⁵ Jinnah also attacked Khizr for his 'subservience' to the dictates of the Congress.⁹⁶ The Punjab Muslim celebrated March 7 as 'Traitor's Day'.⁹⁷ At other meetings Jinnah described the Punjab Premier as a 'culprit' and 'traitor'.⁹⁸ On March 10, the Punjab League held a huge gathering (70000 participants) at Lahore against the Governor's decision⁹⁹ – speech after speech was made against Khizr and Governor's partiality.¹⁰⁰ These feelings of resentment, bitterness, and anger were continuously expressed for some time.¹⁰¹

It was the general thrust of the British policy to keep Muslim-majority areas out of Jinnah's reach.¹⁰² Though Jinnah was keen to retain Khizr's association with the League, he was not willing to accept him as an 'ally', as he had accepted Sikandar early in his regime.¹⁰³ But Khizr continued his close relationship with the British Government, on one hand, his Unionist supporter Chhotu Ram particularly refused to submit his authority. Subsequent developments showed that this was the beginning of the end of Khizr's Government.¹⁰⁴ However, Khizr's expulsion from the Muslim League immensely marred his popularity in the Punjab province.¹⁰⁵ This also politically lowered the graph of the Unionist Party in the upcoming elections in the Punjab.¹⁰⁶ It gave a powerful jolt to the provincial structure of the party slashing its membership strength.¹⁰⁷ Within six months after Khizr's dismissal¹⁰⁸ from the Muslim League, the Punjab League Assembly Party stood at 27 members.¹⁰⁹ The decreasing graph of the Unionists proved to be a great setback for the party.¹¹⁰ This resulted in the switching of the Unionists towards the Muslim League.¹¹¹ Thereafter, the Muslim supporters and even committed leaders of the Unionist Party were trickling towards the League.¹¹²

The demise of the leading statesman of the Unionist Party, Sir Chhotu Ram on 9th January 1945, further dealt the severe blow to the Party's crumbling unity.¹¹³ Khizr rued Chhotu Ram's loss as a colleague and a loyal friend.¹¹⁴ The Punjab's Premier proclaimed that he regretted Chhotu Ram, not only as a valued colleague and an illustrious son of the Punjab but a cherished friend whose unfailing kindness and support I can never forget or replace.¹¹⁵ The Unionists started to collapse gradually in the different divisions of the province.¹¹⁶ Khizr's power in the Punjab had shrunk owing to the sudden death of his political mentor, Sir Chhotu Ram.¹¹⁷ The Punjab League also propelled its rural propaganda in favor of the demand of Pakistan.¹¹⁸ The social activities triggered by the student and workers, toured the village and exploiting the growing wartime discontent.¹¹⁹ Khizr's abusive and hostility-laden behavior¹²⁰ caused his expulsion from the League.¹²¹ The Muslim League had initiated to creep into the different layers from division to village level with its rising popularity in the province.¹²²

Simla Conference of 1945

The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, held a conference of prominent political leaders of the various political parties from 25th June to 14th July 1945 at Simla. The Simla Conference also played a vital role in the glorious victory of the Muslim League in the upcoming elections. Further, the purpose of this conference was to discuss the formation of an Executive Council. Lord Wavell discussed this issue with the high profiles of India such as Jinnah, Gandhi, Khizr, Maulana Azad and Glancy in order to finalize the composition of the Executive Council.¹²³ Jinnah proposed that Muslim League should give the names of all Muslim members for the council. Congress refused to accept the League's status as a party with national character. The Punjab Premier Khizr opined that British should have left well alone the Unionist for the composition of the council. The Punjab Governor Glancy warned him that Ministry might resign, if the Unionists were not represented in Executive Council. Jinnah put forward his two demands: one, all the Muslim members should be taken from the Muslim League, second, any measure to which the Muslims refused could only be carried by a two third majority of the council.¹²⁴ Jinnah not only effectively blocked Khizr's political maneuvers at the center in Simla Conference, but also went on to challenge his authority in his home province, Punjab.¹²⁵ Jinnah was determined to make it clear to all the Muslim leaders and especially Khizr that he could not get his nominee in the Viceroy's expanded Executive Council over and above the head of the League President.¹²⁶ Jinnah in his statement described the Viceroy's proposal as death warrant for the Muslim League. He further said: "there was the combination comprising of the Gandhi-Hindu Congress who stand for India's Hindu national independence as one India and the latest advocates of geographic unity, Lord Wavell and Glancy-Khizr, who are bent upon creating interruption among the Muslims in the Punjab. Wavell did not accept these demands and declared that council had failed."¹²⁷

After the failure of Simla Conference there was a greater strain on the loyalty of the Unionist supporters. However, the conference carried the fact that the receipt of high office in future would depend on collaboration and cooperation with the Muslim League rather than the British Government. Nevertheless, the

propaganda campaign against the Unionists and the Punjab Premier was in full swing from the League supporters. It was this time, the tide veered away in a new direction rather than League's new conjecturing about Punjab Premier, Khizr as sacrilegious to Islam. As a result, this uproar led to the rural elite including *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* at large scale withdrawal from the Unionist Party. Khizr was even disallowed by his kinsmen and close associates, Major Mumtaz Khan Tiwana¹²⁸, Malik Sardar Noon and Firoz Khan Noon.¹²⁹ He felt that Lord Wavell had let him down severely by his handling of Quaid-i-Azam during Simla negotiation. In fact, it was the Glancy-Khizr axis, which was responsible for the breakdown of the Simla Conference as they insisted that a Unionist Muslim should be included in the Viceroy's Council.¹³⁰ It was only after the Simla Conference that the large number of *pirs* responded to the Muslim League. The *pirs* of Chisti revivalist shrines were especially at the forefront of this movement in the Punjab. Their *sajjada nashins* had wanted to put the politics in the province on a solid religious footing for a long time. Other *pirs* also joined the Muslim League and provided it with a channel of communication to patronize the illiterate rural voters. The League was thus able to approach the upcoming provincial elections in a much stronger position as compared to the Unionists.¹³¹

Elections of 1946 and Unionists' Defeat

The Punjab Premier Khizr went down struggling and competing for the upcoming elections. In September 1945, he made a preliminary tour of Lahore, Sargodha, Gujranwala, Simla, Ludhiana and Jullundur. It was followed by interviews of prospective candidates and notables with series of keynote speeches. He also turned the Muslim League election slogans to his favor during the campaign to counter the League. He said, the cry of 'Islam in danger' was misleading, he continued, 'it was not Islam, but certain politicians who were in danger'. The Unionist position during this time was much weaker as compared to their past electoral history of the 1937 provincial elections. The political scenario of India especially of the Punjab was totally different in the upcoming elections of 1946. The Unionists were losing its power and strong rule due to the rising popularity of the Muslim League under the leadership of Quaid-i-Azam and the mounting demand for Pakistan.¹³² In this changing pattern of the time the Punjab Premier Khizr could not assess his stature and position. Even he could not manage the prevailing situation in the Punjab Politics and he did not determine his own future as well as the Party.¹³³ In response to League, Khizr started his speeches with verses from the Holy Quran and addressed the economic benefits and attractions of developments which the Unionist Ministry brought to the countryside. In his public address at Gujrat, he used the first verse of *Surah Fatiha* just to prove that the Unionist Party had a greater development program than the Muslim League.¹³⁴ He also employed *ulema* from the Jamiat-i-ulema-i-Hind who opposed the Pakistan's demand. In addition to this, the Unionist Party endeavored to counter the increasing religious appeal of the League by introducing religious symbolism in their election campaign, but none to rely upon them and declining support amongst the *pirs*, *sajjada nashins* and landlords, their attempts met with little success and got nothing. Local workers of Zamindara League pleaded that the Ahrar leaders and orators like Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar (1895-1974) and Sayed Ataullah Shah Bokhari (1892-1961) should deal with the *pirs* and decrease

their influence. The Unionist Party also enlisted the Khaksars who were under the leadership of Allama Innayat ullah Mashraqi (1888-1963), although they were the opponents of Sikandar but Khizr tried to approach them. It was also observed that the Muslim members of the Indian Civil Service did more to strengthen the League than any politician except Jinnah.¹³⁵ However, in early 1946, the League had been able to secure its position because the support of many eminent families of the Punjab including landed elite, *pirs* and *sajada nashins* were supporting and defending it.¹³⁶ According to Sarah Ansari, “although the *pirs* and the *sajjada nashins* were not so rich as compared to the landlords of the Punjab but these families employed great religious and political influence over their followers”.¹³⁷ David Gilmartin and Ayesha Jalal both historians believed that the majority of the *pirs* developed personal links and influence in the League’s election campaign. They also established their stake not only because this was the most suitable, tactical response towards the prospects of the British transfer of power but because of the *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* were farsighted in the Pakistan Movement as an opportunity to break up of the colonial rule that had for so long dissatisfied their religious interests and personal advantages.¹³⁸ However, Khizr did his best to check these tendencies but he was only partially successful.¹³⁹

Even Khizr faced strong opposition in his own area from the *pirs* and *sajada nashins* because of strong influence of the Muslim League.¹⁴⁰ As the Muslim League had already conveyed its message in the rural areas of the Punjab; therefore, the Unionist Party profited little from this technique and tactics.¹⁴¹ The Unionist Ministry merely mirrored the image of the British Government, and this state of affair in the Punjab had to be ended, and the people could do so by voting for freedom, and not for bureaucracy and its henchmen.¹⁴² The British Government under the increasing demands and political pressure was compelled to hold the elections of 1945-46. On the eve of the elections, the political scenario in the Punjab Politics was finely composed, and the League offered a reliable alternative to the Unionists. Within a short span of time, the League was able to wipe out the Unionist Government in the elections due to its well-organized campaign. The elections results were declared on 24th February 1946 and the League performed remarkably well, it surprised everybody by achieving overwhelming victory. The press also reported the crushing defeat of the Unionist Party, only 13 Muslim candidates were elected from its platform, even some of their mainstream leaders and ministers lost their seats. The League swept all the Muslim seats and achieved a grand victory in the Central Assembly and bagged 428 out of 492 Muslim seats in the Provincial Assembly. At this juncture, the League’s claim to speak on behalf of the Muslim India was completely justified. In Punjab, it captured 76 out of the 86 Muslim seats, in urban constituencies winning all 11 seats and in rural constituencies it got 64 out of the 75 seats.¹⁴³ Consequently, the Unionist Party reduced to the body of only 18 members out of 175 strongest Assembly of the Punjab Province in the election of 1946. The Punjab League had done great job and proved its popularity enough to represent Punjabi Muslim support and its ascending graph, for the Pakistan’s demand, but it was not able to form a Ministry.¹⁴⁴ However, the Unionists’ defeat paved the way for the complete ascendancy of the League in the Punjab Province and also for Pakistan.¹⁴⁵ These elections proved to be a turning point in the history of the Punjab Politics as well as the Muslim League position in the province. Ian Talbot argued that, Pakistan

had never been able to come into being without the support of the Muslim landed elite of the Punjab during 1946 Punjab Provincial Elections. The *pirs* and landlords joined the League before the elections; the Muslim League would not have gotten Pakistan without its victory in the Punjab.¹⁴⁶ Peter Hardy explained that, the League achieved its electoral success in the Punjab by making a religious appeal over the heads of the professional politicians.¹⁴⁷ Penderel Moon attributes, that the League's rise to its power to the irresistible and alluring appeal of the Pakistan cry to the Muslim masses.¹⁴⁸ Khalid Bin Sayeed is of the view that the League's victory in the Punjab provincial elections and all over the sub-continent, was exclusively on the basis of the two nation theory.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, it is clear that League's victory was due to the charismatic leadership, political acumen, prophetic and farsighted approach of Jinnah, who was a man of great vision, high individual integrity, capability and a mastermind of the political game.¹⁵⁰ However, the League fought its case on the demand for 'Pakistan' which it placed before the Muslim masses.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, the Unionists were realizing the overwhelming force of the Pakistan demand to Muslim masses which were not opposing Pakistan but they argued, that to press for a separate state of Pakistan would inevitably entail cutting off the Hindu and Sikh area from the Punjab and would be detrimental to economic interest of the Muslims themselves.¹⁵²

Numerous factors led to the Unionists defeat in the 1946 elections and finally the results of elections proved to hammer the last nail into the Unionist's coffin. But still Khizr didn't accept his defeat and made a 'Unionist Coalition Government' with the collaboration of the Congress and the Sikhs.¹⁵³ As 'Congress-Panthic-Unionist Coalition' consisted of 94 members in the assembly, therefore, the Punjab Governor Glancy called on Khizr to form a Ministry on 7th March 1946. There were three Muslim Unionists members in the Cabinet including: Khizr (the Premier), Nawab Sir Muzaffar Ali Khan Qizilbash (Minister of Revenue), Mian Mohammad Ibrahim Barq (Minister of Education and Health) and two from Congress namely Lala Bhim Sen Sacchar (Minister of Finance), Chaudhary Lehri Singh (Minister of Public Works). Among Akalis, Sardar Baldev Singh (Development Minister) was chosen to continue his services in the cabinet.¹⁵⁴ Two immediate tasks faced by Khizr were to represent the Punjab's view to the Cabinet Mission¹⁵⁵ of 1946 and survive the Budget Session of the Assembly.¹⁵⁶ Although Khizr coalition ministry had survived, but received such a swear opposition from the League which made his heart sick.¹⁵⁷ Khizr had done his utmost to check the growth of 'Pakistan Scheme' in the Punjab and to deprive the Muslim League from power. He had succeeded in keeping the League out of power, but the 'Pakistan Idea' became more and more popular as the days passed. It looked as though Khizr lacked ability to come to terms with the changing circumstances in favor of the Pakistan Scheme.¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile, the Direct Action Day on 16th August 1946 guaranteed that the Muslims would not negate Pakistan. Khizr had lost hold over the Muslim masses and that it was well-nigh impossible for him to have a hold over the ministry against the attacks of the League.¹⁵⁹ In the meantime, Khizr and one of his Muslim Ministers, Nawab Muzaffar Ali Qizilbash had been behaving somewhat nervously.¹⁶⁰ Nawab Khurshid,¹⁶¹ a close and trusted friend of Khizr, frankly admitted that the Unionist Party was dead; in his opinion it was best for

Khizr to join the League or retire from the Politics.¹⁶² Khizr in his public statements also commended that it was highly desirable that the Punjab Government has the support of the majority community of the province; and it was now mandatory for him to leave the field clear for the Muslims of the Punjab.¹⁶³ Khizr lifted the ban on public meetings and agreed to release the political prisoners.¹⁶⁴ During his final stage of negotiations with the Muslim League, he planned his resignation and he met with Evan Jenkins (the then Governor of Punjab 1946-1947) and revealed his intention on 2nd March. A day later on 3rd march 1947, he proclaimed his resignation to a stunned Cabinet and Governor on the eve of Budget Session. Khizr had no other option but “to leave the field clear for the Muslim League in the best interest of the Muslims and the province”.¹⁶⁵ Swaran Singh had provided the thinking of the Punjab Premier who ultimately led him to concede his defeat as Khizr said to him, ‘I could go on fighting with the Muslim League,’ he maintained, ‘but if our children feel we are the villains of the piece, let us disappear and whatever happens, happen’.¹⁶⁶ Khizr was denounced as a ‘Vidkun Quisling and Kafir’¹⁶⁷ mock funerals were held outside his official residence and during the last weeks of his Premiership he was greeted everywhere with black flag protest demonstration.¹⁶⁸

With heavy heart due to disappointing conditions, Khizr took a difficult decision to leave for Europe as he wanted a loop hole for exit to detach him from his revengeful League leaders. He turned his back to re-enter public life in 1953 when he went to Mohammad Ali Bogra’s ‘cabinet of talents’ that included the previous ‘renegade’ Congress Premier of the Frontier Dr. Khan Sahib.¹⁶⁹ On 19th January 1975, he died of a massive heart attack at the age of seventy four in America. He was buried four days later after his death in his family graveyard at Kalra Sargodha. Messages of condolence were received especially, from high profiles of the Governments, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Indira Gandhi and Lord Louis Mountbatten.¹⁷⁰ Khizr’s political career ended in failures which even he himself was not expecting. He spent a self-imposed exile to Britain because he was not ready to accept the partition of India.¹⁷¹ Finding himself unable to accommodate in newly-born Pakistan, Khizr saw off India to get rid of his revengeful political fellows.¹⁷² The sun had set upon his egoistic political supremacy along with the death-end of his fiefdom.¹⁷³

Conclusion

Khizr was a staunch and highly principled in his individual capacity. After coming in power, he saw it as his obligation to maintain rural customs of loyalty, military assistance and the uplift of the backward classes of the Punjab. He was of the view that partition would split the fabric of Punjabi rural society and deteriorate the whole way of life. On many occasions there was the high ground for him to defend his political career and he would have secured himself in the Muslim League. The Unionist Party under Khizr’s Premiership could not match with his predecessor Sikandar’s popularity in the Punjab Province. He could not resist Jinnah in the Punjab as the rising graph and popularity of Jinnah and the League’s influence did not give more space to Khizr and the Unionist Party in the Punjab. However, being a last and sole voice of the Unionist Party, Khizr played a key role to limit the League’s influence in the Punjab to a great extent. He

countered the Pakistan demand with his own vision of a United Punjab which resulted massive slash in his popularity graph.

Khizr was politically inexperienced and had lacked acumen and wisdom in political terms to be a ‘General without an Army’. One wonders, why Khizr opposed the ‘Pakistan Scheme’ at a time when even many eminent Congressmen had come to hold the view that Muslim provinces should have the right of succession. Following Khizr’s expulsion from the League, all those who cooperated with Khizr or the Congress were branded as traitors in the Punjab, and were openly even crudely, abused by Muslims. The campaign of the ‘Direct Action Day’ caused the eventual decline of Khizr’s Premiership, which was mostly dependent on Akali’s and the Congress support. Although Khizr struggled throughout his political career for the survival of the Unionist Party, but the time did not support him and the partition of India ultimately declined his power, desires, dreams and ambitious plans which never came true. The Unionists’ diverse pan-provincial and collaborative organization was totally shattered with the drastic end of Khizr’s political career.

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