
Revisiting the Elections 1946 and the Punjab Politics

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The enthralling work produced by Ian Talbot, an authority on the Punjab, undertakes the study of the factors which ensured decay of the Unionists and marvellous victory of the Leaguers in the elections 1946.¹ The officials, non-officials and the US diplomats considered Punjab the key to win Pakistan.² The most important democratic upheaval was the elections of 1946 which changed entire history of the Subcontinent. All-India Muslim League, the main target of the Hindu, Sikh and British forces, emerged as a potent political force on the political scene. All the political and administrative groups made tremendous efforts to debar the League to gain sound hold in the Punjab politics. The government and its allies utilised official sources and influence against the League but even then the political history of the Colonial Punjab witnessed an unprecedented success of the League in the elections. The British and the non-Muslim parties felt comfortable while working as coalition partners with the Punjab Unionist Party but these elections changed the political scenario which sought a major shift in the political trends of the Muslim and non-Muslim parties whereas the political protagonists could not compromise with this changing on-goings. Their anti-League stance deteriorated the nature of the communal conditions

of the region and ultimately resulted in the furious clashes between the Muslims and non-Muslims. How did the Unionists tried to upset the League? What remedy the League had to meet the challenge? How the integrationists or nationalist parties including British made a joint front to deprive the League of the right to form government and how their undemocratic attitude ramified in the political split? The clarion call of the day was to cooperate with the League but the immature political attitude exhibited by the rivals moved them to concede the regional splitting. This study is an endeavour to peep into the overall political scenario in which the elections were held and manipulations displayed by the anti-League forces regarding the ministry-making in the Punjab. The article also studies attitude of the ruling, majority and minority communities at the crucial juncture of the Colonial period.

The Subcontinent suffered a lot because of the despotic rule of the aliens who brought a meagre change in the educational, financial, political and social status of the masses. The British introduced divergent nature of reforms which uplifted the standard of the living of the locals particularly the common people. Constitutional reforms, political participation and power-sharing seem a tremendous achievement in the democratic reforms which provided an opportunity to the common people to elect representatives of their own choice.³ The local leadership aligned themselves on the democratic line by establishing the manifestoes entrenched in the religious affiliation. The political demands raised by the political parties mainly meant one-community rule that resented the other stakeholders. The clash of interests in the demands was further transmuted into communalism. The Indian National Congress⁴ was dominantly a Hindu party; Shiromani Akali Dal⁵ (SAD) secured mass support of the Sikhs while All-India Muslim League (AIML) was a representative party of the Muslims. Consciously or unconsciously, from the very outset of the political history, the British Punjab was divided on communal lines.

The elections of 1945-46 proved one of the most important events of the British India's political history which stamped the Two-Nation theory⁶ conceded by the main strata of the Muslims throughout the Subcontinent. The claim to be a representative party of all the religious communities living in India projected by the Indian National Congress was absolutely rejected by the Muslim voters. The Shiromani Akali Dal enjoyed a profound base among the Sikhs but many other parties like the Congress, Central Akali Dal (CAD) under the leadership of Baba Kharak Singh and the Communist Party of India had immense influence in the Sikh constituencies. All the political parties favoured united India except the League which after observing the plight of the South Asian Muslims demonstrated unshakable determination to secure a sovereign Muslim state. The League's performance in the elections of 1937 was negligible⁷ as it could win only two seats in the Punjab and this was being quoted by many that Quaid-i-Azam did not enjoy the support of the Muslim majority provinces. This political scenario had made these elections decisive and crucial as far as the destiny of the region and the Muslims was concerned. Sharif al Mujahid contends that psychological boost by the Simla strategy to the League, Cripps tour and post-war Labour government in England helped in holding elections in winter 1945-46. The Punjab emerged as sensitive region in determining the League strength so the Hindu leadership had to bribe the League's Muslim parties. The elections were deemed to seek support for the Pakistan scheme.⁸ The parties enthusiastically launched their campaigns with well-worked out strategies.

Electioneering Campaign (1945-46)

The elections aimed basically to judge the peoples' sentiments on the demands made by the political parties as the Congress had been vociferating that it was a representative of all the religious communities living in the Subcontinent. The League claimed to be the sole representative body of the Muslims while the non-Muslim political forces did believe in the meagre support by the

Muslims for the League. On the other hand, Congress leadership claimed a tremendous influence in the Sikh constituencies therefore, any position could affect the Sikh position. The Congress sensed the time and "made an all out bid to divide the Sikhs to eliminate them as a forceful separate entity" but the Sikh leadership could not learn the lesson.⁹ The League approached the Muslim voters to obtain their will in favour of Pakistan while the Punjab Unionist Party issued its manifesto in 1945 which highlighted its past services in general to the province and the Muslims in particular. The Unionists claimed that 80 per cent population of the Punjab lived in the rural areas which remained their focus during their entire political past. They propagated the objectives to achieve:

- attainment of complete independence through constitutional strategy,
- provincial autonomy,
- better facilities for the backward urban classes,
- national self-respect,
- to work for the Punjabi recruitment in the army,
- educational, industrial and agricultural development,
- rural uplift,
- working for cultural and religious integrity of all the communities on the basis of tolerance.¹⁰

According to Qalb-i-Abid, the Sikhs cleared Tiwana that they would support him if he would have opposed the Pakistan scheme¹¹ but he remained confused on this point and issued statements in favour of Pakistan that resented the non-Muslims but he was sure that post-election situation would eliminate the entire gimmick from their mind.¹² The Punjab government planned to project their services and activities through the print

media. The *Paisa Akhbar* (Lahore) published the news with the reference of some prominent Indian newspapers that the Punjab government had purchased the local newspapers including *Hindu*, *Ajit*, *Inqelab*, *Ihsan* and *Al-Shehbaz* for its political propaganda. The government had been granting Rs.3,000 annually to these papers in the name of war propaganda and this amount was raised to Rs.17,000 till February 1945. The paper further claimed that the governments could not be saved through such immoral and undemocratic means.¹³ The League came up with a well-worked out plan in the elections. They had tough task ahead as they had never enjoyed a sound numerical representation in the provincial legislature. Therefore, the challenge was a gigantic but it was taken as an easy venture under the tremendous leadership of Quaid-i-Azam. Their canvassing was based on two elements i.e., Horrors and Hopes. They depicted what happened in the past with the Muslims under the majority of the Sikh and Hindu communities. The League infused that the anti-League victory would ruin the Muslims. The economic, religious, educational, agricultural, political and other hopes enunciated by the Leaguers in the proposed Muslim state was another aspect to attract huge number of the sympathisers.¹⁴ To Iftikhar H. Malik, "Islam, Urdu, economic empowerment and political assertion all combined to offer inducements to various Muslim strata seeking their own respective heavens."¹⁵

Religion could muster the respective communities around their political parties as it proved a sensitive point for the communities in India. The League propagated that they were out to fight the anti-Muslim forces. Interestingly, the main religious groups working in India opposed the Pakistan drive while the Muslim spiritual circle supported the League. David Gilmartin writes that Sardar Shaukat Hayat tried a lot to attract the Muslims in the name of Islam. At Sial Sharif (Sargodha), he spoke to the Muslim League conference in June 1945 and sought a promise not to leave the path of Islam while in September 1946 he stated that there would be an Islamic government in Pakistan. In February 1946, Pir Jama'at Ali Shah defending Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad

Ali Jinnah at the Sunni Conference at Benaras, declared that Jinnah was a saint of God.¹⁶ Such statements had marvellous impact on the people who had profound love for the saints. In the early February 1944, he had already announced his full support to the Pakistan ideal. He conveyed his voice to all the Muslims and appealed to make the annual session of the Punjab Muslim League, Sialkot successful and sacrifice all what they possessed on the call of Quaid-i-Azam.¹⁷ His son Muhammad Hussain Shah in December 1945 toured Jhelum Tehsil and issued a verdict that only the Leaguers were true Muslims while the anti-Leaguers were unquestionably infidels.¹⁸ Maulana Syed Fazl Husain Shah, Sajjada Nashin Jalalpur Sharif (district Jhelum) who enjoyed immense influence in whole of the district issued a statement to support the League.¹⁹ They used festival of Eid and Friday prayers as the platforms to convey that the support to Jinnah was their religious duty. The students trained on religious lines played an impressive role in engraining the League in the Muslim minds in the rural Punjab.²⁰

The Governor's Reports supported the facts relating to the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Islam Conference held at Lahore attended by 20,000 people including *Pirs* and *Ulama* from all over the Punjab, Delhi, UP and NWFP²¹ in which the speakers unequivocally appealed to the Muslims to vote for the Leaguers "in the name of *Allah*."²² The strategy proved effective in strengthening the League in the Punjab. Notable point is that the students' activities in favour of Pakistan had entrenched this idea in the minds of the masses.²³ The League's decision to strengthen its position through the students was projected by the Governor in June 1944 as a devious move to further its objectives. The Leaguers were using Mosques as a base for the party politics and propagation for the Pakistan demand. They were doing all this under the assertion that politics and religion in Islam are inseparable. The report warned that boycott of the Hindu shops and opening of the Muslim shops in the villages would end any possibility of communal understanding between the two communities in the near future.²⁴ The propagation in the name of God or Islam was proving too

disastrous for the Unionist Muslims that the Premier had to issue a press statement in which he warned the propagandists of legal action if they continued influencing the voters in the name of Divine displeasure.²⁵

The Governor expressed concern over the Muslim League National Guards and Jinnah's anti-Unionist propaganda on religious lines. Khizr Hayat Tiwana informed the Governor that Jinnah was inviting *maulvis* (Muslim clerics) from the UP to the Punjab to challenge the Unionist government "on religious lines."²⁶ Nevertheless, the Punjab Muslim League National Guards had no secret funds and motives, as the organisation advertised in the *Inqelab* that the audited reports of the organisation had been placed in the office for the public view²⁷ along with its source of income and expenditures. The governing party also decided to secure mass support of the Muslims through religious propaganda. The Unionist organiser in district Jhelum in the late December 1945 faced difficulty in countering the religious propaganda of the League and sought the similar help from the party. He demanded that verdicts against the League should be arranged from Bareilly or Deoband. Other districts also faced the same situation wherein the party leaders cried for the help of some religious oratory and verdicts. For example, Multan district branch requested for sending *maulvis* for help. The party tried to meet the demand by sending paid *maulvis* of the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, Delhi,²⁸ a pro-Congress political wing of Deoband established in 1919. The Zamindara League²⁹ of district Montgomery organised a camp on the annual fair of Baba Farid (Muslim saint) at Pakpattan to attract the masses but it could not be effective as neither people nor *Sajjadanashin* (family to look after the shrine affairs) gave them any importance while the League maintained the privileged place during this event.³⁰

A Sikh Election Board was established under Master Tara Singh to participate in the coming elections who pointed out that the Congress and Communists were supporting Pakistan while the Hindu Mahasabha (extremist Hindu party) was the only anti-

Pakistan party but without any importance in the political sphere. Nevertheless, he advised the Akalis to fully support the Congress in the fight for the Indian independence.³¹ Dr. Gopi Chand, a strong Hindu leader in the Punjab Assembly, concluded an understanding between the Provincial Congress and the Akalis. As a result, the Congressite Sikhs and the Nagoke group agreed that such avenues should be worked out; this could provide a base for the Akali-Congress compromise at the national level. By this formula, the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Congress Parliamentary Board would pick the candidates with mutual agreement on the Congress tickets but with the conditions of safeguarding the Sikh interests and the opposition to Pakistan. But Master Tara Singh did not approve it. The Akalis however seemed hopeful of an eventual compromise despite the friction between the Akalis and the Congressites during the election campaign.³² Under such expectations, the Akalis continued supporting the Congress candidates. The Police reported that the Akalis were supporting Dr. Gopi Chand because they had compromised with the Congress on a few electoral constituencies.³³

According to the Governor's Report, the Akali Dal and the Congress started discussion to conclude an agreement for the Punjab Assembly elections but it failed to achieve the understanding. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (Congressite Muslim) and the other Congress high command expressed a great concern over the breakdown of the negotiations. He instructed the Punjab Congress to come to an agreement with the Akalis and Unionists even if the terms were not favourable as desired. The extremist Akalis and Dr. Gopi Chand maintained the enthusiasm to strengthen the group position while the Communists forced Master Tara Singh to make a settlement. Sarat Chandra Bose made a visit to the Punjab to mediate but could not produce any settlement.³⁴ In January 1946, at Chakwal, the Congress organised its meeting a few yards away from the place where the Akalis had organised their gathering. At Rawalpindi, the Akalis sabotaged all the arrangements for a conference made by the

CAD, a Sikh party headed by Baba Kharak Singh. The Akalis and Congressites were close to fight but escaped. On the other hand, the Namdhari³⁵ Sikhs declared their support to the Congress candidates in the elections. In the meanwhile, the League held 70 meetings in one week and the Muslim women and students were struggling hard to secure the mass support for the Muslim state. Nevertheless, it was reported that the students of the Aligarh proved not effective during the mass campaign.³⁶ The candidates were sent to the constituencies to contest elections by the parties.³⁷

Using Government Machinery

The abuse of the government machinery against the League remained a salient feature of the Unionist Ministry led by the British Governor. Numerous cases from different constituencies were reported to the League leadership in this regard. The League meetings were held to deal with the complaints of interference by the Punjab officers against their candidates.³⁸ On 3 December 1945, the League Working Committee eventually decided to approach the Punjab Governor and Viceroy to report the officers' interference in the elections and the postponement of the Municipal and Corporation elections. On 8 December, the League deputation met the Governor and demanded enquiry by the British MPs and "Parliamentary supervision over the elections."³⁹ The official influence was utilised to the extent that Baba Kharak Singh and Gopal Singh Qaumi had to say that Sardar Ujjal Singh and Baldev Singh were the 'nominees' of the Punjab Governor.⁴⁰ On 17 January 1946, Jinnah addressed a huge gathering of the Muslim women at Lahore in which he condemned the "Glancy-Khizar Axis."⁴¹ He also condemned the Punjab government's illegal interference in the electioneering activities and consoled his followers by saying that if Gandhi, Patel and Nehru could not damage the League what the Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, and Tehsildars of the Punjab could do; they could do nothing to damage the prestige of the League. He

considered the nationalist Muslims, Ahrars and Khaksars as henchmen of the government and enemies of the League.⁴²

Chaudhry Ram Singh, Superintendent of Police, toured the area of Midh Ranjha, district Shahpur and scared the supporters of the League's candidate and tried to pressurise the local eminent people to side with Tiwana's candidate. Sheikh Manzur Ali, Revenue Assistant and District Election Officer, tried to influence the voters against the League during his tour to Bhalwal Tehsil.⁴³ Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan issued a statement that the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police were struggling hard through different inducements and threats to secure the candidates for the Unionist Party against the Leaguers. He further said that they had appealed to the Governor to issue orders for the impartial working of the district administration but Glancy turned down the request. Jinnah stated that Glancy and Khizr could not eliminate the party representing the millions of the Muslims.⁴⁴ Jinnah in his speech to the Muslim women on 17 January 1946 said that the bureaucracy was interfering with the elections.⁴⁵ Khizr Tiwana, Ch. Chhotu Ram, Glancy and the Ministers along with the officers were openly collecting money for the Zamindara League, another name of the Punjab Unionist Party. Amazingly, the senior British officials sometimes supported the undemocratic and illegal activities of the Unionists who were involved in pressurising the subordinates to do all this to defeat the League in the forthcoming elections. The Punjab Premier also disclosed about the Governor's interference in the canvassing and conveyed his message according to DC, Ludhiana that Sardar Shaukat Hayat in particular and the Leaguers in general should not win the elections at any cost.⁴⁶ The Governor and his machinery played a crucial role in the elections:

The Muslim intelligentsia is dead certain that if the official machinery had not been used on the side of Unionists no member would have been returned on the Unionist ticket for the Provincial Assembly.⁴⁷

The law and order situation during the elections is worth-mentioning because no major clash took place on the polling day as the Governor reported. Nevertheless many minor brawls between the Akalis and Congressite Sikhs and between Ahrars, Unionists and Leaguers occurred.⁴⁸

Results of the Elections

The party position was as follows:

Party	Seats
All-India Muslim League	75
Indian National Congress	51
Punjab Unionist Party	21(13 Muslims)
Panthic Sikhs	21
Independents	07

Source: Letter from Glancy to Wavell, 28 February 1946 in Lionel Carter, ed., *Punjab Politics, 1 January 1944-3 March 1947* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2006), 172-74.

Total fourteen returned unopposed including two Leaguers, two Unionists, one independent and nine Congressites. Congress defeated 20 Unionist, 6 Akali, 2 Hindu Mahasabha, 1 Radical Democrats, 10 Communists and 34 independent candidates. Congress was defeated by 9 Leaguers, 3 Unionists, 13 Akalis and 4 independents. The Muslim League defeated 57 Unionists, 16 Ahrars, 9 Congressites, 3 Khaksars, 1 Unionist-cum-Khaksar and 47 independents. ML was defeated by 11 Unionists and 1 independent. The Unionists defeated 3 Congress, 11 ML, 1 Ahrar and 10 independent candidates. The Unionist Party faced defeat by 20 Congressites, 57 ML and 3 independents including on 1 Sikh and 1 Christian seat. The Akali Dal defeated 13 Congressmen, 11 Communists and 17 independents. The Akali Dal was defeated by 6 Congress and 1 independents candidates. The independents snatched victory from ML (1 seat), Congress(4), Akalis (1), Radical Democrats (1), Unionists(3) and Communists (4). The Communists (23), Ahrars (17), Khaksars (4), Hindu Mahasabha (2), and Radical Democrats (2) could not

win any seat in the elections. Votes polled by the parties remained ML 65 percent and Unionist 26 percent, while on Sikh Seats Akalis 41 percent and Congress 40.93 percent.⁴⁹ The party position regarding voting strength and percentage was as under:

In all Contested Constituencies

Party	Total Seat	Total Votes	Percentage
Congress	73	513,101	24.78
ML	83	677,792	32.73
Unionists	97	413,815	19.98
Akalis	28	171,583	8.28

Source: IOR: L/P&J/8/472

The Unionist success can be assessed by the constituencies:

Constituency	Party	Successful Name
1. North-West Gurgaon	Unionist	Mohar Singh
2. ?		Prem Singh
3. Hansi		Chaudhri Suraj Mal
4. Hoshiarpur West		M. Mangoo Ram
5. Jullundur		M. Sant Ram
6. Lahore		Nawab Sir Muzaffar Ali Khan
7. Fazilka		M. Bagh Ali
8. Gujrat East		M. Asghar Ali
9. Shahpur		Mian Sultan Ali
10. Khushab		Khizar Hayat Tiwana
11. Sargodha		Allah Bakhsh Tiwana
12. Attock South		Mohi-ud-Din Lal Badshah
13. Mianwali South		M. Mohammad Abdullah Khan
14. Multan		Maj. Ashiq Hussain
15. Alipur		M. Mohammad Ibrahim
16. Dera Ghazi Khan Central		Faiz Mohammad Khan
Indian Christian		
17. West Central Punjab	Unionist	DBSP Singha
Landholders		
18. Central Punjab Landholders		S. Jagjit Singh

Unionist-Panthic	
19. North Punjab Landholders Unionist	Malik Khizar Hayat Khan
20. West Punjab Landholders Unionist	Malik Khizar Hayat Khan
21. Tumandars	Sir Mohammad Jamal Khan

Source: IOR: L/P&J/8/472

The election results set a new trend in the political history of the Punjab. As a democratic tool, the elections pushed the minor parties to the bottom and the voters supported the parties which had popular ideological base. It washed out the Communists, Ahrars, Khaksars, Hindu Mahasabha and Radical democrats totally from the political scene.⁵⁰ Mohar Singh, Prem Singh, Chaudhri Suraj Mal, M. Mangoo Ram, M. Sant Ram, and S. Jagjit Singh (Landholder) returned to the Assembly as the Unionists while D. B. S. P. Singha won as a Christian Unionist.⁵¹ By this, the Unionist Party was relegated to a negligible political organ despite its claim to represent all the Punjabi communities. It could obtain just 3 Sikh, 3 Hindu and 1 Christian seat. The claimant of the 'cross-communal' party could win only 7 non-Muslim seats. The elections unseated fifty-seven Unionist Muslims and it could secure only 21 seats. The Communists also did poorly by losing all the 4 seats they previously held.⁵²

The results invoked great appreciation for the students of the Aligarh University, Muslim Students Federation, Islamia College Lahore and other colleges of Lahore and Amritsar who furthered the cause of Pakistan⁵³ and did a lot in winning the elections. The Unionists faced severe setback in the elections as the results were declared in favour of the League. Their best candidates had been defeated by the Leaguers. Even Khizr Tiwana could save his seat with flooding money. According to his son, Tiwana had to spend Rs.800,000 during his election campaign.⁵⁴ Sardar Baldev Singh had to utilise lakhs of rupees, government machinery and appeals in the name of *Panth* only then he could win his seat with a very close margin of a few hundred votes.⁵⁵ According to T. P. Khalidi, the Jat ministers, Baldev Singh and Ch. Tikka Ram were in

trouble due to the Congress opposition and both had to spend a huge amount of money.⁵⁶ Bibi Amar Kaur, sister of Bhagat Singh Shaheed, was jailed because she had made anti-Baldev speeches in his constituency during the election.⁵⁷

Many Hindu leaders viewed the League's victory in the elections as of no importance. To them, the victory did not reflect that the Muslims had voted for Pakistan. Narayan Kumar writes that the Muslim support for the League could not mean the support for Pakistan.⁵⁸ Such assertions were preposterous because the League had contested the elections on the basis of Pakistan agenda therefore the victory of the League was a victory for the idea of Pakistan. Jawaharlal Nehru also rejected the League's success in the elections and remarked that the victory did not mean the Muslim support for the Pakistan scheme⁵⁹ while Maulana Azad writes that Nehru considered the League as a popular party after the elections and that the Congress could have coalition with it.⁶⁰ Nehru had contended in January 1946 that he would not oppose the Muslims to join India against their will but it did not mean that they would drag the other communities with them. Ram Narayan opines that this statement by him was tacitly proposing partitioning the provinces.⁶¹ Vallabhai Patel opined that the League secured more seats than expected one.⁶²

Quaid-i-Azam seemed proud on the tremendous victory endowed by the Punjab. He sent a wire to Nawab Iftexhar Hussain Mamdot, provincial President of the League, with pleasure that a win over the rivals equipped with all powers was a magnificent achievement.⁶³ The election results deepened the communal crisis and very little effort was made to avoid the expected problems in the problematic corners of the region. The League triumphed in the Punjab against the will of the Unionists and British and if its victory was to be marred it could not remain silent. Sensing this grave situation, the decision-making authorities both in the government and political arena should have honoured the League's success that was the only way to save the Punjab from a geographical split. But a new drama was initiated to transmute the

League's victory into a defeat. The Governor reported to the Viceroy about the doubtful political situation regarding the loyalties while the seat position at that time did not indicate that any single party could make a ministry independently. The Governor thus came to the conclusion that as no single party commanded a majority in the Assembly so a coalition government was the only solution.⁶⁴ The Governor's analysis was very strange because everyone knew that under the constitutional arrangement of the seat allocation to the different communities of the Punjab, only a coalition government could be formed after every election. So, the report was a clear message that the Governor was prepared to ignore the League's political breakthrough and was determined to deny the status of the largest Assembly party.

The League's victory, the disappointing performance by the nationalist Muslims and Ahrar candidates and the total rejection of the Unionist Party by the Muslim masses were a stunning surprise to the Congress circles. Patel cried that all their efforts, hopes and finances were wasted. All their expectations and calculations proved false and wrong. Nevertheless, the possibility of a Congress, Akali, and Unionist coalition relieved him but he too repeated the Congress creed that "we can have no truck with the League."⁶⁵ The success in the elections should have convinced the so-called 'democratic' Congress to acknowledge the League as the sole representative of the Indian Muslims and this was the best opportunity to bring the League in the main fold of the national struggle but the Congress did not even accept the League victory as a genuine change rather the Congress leadership in the coming days stated that the League had befooled the Muslims.

The Governor reported that the results busied the parties in the ministry making parleys. The Akalis would have a key position in any move to form coalition ministry. The report further depicted the situation that the coming Gurdwara elections and the apprehension about Pakistan presented sufficient base to reject any possibility of the political working with the League. The Sikhs were furious due to the Congress opposition in the elections and

most of them regarded it as a Hindu party which had no concern with the Sikh interests. The Akali MLAs empowered Baldev Singh to negotiate with the political parties regarding the coalition government.⁶⁶

The Akali Sikhs always seemed keen to win the Gurdwara elections which could enable them to collect Sikhs around them in the name of religion and provide them substantial amount of funds. This distracted them from the main task at hand which was to safeguard the Sikh political interests in the changing political circumstances.

Ministry Making Process

The League's working permeated a sense of responsibility and security of the Muslim interests among the Muslims. The denial of the League's right to make government in the Punjab was perceived as a conspiracy against the League. The League leaders' horrors were justifiable as Hodson has observed:

It was a trump card in propaganda for Pakistan among the Muslims, who could say: 'Even in the Punjab, even with a Muslim majority, the wily Hindus will be able to rule you, with the connivance of Sikhs and businessmen and a few Muslim stooges: the only way out is independence for your homeland.'⁶⁷

The new Punjab ministry under the premiership of Nawab Khizr Hayat Tiwana was made entirely in an undemocratic manner. The attitude of the British Governor, Congress, Sikhs and Unionists set a new example of political suppression in the Punjab against the League. Actually, there was no space for the defeated Unionists but even then a Muslim Unionist clinched the Premier office, no doubt it generates several questions. In reality, the traditional phenomenon that no non-Muslim could become Premier of the Punjab was retained as myth in the Punjab politics.

Ch. Chhotu Ram once had analysed that in case of the non-Muslim candidate for the Premiership, many Muslim Unionists could desert the party immediately. It was strange that the Premier had only 17 or 21 members from his own party and the majority parties were to salute. It may be one of the unique incidents in the political history that a person with meagre strength had been ruling over the majority parties in the British India. Coalitions are concluded on the basis of numerical strength and the portfolios are awarded according to the party position but in the Punjab the situation was vice versa. The most prestigious political office was to be awarded on the basis of religion.

K. C. Yadav opines truly that results of the elections 1946 paved the way for the partition of India.⁶⁸ The League tried a lot to win over the Sikhs in the making of the ministry but their non-cooperation took the League to reconsider its agenda of Pakistan scheme. The election results had amply cleared the future political scene of the Punjab. Observing the true picture of the political scenario, the Sikhs should have realized that their next partner in the Assembly would be the League and not the Unionist Party. According to democratic principles, a political party should be ready to survive with other political parties but the Sikhs refused to accept the League's mandate and challenged that they would never let the single largest party enjoy the right to make the government. The Sikhs could not understand the wind of change. It was the most unjust political decision when few Unionist Muslim members were in the government whereas 78 League members had been pushed to the opposition benches.⁶⁹ The Muslim masses construed the anti-League coalition in the Punjab as a conspiracy against the Muslims as a whole which increased the sympathy for their party.

Conclusion

The results of the elections 1946 convinced the anti-League protagonists to accept the League's stature as the sole

representative party of the Indian Muslims. The elections left revolutionary impact on the Punjabi communities who sought survival by supporting their respective political parties on the basis of religious affiliation and thus most of the secular and non-secular groups were aligned on the communal line with exception of Sikhs⁷⁰ who focused on Pakistan issue that was a political demand of the Muslim League. Interference of the government machinery in the elections established a poor tradition of suppression, buying loyalty, bribery, forced fund collection and threats which affected the spirit of democracy in the region. Unfortunately this cult seems prevalent in the electoral history of Pakistan.

Interestingly, no clash between the Leaguers and Akalis took place during the polling and it was the blessing of the 'separate electorates' otherwise buying voters and verdicts of profanity or traitors against each community could be poisonous to the peaceful process of the elections. The peaceful elections showed that in the presence of all the past bitterness and political grievances both the parties could go ahead for some mutual understanding and this experience could be utilised to obtain political patch-up in the newly formed assembly.

The shocking results of the elections deprived the Punjab Unionist Party of the influential position. They vociferated to be the 'cross-communal' party but the eight non-Muslim seats won on the Unionist tag repudiated this assertion projected by the government agencies and today's scholars. Fifty-seven Unionist Muslims lost their seats and it could bag only small percentage of votes. The performance of the Communists was also poor as it lost all the four seats they previously held.

The League's position on the Pakistan scheme became stronger as all the assertions of the League's ineffectiveness among the Muslim masses propagated by the anti-Leaguers proved false and Quaid-i-Azam reached zenith of the popularity. The anti-League forces' strategy to oust the majority party in the Assembly from the power was not a good move and it could produce

dangerous results as happened in the post-election scenario. By the democratic norms, the results endowed with the top office to the majority party which should have gone to the League but this right was denied. The next majority party was the Congress and then the Akalis but the minority party, the Unionist, was crowned with the Premiership which set a wrong political tradition in the regional history. It was also a continuity of the tradition that to be a Premier of the Punjab was a Muslim right only. The post-election arrangements also showed the political rapacity of Khizr Tiwana, the Sikhs and Congress leadership and it exposed the anti-League forces which intended to knock it down at any cost. This unity also exposed the so called anti-British character of the Congress leadership who collaborated with the British and their political allies in the Punjab against the League.

The partition of the Punjab and communal killing could have been averted if anyone of the political actors had not become a part of the conspiracy against the League after the elections of 1946 because a coalition ministry with the League meant a communal patch-up in the Punjab which might have delayed the separatist movements. The elections of 1946 evidently exposed official interference in the elections, bargaining and manoeuvring by the small political parties to subdue the major parties particularly the League in their favour and terrorising the voters by the government machinery. All these ills detrimental to the democratic spirit and norms still persist in the political culture of Pakistan as a historical legacy. The elections empowered the League leadership to strike strongly and prudently in redeeming the poor Muslims from the injustice of the non-Muslims.

Notes and References

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- 2 Sharif al Mujahid, "1945-46 Elections and Pakistan: Punjab's Pivotal Role," *Pakistan Vision* 11, 1 (2010): 7.

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- 3 Although the electoral college was limited and a few were given the right to vote.
 - 4 A political party dominated by Hindus founded by a British, A. O. Hume in 1885.
 - 5 Major Sikh political party under the leadership of Master Tara Singh.
 - 6 Two-Nation theory, an ideology envisaged by the Muslim political thought in India, means distinctive identity of the Indian communities on the basis of religion. According to this creed, the Indian Muslims highlighted discrimination against them by the non-Muslims. They also applied the same in the social life and declared that on the basis of separate religion, language, culture, ethos, traditions and history, the Indian Muslims were different from the other non-Muslim communities and for the reason both the communities don't inter-dine and intermarry. This philosophy worked behind the demand and struggle for separate homeland.
 - 7 The League entered the regional politics for the first time since its inception and hereafter the regional leadership could no more maintain their influence.
 - 8 Sharif al Mujahid, "1945-46 Elections and Pakistan," 1-2. The Congress leadership asked Sachar to collect funds from influential people of the Punjab.
 - 9 Gurmit Singh, *Failures of Akali Leadership* (Sirsa: Usha Institute of Religious Studies, 1981), 44-45.
 - 10 Many other points were also there in the document. See *Manifesto of the Punjab Unionist Party, Election 1945* (Lahore: Imperial Printing Works, 61 Railway Road, n.d.), MS210/3 in Papers of Col. Nawab Khizar Hayat Tiwana
 - 11 Dr. S. Qalb-i-Abid, "Muslim-Sikh Relationship (1921-47), A Brief Survey," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 39, Part III (July 1991): 274.
 - 12 Sharif al Mujahid, "1945-46 Elections," 3 and 8n.
 - 13 Weekly *Paisa Akhbar* (Lahore) 24 February 1945.
 - 14 K. C. Yadav, "The Partition of India: A Study of the Muslim Politics in the Punjab, 1849-1947," *The Punjab Past and Present* 17-1 (April 1983): 138.

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- 15 Iftikhar H. Malik, "Punjab, partition and Pakistan," http://www.india-seminar.com/2006/567/567_iftikhar_h_malik.htm, 22-12-2008. 7-8 (1-11).
 - 16 David Gilmartin, "Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab," in Mushirul Hasan, ed., *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 223-224.
 - 17 Daily, *The Eastern Times* (Lahore) 6 February 1944.
 - 18 Letter from Bashir Husain, Jhelum District Organiser, to Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha, Zamindara League's Secretary on 13 December 1945 in David Gilmartin, "Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab," 228 (198-232).
 - 19 Daily *Inqelab* (Lahore) 11 January 1946.
 - 20 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988), 160-61.
 - 21 Now 'Khyber-Pakhtoonkhawa.'
 - 22 Governor's Fortnightly Report, (Punjab) Second half of January 1946, L/PJ/5/249.
 - 23 The work produced by Sarfraz Mirza and Baidar Malik is worth-mentioning.
 - 24 Fortnightly Report, June 1944, L/PJ/5/247, British Library, London.
 - 25 Premier's Statement on 21 January 1946, MS-210/18, Tiwana Papers.
 - 26 Extract from Private and Secret Letter from Lord Wavell to Mr. Amery on 20 June 1944, IOR: L/PJ/8/662.
 - 27 Daily *Inqelab*, 24 February 1946
 - 28 Letter from Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha to Nawab Allah Bakhsh Tiwana on 16 January 1946 in David Gilmartin, "Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab," 230.
 - 29 Zamindara League, an extra-parliamentary organisation of the Unionists, was founded by Ch. Chhotu Ram in 1920s and later on it was revived in 1944 to counter League's politics. In the 1940s, Zamindara League meant to be a supporting platform of the Punjab Unionist Party.

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- 30 Ian Talbot, *Khizr Tiwana, the Punjab Unionist Party and the Partition of India* (London: Curzon Press, 1996), 132.
- 31 Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History* 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Uncommon Books, 1996), 224-25.
- 32 FR, November 1945, L/PJ/5/248.
- 33 Secret Police Abstract of Intelligence, (Lahore) 1946, para. 19.
- 34 FR, January 1946, L/PJ/5/249.
- 35 A Sikh sect.
- 36 Secret Police Abstract, 1946, file S-414, para 20, 21.
- 37 Candidates put by parties:
- | | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Congress | 82 |
| ML | 85 |
| Unionist | 99 |
| Ahrar | 17 |
| Khaksar | 03 |
| Unionist-cum-Khaksar | 01 |
| Communist | 24 |
| Akali | 28 |
| Radical Democrat | 02 |
| Hindu Mahasabha | 02 |
| Independents | 118 |
| Total Candidates | 461 |
- IOR: L/P&J/8/472
- 38 Skirmishes between the Leaguers and anti-Leaguers were reported on the interference in the elections by the pro-Unionist officials. See Ian Talbot, "The 1946 Punjab Elections," 71.
- 39 FR, the first half of December 1945, L/PJ/5/248.
- 40 Secret Police Abstract, Lahore 1946, file S-414, para. 50.
- 41 *Ibid.*, para 51.
- 42 Khurshid Ahmad Khan, ed., *Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah: Some Rare Speeches and Statements, 1944-1947* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, Punjab University, 1988), 114-119.
- 43 Report from Bhera on 4 January 1946, Punjab I:84, Shamsul Hasan Collection, National Archives of Pakistan.

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- 44 Daily *Inqelab*, 16 January 1946; see also *The Punjab Assembly Debates 1946*, vol. XXV (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1947), 116.
- 45 *Inqelab*, 19 January 1946.
- 46 Letter from A. M. Khan Leghari, DC Ludhiana, to the Secretary of State for India, undated, file no. 1120, Quaid-i-Azam Papers, NAP, Islamabad.
- 47 "The Khizar Quisling Ministry," Editorial, *The Eastern Times*, 26 March 1946.
- 48 FR, February 1946, L/PJ/5/249.
- 49 IOR: L/P&J/8/472.
- 50 IOR: L/P&J/8/472.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 FR, February 1946, L/PJ/5/249.
- 53 T. P. Khalidi, "Punjab Assembly Elections- Second Week," *The Eastern Times*, 19 February 1946.
- 54 Nazar Tiwana, Interview with the author on 13 December 1993 at New Delhi, Ian Talbot, *Khizr Tiwana*, 148.
- 55 Durlabh Singh, "Akali-Congress Pact," Editorial in daily *Ranjit*, Lahore, 17 December 1946;
Result of Ambala North:
Baldev Singh bagged 8226
Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh got 7277.
In another constituency:
Sardar Ujjal Singh 10460
Sardar Gopal Singh Qaumi got 10342. Kripal C. Yadav, *Elections in Punjab, 1920-1947* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1981), 117.
- 56 T. P. Khalidi, "A resume of the First Week of 1946 Elections in the Punjab," *The Eastern Times*, 10 February 1946.
- 57 *Nia Zamana*, 26 May 1946.
- 58 Ram Narayan Kumar and Georg Sieberer, *The Sikh Struggle, Origin, Evolution and Present Phase* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1991), 138.
- 59 Ibid., 138-39.

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- 60 Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1967), 129-30.
 - 61 Ram Narayan Kumar, *The Sikh Struggle*, 138-39.
 - 62 Sharif al Mujahid, "1945-46 Elections and Pakistan," 6.
 - 63 Ibid.
 - 64 FR, February 1946, L/PJ/5/249.
 - 65 Ibid.
 - 66 Ibid.
 - 67 H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide: Britain-India-Pakistan* 3rd ed. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1970), 271; also see Iftikhar Malik, "Pluralism, Partition and Punjabisation: Politics of Muslim Identity in the British Punjab," *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 5 (January-June 1998): 118-19.
 - 68 K. C. Yadav, "The Partition of India," 137.
 - 69 See, *The Sikhs in Action* (Lahore: Punjab Government, 1975), 1.
 - 70 Although Sikhs supported anti-Pakistan forces that can be taken as a religious drive but as a matter of fact the Sikh voters distributed seats between Shiromani Akali Dal and Congress. The Sikh position was very important for the British but the weak performance of the Akali Dal in the elections mainly affected the Sikh position in the politics