
Communal Currents: The Fate of Unionist Party in the Punjab

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Abstract

Muslims remained a distinct community in India and were successful in surviving the attempts of the Hindus to absorb them into the fold of Hinduism. All the religions that entered India before Islam became victim of Indian *boa constricta*, which had the flexibility to reshape itself, accommodating the new religion into it; thus vanishing the distinct identity of the 'intruding' religion. But Islam and the Muslims in the Indian lands did not meet the same fate because of many factors; more important of those was the belief system of Islam as well as the politically dominant position that Muslims enjoyed in India over the centuries.

Introduction

The status of the Muslims as rulers and their policies based on justice kept the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims on the balanced track. However, with the end of the Mughal rule¹ and the dominance of the British on the Indian political landscape, the relations began to deteriorate. Eventually came a point where even in one of the most 'calm' provinces of India² — the Punjab — such a situation developed, which was depicted by an author as follows:

It was a conclusion, the sudden, shattering collapse of a society. One act provoked another, one horror fed another, each slaughter begot its successor, each riot its imitator, each atrocity its counterpart, until like slow-motion images of a building disintegrated under the impact of an explosion, the walls of Punjab society crumbled upon each other.³

But this 'sudden shattering collapse' was not a sudden development as far as its origin is concerned. It had its roots as the hatred of centuries, which could not vanish even during the period of co-existence, although the rule of the Muslims mellowed it, bringing it to a much lesser degree. The advent of the British as the key

player on Indian political chessboard, and their subsequent introduction of political reforms, brought political consciousness among the local communities. The increased consciousness of self-help resurfaced the hatred, which became uncontrollable with the passage of time. The situation reached to a no-return point and a split became the only feasible option.

As a result, India became the battlefield of communalists. The Punjab was relatively peaceful province under the Unionists. However, the outside 'input' started disturbing the political equilibrium in the Punjab as well. It did not take a long period after Mian Fazl-i-Husain that the Unionists began negotiating with All India Muslim League, hitherto labeled and opposed by the Unionist Party because of its communal nature. But the non-communal structure of the Unionist Party had become a major obstacle in the way of the Unionist-Muslim League understanding. In fact the tussle with Ahrars in the mid 1930's also "stemmed from the fact that the Unionists refused to separate the socio-political interests of different religious groups in the Punjab"⁴. But it is a fact, endorsed by many historians that the Unionist programme and its verbal commitment were not in harmony with each other. The Unionists, along with promoting the interests of all communities, focused to improve the conditions of the Muslims in the province particularly in the field of education, economics and services. Thus, the Unionist attempts to uplift the Muslims, while maintaining the verbal commitment to a non-communal policy was bound to backfire.⁵

With the ousting of Mian Fazl-i-Hussain from the scene, this dichotomy became more pronounced. Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan, the successor of Fazl-i-Hussain who rose to the premiership of the Punjab, on non-communal platform, formed a cross-communal cabinet, espoused the Punjabi cause, yet tried to cultivate the Muslim nationalists, particularly the All India Muslim League. The net result was that the Unionist alliance, a de-facto factor maintaining political equilibrium in the province, ultimately ended up losing everything and giving way to anarchical situation. Sikander-Jinnah Pact, which was then termed as the "shining hour of Sikander's political career, proved to be the beginning of an end of the Unionist Party."⁶

Provincial branch of All India Muslim League in the Punjab was not effective in the decades when the Unionists were on a high tide in the province. Mian Fazl-i-Hussain and other Unionists however, faced strong resistance from the Hindus. The impact of the policies of Mian Fazl-i-Hussain invited criticism by Mahasbha.⁷ Communalist Hindus said that "Chottu Ram⁸ is in fact a Muslim at the heart".⁹ Another paper wrote that: "By selecting Chaudhary Chottu Ram, Sir Malcolm Hailey¹⁰ has made a great mistake ... Chottu Ram will be a puppet in the hands of Fazl-i-Hussain".¹¹

But despite strong Hindu criticism, the Unionists managed to run their affairs smoothly. In the mid 1930s, however, the stakes of the Unionists seemed to

be even higher. The elections held under 1935 Act gave the Unionists a big majority. The new Ministry which sworn in on 1937 had the support of one hundred and twenty members in a house of one hundred and seventy five.¹² This was a phenomenal success for Sikandar Hayat, who in the preceding years had not only made his position stronger than the founder of the party, but also had managed to contest elections without any split in the party despite tacit competition for the leadership in the party.¹³ Sardar Sikandar Hayat also managed to get support of minority leaders like Sunder Singh Majitha of the Khalsa Party. He also succeeded to get support of Chaudhary Chottu Ram, the co-founder of the Unionist Party and representative of agriculturist Hindus. In fact, such was his commitment that attempts by Hindu and Sikh leaders to break ranks with the Unionists evoked a sharp rebuke from him.¹⁴ But in the following years, he could not keep the power of unionists intact and Chaudhary Chottu Ram was the only major non-Muslim leader which did not desert the party till his death in 1945. He was instrumental in the passage of legislation like registration of money lenders Act, in 1938, which was aimed at uplifting the land holders — the prime constituency of the Unionists. However, such efforts had their reactions in the Hindus, as they were the community whose interests were being threatened by such legislation. Chottu Ram was criticized by the Hindu press which dubbed him as a ‘bania hater’.¹⁵

As the Unionists were a binding force in the Punjab, it is important to note that what kind of thinking was the guiding principle for the unionist leaders. The most prominent non-Muslim leader in the Unionist party, Chaudhary Chottu Ram’s alliance with the pre-dominantly Muslim party, was not based on any principle of secularism. His address to the Punjab Merchant Association in 1940 gave some insight into the mindset that was at play in the Unionist ranks. In this address he said;

It is true that distinction between urban population and rural population, which is more or less identical with the distinction between commercial classes and agricultural classes has come into existence. But no body can deny that this distinction proceeds upon a well organized difference between two sets of economic interests, nor can any reasonable person deny that line of economic division is twenty times better than a distinction between one section of a community and another on the basis of religious belief. In fact, I will even go to the extent of suggesting that economic interest as a basis for the formation of parties provides a truer and healthier principle of party grouping in the present circumstances in the country than any other principle that I can conceive of.¹⁶

The argument is identical to that of the Congress line of the primacy of economic interests in national life. The Muslim nationalist perspective on that

issue had already been stated by Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, who declared very clearly that culture and not only economics, holds key importance in the life of a nation.¹⁷ The Unionist alliance was not only in economic fields but also narrowly based on class interests. Mian Fazl-i-Hussain's dream of creation of a 'non-communal, non-tribal and non-residential,'¹⁸ party realized only limited success. At the pinnacle of Unionist power, the most prominent non-Muslim Unionists were allied with the Muslims dominated party only because of narrow class interests. In the new circumstances, the forces of religious nationalism increasingly attacked these narrow class interests. Chottu Ram, at another occasion, stated his point of view on religion and politics. He opined that, "religion must be divorced from politics, and political organization must proceed on the basis of economic interests".¹⁹ In the same speech, he admitted that he started his political career as a 'communalist' but later on his "class interest proved so strong and overpowering" that they "completely submerged" his communalism.²⁰ Unfortunately, for him, all his co-religionists and the followers of the other communities in the province did not share this overpowering of 'communalist tendencies'.

The Hindu thought in the Punjab in the late 1920s moved fast towards militancy. Rashtriya Sewak Sangh founded in 1925, had its branches in many districts of the Punjab by 1938.²¹ In the same year, Dr Moonje, a hard-line Hindu leader came to Lahore to bring together various Hindu semi-military organizations. By the year 1940, the enrolment had risen to one thousand. But even more disturbing was the fact that propaganda parties were being sent to rural areas for enrolment of volunteers.²² RSS' ideology was based on the belief that whole of India was the land of the Hindus and the Muslims were foreigners and intruders.²³

Communal currents had tightly gripped the Hindu community in the province but Chottu Ram was neglecting them. As the things moved, it was only a matter of time before religious sentiments overtook "class interests", and with the growing consciousness among the Muslims and a strengthened Pakistan movement put Chottu Ram's loyalty with the Unionists' cause under serious strain. Changed circumstances made him declare: "In any matter related with Hinduism, I yield to none in my loyalty to Hinduism".²⁴ In an earlier article on the demand of Pakistan, he wrote: "If Muslim minorities can not tolerate the rule of non-Muslim majorities, how can Muslim majorities expect non-Muslim minorities to develop a love for the rule of Muslim majorities?"²⁵

After the official announcement of 1935 Act, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, leader of All India Muslim League toured Punjab, on the invitation of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal who had asked him to build a broad Muslim coalition to contest the upcoming elections. While keeping him updated on the situation in the province, Iqbal also suggested him the following in a letter:

Sir Sikandar Hayat left Lahore a day or two before. I think he will meet you in Bombay and have a talk with you about certain matters of importance. Daultana saw me yesterday. He told me that Muslim members of the Unionist Party are prepared to accept the following declaration: 'that in all matters specific to the Muslim community as an all India minority, they will be bound by the decision of the League and will never make any party with any non-Muslim group in the provincial assembly,' provided the League (provincial) makes the following declaration: 'that those returned to the provincial assembly on League ticket will cooperate with that party and group that has the largest number of Muslims.' Please let me know at your earliest convenience what you think of this proposal. Also let me know the result of your talks with Sir Sikandar Hayat. If you succeed in convincing him, he may come to our side.²⁶

The suggestion, the content of the letter and its tone despite that during this period Iqbal was working hard to carve out an alliance of the Muslim leaders. However, the Unionist Muslims did not share the keenness with Iqbal. In fact the Unionists, conscious of their strong position, were confident of winning the elections without the support of the Muslim League.²⁷ They were not erred in their calculations and were able to achieve an overwhelming victory in the elections. But the new situation on All India level in the wake of elections portrayed a worrisome scenario for the Unionists. Congress rule in seven provinces and its attempts to crush the Muslim League and all other Muslim voices through 'mass contact' campaign created a bleak scenario which sent a stir among the Muslim Unionists. The Unionists were anticipating a crisis for identity. The frustration of the Unionist leadership is evident in the statement by Ahmad Yar Khan Daultana: "The creeds of the Unionist Party and of Congress are identical with the only difference of the constructive and destructive method of working".²⁸

As the Congress was directly challenging the Unionists in the Punjab, the Unionists became very cautious. The fear that small Hindu groups of the Unionist party may defect the party, or some Muslim leaders of the Party may join the Congress, created apprehensions among the Unionists.²⁹ The Unionists found them in the most testing time since the inception of the party. Because efforts to forge an alliance with the Muslim League based on Muslim communalism would have meant breaking ranks with the non-Muslims. On the other side, struggling against the Congress on a purely non communal platform would require an end to the class based ideology, which was at the roots of Unionism. It was not possible to maintain Unionist Party as an alliance of the land holders and yet counter successfully Congress' mass contact campaign. By now Unionists began to realize that they need

the support of League to prevent the Congress onslaught. This was something required urgently, as the articulate urban Hindu class and the Punjab press dominated by this class was strongly pro-Congress in their orientation. Thus, the Unionist leadership was facing crucial and urgent choices. They were at the sloppy crossroads, where opting a way was necessary and immediate. They either had to build a genuinely cross communal alliance which protected the interests of all classes or they had to form a strong Muslim block. However, they remained unable to make quick and final choice, thus creating difficulty for the survival of the Party. Their class biases restricted their political vision and ultimately it led to their collapse. The Congress leaders were not allowing them time, as one leader said: "It appears to me that there is no minority problem in India. The only minority community in India is that of supporters of government, belonging to all communities, but who want British supremacy in their own interests".³⁰

The challenge was real and the basis of challenge was solid. The Unionists needed a partner at the centre to counter the Congress' march. Efforts to conclude Sikandar Jinnah Pact were attempts to maintain Unionists hold on power in the Punjab and to check the Congress onslaught. The Unionists thus, started their efforts to reach some understanding with the Muslim League. For instance, chief parliamentary secretary of the Punjab, Ahmad Yar Khan Daultana supported the League while drawing a line between 'All India' and 'provincial' problems. He argued that their differences with League were only on the question of breaking a non communal alliance in the province. He added that Unionists supported Jinnah and the League on 'All India' level with regard to the problems faced by the Muslims.³¹

The new political climate was pushing Unionists to enter in a dichotomy: joining a communal party at the centre while maintaining non-communal postures at the provincial levels. This contradiction was bound to create the problems for Unionists in future. The Pact was not in the form of a legal document but a statement by Sikandar Hayat read at League Council meeting in 1937,³² in the presence of Jinnah who agreed to its text.³³

The Pact suggested that the Unionists acknowledge the supremacy of the Muslim League, at least in matters related to the Muslim interests, and agreed that both the Unionists and the Muslim Leaguers would act jointly in any forthcoming elections or by-elections.³⁴ This was reinforced by a statement made by Sardar Sikandar Hayat in which he strongly advised the Muslim Unionists to work closely with the League.³⁵ It was not a merger but the reshaping of the situation, which favoured the League as its weightage was being increased. Although the Unionist Party tried its best to maintain the cross-communal appearance of their alliance, it was coming under increasing attack. Hindu leaders were asking to the Unionists on what basis the Muslim Unionists can ask their Hindu fellows not to join the Congress while they have joined the League.³⁶ Sikander-Jinnah Pact, thus devoid the Unionists

of their claim of being a non-communal alliance. Although at that stage, some non-Muslim Unionists like Chottu Ram were of the view that fear of the Congress domination was more than the fear of Muslim aggression³⁷ tried to allay Hindu fears by arguing that the League cannot run the province without non-Muslim cooperation but the damage was done.³⁸ Although the Pact was not guided by any ideological shift towards the Muslims, it was the fact that every passing moment was taking away the Unionists strength.

Ahrar movement supporting the cause of Kashmiri Muslims, and Shaheed Ganj Mosque campaign, radicalized the Muslim politics in the province.³⁹ It was not possible for the Unionist leadership to ignore the growing sense of Muslim communitarianism. The support that Ahrars mustered on the Shaheed Ganj issue and the resultant pressure on the Unionist government in the Punjab had shaken the confidence of the Unionist leadership, and there were visible dissensions in the party ranks. The Ahrars made an important contribution in sharpening the Muslim consciousness in the rural as well as urban areas of the province.⁴⁰ The rural-urban barrier that was tactfully erected and masterly protected by the British and the Unionists was no more there. Communitarians started multiplying in urban as well as in rural areas. The Muslims, in face of Congress threat became much protective. The Muslim anger against the Congress is evident in the following excerpt from a letter to Civil and Military Gazette:

So long as the Congress shuts its eyes and sees no Hindu-Muslim question, nothing can happen. The treatment met out to the depressed classes is before us. The *Muslimans* cannot commit suicide by joining the Congress — a purely communal Hindu body Now that the *Musalmanans* are about to organize themselves, the Congress has started the nefarious game of causing disruption amongst them. Every move by the Congress has a sinister meaning for the *Musalmanans*⁴¹.

With the increasing efforts by the Congress to get hold of the Punjab, the resistance to it was also increasing. The Congress' brand of nationalism was being questioned. The symbols flaunted by the Congress as 'national' were being attacked. For instance, Civil and Military Gazette in its editorial comment questioned the parading of the Congress flag as the flag of India. It argued that since "it is not the flag of the millions of Muslims and other communities, it is a misuse of the term to call it a national flag."⁴² This perception helped "intensifying communal feeling generally and Muslim determination not to tolerate Hindu domination in particular."⁴³

Despite Sikandar Jinnah Pact, the Unionists were hell bent upon preventing both the Congress and the Muslim League to increase their influence in the province

because the increase of their influence meant a decrease in Unionist political support.

To prevent the Muslim League to get space to maneuver, Sikandar Hayat wanted that 1938 session of the Muslim League should not be held at Lahore, despite the wishes of Dr. Iqbal to do so. Sikandar Hayat warned Jinnah that a communal riot may erupt in the province because of the *Shaheed Gunj* issue.⁴⁴ But the fact was that the Unionist government was more interested to safeguard its support. Unionists discomfort with All India Muslim communitarianism was matched by its abhorrence for the Congress brand of nationalism. The Unionists wanted to maintain their maximum autonomy in the province. For instance, Sikandar Hayat opposed to convene a constituent assembly for settling the communal and minority problems. For negotiating the communal rights he wanted that the powers should be entrusted to a few leaders.⁴⁵

Sikandar Hayat's scheme of Indian Federation, which he made public in 1939, depicts his future vision. In this scheme he proposed the creation of "an All-India Federation on regional basis," which was to be demarcated into seven zones. The Punjab was in the zone seven, which included Punjab, Sind, NWFP, Kashmir, Punjab States, Balochistan, Bikaner and Jaisalmer. It was proposed that each zone should have its legislature and the representatives of the various regional legislatures were to constitute the federal assembly.⁴⁶ The zonal Scheme was not a declaration of secession from India but it certainly was an important milestone, as the most prominent Muslim leader of the most important Muslim majority province of India – the Punjab, propounded it.

The Muslim League was rapidly moving towards radical solutions by then. In the 1939 session of the League at Patna a resolution was adopted which opposed the scheme of federation in the 1935 Act. The reason given was that the "scheme has utterly failed to safeguard even the elementary rights of the Muslim minorities in various provinces"⁴⁷. By October 22, 1939 the Working Committee of the League made its position even more clearer: "The opposition of the Muslim League is not merely to the 'details' of the plans embodied in the Act of 1935 and the reconsideration therefore, but their demand is that entire problem of India's future constitution should be wholly examined and revised 'de nove'."⁴⁸

Although Sikandar Hayat's Zonal Scheme was not 'communal' in the strict sense of the word yet its close resemblance to Iqbal's ideas and Chaudhary Rahmat Ali's Pakistan scheme could not be missed. Sikandar Hayat, as a member of the League Working Committee, was certainly the guiding force behind the proposals for reviewing the 1935 Act. However the suggestion for re-organizing the Indian federation with greater provincial autonomy was bound to be used in a different manner by the Muslim nationalists⁴⁹.

However, the situation was still very gloomy. Sikandar Hayat urged Jinnah to adopt a “constructive approach” in early 1940⁵⁰. Obviously, he realized that the plans for having maximum autonomy could not be materialized unless a concrete scheme is given by the League. Thus in a confidential telegram to Sikandar Hayat, Liaquat Ali Khan tried to allay his fears. The telegram apart from asserting that Muslims are a “nation” and “not a minority in the ordinary sense of the word” also stated: “Those zones which are composed of majority of *Mussalmans* in the physical map of India, should be constituted into Independent Dominions in direct relationship with Great Britain.⁵¹” It appears that by that time Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was also convinced of the idea of creating some sort of separate state or region for the Muslims. Ikram Ali Malik in his book has published a preliminary draft of the 1940 Resolution, which he opines was presented by Sikandar Hayat Khan as it closely resembles to his Zonal scheme⁵². The preliminary draft, apart from stating that the constitutional plan be recognized as *de novo*, warned that no new plan will be acceptable unless “the units are completely autonomous and sovereign”⁵³. The document noted:

Contiguous units are demarcated into regions which will be so constituted that provinces in which the Muslims are numerically in majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India are grouped in regions, in such a manner as not to reduce the Muslims to a state of equality or minority therein⁵⁴.

In addition, the draft also envisioned giving residuary powers to the units⁵⁵. But Sikandar Hayat’s inspiration came not from the new ideas of Muslim nationhood which had gripped the Punjab. He was still talking in terms of a non-communal and an autonomous Punjab. For instance, while explaining the Lahore Resolution he said:

We do not ask for freedom that there may be Muslim Raj here and Hindu *Raj* elsewhere. If that is what Pakistan means in the Punjab, then I will have nothing to do with it.... If you want real freedom for the Punjab that is to say a Punjab in which every community will have its due share in the economic and administrative fields as partners in a common, then that Punjab will not be Pakistan, but Punjab, land of five rivers⁵⁶.

Unfortunately, for Sikandar Hayat a demarcation of region where the Muslims were in majority was the main point in the 1940 Resolution. Perhaps he was coming

across with the fundamental contradictions of the Unionist position, for the first time. But it was a belated realization. Pakistan was exactly what he was denying it to be. The new state was to be a Muslim dominated country with adequate safeguards for the minorities. The 1940 Resolution had changed the nature of relationship between different religious communities. It was no longer the issue of harmonious relations between communities sharing a territory. It was now a nation asking for self-determination. The minorities in the Punjab had to negotiate with the Punjabi Muslims as a part of a wider religious grouping. Although Unionism remained important in the Punjab for yet another six years, a Muslim state centered in the province was becoming the aspiration and goal of more and more Muslims. The stages of living together and searching for separate space were over.

With the growing consciousness of self-community at all India level, the Unionists' grip in the Punjab began to lose. In lessening the Unionists hold on Punjab and enhancing the influence of the Muslim League in the province of Punjab, Dr. Iqbal "played a conspicuous part though it was not revealed at that time"⁵⁷. In order to consolidate the influence of the Muslim League in the Punjab, Iqbal convinced Jinnah for a separate federation of the Muslim provinces as early as 1937. He stressed that to secure the future of the Muslims of India, it is an imperative that the country should be redistributed in a way that one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities could be coined. Dr. Iqbal not only provided the philosophical foundations, but he "also took effective steps to realize this objective".⁵⁸ Since 1936, he had been unceasingly persuading the Muslim Unionists to join the Muslim League. In a letter to Jinnah he wrote that the Muslim members of the Unionist Party were prepared to declare that: "In all matters specific to the Muslim Community as an all-India minority, they will be bound by the decision of the League"⁵⁹. In bringing the Muslim members of Unionist Party closer to the Muslim League he played an important role. It was made possible only through his efforts that in 1937 he could inform Jinnah that "a strong contingent from the Punjab is expected to attend Lucknow session of the League. The Unionist Muslims were also making preparations to attend under the leadership of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan".⁶⁰

Unionist Party which by then had been the staunch opponent to the growth of the Muslim League's influence in the province, now began to come closer to it. The primary reason for this rapprochement was the common threat; a threat of extinction. Iqbal in one of his statements quoted Maulana Roomi, who said: "Common sentiments are preferable to a common language".⁶¹ The bond between different communities which formed the Unionist Party was the common interest. Now that interest began to fade while the Muslims began realizing that their fate was linked with that of the other Muslims, living in different parts of India.

On the part of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, joining hands with all India Muslim League was not an easy decision, particularly at a time when the Unionists were enjoying a solid majority of 119 members in a house of 175.⁶² Once the hands were joined and the Muslim members of the Unionist Party were made subject to the discipline of the Muslim League, an irreversible process began, where the strength and influence of the Muslim League began to grow in the province with each passing day. Atrocities of the Congress Ministries in other provinces and objections of non-Muslims Unionist on their Muslim premier helped the Muslim League to gain popular support in the province. At some points, Sir Sikandar objected the policy of the League particularly he put his objections on Lahore Resolution of 1940. However, he was cognizant of the fact that he had crossed the Rubicon. He did not want to take risk of his political career by quitting its alliance with the Muslim League, as it appeared to him very difficult to wean his followers away from the League camp....⁶³

The 1946 elections proved to be turning point in the history of the Punjab. Muslim League secured seventy three seats in the Punjab Provincial Legislative Assembly, out of a total of eighty five constituencies where it contested. Whereas out of ninety-nine candidates the Unionist Party could bag only nineteen seats. "The Muslim League polled 75.26 per cent votes whereas the Unionist Party polled only 26.61 per cent votes".⁶⁴ It was in total contrast with the 1937 results when the Muslim League was able to win only two seats in the Punjab Legislature.⁶⁵ The relative strength in Provincial Legislative Assembly was as follows:⁶⁶

| Party | Seats |
|----------------|--------------|
| Muslim League | 73 |
| Unionist Party | 19 |
| Congress | 51 |
| Akali | 21 |
| Independent | 11 |

Despite the landslide victory of the Muslim League in 1946 elections, Sir Khizar Hayat formed a coalition ministry with the support of the Akali and the Congress. But this had a reverse effect. The Muslim masses became more firm in their belief that the Congress did not want to give political space to the Muslim League, which they believed was the only representative party of the Muslims of India. Had Sir Khizar not formed the ministry with the help of the Congress, and the League leaders would have been left with some hope of office, they would have their stakes in going along with the other parties. But the Congress' jumping in, merely to block the Muslim League's coming into power, left very unpleasant marks on the conscious of the League's Leaders. The results of 1946 elections had made it aptly

clear that the Muslims of the Punjab were firm in their support for the Muslim League and were aspiring to establish Pakistan, with the Punjab as a part of it.

The Sikh and the Hindus of the province feared that if Pakistan was established with the Punjab as one of its provinces, they would become a voiceless minority of the Punjab. Therefore, they demanded the creation of a Sikh-Hindu province. The fear of the Sikh and the Hindu communities was evident in the following excerpt from 'A case for a New Sikh-Hindu province in the Punjab':

If this demand is not conceded, it will mean the ruin of the Hindu martial as well as commercial classes under the permanent domination of those who believe in their being a separate nation. Similarly the Sikh, 95 percent of whose world population resides in the Punjab will become politically extinct. A people who, not hundred years ago, were the rulers of this land would become subservient to those who they had conquered and ruled. This is unjust, unfair and preposterous and shall not be permitted. Therefore, by the right of self determination, by the right of majority and by the inherent rights of a culturally homogenous people to live their own life, the division of the Punjab is absolutely essential.⁶⁷

While the new contours of inter-communal relationship were emerging, the Sikhs decided to make alliance with the Hindus.⁶⁸ The Muslim League's resolution passed in Bombay also made some impact in bringing the Sikhs into closer relationship with the Congress in the Punjab.⁶⁹ The conviction that prevented the Sikhs to join the Muslims can be understood from the Sikh psyche. The Sikhs perhaps could not forget the bad memories of their enmity with the Mughal rulers during 18th century. Referring to the Muslim rule of 18th centuries, in all *Gurdwaras*, the Sikhs "repeat the prayer, 'Hail all those who were tortured to death by removing their skins from their bodies'.⁷⁰ Despite aligning with the Hindus, the Sikhs also tried to assert their separate identity. Master Tara Singh, in his letter to Sir Stafford Cripps advocated for the Sikh province, while using all psychological tactics. It was during the World War years, when he wrote:

You cannot refuse to give a child half a loaf of bread on the ground that he cannot digest the full loaf. The Sikhs certainly cannot dominate in any decently large portion of the country and hence they do not demand domination. But a big province, much bigger than many of the existing provinces, in area, population and wealth can certainly be carved out in which the Sikhs are dominated by no single community. We do not want domination, we cannot have it. This does not mean that we should not be given protection which

we can have. If you can separate provinces from India for the domination of the Muslims, why you refuse to separate a big area for the protection of the Sikhs from the rule of a single community.⁷¹

Using the psychological tactics, against the British who were engaged in World War at that time, and badly needed Indian soldiers, Master Tara Singh said: "I may let you know that it is being talked everywhere among the Sikhs that they are between two fires. They are to have Japanistan in case of defeat and Pakistan in case of victory. You can well imagine what effect this frame of mind can have upon the Sikh morale."⁷² The upcoming events led to the formation of sharpened communal identities. The ultimate result of which was the parting of ways and formation of a separate homeland for Muslims of India with a divided and communally demarcated Punjab.

Notes and References

- Although the Mughal rule formally ended in 1857, however, a few decades after the death of last great Mughal emperor Auraggezb, the Mughals began losing grip over the affairs of the state.
- 2 While the other provinces of India were facing communal competition and fights on routine basis, the Punjab under the Unionist party was relatively at calm.
- 3 Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre “Freedom at Midnight”, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976), p. 284
- 4 Iftikhar Malik, Op.Cit p. 35
- 5 Main Fazl-I-Hussain during his Ministry took special measures to uplift the Muslim community of the province. He fixed quotas for the Muslims in services and colleges.
- 7 S.M.Ikram, “Morern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan”, Sikander Hayat Khan: A Political Biography” (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Zcultural Research, 1985), p. 77
- 7 Zarina Salamt, Op.Cit p.157
- 8 the most prominent leader in the Unionist Party
- 9 Haryana Tilak, a Hindu Paper quoted by S. Qalb-i-Abid, Op.Cit p.84
- 10 The then Governor of the Punjab
- 11 Kesari, a Hindu Paper, quoted by S. Qalb-i-Abid, Op.Cit
- 12 Qalb-I-Abid, Op. Cit P.189
- 13 Ibid., pp.180-182
- 14 Agnihotri & Malik, “A Profile in Courage”, pp. 30-31
- 15 Ibid, p. 34
- 16 Ibid, p. 36
- 17 Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1942), p.14, NDC. nd
- 18 Iftikhar Malik, Op.Cit p. 160
- 19 Agnihotri & Malik Op.Cit p. 66
- 20 Ibid, p. 68
- 21 Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, (Lahore: n.p, 1948)
- 22 Ibid.,
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Agnihotri & Malik Op.Cit p. 56
- 25 Ibid, p. 55
- 26 Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah Op.Cit p. 11
- 27 Iftikhar Malik, Op.Cit, p. 48
- 28 Civil and Military Gazette, May 23, 1937

- 29 Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, "Iqbal Kay Akhri Do Saal" (Karachi: Iqbal Academy, 1969), pp. 497-8
- 30 Civil and Military Gazette, May 23, 1937
- 31 Ibid, pp. 498-9
- 32 Ibid, p. 511
- 33 Although Syed Nur Ahmad argues that Jinnah actually signed it, it is a claim contested by Ashiq Hussain Batalvi. For details see Syed Nur Ahmad, "From Martial Law to Martial Law: Politics in the Punjab, 1919-1958, Ed. Craig Baxter, trans. Mahmud Ali (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1985), p. 146
- 34 Iftikhar Haider Malik, Op.Cit., p.77
- 35 Iftikhar Malik, Op.Cit., p. 162
- 36 Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, Op.Cit p. 702-3
- 37 Emerson to Lord Linlithgow Oct.21,1937,IOR/3/1/2
- 38 Ibid, p. 521
- 39 Emerson to Lord Linlithgow, Dec 18, 1937,IOR R/3/1/2
- 40 Emerson to Lord Linlithgow, Jan 11,1938, IOR R/3/1/59
- 41 Civil and Military Gazette, May 22, 1937
- 42 Civil and Military Gazette, May 23, 1937
- 43 Craik to Linlithgow, June 12, 1939 IOR R/3/1/61
- 44 Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, "Op.Cit pp. 638-9
- 45 Civil and Military Gazette, December 17, 1939
- 46 Iftikhar Malik, Op.Cit p. 169
- 47 Ikram Ali Malik, Op.Cit p. 213
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- 51 Ibid, p. 230
- 52 Ibid, pp. 280-3
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Iftikhar Malik, Op.Cit, p. 179
- 57 Dr. Kirpal Singh, Ed. "Partition of Punjab, 1947" (New Delhi: National Bookshop, 1991), p. xvii
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Letter of Iqbal, dated June 25, 1936. Reprinted in "Our Struggle, 1857-1947", Publication of Government of Pakistan
- 60 Letter dated October 07, 1937, Ibid
- 61 Syed Shabbir Hussain, "Lightening Shadows" (Rawalpindi: Mujahid Publications, 1970), p. 190

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- 62 Dr. Kirpal Singh, *Op.Cit*, p. xvii
63 *Ibid*, P. xviii
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65 H.W.Emerson to Linlithgow, Feb 22, 1937, IOR R/3/1/1
66 Press Information Bureau Services No. 22, dated March 05, 1946, pp. 5, 10
& 12
67 Giani Kartar Singh, "The Case for a New Hindu-Sikh Province in the
Punjab" (Delhi: n.p., 1946), p. 9
68 E.M.Jenkins to Lord Wavell, August 3, 1946, IOR R/3/1/135
69 E.M.Jenkins to
70 Dr. Kirpal Singh, *Op.Cit*, p. xxii
71 Letter of Master Tara Singh to Sir Stafford Cripps, dated May 01, 1942,
quoted in Dr. Kirpal Singh, Ed. "Partition of Punjab, 1947" (New Delhi:
National Bookshop, 1991), p. 10
72 *Ibid.*, p.10