

SINDH LEAGUE CONFERENCE RESOLUTION OF 1938: A FORERUNNER OF HISTORIC LAHORE RESOLUTION OF 23 MARCH 1940

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ABSTRACT

This paper is focused to highlight the resolution of Sindh Muslim League Conference held on 8-12 October 1938 under the president ship of Jinnah recommending to All India Muslim League to devise a scheme of constitution under which Muslims may attain full independence. This resolution marked a new departure in League thinking which prepared the way for the formation, two years later, of the League's ultimate goal of Pakistan.

SINDH PROVINCIAL MUSLIM LEAGUE

After the departure of Sir Charles Napier in 1845 Sindh was amalgamated with Bombay Presidency and finally through the Act of 1935 She regains her status of separate province. Under this Act elections were to be held in 1937.

The act of 1935 promoted federalism which in turn bolstered provincialism which was demonstrated by the Muslim leaders of different provinces during the elections of 1937. This was the League's greatest obstacle during the election campaign. Jinnah wanted to set up Muslim League Parliamentary Boards in provinces but the provincial contempt for Jinnah's national aspirations was amply demonstrated by the fact that the leaders of Bihar, Madras, Orissa, the North –West Frontier Province and Sindh did not set up any Muslim League Parliamentary Board in their provinces.¹

In Sindh, Muslim leaders established their own political parties to contest provincial elections and to work for the provincial autonomy. For instance Abdullah Haroon formed Sindh United Party, Sheikh Abdul Majid Sindhi formed Sindh Azad Party and Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah formed Sindh Muslim Political Party. Muslim leaders of other provinces also formed provincial political parties. Thus Muslim league fought the provincial elections as a disorganized, divided and ill-equipped political party.

Election result was quite deplorable for Muslim League as it won seats only in Muslim *Minority* provinces but its performance in Muslim majority provinces like Sindh, Punjab, Bengal and NWFP (North West Frontier Provinces) was dismal. After election at the time of formation of ministries in provinces League leadership hoped that Congress would invite them to form coalition ministries. But Congress demanded that league leaders should leave the Party and join the Congress, which was rejected by Muslims as a result the proposal for coalition government fell through and Congress formed sole ministries in eight provinces.

After the formation of Congress Ministries Muslim complaints against them started creeping up. These were the hoisting of the Congress tri colour on buildings under the management of local authorities; the singing of Bande Mataram at the opening of the proceedings of the legislature; the encouragement of Hindi at the cost of Urdu; the introduction of Gandhi's

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scheme of 'Basic Education' in villages; and the behaviour of the members of Congress as if they were officials with executive powers and not merely members of a political party.² Muslim started considering that the aim of Congress rule is to intimidate, demoralize and to suppress the political rights of Muslims as a separate community.

In Sindh after elections, two ministries were headed by Muslim premiers namely Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah and Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh. As the Muslim members in Sindh Assembly were divided in several groups both premiers depended for their survival on Hindu support.³ Congress used this situation and became king maker. To counter manipulation of Congress in Sindh Muslims leaders decided to revive Muslim league in Sindh. During 1938 within seven months some 138 branches were formed in the different district of Sindh e.g.: in Larkana 24, Hyderabad 16, Tharparkar 20, Nawabshah 16, Sukkur 13, Jacobabad 9, Karachi 7, Dadu 16 and in Karachi city 17.⁴ In the same year to recuperate their political position Sindh Provincial Muslim League provisionally got affiliated with the All India Muslim League.

SINDH PROVINCIAL LEAGUE CONFERENCE

After the affiliation the Sindh Muslim league members decided hold a conference in which it was proposed to invite all India Muslim League leadership. The reasons for holding the Conference were manifold- first as the Muslims in the assembly were divided therefore both the governments under the premiership of Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah and then Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh secluded them selves from the Muslim members of the assembly and took the support of Congress leaders to continue their government. As a result the government took no steps to address the plight of the large Muslim population. Muslim Leaders decided to unite under the banner of Muslim League to curtail the powers of Congress. Secondly, to counter Congress not only in Sindh but at all India level, strategy should be developed. So with this aim the Sindh Muslims decided to hold the conference. Sindh Muslim League Conference held its sessions from 8-12 October 1938 at Karachi under the president ship of Jinnah which was attended by Muslim leaders of rest of India.

At the opening session of the Conference, Sir Abdullah Haroon, Chairman, Reception Committee in his speech while discussing the all India situation between Hindus and Muslims recounted efforts on the part of All India Muslim league leaders during the last fifteen years to arrive at a settlement with the Hindu majority community and pointed out how a solution was as far off now as it ever had been. He severely criticized the attitude of the majority community (Hindus) for not approaching the question with a determination to arrive at an agreeable settlement with Muslims. He believed that the sole obstacle standing in the way of a permanent solution of the problem was the unwillingness on the part of the majority community who is not ready to face political situation. He further stated that "As long as the majority community failed to recognize the deep rooted suspicion of the minorities that their interests were not safe in the hands of the majority and unless they were afforded adequate safeguards and protection there was no prospect of a solution of the problem and if the patience of Muslim India is tried to its utmost capacity it might have no alternative left but to seek their salvation in their own way in an independent federation of Muslim States."⁵

Haroon in reference to the political situation in the six provinces where the Congress was ruling further said "the very culture, religious and the existence of the Muslim community were in jeopardy and they had despaired of getting any justice at the hands of the majority community. We have nearly arrived at the parting of the ways and until

and unless this problem is solved to the satisfaction of all it will be impossible for anybody *to save India from being divided into Hindu India and Muslim India both placed under separate federations*".⁶ The other speakers at the conference Moulvi Fazlul Haq, premier of Bengal and Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, Premier of Punjab also criticized the Congress Government for not safeguarding Muslim Interest.

After a heated debate Conference passed the resolution No.5. which created the sense that the Muslims are a 'separate nation' and India, in reality was not one nation, but two and that the Muslims should devise a new constitution for India. It summarized past efforts to reach a communal settlement between the two major communities, discussed the present situation and recommended a future course of action. The part of resolution began by launching an attack on congress particularly in regard to its policy and conduct in the provinces where it had formed the government, which were also the provinces where Muslims happened to be in a minority. It stated:

Whereas it [Congress] has deliberately established purely Hindu rule in certain provinces by forming ministries either without Muslim ministers or with Muslim ministers having no following among the Muslim members, in direct and flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Government of India Act 1935 and Instrument of Instruction. Whereas the ministries so formed have established a sort of rule which has for its aim the intimidation and demoralization of Muslims, the extermination of the healthy and nation building influences of the Muslim Culture, the suppression of Muslim religious customs and their religious obligations and elimination of their political rights as a separate community.⁷

The next part of the resolution further denounced Congress conduct but this time in the context of Muslim majority province:

Whereas it [congress] has in open defiance of the democratic principles persistently endeavours to render the power of the Muslim majorities ineffective and unimportant in the North Western Frontier Province, Bengal, the Punjab and Sindh by trying to bring into power or by supporting coalition ministries not enjoying the confidence of the majority of Muslims and the Muslim masses of those provinces.⁸

At the end of the resolution the author of the resolution had included a paragraph which called for the League's departure in a new direction, toward a new goal. The shift in League policy signalled by this latter portion of the resolution made this section the most important part of the resolution but it also sparked considerable controversy. This section was passed in an amended form. It stated:

Whereas the evolution of a single united India and united Indian nation inspired by common aspirations and common Ideals being impossible for realization on account of the caste-ridden mentality and anti-Muslim policy of the majority community, and also on account of acute difference of religion, language, script, culture, social laws and outlook on life of the two major communities and even of race in certain parts.

This Conference consider it absolutely essential in the interests of an abiding peace of the vast Indian continent and in the interests of unhampered cultural

development, the economic and social betterment, political self-determination of the two nations known as Hindus and Muslims, to recommend to All India Muslim League to review and revise the entire question of what should be the suitable constitution for India which will secure honourable and legitimate status due to them, and that this conference, therefore recommends to the All India Muslim League to devise a scheme of constitution under which Muslims may attain full Independence.⁹

Sir Abdullah Haroon and his secretary Pir Ali Mohammad Rashdi in close collaboration with Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi authorized the initial draft of this resolution, which contained the radical portion. A conscious effort was put in drafting the resolution with a view to demonstrate Muslim solidarity between the two Muslim blocks in Sindh. So deep was their sense of anger and frustration with Congress' treatment of Muslim in both blocks that they abandoned hope of ever reaching a settlement with the Congress in future. In this way, their profound hatred of Congress produced in them a new awareness that Muslims by themselves must discover their own political destiny. These two impulses combined to find natural expression in the radical version of the resolution's latter portion. Thus the Sindhi leaders' empathy with Muslim Leaders from elsewhere in India both in their opposing to Congress and their desire for a new League goal provides an explanation for their adoption of a radical posture in Resolution No. 5. The conference's adoption of this resolution signified the first time the Muslim League had defined political India as *two separate nations* and at the same time advanced the claim of political self-determination as a legitimate means for the achievement of separate nationhood. This idea was implicit in Rashid's summary of the conference proceedings in which he said:

"I have no doubt that it [Resolution no. 5] will serve as a prelude to the Muslims declaring finally to go in for a separate federation of their own and will thus get Sindh a very conspicuous place in the history of India...Sindh has on many occasions in the past given the lead to the whole of India and ...even on this occasion ...she has given a lead to the rest of India."¹⁰

The resolution was criticized by the Hindu press. Abdullah Haroon in an interview said that "they [Hindus] have given great stimulus to the idea underlying it. They have begun talking of Pakistan and this must catch the notice of Muslims, and set them thinking. More they oppose it more they would popularize it among the Muslims. We have no press of our own to propagate our idea through; thanks God the Hindus themselves have begun doing the job for us". He farther said that "our goal being Pakistan that is independent states for Musalmans under a separate federation of their own".¹¹

Thus the Karachi Conference resolution on "communal question" marked a new departure in League thinking which prepared the way for the establishment one and a half years later the League's ultimate goal of Pakistan. It was in this respect, as a forerunner of the historic Lahore Resolution of March 1940 (Pakistan Resolution) that resolution No.5 of the Karachi Conference achieved its true historical distinction.

TOWARDS SEPARATE HOME LAND

The significance of resolution of Sindh League Conference could be gauged from the report of the Intelligence Bureau, Home Department Government of India: "The Karachi presentation of the idea of separate federation goes further than the Pakistan scheme* and provides for the inclusion of all the states and provinces in which Muslims

are in a majority in India and if necessary, of those beyond the Indian frontier also. A reported detail of some interest in the scheme is to the effect that the Muslim federal unit will be prepared to accord to its minorities the same treatment as is accorded to the Muslim minority in the Hindu unit."¹² Hindu-owned newspapers interpreted the resolution of the Conference as "Pakistan". Sir Abdullah Haroon eluded the nation:

"We have to achieve what the Hindus may well call Pakistan. It is a very difficult task but not an impossible one. I am convinced that is the only solution of the problem. But we must prepare ground for it....".¹³

The president of SPML, Haroon sent copies of Conference's resolutions to His Highness, the Aga Khan to seek his advice on the separate Muslim federation. Aga Khan opined: "the only possible early federation is either British India Federation or with elected members from States- this is a statement of fact not approval or advocacy.... Is your League likely to advocate Pakestan [Pakistan] as the final policy of Muslims? If so the sooner public opinion is prepared gradually the better".¹⁴ Haroon informed Sir Aga Khan that the League has no other alternative but to secure a separate federation" and added that the trend "in the League circles has lately began drifting in that direction".¹⁵

After the passage of resolution No. 5 at Karachi Conference the question of separate federations was discussed by the Sindh leaders with Jinnah in November 1938, regarding this M.A. Khuhro said:

"The question of the demand for a separate homeland for Muslims i.e. Pakistan was discussed by some of us with Mr. Jinnah at the residence of Haji Haroon, where he was staying- for the first time. Prior to that, no such idea had been properly mooted or discussed. Mr. Jinnah told Abdullah Haroon to get whatever material was available collected in order to prepare the case for this demand of Pakistan in case no proper settlement regarding the rights and privileges of Muslims could be reached with the Hindu majority community mainly the Congress party, who were demanding independence without any prior settlement with the Muslims".¹⁶

On the demand of Sindh Provincial Muslim League the League Council at its 4 December 1938 meeting appointed Foreign Committee and Inland Deputation sub-committee consisted of Sir Abdullah Haroon, Nawab Sahib Mamdot, Raja Saheb of Mahmudabad and Aurangzeb Khan. The task of the committee was to send 'deputation of well known leaders of Muslim minority province to tour Muslim majority province to acquaint the Muslims the repressive policy of Congress ministries towards the Muslim minorities; the other deputation be sent to Islamic countries to combat the Congress propaganda that Muslims are not patriots and the third deputation be organized to put before the various nations the real conditions of India and to expose the Congress attitude towards the minorities of India'.¹⁷ Abdullah Haroon sought support from Aga Khan in regard to "financial assistance" for foreign deputation and requested to "give assistance in making deputations, outside India, a real success".¹⁸ The Committee did commendable work which was appreciated by Jinnah.

After 1938 League's growing popularity roused an anxiety within the rank and file of the Congress. But, still Jinnah wanted Hindu-Muslim settlement. Correspondence exchanged between Jinnah- Nehru and Jinnah -Subbhas Bose the president of Congress is ample example but because of negative attitude of Congress all efforts went in vain.

Jinnah showed indignation that Congress had "killed every hope of Hindu-Muslim settlement in right royal fashion and fascism".¹⁹ He complained that Congress was absolutely determined to crush all communities and cultures in this country and to establish Hindu Raj. Jinnah asked Fazlul Haq to compile and publish charges of "Muslim suffering under Congress rule". As a result report called "Pirpur Report" came to light by the end of 1938. It listed grim details of Hindu atrocities, brutal attacks and killings of Muslims in Bihar, The United Provinces, and the Central Provinces.²⁰ The report further alleged 'workers and officials either connived with Hindu mobs that tried to prevent Muslims from exercising their religious and cultural rights, or were simply incapable of protecting the rights of Muslims'.²¹

Due congress complaints against British Government Congress Ministries resigned on 15 November 1939. As a first step the Muslim League on December 22, observed "the Day of Deliverance and thanksgiving" as a mark of relief that the Congress Government have at last ceased to function.²² These circumstances compelled the Indian Muslims to declare at Meerat Divisional Muslim League Conference held on 25 March 1939 that it was now impossible for Muslims and Hindus to live together in India- Muslims are a nation and not a minority community. For the first time such declaration was announced from the platform of League. On this occasion Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan in his presidential address said:

"I want an independent India where Muslims have power and freedoms, for the Muslims are a nation and not a community. It would be a travesty to dismiss 90 million people with a glorious past as a community. Although Hindus and Muslims live in the same country, they live differently because their religious, culture and civilization are different. Muslims do not favour the pseudo-nationalism that the Hindus have borrowed from Europe. If Hindus and Muslims could not now live together amicably in India- and it had become almost impossible for them to co-exist under the same regime then they might be able to do so by dividing country on a religious and cultural basis".²³

Next day, the Working Committee of the Muslim League set up a committee to examine various schemes already propounded by those who were fully versed in the Constitutional developments of India and other countries and those that may be submitted thereafter. Jinnah was to head the Committee including Abdullah Haroon, Liaquat Ali Khan, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, Sir Khwaja Nazimuddin of Bengal and Sardar Aurangzeb Khan of NWFP.²⁴ The meeting opposed to the scheme of Federation embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935 and denounced the provincial part of the Act because it had utterly failed to safeguard even the elementary rights of the Muslim minorities in various provinces.

The last shadow of doubt for division of India was removed by the article of Jinnah "constitutional maladies of India" published in *Times and Tide, London* in 19 January 1940 issue. He argued in it that the "root cause of India's constitutional ills was the fact that "democratic system based on the concept of a homogeneous nation such as England's are very definitely not applicable to heterogeneous countries such as India" . He said that "India is inhabited by many races.... often as distinct from one another in origin, tradition and manner of life as are nations of Europe" He said Hindus and Muslims "are in fact two nations representing two distinct and separate civilization both these religions are definite social codes which govern not so much man's relations with

his God as man's relations with his neighbour. While the Muslim League stood for a free India it was "irrevocably opposed to any federal objective which must necessarily result in a majority community rule under the guise of democracy and parliamentary system of government.... a constitution must be evolved that recognizes that there are in India two nations who both must share the governance of their common motherland. In evolving such a constitution, the Muslims are ready to co-operate with the British Government, Congress or any party so that the present enmities may cease and India may take its place amongst the great nations of the world".²⁵

As a last blow to the unity of India, Abdullah Haroon presided over in Delhi a joint meeting of the Foreign Committee and the authors of the various alternative constitutional schemes submitted to the League for final decision. The Committee passed a resolution that "Muslims of India, who constitute 90 millions of people are a separate nation entitled to self-determination", and "in order to make the Muslim right of self determination really effective, the Muslims shall have a separate national home in the shape of an autonomous state"²⁶. Foreign Committee resolution was send to Liaquat Ali Khan and M.A. Jinnah for placing before the Working Committee which begins its session on 3 February 1940. A Sub-Committee of nine was appointed to sit from day-to-day to draft a detailed constitutional scheme incorporating the fundamental rights declared in the resolution.

The working Committee considered the resolution of Foreign Committee. It resolved that "Muslims are not a minority ... they are nation" The British system of democratic parliament government was not suitable to the Indian people. Those zones which were composed of majority of Musalmans in the physical map of India are to be constituted into "independent Dominions in direct relations with Great Britain. In those Zones where Muslims were in minority, their interests are adequately and effectively safeguarded and similar safeguards be provided to Hindus and other minorities in Muslim Zones. And various units in each Zone shall form component parts of the Federation in that one as autonomous units."²⁷

On the occasion of Lahore resolution Jinnah in his presidential address pronounced the ideal of Pakistan in these words:

Musalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nation and they must have their homeland, their territory and their state. We wish to live in peace and harmony with our neighbours as a free and independent people. We wish our people to develop to the fullest our spiritual, cultural economic, social and political life in a way that we think best and in consonance with our own ideals and according to the genius of our people.²⁸

The "Lahore Resolution" was passed unanimously, its operative part reads:

That it is the considered view of this session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North Western and Eastern Zones of India, should be grouped to constitute Independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.²⁹

Sindhi Leaders, namely Khan Bahadur Khuhro, Abdul Majid Sindhi and G.M. Sayed, supported the resolution. Abdullah Haroon in his speech said that Sindh Muslims were the first to meet this issue, which was now before the League. In 1938, the Muslim League passed a resolution for "establishing Independent states in the North-Western and the Eastern Zones".³⁰

CONCLUSION

The Sindh League Conference Resolution marked a new departure in League thinking which prepared the way for the establishment two years later of the League's ultimate goal of Pakistan. It was in this respect, as a forerunner of the historic Lahore Resolution of 23 March 1940, that resolution No. 5 the Karachi Conference achieved its true historical distinction.

It was the Sindh Assembly which first officially passed the principles of the Lahore resolution on 3 March 1943, the operative part of resolution moved by G.M. Saeyd reads:

This house recommends to the Government to convey to his majesty's Government through His Excellency the Viceroy the sentiments and wishes of the Muslims of this Province that whereas the Muslims of India are a separate nation possessing religion, philosophy, social, customs Literature, traditions and political and economic theories of their own quite different from those of the Hindus, they are justly entitled to the right of a single separate nation to have independent national states of their own carved out in the zones where they are in majority in the subcontinent of India.³¹

And finally it was Sindh, which on 26 June, 1947 decided to join the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. The speaker, while declaring the result of the voting, remarked: "Sindh has arrived at the portals of Pakistan first congratulations".³²

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