

HIS-103: Emergence of Bangladesh

Lecture 03

Establishment of All India Muslim League & Lahore Resolution 1940



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Muslim Politics in the First Century of British Rule

- Under the British rule, the rulers naturally suspected the Muslim community and therefore favored other communities. The Muslims could not easily forget that they were the erstwhile rulers and could not accept a subordinate position in society. They accepted their defeat with anger and continued to harbor hostility towards their victors. The loss of ruling authority greatly flattened the entire community. Very soon they also lost economically as ownership of land passed on to other hands.
- Due to Permanent Settlement Act and Sunset Law, many Muslim zamindars lost their zamindari to their managers and clerks. Besides, for a while, Muslims continued to hold important positions in the government specially in revenue collection and dispensation of justice. But as Persian was substituted by English as the official language of the courts of law in 1837, they lost this advantage, too.
- Unfortunately, Muslims stayed away from English education emphasizing on religious education and relapsed into obscurantism.

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- They were so uninterested in modern education that trust funds for Muslim education could not be used for them. As for example, Hoogly College was established in 1836 by the trust funds left by Haji Mohammad Mohsin for promotion of Muslim education. But in 1850, only 5% of the students of this college were Muslims.
- The Puritan movement began in early 18th century by Shah Waliullah of Delhi which became the inspiration for militant religious movements a century later.
- Syed Ahmed of Berielly, Titumeer of West Bengal, Haji Shariatullah and his son Dudu Mia of Faridpur were both religious leaders and social reformers. They urged adherence to Puritanism and at the same time challenged repression and injustice.
- *Faraizi* movement of Bengali Muslims and *Tariqah-e-Mohammadiya* movement of central Indian Muslims aimed not only at purification of religion but also at political mobilization against the infidel and unjust British rulers.

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- Under this circumstance, it was natural for British power to suspect Muslim loyalty. Muslims were systematically ousted from positions of importance and vacuum was filled by members of Hindu community.
- The Muslim decline and fall began “ever since the British occupation of the country. Every change, executive, administrative or legal, introduced by the British inflicted a series of blows on the Muslim community”.
- In Bengal, the suppression was most as it was the hot-bed of anti-British politics. It intensified more after the failed liberation struggle of 1857. One of the immediate effects of this struggle was deliberate elimination of people from Bengal and central India from the defense forces and replaced them **with loyalist Punjabis and Sikhs.**
- The social and economic development of the Hindu community in Bengal in the first century of British rule was as remarkable as the backwardness of the Muslim community. Bengali Hindus flourished under state patronage.

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- Seat of the government in Calcutta also played a critical role in the advancement of Bengali Hindu community. Bengalis did well in securing government jobs and receiving government favors. They also exercised the greatest influence on the rulers.
- The first institutions of western education were set up in Bengal and Bengali Hindus took full advantage of the new facilities. Most of the Indian scholars at Fort William College, established in 1800, were Hindus. As early as 1816, the Hindu College was established. The acceptance of English education by the Hindus moved them ahead of Muslim community.
- Raja Ram Mohan Ray set up the *Brahma Samaj* in 1828 and this was a milestone in Bengali renaissance which was a monopoly of the Hindu community. A comparable Muslim institution did not come into being until 1863 when Nawab Abdul Latif established the Mohammedan Literacy Society of Calcutta.
- *For a quote see page 38 of Muhith*

Muslim Modernism in Bengal

- In late 19th century Muslim leaders began to think about their positions as the frustration from the failure of the militant social and religious movements and finally the liberation struggle called for a reconsideration of strategy. For that it was necessary to prove their loyalty to the rulers first and then compete with Hindus who had the advantage of an early start. This resulted in a loyalist movement in the last quarter of 19th century.
- Apart from Nawab Abdul Latif, Sir Syed established the Scientific Society of Aligarh in 1864. Syed Ameer Ali established National Muhammadan Association in 1878. Later in 1896, Muhammadan Reform Association was formed.
- These organizations started the Muslim intellectual renaissance in India. Islam was being rediscovered and its closeness with Christianity was being identified. Acceptance of British rule from a religious point of view was argued.
- A plea for scientific enquiry, learning of English and western education was being made. It was the beginning of the enlightenment of Muslim community or the Muslim modernism.

All India Muslim League

- In 1885, All India Congress was organized to provide a forum in which Indian politicians should meet annually and point out to the government about the flaws of the administration and ways to resolve those. This initiative was taken by a retired government official Allan Octavian Hume.
- Sir Syed rightly assumed that it would run into collision with the government and requested the Muslims to keep away.
- The organization was soon captured by fundamentalist Hindu leaders and Muslims were further alienated from it when it started taking anti-Muslim stand on cow slaughter, Ganapati festival and Shivaji festival.
- During the period of Bengal Partition Muslims in East Bengal realized the opening of opportunities which Muslims nowhere in India had experienced at all. Employment opportunity was there and but more important was the educational advancement. Congress and Bengali Hindu community were dead against this and it had several consequences.

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- Firstly, it strengthened the Muslim solidarity
 - Secondly, increased mistrust between the two communities
 - Thirdly, the Muslims felt the urgent need for a political platform of their own.
- Generally, the Muslim leaders of India met informally once a year in a conference to discuss educational problems of the Muslim community and to disseminate the thought of loyalty to the *raj*. Such a conference (All India Muslim Education Conference) was held at Shahbug in Dhaka on 30 December 1906 against the backdrop of the Congress sponsored agitation against the partition of Bengal (1905) and the swadeshi movement. Previously, a delegation of Muslim leaders met Governor General Lord Minto at Shimla in order to ventilate problems special to the Muslim community of India. Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka, the devoted supporter of the Partition of Bengal, felt the need to form a political party to counter the anti-partition agitation launched by the Congress cadres.

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- He proposed in this conference to make a political platform with the objectives of safeguarding the interests of the Indian Muslims. Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, chairman of the conference, supported the motion and thus the All India Muslim League (AIML) came into being.
- The Muslim League emerged as a political party with three objectives:
 - Promotion of loyalty among the Muslims to the rulers
 - Protection and advancement of their political rights and interests; and
 - Prevention of the feeling of hostility to other communities.
- Initially the League as a political organization lacked dynamism as it was founded by those persons who had persistently suggested the Muslims of the subcontinent to keep aloof from politics during the second half of the nineteenth century. The Muslim League remained in a moribund condition for full one year after its inception in December 1906. But within a few years, younger generation of the Muslims with 'middle class' background and radical ideas found their way into the politics of the Muslim League. They not only discarded the program of unqualified loyalty to the British rulers, but also challenged the British colonial rule in India and demanded self-government.

Lahore Resolution 1940

- In 1940 Mohammed Ali Jinnah called a general session of the All India Muslim League in Lahore to discuss the situation that had arisen due to the outbreak of the Second World War and the Government of India joining the war without taking the opinion of the Indian leaders, and also to analyze the reasons that led to the defeat of the Muslim League in the general election of 1937 in the Muslim majority provinces.
- Jinnah, in his speech, criticized the Congress and the nationalist Muslims, and espoused the Two-Nation Theory and the reasons for the demand for separate Muslim homelands. His arguments caught the imagination of the Muslim masses. Sikandar Hayat Khan, the Chief Minister of the Punjab, drafted the original Lahore Resolution, which was placed before the Subject Committee of the All India Muslim League for discussion and amendments. The Resolution, radically amended by the Subject Committee, was moved in the general session by AK Fazlul Huq on 23 March and was supported by Choudhury Khaliquzzaman and other Muslim leaders.

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- The Lahore Resolution ran as follows:
 - That the areas where the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the Northwestern and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'independent states' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.
- The Resolution was adopted on 24 March with great enthusiasm. The Hindu Press dubbed it as the 'Pakistan Demand', after the scheme invented by Rahmat Ali, an Indian Muslim living at Cambridge.
- The 1940 resolution nowhere mentioned Pakistan and when asked about the 'independent states', the spokesmen of the League were far from clear what was intended. By emphasizing the idea of Pakistan the Hindu press succeeded in converting a wordy and clouded lawyer's formula into a clarion call.

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- The Muslims of Bengal, who were searching for an identity throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, finally found it in the Lahore Resolution. The Lahore Resolution gave them a sense of nationhood. Henceforth the dominant theme in Muslim politics was not complaint against Hindu injustice, but a demand for separate political existence.
- On 15 April 1941, the Lahore Resolution was incorporated as a principle in the constitution of the All-India Muslim League in its Madras session. It continued to be the League's principle until its dissolution after the independence of Pakistan in 1947.