

Lahore Resolution of 1940.

With the introduction of political reforms in India by the British, the Muslims realized that they would become a permanent minority in a democratic system and it would never be possible for them to protect their fundamental rights. They only constituted one-fourth of the total Indian population and were much lesser in number than the majority Hindu community. To protect their political, social, and religious rights they first demanded separate electorates. However, due to the political developments that took place in the country, they realized that even the right of separate electorates would not be enough and they had to search for some other long-term solution.

Muhammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher in his famous Allahabad address made it clear that Islam has its own social and economic system, and to implement it a political entity was required. When Jinnah came back to India to reorganize Muslim League and to make it a political party of the Muslim masses, he got the opportunity to interact with Iqbal. Iqbal through his letters tried to persuade Jinnah that the only solution available was a separate state for the Indian Muslims where they could spend their lives according to the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW). Though Jinnah was convinced by the late 1930s, being a realist he was not ready to announce the new plan until he was confident that the vast majority of the Muslims were behind him. The overwhelming support from the Muslim masses for his call to celebrate Day of Deliverance on December 22, 1939, was a vote of confidence given by the Muslim Community in the leadership of Jinnah, whom they by then had started considering as their Quaid-i-Azam.

Organization

With the clarity of mind and backing of the Muslim community behind him, Quaid-i-Azam called for the 27th annual session of the All India Muslim League to be held from March 22 to 24, 1940 at Lahore. Sir Shah Nawaz Khan of Mamdot was made the head of the reception committee and Main Bashir Ahmad was nominated as secretary of the session. Prominent leaders including Chaudhry Khaliquzzam, Nawab Muhammad Ismail Khan, Nawab Bahadur Yar Jang, A.K. Fazlul Haq, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, Abdullah Haroon, Qazi Muhammad Isa, I.I. Chundrigar, Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, Khawaja Nazimuddin, Abdul Hashim and Malik Barkat Ali, etc. attended the session.

Quaid-i-Azam's Address

The venue of the session was Minto Park near Badshahi Masjid and Lahore Fort. The inaugural session was planned at around three in the afternoon on March 22. People started coming in the morning and by the afternoon the park was jam-packed. According to a rough estimate, around 100,000 attended the public meeting. At the beginning of the session, the welcome address was presented by the Nawab of Mamdot. This was followed by the historical speech of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The Quaid in his two hours presidential address in English narrated the events that took place in the past few months and concluded, "Hindus and the Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs and literature. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine together, and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations that are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their concepts on life

and of life are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes and different episodes. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other, and likewise, their victories and defeats overlap. To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state.” He further claimed, “Mussalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nationhood. We wish our people to develop to the fullest 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”.

During his speech, the Quaid quoted the letter written by Lala Lajpat Rai in 1924 to C.R. Das in which he mentioned that the Hindus and the Muslims were two separate and distinct nations that could never be merged into a single nation. When Malik Barkat Ali claimed that Lala Lajpat Rai was a “Nationalist Hindu leader”, Quaid responded, “No Hindu can be a nationalist. Every Hindu is a Hindu first and last.”

The Resolution

On March 23, A.K. Fazul Haq, the Chief Minister of Bengal, moved the historical Lahore Resolution. The Resolution consisted of five paragraphs and each paragraph was only one sentence long. Although clumsily worded, it delivered a clear message. The resolution declared:

While approving and endorsing the action taken by the Council and the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League, as indicated in their resolutions dated the 27th of August, 17th and 18th of September and 22nd of October, 1939, and 3rd of February 1940, on the constitutional issue, this session of the All-India Muslim League emphatically reiterates that the scheme of Federation embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935 is totally unsuited to, and unworkable in the peculiar conditions of this country and is altogether unacceptable to Muslim India.

It further records its emphatic view that while the declaration dated the 18th of October, 1939, made by the Viceroy on behalf of His Majesty’s Government is reassuring in so far as it declares that the policy and plan on which the Government of India Act, 1935 is based will be reconsidered in consultation with the various parties, interests and communities in India, Muslim India will not be satisfied unless the whole constitutional plan is reconsidered de novo and that no revised plan would be acceptable to the Muslims unless it is framed with their approval and consent.

Resolved 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 Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principle, namely, 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.

That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in these units and in these regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them; and in other parts of India where Mussalmans are in a minority, adequate, effective and mandatory safeguard shall be specially

provided in the constitution for them and other minorities for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them.

This session further authorizes the Working Committee to frame a scheme of constitution in accordance with these basic principles, providing for the assumption finally by the respective regions of all powers such as defence, external affairs, communications, customs and such other matters as may be necessary.

Besides many others, the Resolution was seconded by Chaudhary Khaliquzzam from UP, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan from Punjab, Sardar Aurangzeb from the N. W. F. P, Sir Abdullah Haroon from Sindh, and Qazi Muhammad Esa from Baluchistan. Those who seconded the resolution, in their speeches declared the occasion as a historic one. The Resolution was eventually passed on the last day of the moot, i.e. March 24.

Controversies

The name Pakistan was not used in the resolution and the official name of the resolution was Lahore Resolution. It was the Hindu newspapers including Partap, Bande Matram, Milap, Tribune, etc., who ironically coined the name Pakistan Resolution. However, the idea was appreciated by the Muslim masses and the Resolution is more known as Pakistan Resolution. Secondly, the Government and the people of Pakistan wrongly celebrate March 23 as a national day in Pakistan. The actual day when the resolution was passed was March 24. It was only presented on March 23. Lastly, the word “states” and not “state” was mentioned in the Resolution. It means that the authors of the Resolution were foreseeing two separate states in the north-western and eastern zones of India. But if one has a good look at the developments that followed, he or she would conclude that either the word “states” was included as a mistake or the League leadership soon had a second thought to their idea. A Resolution passed at the 1941 Madras session of the League stated, “Everyone should clearly understand that we are striving for one independent and sovereign Muslim State.” In all the speeches that Quaid delivered, he also used the word “an independent homeland” or “an independent Muslim state”.

Hindu Reaction

The Hindu reaction was, of course, quick, bitter, and malicious. They called the “Pakistan” demand “anti-national.” They characterized it as “vivisection; above all, they denounced it as imperialist – inspired to obstruct India’s march to freedom.” In denouncing the demand outright, they, however, missed the central fact of the Indian political situation; the astonishingly tremendous response of the Pakistan demand had elicited from the Muslim masses. They also failed to take cognizance of the fact that a hundred million Muslims were now supremely conscious of their distinct nationhood and were prepared to stake everything to actualize their self-perceived destiny – the creation of an independent Muslim state in the sub-continent.

British Reaction

The British were equally hostile to the Muslim demand for at least two important reasons. First, they had long considered themselves as the architects of the unity of India and an Indian nation. Second, they had long regarded the super-imposed unity under tax Britannica as their greatest achievement and lasting contribution in history. And the Pakistan demand threatened to undo these presumed achievements on which the British had long prided. However, despite the Hindu denunciation and the British alarm, the course of Muslim, indeed Indian, politics was from now on firmly set towards Pakistan.

Conclusion

The All India Muslim League Resolution of March 1940, commonly known as the Pakistan Resolution, is undoubtedly the most important event that changed the course of Indian history and left deep marks on world history. With the passage of this Resolution, the Muslims of the sub-continent changed their demand from "Separate Electorates" to a "Separate State." This Resolution rejected the idea of a United India and the creation of an independent Muslim state was set as their ultimate goal. It gave new energy and courage to the Muslims of the region who gathered around Quaid-i-Azam from the platform of the Muslim League to struggle for their freedom. The dynamic leadership of the Quaid and the commitment and devotion of the followers made it possible for them to achieve an independent state within seven years of their struggle, and that too when the odds were against them.