Social Forces and Ideology in the Making of Pakistan
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Social Forces and Ideology in the Making of Pakistan

Religious parties were implacably hostile to the Pakistan Movement. When, inaugurating Pakistan's constituent assembly, Jinnah proclaimed Pakistan's secular ideology he was voicing the established secular ideological position that the Muslim League had adhered to throughout its career. Fundamentalist Islamic ideology played no part in the origins of Pakistan, although contemporary ideologues of Islamic fundamentalism, including academics, claim that it was Islamic ideology and slogans that created Pakistan and that they therefore have the right to decide its future.

HAMZA ALAVI

I

Many of you will recall Mohammad Ali Jinnah's well known speech that he gave when inaugurating Pakistan's new constituent assembly. In that speech he spelt out the secular vision for the new country, which had inspired him and others through the many decades of struggle. He said:

> You may belong to any religion or caste or creed. That has nothing to do with the business of the state. ... We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of the state. ...We should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in the course of time Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense, as citizens of the state.

It was not until 1952 that Jinnah's unworthy successors turned away from that secular ideal and began to exploit the worn out rhetoric of religion to restore their failing political fortunes. They cried out that 'Islam was in danger'! Coming from them, that was an insincere, bogus and empty slogan, when they had nothing positive to offer to the people. Our tottering leadership believing mistakenly that the slogan of Islam would be sufficient to silence any opposition, resorted to that stratagem.

At first they had not yet gone beyond paying lip-service to the name of Islam. In March 1949, the constituent assembly adopted the 'Objectives Resolution' which included a clause which said that: 'Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives, in the individual and the collective spheres, in accord with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunna.' That was not intended, as yet, to signal adoption of Islamic ideology. That was made quite clear in the speech of Liaquat Ali Khan when he moved the objectives resolution. This was no more than a formal nod in the direction of religious rhetoric, without actually restricting the constitution in any way. When moving the objectives resolution Liaquat explicitly ruled out mullah ideology. He said: 'Sir, I just now said that the people are the real recipients of power. This, naturally, eliminates any danger of the establishment of a theocracy'. That was followed, in September 1950 by the Interim Report of the Basic Principles Committee (BPC) which too said little about Islamic ideology. Indeed, G W Choudhury, who was a committed Islamist, said that it contained 'very little if any provision as to the Islamic character of the new constitution. The ulama, he continued were most unhappy about that. (Speeches and Documents on the Constitution of Pakistan, p 30)

However, before the BPC could move on to prepare its final report, a major event took place which shook the foundations of the state of Pakistan to its roots. On February 21, 1952 the historic Bengali language movement erupted spontaneously all over East Bengal, with great force. For several days the whole of East Bengal was in the hands of the language movement committee. Surprised at the unbelievable success of the movement, its leadership was unprepared to take the movement any further forward. In a few days it subsided. But it remained a major potential challenge. Rather foolishly Pakistan's ruling elite, instead of going some way to meet Bengali demands, thought that they could isolate the Bengali nationalists by raising religious slogans. Slogans of 'Islamic' ideology and 'Islamic' identity were taken up to counter Bengali anger. Instead of looking at the underlying causes of Bengali discontent, they put forward an argument that we are all 'Muslims and Pakistanis' and therefore we cannot be Bengalis or Sindhis or Baluch or Pathan. This was an ethnic redefinition which had little to do with religious values as such. It was merely a bankrupt political argument which led only to disaster.

In response to the Bengali movement, therefore, the Final Report of the BPC, presented on December 22, 1952, now contained a large dose of 'Islamic' ideology. G W Choudhury, jumped with joy and wrote: 'The second draft constitution (which was his name for the final report of the BPC) was noted for its elaborate provisions relating to the Islamic character of the proposed constitution.' (ibid, p 31). Liaquat and his cohort, when faced with the challenge of regional movements as well as a crumbling party, shouted even more loudly that 'Islam was in danger'.

Nearly five years after partition, thus, Islamic ideology was adopted by our mediocre rulers, who had nothing positive to offer to the people. To make this about-turn more credible, they decided to give the newfound religious ideology an institutional form. A board of Talimat-i-Islamia was set up and the senior ulama whom Liaquat had persuaded to find their fortunes in Pakistan, were given jobs in it. The board was not to have any real powers. Pakistan's ruling bureaucracy was in no mood to share power with mullahs. Therefore, the function of the board was only advisory and that too on matters specifically referred to it. 'Advice' from the

board was not binding on the government. When the board did make suggestions, they were unceremoniously brushed aside. But the senior ulama seemed to be happy enough with their well paid jobs and attendant prestige. Recalcitrant mullahs such as Maulana Maududi found themselves in jail. Such nominal concessions to Islamic ideology continued under successive governments until Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, with his misguided populist policies, reactivated the mullahs who, ironically, turned out to be his nemesis. General Zia, in turn, lacking all legitimacy, decided for his part to exploit Islam to the hilt. Several decades later, we are still suffering from his legacy which even successive democratically elected governments have failed to undo. The unexpected successes of fundamentalist religious parties in the general elections of 2002, testify to the fact that we are reaping the inevitable fruit of the policy of placating them.

Sweeping aside Jinnah's clear statement about Pakistan ideology, his successors belatedly redefined it. In 1969 General Yahya Khan's minister, General Sher Ali, declared that 'Islamic ideology' was to be 'Pakistan ideology'. This solution was projected backwards into the past and historians (in Pakistan and also abroad) have taken up the task of justifying that bogus claim. Textbooks were rewritten. Today we are separated from our past by half a century of lies. Even people with a secular outlook, have begun to wonder whether it was not religion, after all, that really brought about the creation of Pakistan. Some of them assume that there must have been a mass movement. How can a mass movement get off the ground without a powerful religious ideology driving it. What other explanation could there be, they ask. All this is mere conjecture. No one has as yet examined the social forces that were actually responsible for the creation of Pakistan. Our true past has been snatched from us and lies buried where it cannot be found. We have to disinter it. Let us therefore have a look at it.

II

Modern Indian Muslim politics had its beginnings in the Muslim minority provinces of northern India, notably the UP, and Bengal. In the Muslim majority areas of western India, that now form Pakistan, namely, the Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and the NWFP, Muslims were relatively backward and the urban population was predominantly non-Muslim. The educated classes that were behind modern Indian Muslim politics were absent in those areas.

It was in northern India, that modern Indian Muslim politics were triggered off by the new Anglo-vernacular language policy that was introduced by the British in the 19th century. It abolished the use of Persian as the official language. Persian was the language of the northern Indian, Muslim Ashraf, the pre-colonial ruling elite. Abolition of Persian as the official language hit them hard. To qualify for government jobs, they had to take to English education. Hindu service castes, like kayasthas, khatris and Kashmiri brahmins in northern India (or the baidyas, kayasthas and brahmins in Bengal) took to English education more rapidly and competed more successfully for jobs than the Muslim Ashraf had previously monopolised. Muslims began to lose their primacy.

In looking at the impact of colonial rule on the Muslim Ashraf, we can divide them into three categories, for they were affected differently. Firstly, there were the landlords who were political allies of the British for which they were much favoured. As a class they were the most loyal to the raj. There were some exceptions though, like the rajas of Mahmoodabad (father and son) who were active in the Muslim League. The second group of Muslim Ashraf were the ulema, who were the hardest hit by the new language policy. They lost out when children who used to go to their madaris, to learn Persian and Arabic, were now sent to English teaching schools. The introduction of new statute law written in English, took away legal roles which the ulama performed by way of the application of shari'a law in particular cases or issuing fatawa on contentious issues or mediating disputes. These functions atrophied. In response, the ulama at first engaged in militant campaigns against the British (and the Sikh) and played a prominent role in the national revolt of 1857. They were crushed brutally. After the revolt the ulama retreated into their seminaries such as the newly established *dar-ul-uloom* at Deoband or the older Firangi Mahal, etc. As a class, they did not re-enter the political arena until they were drawn into the Khilafat movement in 1918.

The most important Ashraf group, however, behind modern Indian Muslim politics, were the educated Ashraf who depended mainly on careers in government employment. I have designated them as the 'salariat', i e, those who aspire to and depend on careers in salaried employment, overwhelmingly in the government in the absence of a large enough private sector. Associated with the salariat were professionals such as lawyers and doctors. For them the new language policy meant that they too had to have English education. Competing with the Muslim salariat and professionals were Hindus who aspired to similar employment in government or as professionals. Unfortunately, given the communal (caste!) structure of Indian society, Muslim and Hindu members of the salariat and professionals were pitted against each other because their lives and careers were embedded within rival institutionalised communities. The mutual competition between the Muslim and Hindu salariat was of no direct concern for the vast majority of Muslims or Hindus. Muslim Ashraf were preoccupied with questions about their own future and ignored poor Muslims and their problems. For example large numbers of Muslim Julahas were going through a profound crisis in the 19th century, because of competition from mill made cloth, both imported and locally produced in Indian textile mills. The Ashraf were unconcerned with the problems of the very poor and suffering Julahas. The salariat and the professionals had their own specific interests to pursue. Competition between these petit bourgeois Muslim and Hindu groups, shaped the policies of the All India Muslim League, and the Indian National Congress, respectively. They used concepts of Indian nationalism and Muslim nationalism, to legitimise their narrow class demands.

There is a myth that Muslim Ashraf were underprivileged and backward. That idea comes from William Hunter's book on *Indian Musalmans*, which is based on eastern Bengal data, where Muslims were truly underprivileged. But Muslim Ashraf of northern India were over-privileged. In the UP, Muslims were only about 12 per cent of the population, a small minority. Nevertheless, in 1857 Muslim Ashraf of UP held no less than 64 per cent of posts in the subordinate judicial and executive services (positions above that rank being the domain of the white-man). However, those highly privileged Muslim Ashraf were rapidly losing that lead. By 1886 Muslims held only 45 per cent of those posts, though with a Muslim population of only 12 per cent, they were still very privileged. These figures show that their lead was being cut down. Sir Syed Ahmad therefore proposed that there should be a 50-50 quota each

for the two communities. Modern Indian Muslim politics, in its origin, was therefore quota politics and not a religious movement. English education was the key to future prosperity. The Aligarh movement sought to propagate English education amongst Muslims. Given Sir Syed Ahmad's lead Muslim educational societies began to come up all over India, to teach English.

A new Anglo-vernacular culture, which was relatively more oriented towards science and reason, began to evolve, though often expressed in Indian idiom. It was the culture of Muslim Ashraf salariat and professional groups. It did not extend to the poor, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. The culture of the Muslim poor tended to be dominated by the mullahs. Sir Syed Ahmad pioneered the cause of English education and rational and scientific thought amongst Indian Muslims. He was concerned only with the future of Muslim Ashraf ; not with the future of all Muslims inclusive of the poor. This is not widely realised. Sir Syed Ahmad looked upon 'low born' people with aristocratic disdain. Commenting upon qualifications for membership of the viceroy's legislative council, for example, he expressed his deeply rooted class (caste?) prejudice when he said that 'It is essential for the viceroy's council to have members of high social standing. Would our aristocracy like that a man of low caste or insignificant origin, though he may be a B A or an M A , and have the requisite ability, be placed in a position of authority above them and have the power of making laws that affect their lives and property?'

Political activity on behalf of the Muslim salariat and professionals emerged on the public platform in 1906, when a delegation of Muslim notables called on Lord Minto the viceroy to lobby for the English educated Muslim Ashraf. When Nawab Mohsin ul-Mulk, who then headed the Aligarh establishment, learnt about the speech of Lord Morley, the secretary of state for India, announcing plans for constitutional reforms in India, he at once set about organising a delegation of Muslim notables to put their proposals before the viceroy, setting out demands of the educated Muslim Ashraf. Francis Robinson, summing up the result, writes: Lord Minto 'promised (them) ...nothing except sympathy.' Indian nationalist as well as communist historians have blown up the significance of that meeting out of all proportion, claiming, in Maulana Mohammad Ali's words, that this was a 'command performance' at the behest of the viceroy, as part of a policy of divide-and-rule. It has now been established that this charge has no truth in it. Amongst others the Indian historian Bimal Prasad has recently unravelled the details of that story to prove that this charge is not at all true. The initiative for the meeting came entirely from Mohsin-ul Mulk.

Later in the same year, in December 1906, the Muslim League was founded when Muslim leaders met at Dhaka at the invitation of Nawab Salimullah. But the UP Ashraf, led by Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk of Aligarh, hijacked the new organisation taking all the top posts and a majority of the working committee memberships. The League took up secular demands of the western educated Muslim professionals and the salariat. Attempts to place the issue of Islamic ideology on the Muslim League agenda were rare and invariably unsuccessful. Religious ideology played no part in its ideology. Not surprisingly, the mullahs were hostile to the Muslim League from the outset.

Arguably, the earliest attempt to take up Islamic ideology, was made by Shibli Nu'mani, who was committed to theocratic values. He proposed that the Aligarh syllabus should be Islamised. Shibli wanted to change the syllabus away from English and modern sciences, towards Islamic learning and the Arabic language. The response of the Muslim professional and salariat classes to that attempt is exemplified by the views of Sir Raza Ali, a lawyer who was a close and very influential collaborator of Sir Syed's successors, Mohsin ul-Mulk and Viqar ul-Mulk, at the centre of the Aligarh establishment. Raza Ali attacked Shibli's proposal in an article published in *The Statesman*, of which he offers an extract in his autobiography

Raza Ali wrote that there is sometimes a conflict between reason and sentiments. But, he wrote, the conflict between reason and the sentiments that underlie Shibli's proposal is greater than such conflict about any other issue. The memory of the achievements of Cordova and Baghdad is as enticing to Muslims as her amulet ('taawiz') is to a superstitious woman who holds it close to her heart. The truth is that it is extremely difficult not to sympathise with such feelings of Muslims. But it is also true that to deny reality that is open and manifest, would also be very foolish. The proposal that is now in front of us (i e, Arabic education, as proposed by Shibli HA) is, superficially, extremely appealing. However, we must not turn our faces away from reality. ...The question before us is: 'What kind of education does our community want and need? In my view the kind of education that we most need is education that would be most useful in helping us to deal with the affairs of this world ...which can help the coming generations to earn their livelihood.' (*Aimal Nama,* p 170). That was the essence of the Muslim League ideology.

Raza Ali warned that the need of the Indian educated Muslim middle class was not that of a hypothetical return to original Islam and the creation of an 'Islamic State', to be ruled over by mullahs. Their most urgent need was the provision of an education that would help them in grappling with the affairs of this world; education that would help their coming generations to earn their livelihood. He spelt out the secular ideology of Muslim nationalism, clearly reiterating the interests of the Muslim salariat and professional classes. Shibli had to leave Aligarh, for it was not a place where his theocratic ideas could flourish.

As for the Muslim League, as it attracted more and more support, there was a parallel shift in its class support base. There was an increased participation of men drawn from more modest strata of society. Far fewer of them were now from substantial landed families. According to Francis Robinson, the great majority (of them) belonged to the class which occasionally had a small pittance in rents from land but, generally, in order to survive, had to find employment in service or the professions. That was a less privileged section of the Muslim Ashraf. Amongst them the Muslim League found its enduring class base, even though salariat members from better off families, some landlords like the Raja of Mahmudabad, the father (not to be confused with his equally active son, Amir Ahmad Khan) and some businessmen, still continued to play a part in it.

III

With these changes in its class base, the centre of gravity of the Muslim League shifted away from the Aligarh conservatives to a relatively more radical leadership based on Lucknow (to which the League office was moved). By 1912 the energetic and radical Wazir Hasan, took over as general secretary. A new phase began in the political style of the League and its attitude towards the Congress. There was a grow-

ing realisation in the Muslim League that they would not make any headway against the British colonial rule without establishing a united front with the Congress. Calls for Hindu-Muslim unity were therefore reiterated.

The Muslim League looked for someone who could build bridges between the League and the Congress. Jinnah was the obvious choice. He had a high standing in the Indian National Congress and was ideally placed to bring the two movements together. In October 1913 when Wazir Hasan and Maulana Mohammad Ali were in London to see the secretary of state for India (who, in the event, refused to see them!) they took the opportunity to meet Jinnah. The two persuaded him to join the Muslim League and work for Congress-League Unity. Jinnah agreed, provided that his commitments to the Congress would remain.

Jinnah worked hard for Congress-League unity, which was sealed by the Lucknow pact adopted at a joint session of the Congress and the League in 1916. Under the pact, the Congress accepted some Muslim demands, including their key demand for separate electorates, a Muslim demand which was strongly supported by Gokhalé. The pact also specified province-wise weightage for Muslims. That was very controversial. Muslim minority provinces like the UP, were given a bigger share of seats than that provided under the Morley-Minto Reforms. That was at the cost of Muslim majority provinces. Bengal with a Muslim population of 52 per cent was given a share of only 40 per cent of seats. Punjab with a Muslim population of nearly 55 per cent was given a share of only 50 per cent of the seats. On the other hand, the UP with a Muslim population of only 12 per cent was given a share of no less than 30 per cent. After all the UP elite were running the show. This turned out to be the most contentious aspect of the Lucknow pact. The Congress for its part had conceded the Muslim demand for separate electorates because Muslims believed that they could not get elected under joint electorates even in Muslim majority constituencies, because of the effects of property qualifications. Later, however, this turned out to be a sore point with a new generation of Congress leaders.

Justified criticism of the Lucknow pact should not make us underestimate its significance. It had succeeded in bringing the Congress and the Muslim League together on to a common platform to fight British imperialism. It was the Muslim League and Jinnah who had initiated that bid for unity and the Congress responded positively. Jinnah was a unifier and not a separationist, as generally suggested. He persisted in that difficult role, despite setbacks, for a quarter of a century until a point was reached when, despite all his efforts, unity was no longer an option.

The Lucknow Pact was not only about Muslim demands. It also incorporated shared demands of the Congress and the League vis-à-vis the colonial government against which they would struggle together. Thus, for example, the pact demanded that in the legislatures, elected members should be in a majority. It demanded that in the provinces there should be four-fifths elected members and only one-fifth nominated, and that the members of councils should be elected directly by the people, on as broad a franchise as possible and so on. Thus contrary to popular opinion, the Lucknow pact was not just about concessions to the Muslim League. It also spelt out the basis on which the Congress and the Muslim League could carry the anti-colonial freedom struggle forward together, as close allies. The significance of the Lucknow pact was greater than is generally supposed.

Before the politics of the Lucknow pact could have a chance to unfold, it was torpedoed by the Khilafat movement of 1918-24, in which the mullahs were the main force. Until then religious ideology was absent from Indian Muslim politics. The religious focus of the Khilafat movement brought about shifts in the Muslim League leadership. Secularists like Jinnah and Wazir Hasan were driven out of the League and second rank leaders like Maulana Shaukat Ali moved into the first rank. It was Mahatma Gandhi, however, who was the true leader of the Khilafat movement – in his own words he had become the dictator of the movement. around him were fanatical mullahs like Maulana Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal. But at every stage they asked Gandhi to tell them what to do. Under Gandhi's leadership the Khilafat movement became a powerful mass movement. But it collapsed soon because of its own internal contradictions. Gandhi claimed that he had made the Khilafat movement a means of establishing Hindu-Muslim unity. But unlike the Lucknow pact, the Khilafat movement triggered off fierce communal riots in the 1920s. The Lucknow pact which had worked for unity between the Muslim League and the Congress, was lost somewhere along the way.

It is quite true that the Muslim League represented only a small Muslim elite. The Muslim masses, the workers and peasants, were largely untouched by it. The mullahs, who were behind the Khilafat movement, did not voice the demands of the Muslim peasant and the working class either; its methods remained restricted to elite negotiations at the top. The mullahs were petty bourgeois radicals who represented the dead past rather than the future, the direction towards which Muslims along with the rest of India needed to go. The main consequence of the Khilafat movement was that it dealt a blow to the Muslim League from which it did not recover for more than a decade. Having no true mass base amongst the working masses, the Muslim League existed during that time only nominally, as a side-show for the Khilafatists.

After the abolition of the Ottoman Khilafat by the Turkish republican nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal, the Khilafat movement, in spite of its mass base, became a lost cause in India. It did not leave a permanent mark on Indian Muslim politics, except that it had enabled the mullahs to organise. Gandhi helped hardliner Muslim mullahs, the so-called 'Deobandi Sunnis', to set up a political organisation, namely the *Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind* which implacably opposed the Muslim League and its leadership. The Barelvi Sunnis, more superstitious but also more tolerant, played no part in the Khilafat movement because they did not accept the legitimacy of the Ottoman Khalifa, on the ground that he was not descended from the Quraysh. It might be noted that in addition to the *Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind*, two other extremely dogmatic religious political organisations of mullahs were to emerge, namely, the Majlis-i-Ahrar and the *Jamaat-i-Islami*. They were all bitterly opposed the Muslim League and its westernised leadership, and eventually they also opposed the demand for Pakistan with unabated vehemence.

These religious parties were unable to generate enough support to allow them to stop the Muslim League. Some Muslim Leaguers, like the Ali Brothers and even Jinnah's ward, the young Raja Amir Ahmad Khan of Mahmudabad (the son) did succumb for a time to Islamic ideology. But, as he told me, that was a passing phase. He realised soon that this fundamentalist ideology was a delusion. Like-

wise, the Ali Brothers and others like them too returned to the secularist Muslim League. The Khilafat interlude did not convert the Muslim League into a religious ideological movement. It was only on the eve of independence that Liaquat Ali Khan was able to induce a few Ulama of the *Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind*, to migrate to Pakistan in the hope that in a Muslim state they might fare better than in Hindu India. They formed the *Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam*. They had little influence on state power until the advent of the regime of General Zia. All that while, the Pakistan movement remained a secular movement of Muslims, not a movement of Islam.

However, by the time secularists like Jinnah, who had left the Muslim League at the time of the Khilafat movement, rejoined it, it was a changed Muslim League in a radically changed political (and constitutional) context. As a result, the centre of gravity had shifted from Muslim minority provinces like UP and its salariat base, to Muslim majority provinces and their dominating feudal landed magnates. That happened because of the implementation of the Montague-Chelmsford reforms under the government of India act of 1919. Under that act, limited power was transferred to Indian ministers, at the provincial level, over certain departments of the government. That injected a new logic in Indian politics. From then on distribution of state patronage by Indian ministers began to play a part in building up political support.

Muslims of the UP and Muslim minority provinces and their salariat and professionals, who were the Muslim League's main power-base, being a minority and unable to form a government, were now out of the game. Nor did the Muslim League secure the support of the feudal magnates automatically. They had their own politics. The Muslim League continued on their support but it was now a shadow of its former self.

In the Punjab, Muslim feudals, in alliance with Hindu and Sikh feudals and the jat biraderi of East Punjab (led by Sir Chhotu Ram) ruled the roost under the banner of the unionist party, which was presided over by Sir Fazli Husain who was not a feudal but who understood the needs of feudals better than they could themselves. Along with their clear class interests as landed magnates, the unionist ideology included Punjabiyat, i e, Punjabi nationalism. They were wary of more radical politics impinging on them from other parts of India. The unionists believed that the British would rule over India for ever. Their aims therefore were narrowly focused on governing and exploiting the Punjab and insulating it from outside influences while the going was good under the British. As the prospects of independence (under Congress rule) appeared on the agenda they opted for an independent Punjab, within the British Commonwealth. Chief minister Sikandar Hayat, Fazli Husain's successor, even tried to get Churchill's support for an independent Punjab within the empire. But, in the event, that project was not taken up.

Fazli Husain successfully divided the Punjabi middle class into two rival groups, urban and rural. The salariat and professionals of rural origin, who enjoyed feudal patronage, got priority and preference. Urban Muslims, on the other hand, were a deprived minority in unionist ruled Punjab. Being bitter about social injustice, many of them responded to the hot rhetoric of the fundamentalist religious group, the Majlis-i-Ahrar. The Muslim League was weak and ineffective and too dependent on the unionists, to be able to give them an independent lead. The Punjabi feudals, especially, Sir Fazli Husain, saw the Muslim League not as a serious rival who might possibly threaten their hold over power in the province. They tolerated it, and even patronised it and certainly used it for their purposes when the occasion required it. Sikandar Hayat therefore even entered into a pact with Jinnah.

IV

It was not until the mid-1940s, when the approach of independence began to look like a reality, that the landed magnates of Punjab realised, firstly, that they would not be given an independent Punjab within the Commonwealth, which they wanted. Secondly they saw a mortal danger to their survival as a class, if independence were to come to the Punjab under the Indian National Congress. The Congress was fully committed to land reform, on which a committee, presided over Pandit Nehru himself, had been working for some years. For the survival of their class, the Punjabi feudals reckoned that Pakistan under the Muslim League was a workable alternative for them, the more so because they knew that if they 'joined' the League, they would, in effect, 'take it over'. They would control it. Mian Mumtaz Daulatana was amongst the first to see this and he joined the Muslim League in 1943. By 1945 virtually all of the Muslim landed magnates of the Punjab had joined it, except for a small misguided rump under Khizr Hayat Khan. They hung on to the dreams of an independent Punjab in the British Commonwealth which the British were not going to give them. The situation in Sindh was similar to that of the Punjab. So by the time that independence came, the feudal landed magnates of Punjab and Sindh had taken over the Muslim League. No ideology except their concern for self-preservation was needed to draw them to the League. The peasants whom they dominated completely needed no ideology to make them vote as their landlord instructed them to do.

The Pakistan movement, thus, was not driven by any religious ideology and except for East Bengal, there was no mass movement as such to go with it. Many pirs in Punjab and Sindh were among the great landed magnates who opted for Pakistan. At their behest their 'mureeds' celebrated the idea of Pakistan with gusto. From this a false impression has been taken by some scholars that it was the idea of Pakistan which had motivated them, whereas in truth what they were celebrating was the joy of their pir, when he joined the League and thereby averted the threat of Congress land reforms.

'Islamic' ideology was indeed invoked in the Punjab but not by the Muslim League. It was invoked by the hardliner Majlis-i-Ahrar, which bitterly opposed the Muslim League, tooth and nail, denouncing its leaders as kaffirs. It was the only 'mass' movement in the Punjab that made its appeal in the name of Islam and with it opposed the Pakistan idea. The main base of the Majlis-i-Ahrar was amongst the urban petty bourgeoisie, the lower middle class, which had been neglected because of the anti-urban policy of the unionist party with whom the Muslim League had collaborated.

It was only in Bengal that the Muslim League led a genuine mass movement, in the 1945 elections; but that was not a religious movement. Until the elections of 1937 the Bengal Muslim League was under the control of the Dhaka Nawab family and a small coterie around it – the Bengali feudals. They were challenged by the Krishak Proja Party, led by Fazlul Haq, whose political base was amongst the well off peasantry. The final vote in the 1937 election was evenly divided between them and they formed a coalition government.

In 1943 the great Bengal famine killed three and a half million Bengali poor

peasants who had no reserves to fall back on when the famine hit. The peasants were soon on the warpath. Their movement known as the Tebhaga movement, was mobilised by the communist led All India Kisan Sabha. It was against that background, when the Bengal peasant had been aroused, that the 1945 elections were held. In 1943 a remarkable man named Abul Hashim was elected as the general secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League. He professed a confused mixture of socialism and Islam. He took over the task of organising support for the Muslim League, with the help of the Tebhaga activists as his local cadres. Pushing aside the Dacca Nawab family and other elite leaders who had so far controlled the Bengal Provincial Muslim League, Abul Hashim organised the Muslim League election campaign in which he focused on the concrete needs and economic demands of the small peasants. If that mass movement was driven by an ideology, it was not religious ideology. He mobilised the peasantry behind the Muslim League by giving class slogans and not religious slogans.

Religious ideology therefore played no part in the 1945 election campaign in Bengal. It turned almost entirely on the economic demands of the Bengal peasant; the genius of Abul Hashim and his colleagues of the All India Kisan Sabha, prevented their movement from degenerating into communal slogans that it could have happened all too easily. The Bengal peasants (who were overwhelmingly Muslim) depended very largely on jute as a cash crop and were thereby enmeshed in the globalised cash economy. Their immediate conflict was with traders and moneylenders, who all happened to be Hindu. Abul Hashim took up both these issues but as purely economic class issues, without allowing them to turn into communal conflict. He promised the peasants that the future Pakistan government would be their government, a peasant raj. That government would scale down their debts and take steps to prevent the traders from manipulating prices against their interests. The peasants were also promised abolition of zamindari. The Bengal peasantry was led to believe that Pakistan was going to be ruled by the peasants. If an ideology there was, it was a peasant ideology. That was the opposite of the feudal dominated Punjab and Sindh. Due to Abul Hashim's successful campaign the Bengal Muslim League secured 114 seats in the provincial assembly as against a total of 121 Muslim seats. Religious ideology played no part in this, not even by way of rhetoric. But, in the end, the peasants were cheated, as they always are. Abul Hashim having served their purpose, the powerful Dacca Nawab group had little difficulty in manoeuvring him out of the way; in February 1947 when he was sent on indefinite leave to his native village in Burdwan. The Bengali Muslim feudals were back in the saddle – that is a long story and sad story by itself.

The final result, as we can see, was a Pakistan dominated by feudals (both of West Pakistan and also of East Bengal) associated with a ruling bureaucracy. The ruling group was soon joined by an all powerful military. In the Punjab and Sindh the feudals won and imposed their feudal values on us for decades. In Bengal, despite the overwhelming popular victory, it was the Bengali Muslim feudals who were back in power at the time of the partition. At the time when it was created, Pakistan's problem was not that of religious ideology but, rather, that of feudal domination. .

Contrary to the present-day claims of the mullahs, the Muslim League had consistently maintained a secular stance throughout its career except for the brief Khilafat interlude. There had been some attempts to bring Islamic ideology on to the Muslim League platform. But such attempts were rare and they were invariably defeated. For brevity, to give only one example, one of the rare attempts to bring the issue of Islamic ideology on to the agenda of the All India Muslim League has been documented by Sharifuddin Pirzada in his collection of Muslim League documents. At the AIML session in Delhi in 1943, one Abdul Hameed Kazi canvassed support for a resolution that he proposed to table, to commit the Muslim League to Islamic ideology and the creation of an Islamic state. Immediately there was pressure from everyone that forced Kazi to abandon his idea. It was such widespread opposition in the Muslim League to the ideology of the religious parties that marginalised religious fanatics who were bitterly opposed to the All India Muslim League and its leadership and, eventually, to the idea of the Pakistan.

Religious parties were, as I have said, implacably hostile to the Pakistan movement. In Punjab and Sindh, the power of the feudal landed magnates was itself sufficient to line up support in the 1945 elections and no mass movement was needed; nor did any mass movement actually arise. Anyone who has lived in a Punjab village for an extended period would realise this. In East Bengal there was indeed a powerful mass movement, as I have said. It was led by the legendary Hashim Khan, with the help of cadres of the Tebhaga movement. Their slogans, however, were explicitly secular. There were indeed occasional popular demonstrations in towns. The slogans would be cast in terms of demands of Muslims and not in terms of Islam, though at times a rare voice speaking in the name of Islam might join in. But that would not make it an Islamic 'mass' movement. Negotiations with the Congress and the British were settled through negotiations at the top. When Jinnah proclaimed Pakistan's secular ideology he was voicing the established secular ideological position that the Muslim League had adhered to throughout its career. Fundamentalist Islamic ideology played no part in the origins of Pakistan, although contemporary ideologues of Islamic fundamentalism including academics, claim that it was Islamic ideology and slogans that created Pakistan and that they therefore have the right to decide its future. EPW

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