

The Sindh Muslim League: Formation, Problems and Role in the Freedom Struggle of Pakistan

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Abstract

All India Muslim League, the biggest political party of the Muslims of the Sub-Continent, played a pivotal role in the political and constitutional history of India in general and for the cause of the Indian Muslims in particular. Through a long and cumbersome journey, the organization grew up and went through a process of politicizing the Muslim community of India. The freedom struggle of the Muslims in the Sub-continent got a firm footing in the province of Sindh due to the tireless efforts of the provincial Muslim League leaders who worked with missionary spirit and zeal to uphold the cause of the League. This paper is focused on the formation of Muslim League in Sindh, its aims and objectives, the problems and difficulties it faced during the struggle for Pakistan? What were the problems for the League to get strong foothold in the province? Why was Sindi politics ravaged with factionalism, opportunism, and particularism? How the League managed to discipline the Leaguers in the province, brought unity and amassed their support for its demand for Pakistan and finally how the Sindh Muslim League achieved its goal i.e. Pakistan? The answers to these questions would help us to see in right

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perspective the struggle of the Sindi Muslims for their right of self-determination and independence under the banner of the League.

Introduction

It is generally believed that Sindh is the land of one of the most ancient civilizations of the east,¹ scion of the Indus Valley Civilization, and gateway of Islam². Sindhies had always been sentimentally attached to their culture, traditions, freedoms and liberties.³ Passing through different phases of struggle in the history after remaining province of the Mughal Empire and enjoying local rule. Sindh became part of British India in 1943. The British occupation of India that had started with the Battle of Plassy culminated with the war of independence in 1857.⁴ Since the abolition of the Company's rule from India, the British government introduced a series of reforms in India. They started propagating their political ideals like democracy, constitutionalism, rule of law, liberty, fundamental rights and representative responsible governments etc. They also setup educational institutions to train the Indians to help them to adjust with new system, traditions, values and ethos.

The British imperial power exploited the Indians and their resources mercilessly, but its stay in India compelled them to introduce some reforms under the pressure of public opinion and their liberals at home. The Indian educated lot took advantage and started mobilizing public to safeguard their interest. The western educated Indians were constantly trying to extract maximum for the Indians through their weapon of language through the platforms of different political parties. It was because of their efforts that the

1 Aitezaz Ahsen, *Sindh Sagar aor Qayaam-i-Pakistan*, (Islamabad: Dost Milli Publications, 1999), pp. 32-35.

2 Syed Abdul Quddus, *Sindh the Land of Indus Civilization* (Karachi: Royal books Company, 1992), pp. 3-5.

3 Hamida Khuhro, *Documents on the Separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency*, Vol. I (Islamabad: Institute of Islamic History Culture and Civilizaion, 1982), pp. XVII-LXVI.

4 Mubarak Ali, *Sindh Analyzed, Mc Murdos's and Delhouste's Account of Sindh* (Lahore: Takhleeqat, 1994), pp. 13-20.

British Government introduced constitutional reforms and gradually setup institutions required for the parliamentary democracy. The formation of political parties, therefore, was a pre-requisite to the introduction of democratic participatory system. Within a short period of time, there emerged dozens of political parties in India formed by different segments of society to safeguard their interests.⁵ The Indian Muslims also took the tide and formed various organizations at central and provincial levels to protect their interests.

The formation of All India Muslim League was the culmination of the desire of Indian Muslims to have an organization of their own as a joint platform to secure their interests. All India Muslim League took a tremendous start by securing the right of separate electorate for the Indian Muslims in 1909. Encouraged from its early successes, the League established its branches at all levels — both Muslim majority as well as in Muslim minority areas in India. In Muslim majority areas, Sindh had its unique position while in Bengal and Punjab the Muslim majority was razor thin Sindh was the overwhelmingly solid Muslim majority province. It had remained part of Bombay presidency after Charles Napier till 1932 when separate Assembly and Government was given to Sindh. The political activity that had started in India after 1857 also affected the Sindhis and hampered the process of political activities there.

Modern education was instrumental in creating awareness and carrying forward the message of political rights in the province of Sindh. The establishment of Sindh Madrassa-tul-Islam Noushero Madrassa, Larkana Madrassa, Noor Muhammad High School Hyderabad and Madrassa Tando Bago played their part in training the young Sindhis to keep them familiar with their rights and interests as well as educating them how to protect their rights. Similar was the role of D.J. Science College Karachi, D.J. National College Hyderabad and Navalrai Hiranand Academy in

5 Noreen Talha, *Economic Factor in the Making of Pakistan 1921-1947* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 59-70 and 103-110.

Hyderabad. Therefore, organizations like Sindh Sabha, Sindh Muhammadan Association, Sindh Provincial Conference, Sindh Education Conference, Sindh Zamindar Association etc emerged on the political scene and they served as the early political organizations.⁶

In Sindh Muslims were 75 percent of the population; among the 25 percent remaining Hindus were the largest minority.⁷ The society was heterogeneous. Though the non-Muslims were in minority yet they were more influential as compared to their numerical position. They were practically at the helm of the affairs in the province because economically they were very sound. They were the capitalist class of the province, owned urban property, dominated business and trade and the big Muslim jagirdars were heavily under their debts and had thus mortgaged their lands to them.⁸ The Indian National Congress also had its influence in Sindh because the province was controlled from the Bombay Presidency, an overpoweringly Hindu Majority province.

All India Muslim League Sindh branch was opened in Sindh on March 1, 1917, in a meeting held at Khaliqdin Hall Karachi. Yousafali Alibhoy was elected as its 1st President and G.M. Bhuegi as its Vice-President.⁹ Though the League had established its provincial chapter yet virtually it had no significant existence before 1937 and wielded little influence. Before 1937 League organization in the province was weak. The important Muslim leaders, who later on joined the League, were initially very reluctant to associate themselves in any capacity with the Party. The political Stalwarts like Sir Abdullah Haroon, G.M. Syed, Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur, Pir Illahibuhsh, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, Ayub Khuhru, Hasham Ghazdar, Ali Muhammad Rashidi, Hatim Alvi,

6 Khuhru, *Documents on the Separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency*, vol. II (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1997), pp. 461-68.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Noureen Talha, *Economic Factor in the Making of Pakistan*, p. 163.

9 *Ibid.*

Shiekh Abdul Majeed Sindhi, Miran Muhammad Shah, Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto, Band-i-Ali Talpur, were not ready to associate themselves with the League. In fact they were opposed to the creation of a party like AIML in the province, because they were of the opinion that it would disturb the communal harmony and thus deprive them from non-Muslims' support. Abdullah Haroon made it very explicit when he remarked that "any attempt to set up a communal party in the future assembly to follow the All India Muslim League line would prove disastrous."¹⁰ Jinnah visited Sindh in his effort to persuade Sindi Muslim politicians to contest the 1937 Elections on the League ticket but none of them were ready to even allow their names to be included in the list of the hosts to a party that was arranged to welcome Jinnah that it would be politically a great disadvantage.¹¹ Therefore, AIML could not find foothold in the province even in 1937.

Situation for the League was not much different in other Muslim Majority areas as well; even people like Agha Khan were of the opinion that the Muslims in different parts of India should contest elections by forming local political parties and were opposed to the formation of Parliamentary Board of the League. Therefore, we see that the Knights, Khan Bahadures, Khan Sahibs and Nawabs etc, formed their own political parties in different parts of India. But Jinnah constituted Central Parliamentary Board consisted of 55 members for 1937 elections. From Sindh Abdul Majeed Sindhi, Hakim Fateh Muhammad Shirwani, Maulana Muhammad Sadiq and Muhammad Hashim Gazdar were nominated as the members of the Board.¹² But in Sindh Abdul Majeed Sindhi had established Sindh Azad Party, Abdullah Haroon set up Sindh United Party and Ghulam

10 Ian Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement, the Growth of Muslim League in North- West and North –East India 1937-47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 34.

11 Sohail Zaheer Lari, *A History of Sindh* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 182.

12 Syed Hussain Ahmed Maddani, *Tehreek-i-Pakistan ka Haqeeqi Pass-e-Manzar* (Lahore: Haji Haneef and Sons, n.d.), pp. 91-64.

Hussain Hedayatullah formed Sindh Muslim Political Party to contest the elections.¹³ The situation for the League was so awkward that even Abdul Majeed Sindhi, the member of the Central Parliamentary Board of Muslim League, was not ready to contest election on the League ticket.

In 1937 elections, Sindh United Party secured 21 Muslim seats, but because of defeat of Abdullah Haroon and Shah Nawaz Bhutto, Ghulam Hussain Hedayatullah managed and manoeuvred to become Premier with three seats in the Assembly. He secured the support of Hindu members of the Assembly who joined the ministry under the leadership of Mukhi Gobind Ram and Mir Bandi Ali Group. Sindh United Party, the majority party, faced defections and its strength went down to half a dozen members. Prominent among defectors were Hasham Gazdar, Allahbuksh and G.M. Syed.

The defeat in the elections compelled Jinnah to re-organize the League and its policy. As a result throughout the length and breadth of India branches of the party were opened at provincial, district and local levels. An extensive programme to contact the Muslim masses and educate them to know and protect their interests was launched. An aggressive strategy was devised to expose the weaknesses of the Indian National Congress governments in the provinces.¹⁴

In the Muslim Majority areas the League needed strenuous efforts as it wielded little influence in the areas. In order to seriously challenge the British and the Congress the League had to prove its strong influence and presence in the areas. Therefore, like other parts of the Sub-continent, Sindh also received special attention from the League leadership. Under the directions of the Jinnah, the League was revived with Shiekh Abdul Majeed Sindi as its President, Sir Abdullah Haroon as Vice President and G. Allana as the Secretary. Branches of the League in Tharparker, Nawab

13 Khalid Shamsul Hassan, *Sindh's Fight for Pakistan* (Karachi: Shamsul Hassan Foundation for Historical and Cultural Research, 1992), pp. I-XIV.

14 Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah, Creator of Pakistan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 113.

Shah, Sukkur, Jacobabad and Larkana etc were established. The masses in general and students, merchants, traders, professionals and religious circles in particular were engaged by the League leadership to gather support of different sections of the population.

With this new spirit infused in the League organization and sensing its popularity the leading Muslim politicians of Sindh started joining the League. G.M. Syed, Muhammad Ayub Khuhru, Abdullah Haroon etc were few of those who joined the League. The name and fame of the League increased tremendously after the formation of the Congress ministries. Jinnah employed all tools to popularize the League and its message throughout India. In Sindh, too, the party got opportunities to amass public support and demonstrate its power. One such opportunity came on March 22, 1938 when Ghulam Hussain Hedayatullah's ministry was defeated and Allahbuksh became primer.¹⁵ The defeat of the ministry was because of creation of groups in the Assembly opposed to the regime. The Muslim League got an opportunity to create support for itself in and outside the Assembly.

The holding of 'League Worker's Conference' was another very significant event in the history of Sindh Muslim League. A student of Aligrah University Ghulam Nabi Pathan, who had returned to native town Sultankot, organized the Conference.¹⁶ The Conference was a great success. Feeling the pulse of the people of Sindh and allured by the success of the Conference, Muslim leading politicians of Sindh came close and started associating themselves with the League.

The year of 1938 brought many opportunities for AIML to amass support and show its muscles. The leadership of the League took great advantage of the follies of the Congress ministries and policies created support for the Party both in Muslim majority as well as in the Muslim minority provinces of Sub-continent. Jinnah very successfully brought Muslims

15 Hassan, *Sindh's Fight for Pakistan*, p. vi.

16 Lari, *A History of Sindh*, p. 186.

of India under the League's banner. The leaders of the popular governments in Muslim majority provinces i.e. Bengal, Punjab, Sindh and the minority province of Assam joined hands with Jinnah. In the Conference of the League held at Lakhnow, Sir Sikandar Hayat, the primer of Punjab and A.K. Fazal Haq the primer of Bengal, agreed to work in an alliance with the League. Similarly, G.M. Syed resigned from the cabinet of Allahbaksh and devoted himself for the cause of AIML in Sindh.¹⁷

After the Conference, a meeting of the Sindi leadership was held with Jinnah. The meeting was attended by G.M Syed, G.H. Hedayatullah, Allahbuksh, Bandi Ali Talpur, Abdul Majeed Sindi and Muhammad Ayub Khuhru etc. In the meeting it was decided that the Muslim League Parliamentary Party would be created in Sindh Assembly and after attaining majority the League ministry would be formed.¹⁸

The Sindh Muslim League's contribution to the cause of Indian Muslims and the League is significant because it remained in forefronts in persuading the Central League to go for radical measures to resolve the problems of the Muslims of Sub-continent. In that connection landmark was the conference of the provincial league that was held on 7-9 October, 1938 for which Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Muslim primers of Punjab and Bengal were specially invited. The Conference passed resolution, which condemned the Congress for consciously establishing purely Hindu rule in certain provinces by forming ministries either without Muslim ministers or with Muslim ministers having no following among Muslim masses. The resolution also condemned attempts by the Congress to make Hindi as the lingua franca of India and to close Urdu medium schools where possible and discouraging teaching of Urdu language. The most important part of the Resolution was:

17 Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement*, p. 41.

18 Azad Bin Haider, *G.M Syed ki Soach, Azaem ore Siyast* (Lahore: Deed Shuneed Publications, n.d.), pp. 70-78.

whereas the evolution of a single united India and united Indian nation, inspired by common aspirations and common ideas, being impossible of realization on account of caste-ridden mentality and anti-Muslim policy of the majority community, and also on account of acute differences of religion, language, script, culture, social laws and outlook of life of the two major communities and even race in certain parts... this Conference considers it absolutely essential in the interest of an abiding peace of the vast Indian continent and in the interest of unhampered cultural development, the economic and social betterment, and 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 this Conference, therefore, recommends to All India Muslim League to devise a scheme of constitution under which Muslims may attain full independence.¹⁹

The resolution of the Sindh Muslim League changed the very nature of Indian politics. Few at that time could foresee the far-reaching repercussions of the resolution that ultimately changed the map of the Sub-continent.

After the Conference, Jinnah along with primers of Bengal and Punjab met Muslim members of Sindh Assembly and persuaded them to form Muslim League party in the Assembly, Allahbuksh, Pir Illahi Baksh, G.H Hedayatullah, Mir Bandi Ali Talpur, G.M Syed and Shiekh Abdul Majeed, signed an agreement whereby they agreed to hold a meeting on October 12, 1938 to form a Muslim League Assembly Party. The primer Allahbaksh was party to the agreement, but when he realized that he would not be elected as the leader of the Parliamentary Party he withdrew his support from the League and the dream of forming the League ministry could not be materialized for time being. However, Muslim League Parliamentary Party was created in the Assembly with Ghulam Hussain Hedayatullah as its leader and Bandi Ali Talpur as its deputy leader.²⁰

The structure of the Provincial League was also completed with Abdullah Haroon as the President, G.M.

19 Lari, *A History of Sindh*, p. 183

20 *Ibid.*

Syed and Muhammad Ayub Khuhru as the Vice Presidents, Abdul Majeed Sindi as the General Secretary and Muhammad Rashid and Ghulam Nabi Pathan as Joint Secretaries. Sir Abdullah Haroon and Shiekh Abdul Majeed were nominated as the members of the Working Committee of All India Muslim League.²¹ Though the League Organization was well-organized and the Assembly Party was created yet the party lacked discipline, and personal interests were preferred over the interests of the community. During the period from the formation of the league Parliamentary Party in Sindh Assembly to the formation of second League ministry, factionalism, opportunism and lust for ministerial offices and thus changing loyalties were the cornerstone of the politics of Sindh. That was mainly because the feelings of Muslim Nationalism were not very strong at that time and had just started to build, the traditions to follow the discipline and line of action of the party had not taken roots, the members of the Assembly were elected in their individual capacity and not as representatives of the Party and the traditions of democracy were in infancy stage. The hold of Jinnah over the Party in Sindh was also not very effective that is why Ayesha Jalal has said that "Jinnah was impotent and irrelevant in Sindhi politics".²²

That was why the Leaguers were running after personal gains and offices, and floor crossing and changing loyalties were frequent. The Provincial League, by 1938, had secured the support of 27 Muslim members but when the League tried to dislodge Allahbaksh Ministry, the leader and the Deputy Parliamentary Leader of the League in the Assembly, G.H. Hedayatullah and Bandi Ali Talpur respectively joined the Allahbaksh Ministry. They felt no hesitation in switching over to government when they were holding ministries.²³ That was blow to the name and fame of the Party but the League recovered very quickly. The provincial chapter of the

21 Hassan, *Sindh's Fight for Pakistan*, pp. 239-42.

22 Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman, Jinnah, The Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 113.

23 Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement*, p. 39.

League continued to show its muscles in Sindh by holding public meetings against the Allahbaksh Ministry.

The Manzilgah Mosque incident provided an opportunity to Sindh Muslim League to demonstrate its power. The Muslims of Sukkur were of the opinion that Manzilgah was a mosque built by Mir Masum, a historian of Sindh and an officer of the Mughal Imperial Army that conquered Sindh, and demanded that it should be restored to them. The Hindus who dominated the city of Sukkur were opposed to it. The League supported the Muslim cause and a Mosque Restoration Committee was formed to launch a campaign to put pressure on the provincial government to restore mosque to them. The August 18, 1939 was observed as Manzilgah Day. The agitation became violent with the passage of time and resulted in the loss of men and material. Riots raged all over Sukkur district, which crippled the administration not only in Sukkur but tension ran high throughout Sindh. The Muslim League leadership was put behind the bars but the agitation continued.²⁴

The commencement of 2nd World War and subsequent resignations of the Congress Ministries provided another opportunity to the League to prove its claim of representing the Indian Muslims. The December 22, 1939 was observed the Day of Deliverance throughout India and proved the popularity of the League and its ability and effectiveness to mobilize the Indian Muslims.²⁵ In the Province of Sindh, the effective observance of the Day of Deliverance further weakened the position of the premier. As a result, no-confidence motion was moved against the premier in February 1939. Though the motion failed in the Assembly yet the Premier resigned. Mir Bandi Ali Talpur's ministry that was formed after Allahbaksh was short lived, but the League

24 Kazi Muhammad Akbar, "Sindh Ki Pakistan Main Shamuliat aor G.M Syed Ka Muslim League Sy Ikhraj" Weekly *Sindh Observer*, July 13, 20, 27 and August 3, 1975, quoted by Azad Bin Haider, pp. 97-108.

25 H.V. Hudson, *The Great Divide: Britain-India-Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 527.

got representation in the new cabinet with Muhammad Ayub Khuhru, G.M. Syed and Abdul Majeed as ministers.

The League got representation in the Cabinet on the terms and conditions that were equal to the dissolution of its Parliamentary Party in the Assembly and faced another setback when its ministers supported the Joint Electorate Bill for local bodies, contrary to the policy of All India Muslim League.²⁶ The compromises were made on the pressure of the ministers who desperately wanted to remain in power.

Despite the differences, the League's provincial chapter in Sindh was busy in amassing support of the Muslims. Abdullah Haroon, the President of Sindh Muslim League was working effectively to carry forward the message of the League and enlist support for its cause.²⁷ Since the passage of the resolution for the self-determination of the Indian Muslims by the Sindh Muslim League, All India Muslim League was working on different schemes to materialize the programme envisioned in the resolution. For this purpose 27th Session of the AIML was held at Lahore in which the historic resolution demanding autonomous independent states, for the Muslims of India, in the northeast and north west of India, was passed.²⁸ The vision of the Sindh League prevailed and destiny was determined. The Sindh delegation consisted of Abdullah Haroon, G.M Syed etc., expressed their resolve to materialize the dream of achieving separate homeland for the Indian Muslims as soon as possible.

The provincial League was striving to take the Pakistan demand to every nook and corner of Sindh and carried forward the message of self-determination of the Indian Muslims to even far-flung and remote areas of the province. Sir Abdullah Haroon, the President of the Sindh League

26 Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan, All India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1947*, Vol. III, (ed.) (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1990), p. 381.

27 Lari, *A History of Sindh*, p. 185.

28 Resolution No.7 of the Meeting of Council of All India Muslim League held on Feb. 23, 1941 at Delhi, quoted in Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan, All India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1947*, p. 3.

organized Pakistan Day Celebrations in Karachi on 19 and 21 April 1940. This was attended by mammoth gathering and further added to the strength and popularity of the League.²⁹

On the invitation of Abdullah Haroon, Jinnah visited Sindh in December 1940. The great leader very skilfully managed the affairs of the Sindh League. Due to his artistic dealings the League house in Sindh was soon put in order. In March 1941, the League ministers who were more interested in enjoying the patronage and power of the office than building the League strength, dutifully stood down. That was the major turning point in the politics of Sindh.³⁰ The Bandi Ali Ministry was removed and Allahbaksh was appointed as the primer in March 1941. He was pro-congress and was groomed by the Congress to contest and challenge the Sindh League leadership. In April 1942, he presided over the All India Azad Muslim Conference held at Delhi. All those Muslim leaders who opposed Pakistan participated, and prominent among them were Hussain Ahmed Madni, Mufti Kifayatullah, Ahmed Saeed, Ataullah Shah Bukhari, Ch. Afzal Haq, Habib ur Rehman Ludhyanvi, and Shiekh Muhammad Jan.³¹ He was venomous in his opposition to Pakistan. As he had allied himself with the Congress, when the Congress launched Quit India Movement, Allahbaksh supported the movement and renounced his British titles of Khan Bahadur and O.B.E. Therefore, the governor dismissed his ministry. The Sindh Muslim League in response to 'Quit India' slogan of the Congress adopted 'Quit Bania' slogan in its meeting of September 12, 1942 at Karachi.³²

The Sindh Muslim League suffered an irreparable loss when Abdullah Haroon died on April 27, 1942. He had rendered valuable services for the League during the turbulent years of its re-organization. After his death

29 Riaz Ahmed, *The Sindh Muslim League 1940-47, Secret Police Abstracts*, ed. (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2008), p. 6.

30 Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement*, pp. 34-40.

31 For his their views see Syed Hussain Ahmed Maddani, *Tehreek-I-Pakistan ka Haqeeqi Pass-e-Manzar* (Lahore: Haji Haneef and Sons, n.d.), pp. 91-64.

32 *The Sindh Muslim League 1940-47, Secret Police Abstracts*, p. 83.

Muhammad Ayub Khuhru, who was vice president, served as the acting president of the League in Sindh. When Allahbakhsh ministry was dismissed, finding himself unable to form government, Ayub Khuhru persuaded Ghulam Hussain Hedayatullah to join Muslim League and form the government. Ghulam Hussain enthusiastically accepted the offer and formed ministry after joining the Muslim League. Thus Muslim League government was formed on October 16, 1942 when Ghulam Hussain government was sworn in. The League ministry under Ghulam Hussain remained in power till independence.³³

After the establishment of the ministry, the league in Sindh intensified its efforts to materialize the demand for Pakistan. G.M. Syed was elected as the president of the League on June 13, 1943. Besides working as the president of the Sindh League, G.M. Syed was member of 21-man Working Committee of the AIML and was one of the six AIML leaders who formed its apex body, i.e., the Committee of Action. He along with his workers did terrific work to popularize the League among the masses.³⁴

The Sindh Muslim League once again took a bold initiative when on March 3, 1943 G.M. Syed tabled what is known as Pakistan Resolution. The Resolution stated:

This house recommend 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 separate nation possessing religion, philosophy, social customs, literature, traditions, political and economic theories of their own quite different from those of the Hindus, they are justly entitled to the right as single, separate nation, to have independent national states of their own, carved out in zones where they are in majority in the Sub-continent of India. Wherefore they emphatically declare that no constitution shall be acceptable to them that will place the Muslims under the central Government dominated by an other nation... it is necessary for them

33 Francis Robinson, "The Memory of Power, Muslim, 'Political Importance' and the Muslim League" in Riaz Ahmed, *Papers Presented at Three-Day International Conference on All India Muslim League (1906-1947)* 18-20 December 2006(Islamabad), Vol. II, (ed.) (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2006), pp. 156-59.

34 Lari, *A History of Sindh*, p. 188.

to have independent National States of their own with safeguard for minorities... any attempt to subject the Muslims of India under the Central Government is bound to result in disastrous, unhappy consequences.³⁵

The vision was very clear, as the League achieved the first stage of the growth of nationalism that is the evolution of a group into a nation. The conditions of the nationalism, i.e. common group feelings, love for the fellow nationals, common moral, social, or economic consciousness, pride in common cultural characteristics such as language, customs, manners, literature, art and music etc, common religion and the hope that nation will one day be great, were very intelligently inculcated in the minds of the Indian Muslims by the League leadership. The Muslim Nationalism from sentiment i.e. love for common soil, race, language or culture, was transformed into policy i.e. to acquire independence for security and prestige by Quaid-i-Azam and was reflected in the policies of All India Muslim League and its provincial chapters.³⁶

Though the League was making tremendous progress all over India and people were flocking around the banner of the League, personal rivalries, differences and vested interests once more raised their heads in the ranks of the Sindh Muslim League. The bitterness started when G.M. Syed replaced Yousaf Haroon with Ghulam Haider Shah as General Secretary of the Sindh Muslim League. The groups started to emerge in the Provincial League. There emerged two groups in the Provincial League, i.e., the Mir and the Syed group. Ghulam Hussain the primer, G.M. Syed, Muhammad Ayub Khuhru, Gazdar etc., were at daggers drawn towards each other.

The murder of Allahbaksh, the former primer, further widened the gulf between the warring groups of the League. The arrest of Muhammad Ayub Khuhru was taken by the Khuhru family and group as an attempt of G.M. Syed and his

35 *Ibid.*

36 For conditions and stages of nationalism see K.K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan, A Study in Nationalism* (Lahore: Islamic Book Service, 1994), pp. 181-83.

group to clear their way to monopolize the politics of the province.³⁷ The allegations and counter allegation continued for a long period. The correspondence of these groups with Jinnah during that period reveals the tremendous amount of mistrust, bickering, petty quarrels and personal liking and disliking against each other. That was why Jinnah while referring to the problems in Sindh League had remarked that the Sindi leaders were quarrelling among themselves like children. Hedayatullah wrote to Jinnah about G.M Syed and his group, "they are going to stab me very soon, so I must get rid of them at once. I cannot allow a disloyal and treacherous colleague with me in the cabinet".³⁸

On the other hand G.M. Syed presented his case before Jinnah terming the tussle between himself and the primer as clash of interests between the big landowners and labours and tenants of Sindh. He claimed that the ministers' support of landed elites' interests was making the Muslim League unpopular and retarding the cause of Pakistan. There seemed to be a perpetual tug of war between 'corrupt primer' and the 'fanatical and unsteady provincial President'.³⁹

By elections for the Sindh Assembly vacant seats for Shikarpur and then Tandul Muhammad Khans proved to be a great challenge for the League because of the differences of the Syed and the ministerial groups. But Jinnah had matters under his control, which is evident from the correspondence of Sindh leaders with him. On every development the members of the different groups were informing him and in this way Jinnah was getting almost all the dimensions of the problem and was taking effective measure to keep the situation under his control in Sindh. Jinnah did not hesitate to take radical steps to keep the house of the Provincial League in order. In the words of Ian Talbot 'Jinnah's word was law'.⁴⁰ Due to differences between the League primer and the League's President, the primer included Mola Baksh,

37 Mrs. Khuhru's Letter to Jinnah quoted by Sohail Zaheer Lari, p. 193.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 194.

39 Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement*, pp. 34-40.

40 *Ibid.*

a non-League member in his cabinet. On G.M. Syed's protest Jinnah asked the premier to remove the minister if he was not ready to join Muslim League. Mola Baksh was removed from his ministry, despite of his protest that the Premier had gone back on his words. So before 1946 election the Sindh Muslim League was a house divided within but Jinnah was all involved and assertive.

When the 1946 elections approached, Quaid-i-Azam constituted seven member Parliamentary Board with the responsibility of issuing the League tickets with G.M. Syed as its chairman. But worse was to come. The Board split into two groups with majority against the Chairman. The cause of the split was personal than ideological or for the principles. The main bone of contention was issuing tickets for two constituencies. For Hala constituency, the Parliamentary Board gave ticket to Makhdoom Ghulam Haider and for Mirpur Khas it nominated K.B. Ghulam Muhammad Wassan. G.M. Syed wanted Ba'qader Shah Matyari and Syed Ghulam Hyder Shah as the League candidates. As the group against the chairman was in majority and the differences between the two could not be reconciled, G.M. Syed adjourned the meeting of the Board but majority continued to issue tickets. Similarly the nomination of Yousaf Haroon by the Central Parliamentary Board for Central Assembly seat from Sindh antagonized the Syed who wanted the ticket for Pir Ali Muhammad Rashidi.⁴¹

The matter once again was referred to Central leadership. The Quaid-i-Azam stressed upon the Sindhi leadership to realize the gravity of the situation and mend their fences for the greater cause of the Indian Muslims. He said:

I wish people thought less of premier and ministers and thought more of the paramount and vital issue confronting us, I do hope that

41 Akbar, "Sindh ki Pakistan mein Shamooliat", p. 105.

the seriousness of the situation will fully be realized... the only issue before us is Pakistan versus Akhand Hindustan and if Sindh fails, God help you. There will be nothing left... if you all stand solid and close your ranks, success is in your grasp...⁴²

In order to reconcile the differences the Provincial Parliamentary Board was suspended by Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan was sent to Karachi where in a meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board decision of G.M Syed to adjourn the meeting of the Provincial Parliamentary Board was declared unconstitutional. G.M. Syed became furious, called meeting of the Provincial League Council and passed no-confidence vote against the Parliamentary Board. A three-member committee of All India Muslim League consisting of Liaqat Ali Khan, Nawab Ismail and Hussain Imam failed to reconcile differences and thereafter Jinnah himself visited Karachi and held lengthy meetings with G.M Syed but in vain. Jinnah then put the selection of the candidates in the hands of the Central Parliamentary Board. The Board nominated candidates favourable to the primer. It nominated 27 candidates and announced that the decision regarding remaining 7 would be announced later. G.M Syed challenged the decision and announced his intention of putting up his own candidates in opposition to those put up by the Central Parliamentary Board.⁴³

Jinnah made last attempt to persuade G.M. Syed to respect and honour the party decision by sending Liaqat Ali Khan and Qazi Isa but it failed and Syed resigned from All India Muslim League Committee of Action and renounced the League ticket for Provincial Assembly. He launched a vigorous campaign against the Muslim League, Jinnah and the Central Parliamentary Board of

42 The Quaid's letter to Ayub Khuhru dated October 13, 1945, quoted in Khalid Shamsul Hassan, p. 128.

43 The Sindh Muslim League 1940-47, Secret Police Abstracts, p. 194.

the League. He started promoting Sindhi nationalism. The All India Muslim League Committee of Action took disciplinary action against him on Jan. 2, 1946, and he was removed from the office of the president of the Provincial League, expelled from the League along with his candidates who were put up to contest election against the League candidates.⁴⁴ The Committee of Action directed the vice-President Hasham Gazdar to take over the charge of the office of the President, appoint a committee consisting of Ayub Khuhru, Hasham Gazdar, Ghulam Nabi Pathan, Ghulam Ali Talpur with Yousaf Haroon as Convener to take the charge of election in Sindh.

The split in the League deprived it from the support and success it needed at that critical moment. The Muslim League won 27, the Syed group 4, Somoro group 4, Congress 22, and Europeans 3 seats in the Sindh Assembly Elections that were held on January 21, 1946.⁴⁵ The Congress, Somoro and the Syed groups joined together and formed Coalition Party in the Assembly. The League with the support of three Europeans formed the government on Feb. 9, 1946, under Ghulam Hussain Hedayatullah. But the House was equally divided between the Government and the opposition having the support of thirty members each. On March 15, 1946 Professor Ghanshyam Jethanand moved a no-confidence motion against the minister of law and order. The motion was defeated by the margin of one vote.⁴⁶

The historic convention of the elected Muslim members of the Central and provincial assemblies in

44 *Ibid.*, p. 212.

45 Lari, *A History of Sindh*, p. 199.

46 Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement*, pp. 53-54.

1945-46 elections was held at Delhi on April 6, 1946.⁴⁷ Speaking at the Convention, in which resolution that Pakistan zones where the Muslims were in majority be constituted into a sovereign independent state was passed, the Sindh Primer made it clear that ninety percent of the Indian Muslims were with the League and were united and determined to achieve Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion Jinnah said:

There are those who say to us what is the good of your talking of Pakistan when you cannot form ministries even in your majority provinces, I say to them this is the very reason why we want to get rid of the existing Act of 1935 and establish Pakistan.⁴⁸

The tussle between the government and the opposition in Sindh continued unabridged. On September 5, no-confidence motion was moved against the primer. The claims of the opposition during every session of the Assembly of having majority and due to uncertainty the governor dissolved the Assembly and fresh polls on December 9 were announced.

The Sindh Muslim League took it as a challenge. Realizing the consequences of a Pro-Congress ministry at that critical juncture for the cause of Pakistan the League gave its hundred percent in the polls. The top central leadership of the League, including Jinnah, student workers of the League from Punjab and Aligarh universities, Gillani and Manki Pirs and orators of the League flocked to Sindh and carried out a vigorous election campaign. They made powerful and effective appeals for the Muslim solidarity by exposing and propagating the atrocities of the Hindus on the Bihari Muslim population. Bihar Muslim Fund was also created to help the victims of the Bihar bloodbath. The

47 G.W. Choudhury, *Constitutional Development in Pakistan* (London: Longman Group, 1969), pp. 20-28.

48 Lari, *A History of Sindh*, p. 204.

League also observed Bihar Day ⁴⁹ and presented the massacre as the future of all India if Pakistan was not achieved. The League asked the Muslims of Sindh to give wholehearted support to the party to avoid slaughter of the Indian Muslims in future.

The efforts of the workers and the leadership of the League proved fruitful when it won thirty-four Muslim seats of the Assembly. The anti-League giants, including G.M. Syed, who had backing of the Congress and the rich Hindu Capitalists who were spending money in his constituency, and who had got walk over in the January 1946 election, were routed out. Qazi Muhammad Akbar, a young Leaguer and a commoner defeated G.M. Syed.⁵⁰ The verdict of the Muslims of the province was clear and louder than nothing except Pakistan was acceptable to them.

When the efforts to keep India united under Cabinet Mission Plan arrangement failed, the British government announced Partition Plan on June 3, 1947. In a radio broadcast on the same day, Jinnah gave his approval to the Plan and the Council of All India Muslim League formally accepted the Plan on June 5, 1947.⁵¹ After the announcement of the Partition Plan and its subsequent acceptance by the All India Muslim League, the Legislative Assembly of Sindh met at Karachi on June 26, 1947 and passed the following resolution:

...The Assembly resolves that the province will not participate in the existing Constituent Assembly, and hereby decide to be in new separate Constituent Assembly, referred to in paragraph 4, subparagraph (b) of the British government Plan of Division of India.⁵²

49 The Sindh Muslim League 1940-47, Secret Police Abstracts, pp. 267-68.

50 Hader, *G.M. Syed ki Soach*, pp. 108-09.

51 Zulfikar Khalid Maliuka, *The Myth of Constitutionalism in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 99-110.

52 Lari, *A History of Sindh*, p. 209.

Thirty-three votes were in favour and twenty against the resolution. One Congress member, who had not taken oath because he wanted to keep his Central Assembly seat, and two nationalist Muslims, Muhammad Khan Khoso and K.B. Moula Baksh, did not attend the Assembly Session. The three European members abstained. Thus the Resolution was passed and Sindh became 1st province to join the federation of Pakistan.⁵³

Conclusion

After meticulous analysis of the role played by the Sindh Muslim League in the freedom struggle, it might be concluded that the province of Sindh was ahead of all Muslim majority provinces in demanding Pakistan through a resolution passed in the Karachi session of the Sindh Provincial Muslim League. The people of Sindh realized the fact that their religion, customs and traditions and their culture would be safe only if they get united with the Muslims of the Sub-continent in demanding a separate homeland. After this realization, all their political activities were centred around one and only one theme and that was the achievement of Pakistan by any cost. During long struggle for the protection of rights of the Indian Muslims and then striving for Pakistan, the League in Sindh saw many ups and downs. It took a long period to firmly establish its foothold in the province owing to personal, particularistic, parochial, opportunistic, and self-seeking nature and policies of the local political leadership and the feudal, rural, agrarian, traditional society where land lords, pirs and clan leaders dominated the politics. But with the passage of time when the League leadership and workers through their meetings, writings, speeches and contacts educated and mobilized general public in favour of the League programme, the Sindhi political leaders, feeling the pulse of the people joined the League and worked for the liberation of the Muslims of the Sub-continent. The Sindhi Muslim leadership

53 *Ibid.*

though stratified yet always was at the forefront in taking stride forward for the cause of Pakistan.