

---

## **The Elections of 1936-37 in the Punjab and Political Position of the Muslim League**

\_\_\_\_\_ Akhtar Hussain Sandhu  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Only two nominees of the Muslim League succeeded in the elections of 1937. MA Jinnah had been a non-entity in the Punjab until the passage of the Pakistan Resolution in 1940.<sup>1</sup> Amarjit Singh concludes that the Punjab Muslim League experienced the severest setback of its history in the elections 1937. He considers the aftermath as the era of struggle for survival on the part of the League.<sup>2</sup> KC Yadav writes on the Jinnah-Sikandar Pact that the British ordered Sir Sikandar Hayat to conclude a pact with the Muslim League to revive its image after the defeat in the elections 1937.<sup>3</sup> Important documents and solid arguments are there to challenge such conclusions. Through this article, I have tried to address such contentions. Through my study, I have tried to prove that the League had deep roots in the Punjab before the elections of 1937 as it was perceived as the sole Muslim party at the national level. The election results were no surprise to the League leadership because of the prevailing circumstances. The League's decision to participate in the regional politics was a turning point in the history of the Indian Muslims which enabled it to permeate among the masses. It also made the British and their loyal groups uneasy in the Punjab. The Unionists intended to capture the League but became a victim of their own tricky politics.

The Muslim League is considered to be a weak party during the 1930s but actually it had started successfully engaging the regional elements in the Muslim politics during this time. No doubt, the League's position in the Punjab was not strong because the only blue-eyed group of the British Governor was the Unionist Party which was officially entitled to have influential position in the bureaucracy and the politics. To line up the Punjab behind the League was necessary because without

its backing the League had a weak voice in all-India issues relating to the Muslim community. The League did not require this backing earlier because every Muslim province was thought to be with the League but the specific circumstances of the pre-election situation convinced MA Jinnah to enter the regional politics which was not the tradition of the parties working at all-India level. The central political leadership preferred their involvement in the issues relating to the central politics.

Before 1936, the League was confined to the national politics had given a free hand to the regional parties taking for granted their support. On the other hand, the Unionist Muslims felt vulnerable by supporting the League as they could lose political and social status in the province which they had been enjoying for a few decades. The Shiromani Akali Dal<sup>4</sup> had got recognition as a religious and political force among the Sikh community. They opposed the feudal leadership of the Khalsa National Party.<sup>5</sup> The Akal politics was mainly based on antagonism and hatred towards the Muslims on religious and historical grounds. They were opposed to the feudal leadership within the Sikh community on economic and political reasons. They projected themselves as the benefactors of the *panth* but actually they were keen to secure economic and political gains in the guise of religion. This two-faced politics of the major stakeholders of the Punjab created crisis in the provincial politics. The League permeated gradually among the regional politics and secured sympathy of the masses.

The 1930s was a turbulent phase of the Punjab history. The Muslim League became a leaderless party for the time being as Jinnah was in England and the local Muslims were utilizing the All-India Muslim Conference for their political activities. No one valued the importance of the League and the sincere Muslim leadership diverted its attention to the regional parties. Sir Agha Khan joined hands with the Punjab Unionist Party and supported it financially.<sup>6</sup> Sir Agha Khan had no voting base in the Punjab and his separation from the League did not value as far as the electoral politics was concerned. He was respected by the community on his generous funding for the Muslim projects and influence in the imperial circles, nevertheless, his severance from the traditional Muslim representative party was not an encouraging sign. Under such atmosphere, MA Jinnah came

back and re-organised the League in early 1935. He planned to gather the prominent Muslim leaders under the League flag and invited Sir Fazl-i-Husain to preside over the League session. He not only turned down his request to join the League session but also decided to resist the League leader to have any influence in the Punjab affairs because it could end the communal harmony of the province.<sup>7</sup> The main argument for the refusal was that the Hindu and Sikh communities would never accept the League's position. It is surprising that nobody questioned the communalistic character of Sir Fazl-i-Husain who had incessantly been criticized by Hindus and Sikhs on his pro-Muslim policies which confirmed him a Muslim rather than a cross-communal leader. The non-Muslim groups at protests against him included the moderate faction of the Sikhs as well.<sup>8</sup> The principal issue was the office of the Premiership. Fazl-i-Husain feared that by joining the League, the Muslims of the Punjab could be deprived of the Premier's office. The machinations within the party were at peak and none was happy on his return from the centre to the Punjab politics.<sup>9</sup> Under this specific situation, he was unable to render support to the League. His pro-League posture could be an invitation to new problems.<sup>10</sup>

Fazl's refusal to accept Jinnah's invitation to preside over the League session has been hailed by many writers and attributed to the political prudence of Fazl-i-Husain and as an utter defeat of Jinnah. To Khalid Bin Sayeed, "Jinnah did not make any headway in the Punjab"<sup>11</sup> but the factual position is that he never confined himself to the central politics and activated the party to capture the Punjab as soon as possible. The writers projected Fazl's refusal prominently because rejection of the invitation of a leader like Jinnah was not possible for a leader of a regional character. He was projected as a challenger to Jinnah and his status was raised among the anti-League circles. However, such writers ignored the coming political developments in the Punjab in which Jinnah became assertive soon after his entry in the regional politics.

The decision to participate in the regional politics became imperative to strengthen the League in all-India politics. Before the refusal of Fazl-i-Husain, it was a general perception that all the Unionist Muslims were with the League but the rejection of

the Jinnah's invitation convinced the League leadership to come down to the regional level to save the party from the blackmailing by the local leadership. Muslims were lucky that League decided to challenge the regional parties well in time as the first general elections under the 1935 Act were approaching which could provide an opportunity to deal with the regional parties and place the League agenda directly before the Muslim masses. It pleased the Muslims of the Punjab that they were expecting a better alternate to the Unionists who practically did nothing for the common people. Their utmost endeavour was to facilitate the landed aristocracy and the well to do families who were inter-linked to each other by inert-marriages<sup>12</sup> neglecting the prevailing caste system.

Before the elections of 1937, Sardar Buta Singh, the Deputy President of the Council, contested election for the seat of President of the Punjab Council against Ch. Chhotu Ram. The Sikhs were hopeful of the victory as the urban Hindu members opposed Chhotu Ram. This made Sardar Buta Singh a very strong candidate.<sup>13</sup> But Chhotu Ram won the seat with 56 votes while Sardar Buta Singh bagged only 28 votes. The defeat enraged the Sikh parties who protested and left the Chamber.<sup>14</sup> This shows the environment of the communal relations within the Punjab legislature. The non-Muslims had been with the Unionist leadership but with reservations. They never gave a free hand to the leadership in communal and other political issues which had made this coalition strong as well as vulnerable. They being far away from the communal tangles had been running the governmental affairs successfully but on the other hand, ignoring the real and core issues such as communalism was erroneous which ultimately proved harmful. Even then, every community was pursuing the communal agenda remaining within the coalition government. In 1937, the non-Muslim members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly intrigued against Sir Sikandar and made a united effort to force the Premier to leave the office through a no-confidence motion. They collected 16 lakh rupees under Sardar Baldev Singh but not a single Muslim favoured this anti-Sikandar conspiracy.<sup>15</sup>

## **Provincial Elections of 1937**

The Indian Act of 1935 brought major changes in the constitutional status of the Punjab. The provincial Council was renamed as the Punjab Legislative Assembly with increased number of its members (175). All the members were to be elected by the increased number of voters. The voting qualification was the education,<sup>16</sup> being widow or mother of the officer or military men martyred in war, being tax payee, being tenant or land-owner of specific quantity of land or public servant. The Sikhs were given 18 per cent, Hindus 24 per cent and Muslims 48 per cent share in the Assembly seats.<sup>17</sup> The division on the communal basis to Kripal C. Yadav was a continuity of the divide and rule policy of the British who intended to damage the national cause of India<sup>18</sup> but as a matter of fact no community objected to it; they only protested on the allocation of number of seats in the assembly. According to the contradictory demands, the Sikhs had demanded 30 per cent seats or the partition of the Punjab at the Round Table Conference during 1930-32<sup>19</sup> which made the communal issue in the Punjab very complicated and sensitive as well. Before the general elections of 1937, the situation was undemocratic in the province and the political tycoons were hardly opposed in their constituencies. In the elections of 1930, Dr. Gokal Chand Narang (EU), Ch. Chhotu Ram, Ujjal Singh (EU), S. Sampuran Singh (EU), Raja Narender Nath (EU), S. Joginder Singh (EU), Mukand Lal Puri (EU) from the non-Muslims and Jamal Khan Leghari (EU), Ahmad Yar Daultana, Mubarak Ali Shah, Raza Shah Gilani (EU), Mohammad Hayat Qureshi (EU), Feroz Khan Noon (EU), Ch. M. Zafarullah Khan (EU), Ch. Shahab-ud-din (EU), Pir Akbar Ali (EU), Abdul Ghani (EU) and others from the Muslims were the prominent figures who returned to the provincial legislature<sup>20</sup> as unopposed (EU). It shows the environment of elections where influential families were playing the role of a pressure group or *Qabza* group. Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar and Zaman Mehdi Khan won bye-election in 1934 and entered the Assembly.<sup>21</sup>

The elections of 1937 started with submitting the nomination papers in November 1936 and polling was planned from December 1936 to January 1937.<sup>22</sup> The Unionist Party having no threat from any other political party launched its candidates and in many cases it was decided beforehand that the winning candidate would be an existing Unionist member. Being confident so the Unionist Party did not contest elections as a democratic party. According to Ian Talbot it did not arrange any public gathering to convince the voters about the manifesto. They believed that the government officials were there to do this job.<sup>23</sup> They did not need to approach the masses because some specific groups had a right to cast the vote but the common Punjabis were deprived of this basic right. Furthermore, the Unionist Party was existing as a ruling class having no ideology to follow therefore, they were least interested in securing public sympathy.

Interestingly, the elections were the first electoral event which attracted a huge number of contesters and all the parties participated with full democratic zeal and only a few returned as unopposed to the Assembly while before 1937 most of the candidates had faced no difficulty in re-capturing their seats.

The Sikhs and the Hindus joined hands against the Unionist government which was being perceived as a Muslim domination over the minorities. The Shiromani Akali Dal contested elections on the basis to save Indian freedom, anti-Communal Award pledge, Sikh rights, anti-Shahidganj struggle, Kirpan issue, etc.<sup>24</sup> The Akali Sikhs and the Congress made adjustment in numerous constituencies during the elections<sup>25</sup> which encouraged them to make more joint efforts in the political sphere. The Sikhs expressed grave concern over the Muslim domination in the Punjab and vociferated against the Unionist Muslims. The League came down to the regional politics which disturbed the makeshift arrangements in the provincial political arena. Jinnah who was said to be a non-entity in the Punjab was there in the Punjab when the Gurdwara Movement was launched by the Sikhs in 1920s. He seemed favouring the Akalis when they were tortured by the authorities.<sup>26</sup> He was the leader who resigned from the assembly when the Rowlatt Act was enforced. He was there in the Punjab when the Shahidganj issue was dragging whole of the Punjab to a dreadful chaos. KL Guaba and Allama

Mashriqi requested Jinnah to interfere while the Governor and the Unionist leaders were waiting to end the Muslim-Sikh clashes.<sup>27</sup> It is interesting that the cross-communal party (the Unionists) had been waiting for Jinnah (a communalist to the Unionists) to cool down the communal frenzy in the province over the Shahidganj issue.

The Congress got majority in 8 provinces out of 11 while the League won only two seats in the Punjab. Beside 16 independent candidates, the party position was as under:

### Results in Punjab

Party	Seats
Ahrar	02
Muslim League	02 <sup>28</sup>
Shiromani Akali Dal	11
Khalsa National Party	13
Hindu Mahasabha	12
Punjab Unionist Party	98
Ittehad-i-Millat	02
Indian National Congress	18
Congress Nationalist Party	01

Source: KC Yadav, *Elections*, 133-34.

The results reflect the trend of the Sikh voters towards the Akalis who performed well and got recognition as the sole representative of the Sikh *panth*. The main objective of the League to contest the elections was to announce its entry into the regional politics to challenge the Unionists who had refused to accommodate the League leadership. It was a mere appearance and first show on the part of the League and the real work were yet to be done in the future.

The Unionist Party maintained its hegemony in the Assembly but it secured 70 per cent votes in the rural and only 25 per cent votes in the urban constituencies. Apart from this, it did not send any candidate in the eight urban constituencies reserved for Hindus.<sup>29</sup> The sweeping election results put the anti-League parties into power but this defeat did not discourage the League because the results were not out of expectation. The

League leadership being realist could not expect a miracle regarding the results after facing an extreme difficulty in finding candidates for the constituencies. Jinnah was sure that it was a starting point for the League and with its first direct entry in the regional politics it could make the local leadership realize that they had a short time to survive. Amarjit Singh writes that the League sent 44 candidates in the constituencies<sup>30</sup> which is not a correct figure. Only 10 candidates in the Punjab contested elections from the League platform which shows that the League leadership had no high expectations. With 102 seats in whole of India retained the League which came up as a sole representative party of the Muslims. The Congress launched 57 Muslim candidates in the Punjab but only 26 reached the Assembly. The party secured less than 50 per cent of the total votes in India. Therefore, it was satisfying for the League that the Congress too had not performed well in the Punjab. To Uma Kaura, "The only redeeming feature for the League was that the performance of Congress in the Muslim majority areas was also not impressive."<sup>31</sup> The League was the only party which voiced for the rights of Muslims. Although the Punjab Unionist Party got majority in the Punjab Assembly yet it had no representation in other provinces of India.

### Overall Results of the Elections of 1937

Province	Actual Seats	Cong. Won	Percentage
Bengal	250	35	32
NWFP	50	19	38
Punjab	175	18	10
Sindh	60	8	13
UP	228	133	58

Source: Uma Kaura, *Muslims and Indian Nationalism*, 108-9.

The results of the Punjab repudiated the Congress's claim that it was representative of all the Indian communities. In UP, the Congressite Muslims were strong but "no Muslim was returned on the Congress ticket."<sup>32</sup> The Akalis had an understanding with the Congress because it mainly wanted to knock down the other Sikh parties. The SGPC<sup>33</sup> provided

workers, finances and support on the religious basis to the Akalis who floated huge sums of money to win the elections against the rival Sikh parties. This abuse of Gurdwara funds by the Akalis was mentioned in Governor's letter.<sup>34</sup> The Punjab Governor Emerson concluded that the "Akali successes would have been fewer had they not used religious funds for the purpose of bribing the electorates."<sup>35</sup> The real show of power in the regional politics started after the elections. The elections produced stunning implications which carved profound impact not only on the politics of the Punjab but also at all-India level. The notable incident of the elections 1937 was the Congress betrayal of the League in the UP Assembly which according to Bimal Prasad upset the Hindu-Muslim understanding<sup>36</sup> not only in the UP but also throughout the Subcontinent.

The Congress leadership opposed the Unionists' which was not a sane strategy because the Unionists and the British had similar agenda for the united India but the Congress could not benefit from this enthusiasm. The anti-Muslim policies of the Congress ministries confirmed the Two-Nation theory and forced them to follow the League regarding their political rights. The anti-Muslim drive of the Congress' governments created favourable atmosphere for the League leadership who had already been complaining of the cruel mentality of the Hindu majority towards the Muslims. The debate in the British Parliament on the anti-Muslim activities of the Congress ministries was discouraged for the reason that such debate might result in communal clashes in India.<sup>37</sup> The avoidance of the subject by British Parliament ramified that there was something wrong on the part of the Congress ministries which could produce tension between Muslims and non-Muslims. Jinnah passed a remark on the abuse of power by the Congress ministries that "the Congress was like a poor man who had won a great deal of money in a lottery; that it was intoxicated with power."<sup>38</sup> He also reiterated that ignoring the League by the Congress was not a reasonable policy. The Congress leadership would commit a greatest blunder if they thought that the constitutional problem would be solved without the consent of the League. He further warned that the Congress should "respect the other parties" if it sought some agreed solution<sup>39</sup> to the on-going constitutional deadlock.

The Muslims faced several problems under the Hindu majority on the social issues and Congress rule on the political rights. Even the Hindus tried to get their number increased through false evidences. In January 1939, Hasan Nizami in an editorial wrote that the Congress considered the League as an impractical party and the Hindu-British patch-up against the League was evident. He suggested that Jinnah should focus on census of the Muslims. He explained that census was going to start shortly and the League could work against the irregularities expected in the census. The non-Muslim machinery was the real cause of such irregularities because the non-Muslim officials deliberately registered the 'Hindi language' as the mother tongue of the Muslims which resulted in decrease of the Muslim voters. Nizami Quoted his own example and expressed that he should have been registered as voter according the eligibility criteria but his name was not there in the voters' list. He further requested Jinnah to take the census issue into consideration because nine crore Muslims were associated with the League therefore it was necessary to collect the real figures of the Muslim population.<sup>40</sup>

## **Popularity of the League**

The League secured two seats in the Punjab and displayed weak performance in the other Muslim majority provinces in the elections which provided the anti-League parties an opportunity to project it as an end of the political career of Jinnah and the party. But as matter of fact, this failure did not rebut the League and its leadership because many had foretold that the League would win only a few of the Muslim seats in the coming elections.<sup>41</sup> The stature of Jinnah remained as important and effective as ever before. He was the only Muslim leader who could face the Congress leadership on equal terms.<sup>42</sup> The results did not pull him down in the eyes of the Muslims. His friendly relations with the prominent Muslim families throughout the country maintained his political position effective.<sup>43</sup> Ahmad Yar Daultana, the Muslim Unionist, had a great respect for Jinnah.<sup>44</sup> Sometimes family members of the prominent leaders shared their interests with him. Ahmad Yar Daultana wrote to Jinnah, "I have

considered you my leader during the last 25 years and have always been loyal to you.”<sup>45</sup> He had a contribution in creating congenial environment for Sir Sikandar Hayat and Jinnah who later came to a pact at Lucknow in October 1937.<sup>46</sup>

Jinnah was confident of the League’s success in the future politics therefore he removed the shortcomings of the party and “assured...that within a short time the League would become a strong party capable of fighting any other party in the country.”<sup>47</sup> His prophecy came true and the Muslims of the Punjab converged in the fold of League. Even the Punjab Premier under the peculiar circumstances had to line up under the leadership of Jinnah. The *Pioneer* appreciated the League’s success and wrote that Jinnah had got a firm footing in the Punjab “within about a year of his launching the programme.”<sup>48</sup>

According to the Jinnah-Sikandar Pact in October 1937 at Lucknow, the Unionist leader promised Jinnah to bring the Unionist Muslim members to the League fold in the provincial Assembly. This issue has generated an interesting debate among the scholars as to why Sir Sikandar Hayat went to Lucknow after winning the Premier’s office. The factors might include the Hindu-Sikh unity, popularity of Jinnah, grouping within the Unionist Party and Congress’ Mass Contact campaign in the Punjab.

The first reason might be the Muslim Mass Contact Movement of the Congress that moved Sikandar to approach Jinnah because the Sikhs and Hindus intended to topple Sir Sikandar’s government. They launched a campaign to root out the League and Unionist influence from the Muslim majority region. The Akalis were with the Congress as Master Tara Singh supported Nehru and stated that the Punjab “Premier was a stooge for the British, and that he was consolidating the Muslim position in the Punjab.”<sup>49</sup> The other cause could be the grouping within the Unionist Party which was divided into factions and the League was causing further rifts among the party members. The Punjab Muslim League though had negligible strength in the Assembly, yet it enjoyed the support of highly respected figures like Dr. Muhammad Iqbal. Sir Sikandar tried to capture the League so that no rival could challenge his position in the province. The other reason might be the sympathy of the Muslim members with the League within the Unionist Party as Raja

Ghazanfar Ali Khan disclosed later that Jinnah himself deployed him to create a pro-League atmosphere among the ruling Muslims.<sup>50</sup>

Sir Sikandar was well aware of the sensitive situation of the party and that grouping within the party could weaken his political grasp in the near future, therefore he decided to join hands with Jinnah. Furthermore, he was clear that only the League leadership could voice for the Muslim rights at the national level<sup>51</sup> whose support was necessary to strengthen his position. KC Yadav is of the opinion that Sir Sikandar joined hands with Jinnah under the British motivation.<sup>52</sup> The writer took it as a supposition rather than referring to any document. Perhaps, his non-consultation of the Punjab Governor's Fortnightly Reports convinced him to misinterpret the situation. The correspondence between the Punjab Governor and the Viceroy clarifies that the Jinnah-Sikandar Pact was a personal decision of Sir Sikander and it was astonishing for the British as well.<sup>53</sup> Actually, Sir Sikandar came to the conclusion that only Jinnah's support could save him from the formidable Congress and Akali Sikhs who had already been united in the Assembly an year before.<sup>54</sup> Sangat Singh concluded that "the Unionists committed the same blunder which the Akalis had committed earlier by making Akali legislators to accept Congress discipline."<sup>55</sup>

The Congress-Akali unity in the Assembly alarmed Sir Sikandar who sought the League support. According to Qalb-i-Abid, Sir Sikander because of the World War II could not afford the desertion towards League because this tilt and popularity of the League could upset the Sikhs.<sup>56</sup> Though, the threat from the Congress and Akali Dal seems to be potent however, no simple factor pushed Sir Sikandar to have a pact with the League instead all major and minor neuroses convinced him to come to terms with the League.

The Jinnah-Sikandar Pact strengthened both the Unionist Party and the League but at the same time, it also resulted in the bitterness between Muslims and Sikhs in the Punjab.<sup>57</sup> Sir Sikandar could not visualise what side-effects the pact would have on the future politics.<sup>58</sup> The Sikh apprehensions increased because the pact declared the Unionist Muslims as the League members while the League was perceived as the enemy of the

Sikh interests in the Punjab although they had no evidence to prove the League as an anti-Sikhs party. The political interdependence had bound them into coalition which the Sikhs had absorbed as a necessary evil. The other attraction was the official and social benefits which were possible in the unity under which the cross-communal phenomenon was being projected. The Jinnah-Sikandar Pact shattered confidence of Sikhs, nevertheless they became satisfied on the clause of the Pact which maintained the existing arrangements in the Assembly.

This clause saved the non-Muslim and Muslim Unionist coalition by sidelining the League. Sir Emerson was pleased on the position of Sir Sikandar and wrote to Linlithgow on 12 November 1937 that the popularity of Sir Sikandar among Sikhs and Hindus had saved the Punjab coalition government. The Premier enjoyed cordial relations with Raja Narendra Nath who forced Dr. Gokal Chand Narang to cancel the united Hindu conference in Lahore which was being held against the Unionist Muslims.<sup>59</sup> The Sikhs disapproved the Jinnah-Sikander Pact and projected it as a conspiracy against the nationalists and communal harmony. A meeting at Rawalpindi was arranged in November 1938 under Sardar Baldev Singh. The Akali and Congress flags were waved together and it passed anti-Unionist remarks. The speakers also advised the Sikh audiences to join the Congress.<sup>60</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, a Communist ideologue, commented that the Jinnah-Sikandar pact was "a short-sighted policy on the part of the League."<sup>61</sup> But the actual position was that, the League lost less and gained more from this pact. It brought a revolutionary shift in the power of the Muslim politics. The government officials and common Muslims perceived the League as the real power of the near future. Jinnah was perceived as leader of the Premier so the public started complaining to Jinnah against the provincial and central government. For example, in August 1938, the people appealed to Jinnah to help the job-hunting Muslims. The impression emerged that Sir Sikandar could not dare to overlook Jinnah's orders.<sup>62</sup>

The popularity of the League was a sign of the downfall of the Unionist government. The Unionists' performance went so low that ultimately it resulted in its political decline. In

December 1937, the Governor had to report that the Unionist Ministers were not arranging public meetings while the Communist and the Congress leaders had been working actively in contacting the masses. To him, the Premier kept him busy in the trivial administrative issues in the province.<sup>63</sup> All such changes proved fatal for the Unionist Party while the decay of the Unionists was a sign of League's dominance.

Gradually, the League started making its position stronger in the Punjab but the unjust policies of the Congress ministries did more than other factors in popularizing the League among the Indian Muslims.<sup>64</sup> Even before the passage of the Lahore Resolution of 1940, the Muslims were mentally prepared to give full support to the League. In January 1939, about 25,000 Muslims gathered in Patna to attend the League meeting. The press presented the League as the sole representative party of the Indian Muslims. Hasan Nizami expressed that the British and the Hindus should witness this recognition of the League and honour the reality otherwise it could be dangerous for them. He further reiterated that hatred was growing against them day by day. He also appreciated Jinnah for his sagacious dealing with the rival parties on the communal matters.<sup>65</sup> The Congress leadership took no prudent action in dealing with the communal issue at the crucial stage instead they tried to let down the League and its leadership. The Sikhs also remained adamantly with the Congress which narrowed their role in the politics.

In the sum, the elections of 1937 were a starting point for the League's participation in the regional politics and after the elections it prospered day by day as far as the massive support was concerned. It did not lose its base, ideology, working tempo and confidence though it got two seats in the first contest. The culmination point of its effort was the passing of the Lahore Resolution in 1940, just over 2 years, when it declared a political war against the philosophy of united India which all the outstanding factions such as the British, Hindus, Sikhs, and nationalist Muslims believed in. A defeated party could not be as assertive in the political domain as the League did. Moreover, if the League was following the British dictation, then it was not supposed to go against the will and ideology of the British masters. The League's agenda dictated by the British should have been observed by the Unionists as well. If the League was

backed by the British, then the Unionists and British should not have opposed the Lahore Resolution and the League leadership. Considering the League as a sister party, (if the Premier had revived the League under the British dictation) the Sikhs, Hindus and Unionist Muslims should have strengthened the position of MA Jinnah. But to the contrary, all of them, along with the British made joint efforts to deny the true status of the League which ratifies that the League was not depending on the British support but it was truly a representative party of the Indian Muslims which never compromised on question of the Muslim rights.

The League leadership proved its sagacity in the political affairs and caused cracks in the anti-League and pro-British fort in the Punjab. Therefore, the elections of 1937 did not damage their image but popularized them among the masses of the Punjab. The Muslim massive response made the League so assertive and confident in the political domain that it adopted the character of a mass party within a short span of time.

## Notes and References

---

- 1 Raghuvendra Tanwar, *Politics of Sharing Power, The Punjab Unionist Party 1923-1947* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1999), 7.
- 2 Amarjit Singh, *Punjab Divided, Politics of the Muslim League and Partition 1935-1947* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2001), 57.
- 3 KC Yadav, "The Partition of India: A Study of the Muslim Politics in the Punjab, 1849-1947," *The Punjab Past and Present* vol. XVII-I, no. 33 (April 1983): 130.
- 4 Akali Dal was founded on 14 December 1920 as Gurdwara Sewak Dal, renamed as Akali Dal on 23 January 1921 and on 29 March 1922, it got recognition with the name of Shiromani Akali Dal. Dr. Harjinder

---

Singh Dilgeer, <http://www.dilgeer.com/sadal.htm>, 31-12-2003.

- 5 Chief Khalsa Diwan was changed into the Khalsa National Party under Sir Sunder Singh Majithia after the elections of 1936.
- 6 *The Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore) 1 March 1936.
- 7 Khalid Bin Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 177.
- 8 Bakhshish Singh Nijjar, *Punjab under the British Rule, 1802-1932*, vol. II (Patiala: n.p., n.d.), 57-58.
- 9 *CMG*, 28 May 1936.
- 10 Qalb-i-Abid, *Muslim Politics in the Punjab, 1921-47* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1992), 187.
- 11 Khalid Bin Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase*, 177.
- 12 Khattars, Syeds, Qizalbash, Qureshi, Daultanas etc. inter-married and strengthened their hold in the Punjab politics. Even they negated the so-called caste system which was an outstanding feature of the Punjabi culture.
- 13 *CMG*, 20 October 1936.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 21 October 1936.
- 15 “Meem Sheen ki kuchh yaden kuchh baten,” *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Lahore) 11 September 1992.
- 16 Minimum education was primary.

- 
- 17 Kripal C. Yadav, *Elections in Punjab, 1920-1947* (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 1981), 15-19.
  - 18 *Ibid.*
  - 19 Sikh Memorandum presented by Sardar Ujjal Singh at Indian Round Table Conference (Second session) 12 November 1931, file no. 15, Quaid-i-Azam Papers.
  - 20 Election Returns 1930 in Kripal C. Yadav, *Elections in Punjab*, 67-71.
  - 21 *Ibid.*, 72-73.
  - 22 *Ibid.*, 84.
  - 23 CMG, 14 October 1936 in Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988), 130.
  - 24 Akali Party's Elections Manifesto, *The Tribune* of 20 June 1936.
  - 25 R. N. Vohra, "The Akali Dal and the National Movement," *Punjab History Conference, 20th Session* (Patiala: Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, 1987): 339-40.
  - 26 Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 210n.
  - 27 Qalb-i-Abid, *Muslim Politics in the Punjab*, 183-84.
  - 28 Malik Barkat Ali won the seat by only 90 votes against his rival candidate, Hamidullah Beg while Raja Ghazanfar Ali took lead of 740 votes from Mohd. Afzal Khan. Kripal C. Yadav, *Elections in Punjab*, 87 and 91.

- 
- 29 Tanwar, *Politics of Sharing Power*, 100.
- 30 Amarjit Singh, *Punjab Divided*, 44.
- 31 Uma Kaura, *Muslims and Indian Nationalism: The Emergence of the Demand for India's Partition, 1928-40* (Lahore: Book Traders, n.d.), 109.
- 32 P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 224.
- 33 Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee was a parent organisation of the Akali Dal with religious status among the Sikhs.
- 34 Letter from Emerson to Linlithgow, *Linlithgow Papers* in PN Chopra ed., *Towards Freedom, 1937-47*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical research, 1985), 166.
- 35 Letter from Emerson to Viceroy on 8 May 1937, *Linlithgow Papers, Ibid.*, 489.
- 36 Bimal Prasad, "Jawaharlal Nehru and Partition," in Amrik Singh, *The Partition in Retrospect* (Delhi: National Institute of Punjab Studies, 2000), 30.
- 37 Weekly *Munadi* (Urdu) Delhi, 8 February 1940.
- 38 Qalb-i-Abid and Massarrat Abid, "The British Response to the Demand for Pakistan: Prelude to the Lahore Resolution and the British Reaction," *Journal of Research* vol., 19 (2002): 78.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 Khwaja Hasan Nizami, "Muslim League k liey kam," Weekly *Munadi* (Delhi) 8 January 1939.

- 
- 41 Mushirul Hasan ed., *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 235.
- 42 Sikandar Hayat, "Charisma, Crisis and the Emergence of Quaid-i-Azam," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, vol. L, no. 1&2 (January-June 2002): 31-46.
- 43 Relations with the Punjab leaders can be observed through the correspondence between Jinnah and the Punjabi leaders, see S. Qaim Hussain Jafri, ed., *Quaid-i-Azam's Correspondence with Punjab Muslim Leaders* (Lahore: Aziz Publishers, 1977); see also, Wakeel Anjum, *Daultana Dastan* (Lahore: Jang publishers, 1996), 42 and passim.
- 44 Ahmad Yar Daultana, "Leaves from Unionist's Diary," *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 21 October 1936.
- 45 Letter from AY Daultana to MA Jinnah on 28 March 1940, in Rizwan Ahmad, *The Quaid-E- Azam Papers 1940* (Karachi and Lahore: East & West Publishing Company, 1976), 96-97.
- 46 BS Nijjar, *Punjab under the British*, vol. III, 160-161.
- 47 Chopra, *Towards Freedom*, 558.
- 48 BS Nijjar, *Punjab under the British*, vol. III, 161.
- 49 S. Qalb-i-Abid, *Muslim Politics in the Punjab*, 192-193.
- 50 Javed Haider Syed, *Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan-A Political Biography* (M.Phil. Thesis) (Department of History, QAU, Islamabad, 1985), 141.

- 
- 51 P. Moon, *Divide and Quit* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), 17.
  - 52 KC Yadav, "The Partition of India," *The Punjab Past and Present*, 130.
  - 53 *Fortnightly Report*, (Punjab Governor to the Viceroy), L/PJ/5/238.
  - 54 The Akali-Congress relationship presented a confused picture. Congress never valued the Sikhs but they remained submissive to the Congress. To counter the Akali influence, the Congress formed the Congress Sikh Party under Sarmukh Singh Jhabal in August 1936 but after few political skirmishes, the Shiromani Akali Dal joined hands partly with the Congress in the elections 1937. In several constituencies, they put joint candidates but in other constituencies, they contested elections as rival parties.
  - 55 The Shiromani Akali Dal agreed that the Akali candidates, returned to the provincial legislature, would be a part of the Congress Legislative Party under the Congress discipline. Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Uncommon Books, 1996), 208; see also KL Tuteja, "Sikhs and the Congress: 1930-40," in Verinder Grover, ed., *The Story of Punjab, Yesterday and Today* (Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1995), 455.
  - 56 S. Qalb-i-Abid, "Muslim-Sikh Relationship (1921-47) A Brief Survey," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* XXXIX, Part III (July 1991): 271-272.
  - 57 Secretary of State on the Indian Political Situation, *Cabinet Papers*, no. 24/273 in Chopra, *Towards Freedom*, 1196.

- 
- 58 S. Qalb-i-Abid and Massarrat Abid, "Unionist-Muslim League Relations and the Punjab Administration," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* vol. 45, no. 2 (July-December 2008): 91.
- 59 Letter from Emerson to Linlithgow on 12 November 1937 in Lionel Carter ed., *Punjab Politics, 1936-1939: Start of Provincial Autonomy* (Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2004):, 147-150.
- 60 KC Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present* (New Delhi: Ashajanak Publications, 1974), 77.
- 61 Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab, 1926-47* (Lahore: Book Traders, n.d.), 174.
- 62 Letters from Mohammad Aziz Mirza to MA Jinnah on 10 August 1938 and MA Majid, Secretary, Muslim Employees Welfare Association, Rawalpindi on 15 August 1938, file. No. 1095, Quaid-i-Azam Papers, NAP.
- 63 *FR*, L/PJ/5/238.
- 64 It was a fact that the Congress ministry did not exist in the Punjab but the Muslims of the Punjab felt jubilant on the resignation of the Congress ministries in 1939.
- 65 "Khawja Hasan Nizami ke Note," (Muslim League ka Jalsa) *Munadi*, Delhi (Urdu weekly) 1 January 1939.