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QUESTION

Critically Analyze the Elections of 1937 and the sufferings and Grievances of the Muslims under the Congress Rule in the provinces (1937-39). How much did it help in popularizing the idea of a separate Muslim state in India?

ANSWER

• Introduction:

The two and half years of Congress rule on the Muslims of India proved to be an eye-opening experience for the Muslims as well as for their leading party in the Indian Subcontinent. The elections of 1937 were considered very crucial for the Muslims, yet they chose to ignore them because the Muslim League at that time was facing several issues related to its organization and structure, which resulted in the dominance and success of Indian National Congress during the 1937 Elections. Congress, as a result of this, got an upper hand on Muslims and continued to commit grave atrocities until its resignation in 1939. The Muslim League during this time realized the need for a separate state to protect their identity.

as Muslims as well as their ^{religious} Islam and its culture. This, as a whole, brought a wave of Muslim nationalism among the Muslims of Indian Subcontinent, consequently paving the path for Lahore Resolution, later called as 'Pakistan Movement' in early 1940s.

• Elections of 1937 at a Glance:

The Elections of 1937 were held under the Government of India Act, 1935. These elections were conducted in eleven provinces. Out of these eleven provinces, Congress and its allies won elections in eight provinces. In Bihar and Central Provinces, Congress formed an alliance with Hindu Mahasabha, while in NWFP, it formed the alliance with Bacha Khan. However, Congress was in power in the remaining provinces such as Bombay, United Provinces, Madras, Assam, and Central Provinces. On the other hand, there were 496 seats for Muslim League. Out of 496 seats, Muslim League won 108 seats. From these 108 seats, 58 seats were won from United Provinces, while remaining 50 seats were won from other provinces.

• Formation of Congress Ministries:

The Indian National Congress after securing the majority in provincial elections

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Krishak Praja Party in Bengal. Congress, including NWFP, was able to form ministries in ^{six} ~~eight~~ provinces while in Bombay and Bengal, it formed an alliance with the other groups. On the other hand, Muslim League could not establish ministry in any province. However, there was a sizeable success of Muslim League in Muslim minority provinces. It was believed by the Muslim League that Congress would include Muslim League in government in minority provinces. Congress, as a result, was very reluctant to include Muslim League in the government and in return, imposed some derogatory conditions for Muslims, which included the resignation of Muslims from United Provinces Legislative Assembly along with its dissolution. Muslim League called it humiliation and disrespect for Muslims and their party, thus rejected these demands altogether.

Hudson, portrays the disappointing state of the Muslim League:

"The League was thus left in wilderness in six provinces.

But it had been taught a lesson, and thenceforward accepted the Congress as its mortal foe".

~ Hudson

- **Congress Rule and the Grievances of Muslims:**

The Congress practiced inhuman treatment on Muslims for two and half years. The Muslim League was of the view that it was an unconstitutional rule completely. Furthermore,

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there was sheer violation of Government of India Act, 1919, particularly those provisions which relate with the provincial matters. Additionally, the leaders of the congress were not accountable to anyone due to which there was gross manipulation of the rules. Hence, the congress regime was absolutist and there was ^{an} oligarchic control dominated by Gandhi.

② Draconian Policies of Congress and Atrocities on Muslims

The congress-
led areas were completely submerged in draconian policies, which are given below:

(a) Bande Matram

Bande Matram was a song which included degrading verses against Muslims and their religion Islam. It was written by a Bengali Novelist, Bankim Chatterjee in his book 'Anadamath'. This urged ^{non-}Muslims to wage war against Muslims and expel them from Hindustan as it was an all-Hindu territory. Furthermore, to strengthen Hindu Nationalism, the casual as well as formal day used to begin with the recitation of the song Bande Matram. It was ^{also} given the status of national anthem.

(b) Wardha Scheme :

This scheme was an outcome of Gandhi's philosophy and it incorporated the principles of Hindu nationalism. However, the objective of 'Wardha and Widdia Mander schemes' was to isolate the young generation of Muslims from religion, culture, and civilization. It also intended to destroy Muslim culture and desired the perpetual domination of Hindu culture.

(c) Hoisting of Three-Coloured Flag:

As soon as the Congress came into power, it ordered the hoisting of three-coloured flag with British Union Jack. The purpose of this was to prove that there were only two powers in India; one is British and the other is Congress.

(d) Widdia Mander Scheme:

The author of the Widdia Mander Scheme was Dr. Zakir Hussain, a Congress Muslim man. The aim of this scheme was to erase Muslim culture and to introduce a new educational policy, which included the conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism. Furthermore, the students of schools and colleges were ordered to pay respect to Gandhi according to this scheme.

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(e) Hindu - Muslim Riots:

This was a very usual policy ever since the Congress assumed power in Indian subcontinent. Many attempts were made to attack honor, lives, and property of Muslims. In addition to this, Muslims used to be assaulted, houses and properties were set on fire, and women and children were abducted. There was Muslim massacre as well.

(f) Muslim Mass Contact Campaign:

This was Nehru's imagination and the aim of this was to crush the popularity of Muslim League among the Muslims. For this purpose, the leaders of Congress used to directly contact with the Muslim masses to win them over Congress.

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In addition to that, few more atrocities committed by the Congress leaders on Muslims are given below:

1.

Ban 'on Azan
(No respect for other religion)

2.↓

Ban on slaughtering
of cows

3.↓

Disturbance during
worship in Mosques

4.↓

Hindi as official
language

5.↓

Molestation of
Muslims

6.↓

Prohibition to
eat beef

7.↓

No protection of
Muslims from
Government Agencies

- The Impact of Congress Rule on Muslims : A Progressive step towards the Idea of Separate Homeland :

- Role of Muslim League during Congress Rule

The Muslim League, the representative party of Muslims, was very active all this time. It drew attention towards atrocities and anti-Muslim policies through 'Resolutions.' Furthermore, it was also observed that Congress had very biased attitude towards Muslims. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah criticized the Congress rule and declared it 'Hindu Raj'. He said:

"Congress Rule was a fascist and authoritarian setup which uprooted all norms of democracy".

~ Quaid-e-Azam
Mohammad Ali
Jinnah

He also stated that:

"The two and half years of Congress rule are a soaring experience for Muslims. The years of Congress Rule have given us a very bitter lesson and have created fear of the Hindu's domination. The Muslims are a nation by every definition of the word 'Nation'. It is absolutely wrong to consider Muslims as a minority."

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In addition to this, a committee of eight members was formed in March 1938, led by Raja Syed Mohammad Mehdi of Piro, to find out about grievances of Muslims. The report published in 1939 in November which identified and discussed the atrocities of Congress. Furthermore, another report was published in 1939, called as 'Shareef Report' and it served the same purpose. Lastly, 'Fazal-ul-Haq Report' also identified the atrocities faced by Muslims in provinces under Congress ministries.

• The Impact of Congress Rule on Muslims:

① Taste of Hindu Government → The Muslims as well as their leaders endured the atrocities of Congress leaders, thus realized the importance of separate Muslim state.

② Destroyed Congress claim of Uninationalism → The role of Muslim League during Congress rule by awakening Muslims and instilling a demand of separate Muslim state is an apparent manifestation of this.

③ **Boosted Muslim Nationalism**

⇒ The Muslim League aided in boosting Muslim Nationalism by highlighting the injustices and discriminatory practices of Congress.

④ **separate state demand became popular**

⇒ With utmost efforts, now the demand of a separate state was gaining popularity; thus a significant role of Congress Rule.

⑤ **Outlook of Muslim League changed**

⇒ The Muslim League viewed the whole perspective differently, and made efforts to strengthen itself. It soon observed the 'Day of Deliverance' on 22 December 1929 after liberating from the oppressive Congress rule. Furthermore, it also laid the foundation for "Pakistan Movement."

⑥ **Jinnah emerged as sole spokesman of Muslims**

⇒ Quaid-e Azam became the sole spokesman of Muslims. He expanded the leadership and gave voices to the concerns of Muslims.

K.K. Aziz writes in his book 'The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism':

"What the Congress rule had taught the Muslims, without a shadow of doubt was that administrative guarantees, governors, instruments and constitutional safeguards were not effective protection against the coming of a Hindu Raj in which they would be relegated to the unenviable position of a permanent minority."

• Conclusion :

The Elections of 1937 proved to be a failure for Muslims in the Indian Subcontinent, however; the Congress rule was no less than a blessing in disguise. The Muslims were made to bear atrocities and the harsh punishments of Congress leaders, yet it was beneficial for them in a way that it made them aware about the importance of separate state where they could practice their religion freely. This is considered as a progressive step for the Muslims as it galvanized the Muslim leaders for the idea of Muslim nationalism.

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Therefore, it is also believed that the "Pakistan Movement" got its roots from this platform which was popularized later with the unanimous support of the muslim population residing in Indian Subcontinent as well as the Muslim leaders. Hence, Quaid-e-Azam had rightly stated that:

"The Muslims can expect neither justice nor fair play under Congress government".

~ Quaid-e-Azam
Muhammad Ali
Jinnah

Question

Critically evaluate the foundations of Allama Iqbal's concept of Muslim separatism in the context of Indo-Pak Subcontinent.

Answer

• Introduction:

Allama Muhammad Iqbal, a great thinker, philosopher and a poet, is one of the great founding fathers of Pakistan. Iqbal, through his ideology,

literary contributions, and charismatic leadership has laid the foundations of Two-Nation Theory and Muslim separatism. The Allahabad Address of Allama Iqbal is considered a turning point in this regard. Furthermore, he has played a significant role in rebuilding the Islamic spirit in the Muslim community in the Indian Sub-continent. His influence on the Muslim leaders as well as on the Muslims at that time in the shape of Pakistan Movement cannot be ignored. Iqbal wrote letters to the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah regarding the disappointing state of Muslims and urged for the separate Muslim state for the Muslims of the Indian Sub-continent.

• Historical Contextualization:

The War of Independence, or the Indian Mutiny was a disastrous happening for the Muslims. In this situation, more fingers were pointed out at Muslims although Indians had an equal role. Thus, the repercussions for the Muslims were more than the Indians. The political, social, and economic state of Muslim had already deteriorated, however there was a rising threat for the Muslims' religion as well. Many prominent personalities such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's role in reviving

the Islamic Ideology and Muslim separatism in the Indian Sub-continent is quite influential. The All-India Muslim League, the representative of the Muslims, also launched campaigns to protect the rights of the Muslims. Allama Iqbal also took part in these national and social activities. By employing his systematic and unique ideology, he encouraged the Muslims and highlighted that, "The pen is mightier than the sword", thus paving the way for intellectual awakening. Furthermore, he inspired Muslims of India to recognize and strive for their separate identity. Thus, Iqbal eventually felt the need to give reality to his ideas, which was later done in the form of "Presidential Address at the Allahabad session of the All-India Muslim League in 1930."

- **How Iqbal's Vision Shaped the Concept of Muslim Separatism?**

② Literary Contributions:

The decline of the Mughal Empire in the Indian Subcontinent made Muslims a backward community under British "divide and rule policy". The problem further aggravated due to the class and community difference post-1857. In the wake of this, Iqbal felt a

need to awaken Muslims about unity and their rights. Thus, he used philosophical poetry and made Muslims aware about the importance of unity and cohesion.

Early Poetry

Used unity across sects and communities for independence

Mid-Term Poetry

Expressed natural & Political landscape
Deep patriotic love for motherland

Later Poetry

Shifted towards Islamic philosophy
Valued in Indo-Pak and Islamic world

Furthermore, he stressed on the unity of Muslims globally, and promoted the rhetoric, "One Prophet, One faith, One Ka'bah and the Quran". He was a staunch disbeliever of "territorial nationalism", and thus, emphasized "Millah" as true Muslim Identity.

② Proposed the Idea of Pakistan:

(a) The Allahabad Address

On 29th December 1930, Allama Iqbal addressed the 21st session of All India Muslim League in Allahabad.

According to Mufti Fakhur-ul-Islam, there were only 400-500 attendees, but this address made the intellectual base of Pakistan.

"The Allahabad Address definitely contains the spirit of Pakistan if not its name. This very spirit infused by Iqbal penetrated into the political consciousness of the Muslims within 20 years and reinvigorated and revitalized it."

~ Mukhtar Zaman in his book 'Trek to Pakistan'

⑥ The Essence of the Allahabad Address

Allama Iqbal in the Allahabad Address negated idea of religion as one's private affair. He expounded that Islam does not believe in the duality of matter and soul. Thus, religion was the joining force of the Muslims living in the subcontinent. He promoted the concept and ideas of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

"India is a continent inhabited by people belonging to different races, communities and religions. Moreover, they speak different languages. For this very reason, the application of Western democracy in India by ignoring the various religious groupings

is impossible".

~ Allama Iqbal

He further stated :

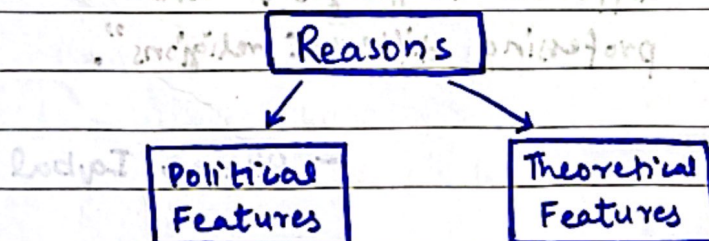
"I would like to see the Punjab, N.W.F.P., Sind, Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me the final destiny of Muslims at least of North-West India".

~ Allama Iqbal

After disposing all Hindu objections and fears, Iqbal reiterated:

"I therefore demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim state in the best interests of Muslims".

(c) Iqbal's Reasons for having such a dream:



• Political Features :

1. Fourteen points of Jinnah in 1929
2. Federal form of govt in India
3. 30% seats for Muslims in Central legislature in India
4. Separate Electorate
5. Separation of Sind from Bombay
6. Reforms in NWFP
7. Reforms in Baluchistan
8. Representation in accordance to population
9. ...

• Theoretical Features:

1. Intellectual basis for Pakistan
2. India is a sub-continent
3. Islamic concept of nationhood
4. Difference between Western and Islamic Political system

"India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages, and professing different religions".

~ Allama Iqbal

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③ Influence on Indian Muslims for Pakistan Movement

Iqbal exerted great influence on Muslims as well as on Muslim leadership in Indian Sub-continent to start 'Pakistan Movement'. To seek this reality, Iqbal wrote letters to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and laid great emphasis on creation of Muslim state in India.

"After a long and careful study of Islamic law, I have come to the conclusion that if this system of law is properly understood and applied, at least the right to subsistence is secured to everybody. But the enforcement and development of Shariah of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim state or states".

~ Iqbal's letter to Jinnah in 1937

④ The Significance of Iqbal's efforts for Muslim Separatism

The efforts of Allama Iqbal for Muslim separatism have

manifold significance.

① It helped in shaping the ideology of Muslims for a separate state where they would practice their religion freely without any sort of coercion.

② It helped in the synthesis of Modern Territorial nationalism with Islamic Nationalism. In 1848, there was the concept of nation state on the basis of treaty.

According to this concept, religion should be kept aside from the state affairs and a nation residing within limited territory would be considered 'Nation-state'.

On the other hand, Iqbal negated this concept and synthesized the modern territorial nationalism with Islamic Nationalism.

③ It expressed the Two-Nation theory, with a particular focus on the fact that the Muslims and Hindus are two different communities, hence they cannot coexist in the same territory.

④ Iqbal's efforts paved the way for 'Pakistan Movement', which

the Muslims and their leadership, united together ^{right} ~~shortly~~ after ^{the end of} Congress Rule. Hence, it is considered a significant contribution towards 'Lahore Resolution' which propounded the idea of separate state for the Muslims of India.

• Conclusion:

Allama Iqbal's enormous contributions for Muslims Nationalism and Separatism, through ^{his} literary ^{and philosophical} efforts, were to inspire Muslims; strengthen their identity, and guide them towards the idea of a separate homeland. The presidential address at Allahabad was marked as a turning point in the history that reshaped the whole perception and injected the idea of a separate state for the Muslims. It became the basis for the subsequent steps undertaken by the political leadership of the Muslim League, which ultimately found ^{practical} expression in the Lahore Resolution.