

THE ROLE OF PUNJAB MUSLIM STUDENTS FEDERATION IN SOUTH-EAST PUNJAB

Dr. Dharamvir Bhardwaj*

ABSTRACT

The Punjab Muslim Students Federation was organised in 1937 and it adopted the demand for Pakistan as part of its constitution.¹ The Punjab Muslim Students' Federation also played a very vital role in creating community identity among the Muslims of this region and strengthened Muslim League demand for Pakistan in the province. The Federation strongly supported the demand for Pakistan and organised a Pakistan conference at Lahore in March 1941, at which Jinnah presided and he emphasized that the only weapon that "you have is to strengthen your own power and make your organisation so complete that you will be able to face any danger, any power from the enemy."²

Keywords: Community Identity, Muslim League, Rural Propaganda, The Tribune.

Introduction

Pakistan Rural Propaganda Committee was formed with Nizami as its Secretary. He wrote to Jinnah that "we were determined to win the Pakistan and we would launch one attack after another like Ghaznavi."³

The Punjab Muslim Students Federation had always been supporting the cause of Muslim League. In fact this body of students had done a great deal of work by popularising Muslim League in this region.⁴ The Tribune wrote (Oct. 3, 1937) that the Federation adopted the line of Aligarh Students. Condemning it the paper said that the Hindus would not allow any students' organisation to work that was based on communal theory. It added that despite the fact that the Federation had come into existence, every effort would be made to hit at its communal character.⁵

The Federation declared its full support and loyalty to Jinnah and declared that it strongly condemned the Congress and regarded the Congress movement as a war against their nation. It was determined to oppose it by all possible means.⁶ The Federation devoted themselves to the propagation of the demand for Pakistan. The Federation provided leadership on the intellectual and social front. For propagation of Pakistan it organised study circles, launched journals, published literature on Pakistan in the form of booklets, pamphlets and handbills, organised conferences and participated in the reorganisational process of the Provincial Muslim League.⁷

The Federation had organised Pakistan conferences and observed 'Pakistan Days' and 'League Weeks' to accelerate the movement for Pakistan. Thus, the Federation succeeded in creating Islamic identity among the Muslim of this region.⁸

The Rural Propaganda Committee resolved to propagate the Muslim League ideology in this region. Manzur-ul-Haq Siddiqui, who had been taken on the Committee, was deputed to undertake the tour of Rohtak. A thirteen day tour programme was also arranged under the supervision of Chaudhary

* Associate Professor, Department of History, G.B. Degree College, Rohtak, Haryana, India.

¹ Mirza, Sarfaraz, Hussain, The Punjab Muslim Students Federation, 1937-47, Islamabad 1991, Historical Studies Pakistan, Series 10, p. 1iii.

² The Indian Annual Register, Vol.I, Jan-June, 1942, p.326.

³ Talbot, Ian, Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement, New York, 1988, p.91.

⁴ Sarfaraz Hussain Mirza, The Punjab Muslim Students Federation, 1937-47, Islamabad, 1991, p.95, N.A. I., New Delhi.

⁵ The Tribune, Oct. 3, 1937.

⁶ Sarfaraz Hussain Mirza, op.cit., p.185.

⁷ Ibid, pp.226-227.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 227-228.

Mohammad Sadiq in association with Siddiqui.¹ Another delegation visited on Aug.24, 1941 Ambala district where they held a successful public meeting which was attended by many local League leaders.² The delegation then went to Jagadhari and other neighbouring places. They organised a public meeting at Ambala on Aug. 25, 1941³ and the meeting was well attended by many local Muslims. The deputation visited Tehsil Jagadhari of District Ambala on Aug.28, 1941, and a meeting was arranged where speeches in favour of Pakistan were made.⁴ They stressed that the Congress movement was an open war against Pakistan and Gandhi Bharat a part of it.⁵

The Federation toured Ambala division on July 5, 1944,⁶ and addressed several meetings. The deputation reached Karnal and Panipat on July 10, 1944, where they addressed the Muslim students of Hali Muslim School, in which more than one thousand Muslim students participated and enrolled themselves as members of the Federation.⁷ The following resolution was adopted unanimously in the meeting, "this meeting of the Muslim students of Panipat congratulates Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan to his unique sacrifice and express full confidence in the leadership of the Quaid-i-Azam and assure him its unconditional support and loyalty".⁸ Another deputation of the Federation visited Rohtak on July 7, 1944, waited upon the local League leaders and discussed with them the Leagues' 'Future Line of Action'. The deputation were successful in getting assurance from Ashiq Ali, President of the Rohtak Municipal Committee, for establishing a League party in the Municipal Committee.⁹

The working Committee of Rohtak district Muslim Students' Federation held under the presidency of Mahboob Ahmad, Ahmad Sued Kirmani made a stirring speech and appeal to the members to carry the message of the League to the remotest villages. He demanded the demand of Pakistan in some detail and exposed the Unionist tactics and advised them to disillusion Sir Chhotu Ram in his very home.¹⁰ The meeting adopted the following resolution, "This meeting condemns Ashiq Hussain leghari and Malik Khizar Hayat Khan on their betrayal of the Muslims of Punjab. They have lost confidence of the Muslims of Rohtak and asks them to quit their offices for sincere worker. This meeting express full confidence in the leadership of the Quaid-i-Azam and assures him of their unconditional support and devoted loyalty."¹¹

Another deputation led by Syed Riaz Kirmani visited many villages in this region. The villagers not only welcomed the student workers but also rendered all possible help to them and got themselves enrolled as members of the League.¹² Another deputation led by Syed Qusin Rizvi visited Rohtak on Jan. 3, 1946, and addressed about 3,000 villagers. At Jhajjar, in a speech, he stated, "In the Punjab, the Unionist Party is our main stumbling block which stands in the way of unity of all the Mussalmans, essential for the every existence of Muslims in India. The present elections are a test for the Muslims. They have been successful in the Central Assembly elections and they would also sweep the polls in the provincial elections." He denounced those Muslims who did not join the League for petty ambitions and he exhorted them to vote for the League of Pakistan.¹³

Another deputation of Federation toured village Faitehpur in tehsil Ambala. A successful gathering was held with the co-operation of local notables.¹⁴ Another group toured Khirbee, Manakpur, Chirgo, Nazra, Koharli, Wasilpur in support of Chaudhary Mohammed Hassan Khan, the League candidate.¹⁵ Another deputation under the leadership of Khalid Irshad, visited Venkot tehsil Gurgaon, and canvassed in a number of villagers in this area. The batch toured the area at least for ten days and made extensive propaganda in support of Chaudhary Mahtab Khan. They travelled about one thousands miles on camels, tongas, and trucks and addressed about hundred meetings. Their work radically changed the atmosphere in favour of the League.¹⁶

¹ Ibid, pp. 167-168.

² Ibid., p.168.

³ Ibid., pp. 168-169.

⁴ Ibid., p.168.

⁵ Ibid., p.230.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 262-263.

⁷ Ibid, p.263.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 263-264.

⁹ Ibid, p.263.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.264.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 264-265.

¹² Ibid., p.268.

¹³ Ibid., pp.322-323.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.323.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp.323-324.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.333.

The Federation helped Jinnah to dramatize the Muslim League's public commitment to a communal ideal. The Federation propagated on such topics as religious background to the demands for Pakistan, Muslim League in the light of Islam and Islamic History. They followed the prophets' examples in all things during their visits to villages. They joined the payers at the mosques and appealed to the people to commence work with a text from the Quran. They delivered their lectures on religious lines and created Islamic identity among the Muslims of this region.

The Punjab Muslim League emerged when it started rural propaganda campaign to build a direct mass base in the countryside after the humiliating defeat in the elections of 1937. Many provincial leaders toured the rural areas to whip up enthusiasm for membership drive. The Punjab Muslim League mobilised the Muslims in the name of Islam to support the Muslim League in struggle for Pakistan. The League used all the religious festivals and symbols¹ to spread its message and promote unity and social solidarity amongst the Muslims of this region. The Punjab Muslim League in their propaganda used mosques,² because, mosques were important centres of Muslim life. The propagandists joined in the prayers at the local mosques and after the permission of Immams, they held their meetings. League meetings were regularly held in mosques especially after the Friday prayers. They urged the people to support Muslim nation.

The Punjab Muslim League made a major effort to win over the support of the leading landlords, pirs, Sajida nashins and Ulema. Infact many of these rural and urban magnets played a leading role in the election of 1946 for the Muslim League for the Muslim nation in its life and death struggle. They exhorted their followers to sacrifice all for the achievement of Pakistan.³ The Punjab Muslim League created a committee of men of religious influence known as 'Masbeikh Committee',⁴ in order to marshal sufi support for its success. Most of the leading sufi shrines issued fatwas in support of the Muslim League and among these Chisti revivalist shrines were most active.

The Sajjada of the older established Chisti shrine of Sharfud-Din-Bu-Ali-Qulandar at Panipat appealed to his murids to give their votes only to the Muslim League in the present election and not to be deceived by the false propaganda of the enemy.⁵ Syed Fazal Ahmad Shah, Sajjada Nashin of the shrine of Hazrat Shah Nur Jamal issued the following fatwas, "an announcement from the shrine of Hazrat Shah Nur Jamal, I command all those people who are in my silsilah to do everything possible to help the Muslim League and give their vote to it. All those people who do not act according to this message should consider themselves no longer members of my silsilah".⁶ Most of the leading shrines issued similar fatwas in the support of Muslim League. Pir Jamaat Ali Shah issued fatwas that Muslim League was the only Islamic party and that all the rest were Kafirs.⁷ The Muslim League had started very intense propaganda on religious lines and urged that the Muslim League was fighting for Islam and Pakistan would have a government of the Quran.⁸ Jinnah stressed that the Muhammadans were prepared to sacrifice each and everything for the protection of their religious and cultural self-consciousness.⁹ The League made use of mosques and maulavis for the party propaganda while urging the Muslims to support the Pakistan scheme as being not only a political necessity for the community but as their religious obligation as well.

Malik Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, premier of Punjab, submitted a memorandum during meeting with Cabinet Mission dealing with methods used by the Muslim League in the province during the Assembly election of 1946. The Muslim League used the fatwas of Muslim pirs invoking Divine displeasure against those who would vote against the League candidate and made use of religious fanaticism in the election campaign. The Muslim officials in many cases supported the League candidates and the present noise created by the League that the officials helped the Unionist Party was just a smokescreen to protect the officials who helped the Muslim League in wining the elections. The Muslim League launched a regular campaign of social boycott of non League Muslim M.L.A.s, making it difficult for them to live as peaceful citizens. This social boycott movement by the League could be

¹ Talbot, Ian "The Growth of the Muslim League in the Punjab, 1937-46", Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, XX:1 (1982), pp.15-16.

² Ibid, p.16.

³ Gilmartin, David, "Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab", Modern Asian Studies, 13,3 (1979), p.516.0

⁴ Ian, Talbot, Punjab and the Raj, op.cit., p.211.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 213-214.

⁶ Ian, Talbot, "The Growth of Muslim League in the Punjab, 1937-46", op.cit., p.20.

⁷ David, Gilmartin, "Religious Leadership and Pakistan Movement in the Punjab", op.cit., p.513.

⁸ Ibid., pp.508-509.

⁹ The Tribune, June 3, 1932.

compared with fascist methods. This led to five Unionist Muslims joining the League after they had been elected on the Unionist Party tickets.¹

The Ulema Conference was held at Karachi on Dec.24, 1943. They expressed full confidence in the leadership of Jinnah and assured him that they would be prepared to make any sacrifice to achieve the principle of Pakistan. They urged unity between all sections of Muslims so as to take collective action for achieving the goal of Muslim nation. Further, they appealed to the Muslims to rally round the League banner and strengthen that body which was true representative of nine crores of Muslims.² The Punjab Muslim League exploited the growing wartime discontent in a number of ways. It raised the demand that Islam was in danger.³

The League's propaganda had strengthen the belief that the disruptionists were out to impose Hindu imperialism on India in the near future.⁴ The Punjab Muslim League conference was held at Sialkot on 30th April, 1944. It declared that the Muslims would not tolerate Hindu domination. They were passing through critical times and it was therefore necessary that the Muslims should unite under the banner of the Muslim League to achieve Pakistan.⁵ It further stated that the Punjab Muslim League had not become merely political but also the social, religious, educational and economic platform of the Muslims, infact their one and only Jammait in every village, town and city.⁶

The League remarked that the Muslims would not tolerate the capitalist domination of Hindus, as also the capitalist domination of their own community. The League appealed to the Muslims to boycott to buy from the Hindus.⁷ By a resolution of Dec.25, 1943, the Muslim League appointed a Committee of Action to prepare and organise the Muslims all over India to meet all contingencies and to resist the imposition of an all India Federation or any other constitution for one United India and asked them to prepare themselves for the struggle for the achievement of Pakistan. Jinnah observed that Muslim India and Muslim League had made up their mind definitely and would only proceed on the basis of Pakistan. There could be no compromise on the question of partition and division of India.⁸

Jinnah reiterated that there could be no peace in India without the transfer of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh minorities from one province to another. He further added that the Hindus should leave the Muslim majority provinces and the Muslim should leave the Hindu majority provinces.⁹ The Council of all India Muslim League met at Bombay to consider the Cabinet Missions proposals and Jinnah reiterated that Pakistan was only course left open to the Muslim League. Firoz Khan Noon also urged the League council to reject the Cabinet Mission plan.¹⁰ The Council emphasized that the time had now come for the Muslim nation to resort to direct action to achieve Pakistan and get rid of the present slavery under the British and the Hindus dominations.¹¹

The Punjab Muslim League gradually adopted different approaches to wining support of Muslims of this region. The League organised local branches and linked the demand for Pakistan with the solution of the Muslims war time difficulties. The Punjab Muslim League made religious appeal to mobilise the Muslim of this region. It stressed that the Muslim had different languages, different literary roots, different ideas of education, different philosophical sources and concept of art.¹² The Punjab Muslim League took advantage of worsening wartime dislocation and death of Sir Chhotu Ram. The Punjab Provincial Muslim League became powerful after Jinnah's growing prestige in national politics. The emergence and strengthening of the Muslim League could be seen as common political creed only in the context of an Islamic concept of political community.¹³ Instead of several other factors it is clear that the revivalist movements created the Islamic identity among the Muslims which could be seen in the massive victory of Muslim League in the election of 1946 and later formation of Islamic state(Pakistan).



¹ The Tribune, April 7, 1946.

² The Tribune, Dec.25, 1943.

³ The Tribune, Feb.22, 1946, p.4.

⁴ The Tribune, April 13, 1946.

⁵ The Indian Annual Register, Vol.I, Jan.-June, 1944, p.222.

⁶ The Indian Annual Register, Vol.2, July-Dec., 1942, p.293.

⁷ The Tribune, July 30, 1945.

⁸ The Tribune, Aug.5, 1946, p.3.

⁹ The Tribune, Dec.1, 1946, p.4.

¹⁰ The Indian Annual Register, Vol.2, July-Dec., 1946, p.9.

¹¹ Ibid., p.67.

¹² Aziz, K.K. The Making of Pakistan, London, 1967, pp.142-143.

¹³ Iftikhar, H, Malik, op.cit., p.222.