CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

The narrative presented in the earlier chapters brings to light quite a few important facts as related to the Muslim politics in the Punjab. A study of these facts may well give an insight into the psychology behind the Muslim struggle for power and political leadership.

The opening years of the twentieth century saw the Muslims suffering from a sense of inferiority and deprivation in view of their educational and economic backwardness as compared to the Hindus. They had ruled India till recently and the advent of the British certainly frustrated them in their quest for power. Naturally, they tried their best to regain their lost glory and prestige, in which they could dominate, or at least be as powerful as, the Hindus. As the Punjab was the Muslim majority province, with 54.84 per cent of the total population being Muslim, their aspirations for power were understandable.
From 1919 onwards, the Muslims' struggle for supremacy was visible. During the Khilafat Movement (1919-1923), the Muslims not only in the Punjab, but all over India tried to attain a powerful position in the country by means of identifying themselves with the Turkish Sultan or the Caliph. At the same time, the emergence of Mian Fazl-i-Husain on the Punjab political scene, with the formation of his Unionist Party, also showed the signs of Muslims' ambition for an authoritative status in the province. The period from 1924 onwards passed through many phases of Muslims' struggle for supremacy. The movement for seeking the partition of India and, consequently, the partition of the Punjab, also signified the Muslim urge for power and sovereignty.

The Punjab had a complex society consisting of the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs, numerically dominated by the Muslims but almost balanced by the Hindus and Sikhs taken together. The Muslims were predominant in seventeen districts of western Punjab. Their proportion decreased when one moved from west to east.

The period from 1857 to 1918 was a period of political change in the Punjab. Syed Ahmad Khan
who was called the father of the 'two nation theory', was actually responsible for sowing the seeds of discord between the Hindus and the Muslims. He was the founder of the Aligarh College. It was due to him that the Muslims became enlightened and eager to have their own institution.

The dawn of the twentieth century witnessed the growing urge of the Muslims to attain power and position in the Punjab. They wanted that their political importance should be recognized by everyone. This resulted in the formation of the All India Muslim League in 1906, the first and foremost Muslim organization. This was followed by the formation of the Punjab Muslim League in 1907. Here, at this juncture, important Punjab Muslims came to limelight, Mohammed Shafi as a pro-Aligarh and Fazl-i-Husain as a pro-Congress Muslim.

Both the above-mentioned groups had serious differences with each-other, but on the other hand, both were ready to co-operate with each-other so far as the interests of their community were concerned. That is why in 1906, the Muslims unanimously laid the demand of separate electorates through the Muslim deputation that met the Viceroy on October 1, 1906 (The
finally framed Morley-Minto Reforms had not provided separate electorates to the Muslims in the Punjab, because the British government considered the province as politically and constitutionally less developed). It led to an increase in communalism, because the Hindus and the Sikhs of the Punjab also started making the same demand.

Thus, it was clear that at the outbreak of the year 1919, the Muslims of the Punjab had been struggling hard to get the proper share in the administration of the province. To achieve this end, there had been a struggle of leadership also.

The long struggle of the Muslims for an unquestioned political leadership in the Punjab was interspersed with the events outwardly showing the Hindu-Muslim unity. During the Khilafat Movement, the Hindus joined the Muslims in realizing the Muslim demands. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Muslims, with the exception of a few, joined hands with the Hindus in participating in the Non-cooperation Movement. The formation and the stay of the Unionist Party in the province for more than two decades could also be made possible due to the unity of the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.
Unfortunately, this spirit of the inter-communal unity was soon extinguished in the events of numberless communal riots either due to inter-religious misunderstandings or due to struggle for political supremacy. In the 1920s, social movements like Shuddhi, Tabligh, Sangathan and Tanzim greatly vitiated the cordial climate of the Hindu-Muslim co-existence.

Moreover, Fazl-i-Husain's politics as the Education Minister resulted in creating further tension amongst the Hindus and the Muslims. He wholeheartedly tried to uplift the Muslim community by giving them more facilities in the field of education. Not only this, he dissociated himself from the Non-cooperation Movement and also resigned from the Congress in 1920 over the same issue. His loyalties rested with the British government with whose help he wanted to improve the conditions of the Muslims.

Fazl-i-Husain had been a very controversial figure. On one side, he was working for the Hindu-Muslim unity, but on the other side, as the Minister of Education, he worked for the upliftment of his own community. In fact, he was a loyalist and wanted to do every task under the supervision and for the pleasure of the British government. He never wanted to
displease them. It was for this reason that he did not join the Non-cooperation Movement and tried to settle everything in an amicable manner. Actually, the motive behind all these acts was the hope of leadership. With the help of bureaucracy, he wanted to become the sole leader of the Punjab Muslims.

To make the situation worse, the British also treated the Muslims as a separate group during the phase of their struggle for political leadership. By granting more privileges during the Round Table Conferences and under the Communal Award, they institutionalized the Muslim non-Muslim division. Despite the attitude of the British government, the Muslims remained contented with the demand of separate electorates and a proper share in the provincial administration. The thought of the partition came only later in their minds.

Apart from this, communalism was also apparent throughout this period. The Hindus and the Muslims quarrelled over the share in the administration. The Hindus demanded joint electorates and the Muslims demanded the separate electorates. Moreover, numerous communal riots added fuel to fire.
Curiously enough, the Muslims, even among themselves, were soon disunited in their pursuit for power, e.g., Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew in the Punjab developed fundamental differences with the Ali brothers and other All India Khilafat leaders. As it came to be, he even diverged from the path of Khilafat agitation and devoted himself to the Tanzim Movement. His differences with the Ali brothers reached a climax when he resigned the Presidency of the Khilafat organization at the All India Muslim Parties' Conference in 1925.

In the Punjab Legislative Assembly itself, the Muslims were divided. Some belonged to the Congress and were known as the Nationalist Muslims. Some were of the extremist views belonging to the Muslim League and the others followed the lead of Fazl-i-Husain under the name of the Unionist. These three groups of Muslims always differed in their views regarding the major events during the period under study, like the arrival of the Simon Commission (1927), the Nehru Report (1928), the Round Table Conferences (1930-32), the Constitution of 1935, and so on.

The Muslim struggle for political power in the Punjab, prior to 1947, again reflected this disunity.
Mohammed Ali Jinnah left no stone unturned in usurping power from the Punjab Premiers, first Sikander Hayat Khan and then Khizr Hayat Khan.

The leadership of the Unionist Party changed in 1937 due to the death of Fazl-i-Husain in 1936. In 1937, Sikander Hayat Khan became the Premier of the Punjab after the Unionist Party won the elections. Now, the Muslim League which had been silent during all these years, started taking interest in the activities of the province and Jinnah signed a Pact with Sikander Hayat Khan, just to carve a role in the Punjab politics.

Hence, the Muslim politics in the Punjab took a crucial turn when Jinnah emerged on the scene with his call for an Islamic state. He had been trying his best to influence and control the Muslim politics in the Punjab since long because, in his view, the Punjab was the keystone of the edifice of a separate Muslim homeland which he was striving to build. He injected the communal poison in the body politic of the Punjab to destabilize the prevailing political structure in the province, especially after the death of the important Punjab Muslim leaders like Mohammed Shafi (1932) and Fazl-i-Husain (1936).
Just like Fazl-i-Husain, Sikander Hayat Khan was also a controversial figure. On one hand, he signed a Pact with Jinnah just to show his adherence to the Muslim League and on the other hand, he remained firm to the principles of the Unionist Party also. Above all, he sacrificed everything when the question of loyalty towards the bureaucracy arose. In fact, Sikander Hayat Khan's strategy of remaining in between (neither too much in favour of the Muslim League nor too much against it) helped in keeping Jinnah at a distance. That is why, till 1942, Jinnah could not acquire the banner of the Punjab politics completely.

It was an open fact that Jinnah firmly believed in the 'two nation theory' and directed his efforts towards making it a reality. After Sikander Hayat Khan, Khizr Hayat Khan also resisted and struggled for a united Punjab, because he realized that Pakistan could be obtained only through partition of the province and this he did not want.

Khizr Hayat Khan, like his predecessors, was also a loyalist and he wanted to run administration only under the supervision of the British government. He was just happy with the present state of affairs. He was
neither in favour of freedom nor partition. But Jinnah was quite adamant regarding his Pakistan demand which could be achieved only through partition. Thus, fighting for the partition of India, Jinnah fought for the partition of the Punjab as well.

The call for the partition of India certainly provided a dubious finale to the drama of the Muslim politics in the Punjab. Way back in 1935, an attempt was made to get the idea of partition out of the Muslim mind by granting an All India Federation, but it appeared to be a belated step. Against the wishes of the Unionist Party, the All India Muslim League leaders had prepared themselves for the division of the country and were not ready to accept any other thing except the partition. To achieve this end, religious sentiments of the Muslims were exploited. The slogans like 'Islam in danger' were raised.

Actually, Jinnah had been trying his best to influence and control the Muslim politics in the Punjab since long, because in his view, the Punjab was the cornerstone of a separate Muslim homeland. Earlier, Mohammed Iqbal and Rehmat Ali, the two Punjab Muslims had already formulated the idea of a separate Muslim state in early 1930s. The idea acquired a definite shape in 1940 when at the Lahore session of the Muslim
League, the Pakistan Resolution was declared. Jinnah was wise enough to realize that the demand for Pakistan could not materialize unless an independent Muslim League organization was established in the Punjab and, to attain this end, he must destabilize the Unionist Ministry by influencing its main supporters and convince them that the Muslim interests would be protected better under the Muslim League.

The Unionist Party which had been dependent mainly on its rural supporters since its formation, got a jolt in its popularity during the Second World War. The policy of unconditional War efforts, in fact, was the main cause because, while the war was going on, the Unionist Party could not control the commercial castes' exploitation of the agriculturists because of the need of their cooperation in the War. Moreover, there was a rise in prices also during the War which effected the lives of the poor ruralites. They began gradually losing faith in the Unionist Party which they had earlier considered as the savior of their economic interests.

This situation was, however, exploited by the Muslim League propaganda that the interest of the
rural masses would be safeguarded better if they joined the Muslim League and it started choosing the leaders from the rural areas as its candidates. Many members became the converts to the Muslim League in 1946 elections and, automatically, the rural supporters of those candidates also came under the shadow of the Muslim League. Hence, Jinnah was able to win the rural Muslims to his side. This, however, weakened the position of the Unionist Party, which gained its strength from these rural masses.

As mentioned earlier, Khizr Hayat Khan did not believe in the idea of Pakistan and he was determined to save the Punjab from such a situation. He tried hard in this direction till 1945. Unfortunately, his Unionist Party was defeated in the elections of 1946 and he headed a non-Muslim government in the province. However, with the consent of the British Governor, he formed a Coalition Party comprising the Hindus and the Sikhs of the Punjab.

All these happenings enraged Jinnah as these could destroy the prospects of a Muslim state. The Punjab was the centre of his Pakistan and he could hardly afford to forego it. Consequently, he started
organizing a mass movement against the government in order to prevent his political opponents from consolidating their forces. His appeal for a separate Muslim State had fired the imagination of the Muslim masses and the mass movement initiated by him received an indirect but unstinted support from all the Muslim quarters in the Punjab who openly sided with the League. All this created awesome problems for Khizr Hayat Khan and the political situation in the Punjab rapidly turned chaotic.

In January 1947, Khizr Hayat Khan courageously declared the Muslim League National Guards as an unlawful body and decided to ban it for the safety of the Punjab. Jinnah could not tolerate this action of the Punjab Premier and ordered the Muslim League to fight out this issue. The Khizr government tried to settle this question with tact and strength, but in vain.

By that time, the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee made a declaration on February 20, 1947 confirming the withdrawal of the British from India. This, however, frightened Khizr Hayat Khan who could not think of running the government without the British support. The Punjab also became the venue of numerous
agitations upholding the appeal of the partition. The fate of the Khizr Ministry was also sealed simultaneously and, unable to face the odds, Khizr Hayat Khan finally resigned on March 2, 1947.

After the fall of the Coalition government, the demand for partition grew at its fever pitch. A civil war broke out in the Punjab in March 1947 and, by the end of April 1947, the partition had become almost a certainty. The Muslim League finally got the Punjab, which was actually the west Punjab, in August 1947. In this way, the long drama of the Muslim politics came to an end with the birth of a new state of Pakistan.

While reviewing the entire gamut of the Muslim politics in the Punjab between 1919-1947, we can identify certain dimensions which appear to be unique for the Punjab. For instance, unlike other provinces of India, the British Imperialism in the Punjab was significantly working for some sort of alliance among various religious communities. This was contrary to their widely accepted policy of 'Divide and Rule'. The agriculturist lobby in the Punjab was propped up which included not only the peasantry but other segments such as landlords, feudal lords, the rich peasantry and retired Army Personnel—a class whose loyalty for the British Raj was unquestioned.
The political outfit of all these classes and undifferen-
tiated peasantry was the Unionist Party. The community-
wise social base of this party were Muslims followed by
the rural Hindus and some sections of the rural Sikhs.
It worked on the premise of rural and urban identity.
It by and large united the three main communities be-
tween 1923-1937. However, with the emergence of the
Muslim League under the leadership of Jinnah, this
unity was broken and the Unionist Party caved in under
the pressure of Jinnah. The political slogans of the
Unionist Party which were apparently on class lines
fell on the roadside and the Muslim honeymoon with
the British Raj was broken. It was a clear case of
subalterns among the Muslims overtaking the leadership
of the Unionist Party with the outspoken support of
some feudal lords and land lords supporting the Muslim
League.

The failure of class relations and the victory
of Muslim communalism in the Punjab can not be easily
explained. Most probably the lack of regional bour-
geois due to under development of industrial sector
in the Punjab solidified the control of agriculturist
lobby. Consequent to it, the fructification of secular
ideology could not take place in the Punjab. The caste
and racial identity got merged with class relations which created spurious relations on the ground. The weight of the Muslim Nationalism was, therefore, uncontrollable and the policies of the Unionist Party were no match to it.

The weakening of Imperial forces during the Second World War might have further contributed to the rise of communalism among the Muslims in the Punjab. Apart from the rural support, the basis of the Unionist Party's strength was British Imperialism. They had successfully used this card to remain on the top in the Punjab politics. But after 1939, this very strength became a dead weight on the Unionist Party and the Muslim League had little challenge from forces which were opposed to it.

The same can be said for the rising middle class among the Muslims in the Punjab. The policies of the Unionist Party since the time of Fazl-i-Husain helped the middle class to emerge. The reservation in governments jobs, educational institutions and a substantial rise of the rural elite had created a new class which asked for a better deal for itself. The British Imperialism largely met their demand but the weakening of Imperialist forces, this class deserted the British and
fell prey to the Pakistan ideology as it promised an independent state for it where their expectations would match with new opportunities within an independent sovereign state, with Punjab as a base for the same.

The ambitions of these forces percolated among the peasantry which was ethnically linked with them. Moreover, the strong appeal of religion for the peasantry was exploited in full. It is significant to note that peasantry was by and large with the Muslim League and its leader Jinnah, particularly after the death of Sikander Hayat Khan. The depression followed by the new problems on the economic front after the declaration of war in 1939 had alienated the peasantry from the British and their allies which also contributed in the rise of Muslim League in the Punjab.

Lastly, it is also necessary to take into account the psyche of the Muslim masses in general. In 1920s, the Muslim psyche was down and out. This community was exploited by the dominant Hindu-Sikh landlords and money-lenders. The communal and class antagonism got enmeshed in such a way that the Muslims by and large were hostile to the Hindus and the Sikhs. Moreover, they were suffering from an identity crisis. The Unionist Party gave this community a sense of importance. Economically also
there was an upward trend in their prosperity. The elite among the Muslims had become bolder and outspoken. It was under the Unionist rule that the Muslims once again tested the political power. Obviously, they were not willing to forsake it. And there was a tendency to unite whenever challenges came from opponents. Thus, the Muslim community's identification with political power became the epicentre for all the developments that took place in the period of our study. Till such time the British Imperialism and its ally, the Unionist Party were convenient, the Muslim community gave support to them. But once the Muslim League became a contender for power at the all India level, they spontaneously extended their hand of comradeship to the Muslim League and Jinnah. The rise of the Muslim communalism in the Punjab was, therefore, part of power equations to which had begun to change since 1937. But after the Pakistan Resolution, the path had been finally prepared for its triumphant march.

In the light of all these forces and counter forces, the failure of the Nationalist Muslims in the Punjab can also be analysed. The Congress Party's failure to spread its influence among the rural masses
on the secular platform in the Punjab weakened the Nationalist Muslims. The hegemony of the communal Hindu element along with the influence of commercial classes in the Congress largely diffused their appeal. The other national forces like Ahrars and Khaksars were also marginalised due to their weak support base and incoherent ideology. Moreover, Congress, Ahrars and Khaksars were always on the defensive due to the peculiar power relationship that the British Imperialism had developed in the Punjab. The Punjab being the 'Sword of Arm' for the British Imperialism, the British bureaucracy had special interest in this region. The paternal administration and the army recruitment policy favoured the Punjab Muslims and other rural castes and communities like Hindu Jats and Sikhs. An emphasis on the rural upliftment and pumping of resources in irrigation and agriculture had also created a lot of goodwill for the British Imperialism. In this scenario, it was obvious that the anti-Imperialist forces had little opportunity to penetrate among the people and secure their commitment against the British Raj.

It is also significant to note that the communal forces among the Hindus like the Hindu Mahasabha and
Akalis among the Sikhs were quite powerful. In fact, the communalism in various communities supplemented and complimented each other. Each derived inspiration from the other. In short, the cumulative impact of all these factors was the total communalisation of the Punjab politics.