CHAPTER 6
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ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MUSLIM LEAGUE

With the beginning of the 20th century, uneasiness among the educated Muslims began to mouth and they wished for a political organization like the congress which could espouse their cause. They were no longer content to leave their fate in the hands of a few leaders who lacked the necessary qualification to satisfy their new-born aspirations.

Opinion of the Bengalee:

The rapid progress of the Hindus in political affairs, was another disconcerting pointer. The Bengalee December 11, 1900 opined that the recent events had come as a rude awakening to the Muslims. Nawab Imadul Mulk maintained that the Muslims would never join the ranks of dark-skinned steads and parnells. The Muslims, said Nawab, were better employed in setting their own house, in order. We have, therefore, made it our business, he wrote, to teach our political creed at Aligarh so that the rising generation should grow up in its doctrines, which we deem to be sounder and much more patriotic than the doctrines taught by the congress. Mr. Beck before him and he has the authority of the leaders of the community to speak on their behalf and he has their fullest confidence.

Simla deputation and said that the present was the logical consequence of it.

The Nawab of Dacca, who was the chief organizer of the meeting, explained why the Muslims now in power in England, he said, have familiar with the position of Muslims and had Indian public men represent justly Muslim claims, the movement might perhaps not have been heard of, but quite, unobtrusive work was now at a discount and only those who cried loudest had a chance of being heard. Muslims had, therefore, been forced against their own wishes to abandon their traditional policy in order to secure easement of very real disabilities, and to avoid the danger that their interest might be neglected, whilst other communities in Indian benefitted.

Soon after this speech, the Nawab circulated among the leading Muslims detailed proposals for a central political organization.

OBJECT:
After a few more speeches the following resolution, containing there important objects of this organization, was unanimously passed by those present.

that this gathering made out of Muslims from all parts of India, gathered at Dacca, chooses that a political affiliation styled the All-India Muslim association be shaped the assistance of the accompanying protests:

(a) to push around the Muslims of Indian emotions of Loyalty to British government and to evacuate any confusions that may emerge as to the aims of government as to any of its measures.

(b) to venture and development the political rights and diversions of the musalmans of India and deferentially to speak to their requirements and yearnings to government;

(c) to avert the ascent around the Musalmans, without preference to different protests of the group.

This resolution was moved by the nawab of Dacca and seconded by Hakim Ajmal Khan, the latter afterwards left the league and joined the congress and was latter elected its president.

Thus, in the shape that the Muslim league finally took at its formation, the nawab of Dacca’s scheme played a great part. The Bengalee, however, referred to the league as ‘nawab Samiulla’s latest fad’. 10(a)

At the same meeting, nawab Viquar-ul-mulk and Mohsinul mulk were elected the joint secretaries of a provisional committee which was authorized to draft a suitable constitution and to make necessary arrangements for the future work of the league.

A parallel organization:

But at the same time and for the same purpose another Muslim meeting was being held in Calcutta. It was attended by a number of delegates from Bombay, Baroda, the U.P., Madras, the Punjab, the C.P., Bihar and Bengal. One of its resolutions was opposed to that of the league, which called upon the Muslims to work with other communities in all political and economic matters because the interests of the
Muslims were in no way different from those of others. To propagate this point of view, a new political organization under the name, ‘Indian Musalman association’, was launched. Mr. M.A. Jinnah was one of its 3 vice-presidents. At any rate not much enthusiasm was shown towards it by the educated Muslims.

Comments of Mary Minto and British newspapers on the ‘league’ and Humayun Kabir's interpretation:

Professor Humayun Kabir has interpreted that the ‘league’ was intended to keep the Muslim intelligentsia and middle class from the dangerous politics into which the congress was just then embarking. (Sayed Razi Wasti,) how true his assessment is can be judged by the joy shown at its birth in concerned British circles.

So overwhelming was the joy at the birth of the league that the governor’s wife Mary Minto poued it into her diary. She wrote on October 1, 1906:- “this has been a very eventful day; as some one said to me _an epoch in Indian History.” (Mary Minto; ‘Indian, Minto and Morley’)

The times welcoming the formation of the Muslim-league as a check against the extravagant and ludicrous claims of The congress, doubted whether it would make for peace (The Times, Jan., 2, 1907).

The most conservative British newspaper morning post warned the league that its work must be entirely defensive and protective, adding, once, however, it departs from these objects......and becomes frankly antagonistic to the Hindu or any other race, or by words or acts does anything to forment internal dissension in India, it will call at once for the most drastic intervention of the British-rulers.

Early Activities of the league:

The association was healthy conventional by the Muslims of India. Extremely almost immediately twigs were put up at a variety of seats. Solitary bough was opened in London under the presidency of Syed Ameer Ali. The primary of the yearly sessions was held at Karachi on 29 and 30th Dec 1907. It was attended by prominent
Muslims from all over India and presided over by Sir Adamjee Peer Bhoj, a distinguished merchant from Bombay. He was one of the members of the Simla Depucation and was specially invited by Nawab Viquur-ur-Mulk to preside. His address outlined the future policy and political attitude of the Muslims. He urged the Muslims to be united in ourselves to be of one mind and one purpose. Our loyalty to government has never yet been impeached and I trust it never will.

The league’s constitution was finally settled in this session. Its fundamental principles were not different from those of the resolution passed at the Dacca session in 1906. At its special meeting at Aligarh on 18 and 19th March, 1908, the Agakhan was elected permanent president of the league and S.H. Bilgrami, honorary secretary.

A change had come amongst the Muslims. But it was a gradual change. Their political party was not founded overnight or one man, but grew slowly and steadily.

The league had taken a cue from the congress right from the beginning, regarding mobilizing public opinion in England and the league devoted considerable attention to making its views and activities known to the public there. So a branch of the league was founded there on 6th May, 1908. It was to play an important part in converting Morley back to the original scheme of separate electorates from his own scheme of electoral colleges.

On 30 December, 1908, the league met at Amritsar. Syes (later Sir) Ali Imam presided. The constitution of the league was formally adopted. By now, the government of India’s reform proposals and the Secretary of State’s reply had become public and from now on, the league was to embark on an incessant campaign for achieving the system of separate electorates which had been promised by the viceroy.

There had arisen a difference of opinion over the third session of the league. It was actually held in 1910 on 29-31 January and Sir Ghulam Muhammad Ali Khan, Prince of Arcot, presided over it.
At this very session it was decided to shift the league’s office from Aligarh to Lucknow a more central place. But that was the only reason for this change of headquarters. Sir J.P. Hewett, it. Government of U.P. did not like everything connected with Muhammedan advancement in every from concentrated at Aligarh. So the Lucknow office started functioning From 1st March, 1910. The ago khan wanted government to recognize the league as the only Muslim authoritative body to be consulted on important matters. Hewett was not very favourably inclined. Minto agreed with hewett. The government could not agree that it is the only authority entitled to be consulted on Muhammadan matters. At the same time we should, of course, always accept the league as a very representative Mohammedan body to which we should naturally refer for an opinion on any question of importance.

Muslim problems needed Muslim organization:

The Muslims had their own problems and interests. When, in 1906, it became necessary to embark upon a political career, they decided to have a political organization of their own rather than join the congress towards which they were never attracted because of its political programme, the attitude of some of its leaders and the predominance of the Hindus in it. In it early stages the congress created suspicion in the mind of the Muslim and after some year they were convinced that to join the congress would be tantamount to this complete annihilation as a separate political entity. 20(a)

The role of the Muslim league:

In consolidating and unifying and unifying the Muslims by championing their cause and jealously guarding their interests, the league succeeded beyound I imagination. Attempts, were made to establish its branches in all important places in India. Provincial and district league were established and its league toured the various parts of India explaining to the people the league’s aims and objects. Small brochures in urdu with translation in other languages were published and through the medium of 20(a). Mohammad Noman, op. cit., pp. 9-10. Press and platform, it was brought nearer to the people.
The paradox:

Thus, a paradox was thrown into Indian politics. If nationalist India wanted representative institutions, the league said that they were harmful and that the autocratic british rule was the best rule for the India said that recruitment to government services should be made through competitive tests, the league would advise that nominations by government were a better method⋯⋯ If the nationalist India preached secularism and democracy, the league said that the Muslims were different from other and therefore would not agree to merge into a common Indian community.

Muslim league thus was the fruit of the outworn doctrine of divide et impera, engrafted on the imperial stalk as a deviationist antidote against the ―Hindu agitators. A great deal has been printed to the result that it was the whitish authorities who originated this artificial Muslim-Hindu dichotomy in Indian politics undoubtedly when its existence was presented to them they welcomed the Muslim league soon after its establishment, the Muslim league embarked upon its main demand for separate representation.

Demand for separate representation:

It has been mentioned earlier that after the implementation of the provisions of the Indian council’s act of 1892 it was found that the representation of the Muslims on the council was not proportional to their population. Their dissatisfaction was given voice by the Muslim league.

The ‘why’ and ‘how’ of it:

The Muslims were worried at the prospect of their swamped by the Hindu Majority. The Hindu majority had not been able to satisfy them that the joint electorates would help Hindus and Muslims to develop a national outlook in political matters. Past experience had showed the Muslims that the only possible way to safeguard their interests was to ask for separate representation of Muslims by Muslims. Hence they strove to achieve this aim and were able to convince the government that they must be given separate representation. Muslim league played a dominant role in this affair.

Government ‘s concurrence:
The government of India concurred with the argument of the Muslim league that under the election system Muslim member that had been elected was not true representation, argued the Muslim leaguers, were not true representatives of the Muslims. The government had supplemented them by nomination. But the total representation, argued the Muslim leaguers, thus effected had not been commensurate with the weight to which the Muslim community was entitled. It further recognized the strength of the argument that even the system of nomination had frequently failed to secure the appointment of the type of Muslims whom the community desired to represent their cause. The nominated Muslim member represents the British authorities‘ views.

Its suggestion’s therefore, were firstly, in addition to the small number of Muslims who might be able to secure election in the ordinary manner, a certain number of seats be filled exclusively by Muslims. Secondly for the purpose of filling the letter or a proportion of them a special Muslim electorate might be constituted.

Governor General minto’s objects for separate representation:

For separate representation for Muslims, minto had two objects. Firstly, it would satisfy important classes like the Muslims secondly with larger representation of these interests and classes, he hoped the cause of unrest would disappear and the foundations of the British raj would be strengthened.

The Muslim league was used as a tool by the British colonizers. It was demanding separate Muslim representation in the legislative bodies and elections to these bodies on the basis of communal electorates. Its demand was given a shape in the reform scheme.

Administration of India’s system of separate representation and its circulation amongst provincial governments:

After the secretary of state’s approval the reform scheme for the separate electorate was circulated amongst the provincial government for their views. All provincial governments approved of the proposals for the special representation of the Muslims. No government disputed the principle though there was a difference of opinion regarding the method of selecting the Muslim representative. This difference was
mainly due to local conditions. While some of the provinces wanted to from Muslim electoral colleges, other preferred to use the recognized Muslim associations. Madras and Bombay preferred simply nominations.

Criticism of the scheme:

The government of Indian in their dispatch of 1st October, 1908, however explained that the Hindus adversely criticized the proposals as they regarded them as an attempt to set one religion against the other and thus create a counterpoise to the influence of the educated middle class.

The Hindustan Review, September, 1907 criticized the idea of special Muslim representation and said that _every honest and intelligent Indian…..must utter an emphatic protest against this new-fangled policy and not rest content till the idea of caste representation is given up._

Change in the views of Morley about the separate electorates:

This severe criticism along with the influence of lord macdonell forced morley to change his mind. He appointed a _reform committee_ of his council, which unanimously passed a resolution regarding separate Muslim representation. It advocated a _system of electoral colleges’ and cumulative voting in case of minor minorities, whereby the representation of each great division of the population in accordance with its proportion to the population would be preserved; such system to be supplemented, when necessary, by nomination._

Criticism of the scheme of electoral colleges:

_Morley’s scheme was not welcomed, however, either by the government of India or by the Muslims. It produced great controversy and the Muslims both in India and London Lodged vigoros protests. In India the Muslim press expressed concern and took it as a political abandonment of the Muslim in favour of the Hindus._

_The Paisa Akhbar, Lahore stated that morley had tried to please the advocates of Swaraj at the expense of minorities._

_The Watan, Lahore also thought that Morley had been influenced by the Hindus._
The Zamindar, karamabd congratulated the ‘congress wallah’ for Morley’s scheme it suspected that perhaps

Morley did not know of the faith which the Muslims reposed in the British government and on the strength of which they had offended their Hindu fellow countrymen by not joining their agitation against the government.

The criticism of the Muslim league:

The Muslim league at its Amritsar session in 1908, viewed the Electoral College scheme with great alarm. Syed Ali Imam, the president of the Amritsar session denounced the scheme as dangerous to the vital interests of the Muslims. He urged the Muslims to protest strongly against this scheme.

According to syed Razi wasti, numerous protest meetings were held throughout India and many resolutions and petitions other than the most vigorous campaign was carried on in London, where Ameer Ali was very active. The times, London also supported the Muslim viewpoint and agreed with their fears that under this scheme the Muslim representation would be illusory. It clarified the repercussion of the implementation of the scheme thus:

‗the type of Muslim who secures Hindu support secures it by virtue of his utility to Hindu rather than Muslim interests; yet this is the type most likely to be elected under the provision of electoral college scheme.‘

Minto’s opposition to Morley’s scheme:

Minto was definite that the Muslim objections to the Electoral College scheme were perfectly sound and that any attempt to introduce it, would increase the Muslim storm that was already raging. According to Morley papers, India office library, London, he therefore, informed Morley that thought the mohammadan is silent, he is very strong.‘

Minto’s intense dislike of Morley’s scheme is apparent from what he wrote to Lansdowne in his letter dates 21st January, 1909: _the electoral colleges are absolutely impossibly contrary to pledges I had given to the Mohammadans and of which the government of India approved. We simply can’t have them.‘
But Morley did not like Minto’s admission of the ‘just’ claims of Muslims. It is a sheer coincidence that on the same day i.e. 21st January, 1909 he wrote to Minto:

Your language to the Islamite’s about their ‘just claim to something more than numerical strength —was perhaps a trifle less guarded than it might have if you will allow me to say so......’

But despite Morley’s wavering Muslim protests for and Hindu expressions against separate representation, Minto all along remained sure of the stand he had earlier taken and was convinced that the Muslim claims were just. He emphasized that “mohammadan electorates are absolutely necessary —if we retreat at all from that view; we shall have an infinitely worse trouble than anything that can arise from ‘Hindu opposition’. He even suggested dropping the word ‘colleges’ to avoid misunderstanding by a population ignorant of electoral terms.

Morley’s final analysis:

The result of all this was Morley had to make a much more definite statement. He said in the parliament, “the Mohammadans demand three things……. I know very well what their minds are. They demand the election of their own representatives to these councils in all stages, just as in Cyprus, where, I think, the mohammadans vote by them. They have nine votes and the non-mohammadans have three, or the other way about. So in Bohemia, where the germans vote alone and have their own register. Therefore, we are not without a precedent and a parallel for the idea of a separate register.

Secondly, they want a number of seats in excess of their number of seats in excess of their numerical strength. Those two demands, we are quite ready and intend to meet in full ||.

The third demand was for a Muslim member of the viceroy’s executive council, if a Hindu was appointed. This was rejected by morley outright because this appointment was not supposed to be a racial one. It would go to suitable Indian whoever he might be.
It indicates Morley’s dilemma. On the one side was the Muslim agitation and on the other the fear of dropping ‘our Hindu parcels’. What could be done? He again sought Minto’s help to pacify the Muslims in India office.

Morrison did this and in his note pointed out that the scheme of electoral colleges would not give the Muslims the type of representation that had been promised to them. Now that the Muslims had been aroused nothing would satisfy them except complete fulfilment of the promises given them.

Simla meeting:

Minto knew that the best way of escape from this dilemma was to parley with the Muslim leaders to Simla and discuss with them the details of the proposed scheme. Nawab of Dacca was one of the seven who were called.

Reaction of the congress:

However, this constitutional development—fulfilled to a great extent Minto’s promise to the Simla deputation—

Criticism:

Thus ended the controversy which occupied and agitated the minds of the officials and Muslims for more than a year. The reasons for this controversy were three:

Results:

Thus it is clear that not the numbers alone, but numbers arising out of a separation based on religion gave the reforms of 1908-09 their real meaning.

The imperial legislative council was to contain a total of 27 elected members, out of which 8 were to be Muslims.