CHAPTER - VIII

SECULARISATION MUSLIM POLITICS
SECULARISATION OF MUSLIM POLITICS

The conversion of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference into the National Conference symbolises the secularization of Muslim politics in the valley of Kashmir. The secularization did not take place all of a sudden. But there were certain developments within and without Muslim to Conference, which ultimately led to the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. These developments were the appearance of political rivalry among the leaders of the valley, both political and religious, the hostile role played by the Hindu communities and the Dogra Government, against the freedom struggle conducted by Muslims and the consequent emergence of radical forces and their role in redirecting the movement which ultimately threw the doors of the Muslim Conference open to all sections of Kashmiri society without any distinction of caste, colour, and creed. S.M. Abdullah was the main figure who played a markable role in providing secular politics to the people of Jammu and Kashmir State.1

Political Rivalry between Mirwaiz Mohammad Yousuf Shah and Sheikh Abdullah

Since 1931, when the movement was started by S.M. Abdullah, there emerged a political rivalry between Sheikh Abdullah and Mirwaiz Moulvi Yousuf Shah. They had

differences between them and these differences grew so severe that the Muslims were involved in factions, which ultimately led to a clear-cut schism between the Sheikh and the Mirwaiz. Two major factious groups came into being, one led by the Sheikh and the other by the Mirwaiz. Both leaders took opposite directions. The followers of one group became sworn enemies of the other group and thus for the people politics became more an affair of loyalty to their respective leaders than to the cause of freedom movement. The result was that factional strifes between their followers began to take place on a large scale, which resulted in chaos and confusion in the society.

These strifes threatened the very foundations of the movement. And for some time it seemed that the people had become more loyal to their leaders than to the movement. Under such circumstances, some well meaning people, like

2. Both the leaders earned two nick names, which came the part of Kashmir history. The Mirwaiz was nicknamed Bakra, which means goat. S.M. Abdullah was nicked named as Gada-Kala, which in Kashmiri means head of a fish, ultimately Sher and Bakra became applicable to the followers of the Sheikh and the Mirwaiz respectively.

Sheikh Mohammad Sadiq of Amritsar, tried to make conciliation between the two leaders, but could not succeed.⁴ In July 1932, "the Itihad-i-Muslimeen" also tried to bring unity between the Sheikh and the Mirwaiz.⁵ In August 1932, similar efforts were made by a learned group of Muslims like Mirwaiz Hamadani, Ghulam Qadir Bhangi, Moulavi Abdullah Vakil and Mubarak Shah, but they failed in their task, and could do nothing for conciliation between the two leaders.⁶

Keeping in view the disordered conditions created by the factious strifes, the Government imposed a ban on August 18, 1932, under section 144 of the Indian Penal Code, within the Municipal limits of the city, on all the three leaders namely, Sheikh Abdullah, Mirwaiz Yousuf Shah and Mirwaiz Hamadani, not to make any political speeches. But speeches of social and religious topics were exempted from this ban. Still these strifes continued unabated.⁷


5. Pir Mohammad Afzal Makhdoo, _op.cit._, p.5. This association was established by some young men belonging to different sects and parties. But soon this association was petered out, as some of its members were accused of belonging to Ahmadiya sect.


7. Ibid. August 19, 1932, item 2. Prof. Alim-ud-Din Salik also worked for conciliation between Sheikh and Mirwaiz. But he too failed in his task.
The gulf of political rivalry between the two leaders got widened when the controversy over the funds of the Muslim Conference took place. Moulavi Yousuf Shah accused the Sheikh and his colleagues of having misused the funds of the Muslim Conference. The Sheikh also levelled the same charges on the Moulavi Yousuf Shah. These allegations and counter allegations only helped to further alienate the rival factions. The political atmosphere in the city became so adverse that the Prime Minister Colvin and some Muslim officials of the State felt uneasy. The Deputy Inspector of Police, Waiz Khan, and the Additional District Magistrate, Sheikh Abdul Rasid, tried in their un-official capacity to bring peace between the two groups. The leaders were advised to refrain from making personal attacks against each other. For some time it looked as though the dust had settled down.

Factions between Moulavi Yousuf Shah and Mirwaiz Hamadani

Quarrels were reported in April 1933 between Mirwaiz Yousuf Shah and Mirwaiz Hamadani of Khanqah-i-Mualla, over the right of preaching in the mosques. During this period Sheikh Abdullah had gone to Punjab. They clashes over the mosques were very fierce. The Government

became concerned and it "prohibited both Mirwaiz Yousuf Shah and Mirwaiz Hamadani from preaching for the present".9 But the Government orders were challenged by Ghulam Nabi Mubarki, who said that the ban was an undue interference in religious matters which could not be tolerated".10

On April 24, 1933, notices were served on the leaders by the Additional Magistrate of the city to deposit one thousand rupees each under Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code failing which they would have to undergo an imprisonment of one year. Mirwaiz Hamadani deposited the security money but Mirwaiz Shah did not, with the result that he was arrested on 27 April, but was later on released on his depositing the required sum of one thousand rupees.11

9. Telegram No.9 from Resident of Kashmir to Pollindia, New Delhi dated April 10, 1933, File 43/11/33, Political Secret.


11. Telegram from Resident of Kashmir to Pollindia, Simla, dated May 1, 1933, File No. 43/11 of 1933, Government of India Home Department, Political Section (National Archives of India). "Syyed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari (Kreri)"furnished the security on behalf of Moulavi Yousuf Shah, Pir Mohammad Afzal Makhdoomi, op.cit.
The release of Moulavi Yousuf Shah was again followed by strifes between the followers of the two parties. On May 25, 1933, one Khalil Wani, belonging to Sheikh Abdullah's party was fatally injured in a fight and a few days later, he passed away in hospital. This incident caused a law and order problem and the Government finally decided to arrest the ring leaders of both the parties. The result was that Sheikh Abdullah and other leaders were arrested but neither of the Mirwaizes was touched.

During the imprisonment of S.M. Abdullah, Moulavi Yousuf Shah organised a separate political party named the All Jammu and Kashmir Azad Muslim Conference. This attempt of the Mirwaiz closed the possibility of any understanding with the Muslim Conference. This organisation was actually organised in order to counter the Muslim Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah.

12. Hafiz Mohammad Ismail. *op.cit.* May 12, 1933. These strifes grew more widespread on April 28 1933. On May 8, 1933 Bashir-ul-Din Mahmud Ahmad resigned from the Presidentship of the All India Kashmir Committee and Dr. Iqbal was elected the New President.

13. Telegram No. 1 from Resident of Kashmir to Pollindia, May 30, 1933, File No. 43/11 of 1933. Government of India Home Department, Political Section.

14. Ibid.
On June 23, 1933, Choudhary Khushi Mohammad, a retired Revenue Minister, tried to settle the dispute between the religious leaders and between the Sheikh and the Mirwaiz. Two meetings were held by Choudhary Khushi Mohammad to bring conciliation between the two leaders. But nothing came out of such meetings. Efforts for the conciliation were revived by the then Home Minister, Wajahat Husain. On June 27, 1933 Wajahat Husain held a meeting in order to heal the breach between the two parties. The other personalities who attended the meeting were Choudhary Khushi Mohammad, Mohammad Din Fauq, Munshi Siraj-ud-Din and Moulavi Mohammad Yousuf Shah. The problems of both the parties were discussed but the meeting ended in failure.

Dr. Iqbal's appeal to the Kashmiri Muslims to refrain from mutual strife

In May 1933, Iqbal was telegraphically informed by some of the people to visit the Kashmir and see things for himself. Iqbal himself wanted to visit the valley,

16. Ibid. Item 3.
but he was not allowed to do so by the Dogra Government. On June 29, 1933, he made a joint appeal along with Syyid Mohsin Shah to refrain from mutual strifes. To prevent outside intervention for the conciliation between the parties, Mr Syyid Husain issued an order that a committee would be constituted to make peace between the parties since all this was going on the government issued notice prohibiting the Mirwaiz not to preach in Hazratbal and Ziyarat Naqashband Sahib. This was resented by the followers of the Mirwaiz. The law and order situation in the State became worse. The Azad Muslim Conference also condemned the Government for its failure to maintain law and order and passed a resolution requesting the Government to restore the right of preaching to the

19. Telegram No. 107 from Resident of Kashmir to Pollindia, June 29, 1953, File 43/11 of 1933.


21. Ibid., June 29, 1933, item 1 also telegram No. 119 from Resident of Kashmir to Pollindia, Simila, July 7, 1933, File 43/11 of 1933.

Mirwaiz according to the established rules and regulations.\textsuperscript{23} The Mirwaiz held Sheikh Abdullah responsible for creating differences between the two Mirwaizes, Moulavi Qawam-ud-Din described the followers of the Sheikh as the new thieves of religion.\textsuperscript{24} Such statements increased the hostility between the parties.\textsuperscript{25}

When Sheikh Abdullah was released from prison, on August 9, 1933, the Mirwaiz offered him a hand of cooperation in order to put an end to the rivalry between them. He sent Khawaja Saad-ud-Din Shawl and Khawaja Mohammad Abdullah Basu with a letter to Sheikh Abdullah. But no good response was shown by the Sheikh with the result that the deputationists returned disappointed, and the matter ended there.\textsuperscript{26}

No measures of conciliation brought leaders close to each other. Each leader had his own line of action to follow. Although many attempts were made both by private and official agencies to bridge the gap between the two parties, none proved successful. Even Dr. Iqbal was very

\begin{itemize}
\item 23. Ibid, July 26, 1933, Item 3.
\item 24. Ibid.
\item 25. Ibid.
\item 26. Ibid. August 12, 1933, Item 2.
\end{itemize}
unhappy with the political situation prevailing in the valley. He laid stress on unity in the belief that unity was the only way through which one could achieve his favourable ends. In an appeal to the Kashmiri Muslims he said "I appeal to the Muslims of Kashmir to beware of the forces that are working against them and to unite their ranks. The time for two or three political parties in Kashmir has not yet come. The Supreme need of the moment in a single party representing all Muslims in the State. If perfect unanimity of political opinion is not secured in Kashmir, all the interests of people of the State will prove ineffective."

Kashmiri Pandits and Muslim factional politics

The Kashmiri Pandits were hostile towards the mass movement led by the Muslims. They exploited factional groupism among the Muslims in order to weaken the mass movement. They thought it a communal movement, as it was led by the Muslims. On finding the leaders at variance with each other, they took the side of Moulavi


Yousuf Shah and made secret meetings with him and his followers, to create differences between the Sheikh and the Mirwaiz. But the Sheikh asked them to give up their hostility against the movement. In one of his speeches on Feb. 27, 1933 he said "During the last agitation our Hindu brethren opposed our movement". It is better for them to join us or at least refrain from opposing this movement. Using personal influence he made the Pandit leaders understand the real purpose of the movement, and advised them to be neutral towards it.

In one of his meetings held on May 9, 1933, he said, "The Pandits should neither come to me, nor should go to see Moulvi Yousuf Shah. Both of us are at variance with each other. The Pandits must adopt an attitude of neutrality".

However, these pleas and requests proved useless, as they continued to create wider differences between

30. Hafiz Mohammad Ismail, *op.cit.*, October 12, 1931, Item 1. Mirza Ghulam Mustafa, Assadullah Vakil, were among the supporters of Mirwaiz.

31. Ibid., February 2, 1933, Item 1, May 5, 1933, Item 41.

32. Ibid., May 9, 1933, Item 2.

Factional politics among the Muslims, the hostile attitude of the non-Muslims, controversial elements like Ahmadiyas and Mirwais Hamadani posed a serious threat to the movement. Keeping all these things into consideration young Muslim radicals appeared on the scene to save the movement from further disintegration.

Birth of Young Muslim Radicals and their contribution towards secularization of Muslim politics in Kashmir

The radical element in Muslim politics emerged due to the efforts made by the leaders of the Muslim Conference in order to save the movement from further disintegration. The radical group of Muslim believed in bringing fundamental changes both in politics and social relationship. They believed in Hindu-Muslim unity and at the same time believed in the unity of men, irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

Young Muslim radicals were influenced by the Ahrars during the latter's exile in Lahore in 1934.

34. On July 24, 1935, a joint meeting of Moulavi Yousuf, and the pandits took place at Mirwais Manzil, to consider the question of release of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his political workers, who were serving them their term of prison. A decision was jointly taken that the Govt. be requested not to release Sheikh until the peace was guaranteed to the citizens of State. It becomes now clear that Kashmiri pandits were equally responsible for creating differences among the Muslims.

The Majalis-š-Ahrar had resolved to intensify propaganda among the migrant Kashmiris, and to persuade various political groups in Kashmir and Jammu to sink their differences to work on the programme prepared by the Ahrars. Influenced by such an approach of exiled leaders in Lahore, the Muslim radicals decided to redirect the Kashmir movement on secular lines.

During the agitation of 1934, the radicals became very popular with the masses. Their secular approach to the politics was the greatest contribution made by them to the freedom movement of Kashmir. They preached nationalism, anti-imperialism, secularism in Kashmir. Their approach to politics was based on their opposition against exploiters and oppressors. They did not believe in discrimination between man and man on the basis of religion, caste and creed. The movement launched by them was not against "any particular individual or a community". It was a movement for the emancipation of all the oppressed.

The secular character of the movement was explained thus:

36. Demi-official letter from H.G. Garbett to Havlett Secretary to Govt. of India, Home Department, New Delhi (confidential). File No.43/11/34, Political Home Department. (National Archives of India).

37. Letter from Garbett to Havlett No.C.1427-S-B (Confidential), Ibid.


This movement is not and can never be against non-Muslims. The slogans such as Na\hsra-i-Takbir or Na\hsra-i-Hyderi should not be taken to mean that we are thinking on communal lines of God forbid, that we have to destroy out Hindu brethren. What we want is to snatch our rights from the oppressors. This is the resultant. Those who believe in it should join our movement, and co-operate with us. 40

The secular nationalist and revolutionary rule, played by the young radicals made the non-Muslim community understand that the movement could be jointly started by both the communities. But they were not ready to join the movement, so long as the Muslim Conference did not change into a National body, so that the doors would be thrown open to non-Muslims as well.

Sardar Budh Singh was the first non-Muslim, who was in favour of a national body and common platform for both the communities. He believed that the people of the country should be united so that they would become a prosperous nation. 41 Commenting on this issue he said "Let me venture to repeat that it is impossible to achieve success in securing political freedom and economic advancement to all sections of the people unless and until

40. Speech delivered by Abdul Razak on February 26, 1934 at Khanqah-i-Mullaha,

some special national body is established for performing this task. There is no hope of any unity and cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims unless and until the Muslim Conference is changed into a national body. The more the delay is caused in this work, the farther shall we remain from our destination. 42

The Muslim Conference was aware that the need was being felt for a national body. But this was not an easy task. The leaders of the Muslim Conference were facing many problems. On the one hand, they had to educate common masses for this change, and on the other hand, they had to free the Muslim Conference from the controversial elements like Ahmadiyas and Mirwaiz Hamadani, so that the change could be brought about without any hindrance and the Muslim Conference would be thrown open to non-Muslims as well. The task was done by radical forces of the Muslim Conference.

Exit of the Ahmadiyas and Mirwaiz Hamadani from the Muslim Conference

In the initial stage, the Ahmadiyas had played a vital role in the organization of the movement. But they became controversial due to certain reasons. First, they were thought revolutionary to the state by the non-Muslims. Moulavi Yousuf Shah held them responsible for discrediting

42. Ibid., "Quami-Itihad-ke-Silalah Mein Kasur-Kasur-kis-ka Hai? The Ranbir (Weekly), Jammu, June 20, 1932, p.10.
his profession. Some workers of the Conference complained of their over dominant role in the organisation, their presence in the organization made no proper distribution of work. They were held responsible for propagating their faith, and at the same time, they were also held responsible for factional politics in the State and their presence was thought detrimental to the movement. It was owing to these reasons that by 1936, the Ahmadiyas were completely expelled from the Muslim Conference.43

The exit of Mirwaiz Hamadani also took place because of his differences with Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The Mirwaiz, who was initially the supporter of the Sheikh, began to differ with him in 1936. Mirwaiz Hamadani was not happy with the position of Muslim radicals in the party, nor was he in favour of a change which was likely to take place, on secular grounds. Opposition between the two leaders was so strong that in a reference to the Mirwaiz, Sheikh Abdullah said, "Those who want to fight us, should come in the open field. Our guns will tear them into pieces". By the guns he meant the people. The fear of people's wrath made him the organization in 1937. It was after the expulsion of Ahmadiyas and Mirwaiz Hamadani

43. Hafiz Mohammad Ismail, op.cit., October, 9, 1932, Item 2, August, 19, 1932, Item 6; Pir Mohammad Makhdooomi, op.cit. The Aina (Weekly), Srinagar, October 31, 1972, p. 4. File No. 42/11/34, Political and Home Department, (National Archives of India).
from the Muslim Conference that it began to move towards the secularization of politics.  

Unity meetings and secularization

During the period of freedom movement, communal strifes at religious places between Hindus and Muslim took place and created a gap between them. This gap was further widened by the political agitation. But secularism and traditional brotherhood, for which the state was known, was not totally absent. The leaders of both the communities, forgetting their political differences, stood to restore cordial relations between the two communities. Even rival elements among the Muslims stood for Hindu Muslim Unity. Such efforts did, in a large, bring both the communities together for joint political action. The leaders of different communities stood for bringing about cordial relations between Hindus and Muslims.

Sardar Budh Singh was the first non-Muslim who stood for Hindu Muslim unity. In July 1932, he attended the meetings conducted by the Muslims and delivered speeches in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity, highlighting the benefits of such unity for both the communities.

44. Pir Mohammad Afzal Makhdoomi, op.cit., The Aina (Weekly), Srinagar, August 23, 1974, p.4.
45. The Ranbir (Weekly), Jammu, June 16, 1932.
46. Ibid.
47. The Ranbir (Weekly), Jammu, August 1, 1932, p.4.
In September 1932, when communal strifes between the two communities took place, the Sikh Gobind Sabha Srinagar played a remarkable role in bringing both the communities together. The Sabha held meetings for the purpose. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Mirwaiz Yousuf Shah, Kashyapbandhu, Pandit Jia Lal Kilam and others participated in these meetings and delivered speeches in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity and urged upon the people to live in peace. These meetings contributed a lot in bringing both the communities together. 48

On October 2, 1932, at the annual function of the Khanqah Middle School, leaders of both the communities were invited. They delivered speeches in favour of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. The Hindu leaders who participated in the function were Pandit Kashyapbandhu, Tara Chand Trisal and Jia Lal Kilam. 49 Moulavi Abdullah Vakil on the occasion declared that the peace between the two communities was possible only when they respected the rights of each other. 50

48. The Ranbir (Weekly), Jammu, October 10, 1932, also Pir Mohammad Afzal Makhdoomi, op. cit., The Aina (Weekly), Srinagar, October 3, 1932, p. 4.


50. Hafiz Mohammad Ismail, op. cit., October 2, 1932, Item 2.
At the inaugural function of Political and Social Conference of the Kashmiri Pandits held on October 2, 1932 at Sheetalnag, many Muslim leaders were invited. Sheikh Abdullah repeated his faith in Hindu-Muslim unity. Slogans for unity were raised at the meeting. This happy development influenced some non-Muslims in Jammu Province, like Choudhary Giani Mirpuri, who supported the cause of unity. He also appealed to the leaders of other communities to divert their energies to the cause and achievement of Hindu Muslim unity.

On October 3, 1932, the Pandits of Rainawari arranged a tea party for the Muslims for the same purpose. Members of both communities participated. They included, among others, Mirza Ghulam Mustafa, Assadullah Munshi, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Pandit Kashyapbandhu and Jia Lal Kilam. They emphasized the need for unity. Similarly, the Pandits of Dabaq Mohalla arranged a dinner for the Muslims.


Muslims also collected money by contribution and gave it to Pandits for the repair of their temples.\(^{54}\) Even disputes over religious places like Nagbal (Anantnag) and Chattabal (Srinagar) were handled with mutual understanding.\(^{55}\)

These efforts for Hindu Muslim unity improved relations between the two parties. The meetings provided a basis on which a joint political endeavour could be made possible in future. Most of the leaders who participated in these unity meetings were those who later conducted the movement on nationalistic lines. Therefore, these meetings made a healthy contribution towards the secularisation of politics in the state.

By 1935, the demand for responsible Government became the main goal of the movement. The Muslim Conference remained the focal point of the movement and became the chief sponsor for change.

**Muslim Conference and secularization**

The Muslim Conference leadership was now feeling the need to run the politics on secular and nationalistic lines. The first step in this direction

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54.  **Pir Mohammad Afzal Makhdoomi, op. cit., The Aina (Weekly) Srinagar, October 3, 1972, p.4.**

55.  **The Ranbir (Weekly) Jammu, January 16, 1933, p.13.**
was taken in March 1933, when the idea of joint action in politics was born.\textsuperscript{56} In November 1934, Sheikh Abdullah went on a tour to Punjab. For four months he stayed outside the state and exchanged his ideas and views with the nationalist leaders of the Indian National Congress.\textsuperscript{57} He was influenced by the ideas of the Congress leaders and the result was the incorporation of nationalism into Kashmir politics.\textsuperscript{58} In order to gain public opinion in his favour, he started "The Hamdard with P.N. Bazaz as the editor. The paper gained popularity in a very short time. It preached secularism and laid the foundation of progressive nationalism in Kashmir. The paper developed democratic consciousness among the general masses, irrespective of religion, caste and creed. It fought against orthodoxy. It also made the people understand the need for responsible government on secular lines.\textsuperscript{59}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} P.N. Bazaz, \textit{The History of Struggle for Freedom, in Kashmir}, p.165.
\item \textsuperscript{58} \textit{The Ranbir} (Weekly) Jammu, August 12, 1935, p.8.
\item \textsuperscript{59} "Letter dated Srinagar May 27, 1938, from P.N. Bazaz to M.N. Roy" \textit{M.N. Roy Papers} (New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Library Teen Murti House).
\end{itemize}
From 1936, the Muslim Conference very confidentially advocated nationalism and secularism. On May 8, 1936, when a responsible Government day was observed in the whole valley, and a call for joining the celebrations was also given to non-Muslims, it was not responded to by them on the ground that they still doubted the character of the movement led by the Muslim Conference. The daily Martand also expressed misgivings and termed it an organization of communalists brought into existence for the protection of Muslim rights. The Rajput Gazette also expressed the same views. But a small section of intellectually advanced non-Muslims responded to the appeal. Their participation, was a great contribution to the growth and development of national politics at this stage. The Muslim Conference also felt the need of non-Muslim participation very urgently. The growing awareness of this need made it necessary that Muslim Conference be transformed into a national body, and the movement must be brought to the level of the Indian National Congress, both ideologically


61. Ibid.
and politically. The task of secularization of politics became henceforth the main job of Sheikh Abdullah and the leftist forces of the Muslim Conference. Sheikh Abdullah at the sixth Annual Session of Muslim Conference held at Jammu declared that all the people, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had suffered at the hands of irresponsible government. They were ignorant and had to pay taxes and were in debt and starvation. To overcome all these ills they had to join together and achieve responsible government for all the people irrespective of religion, caste and creed. By 1936, the leadership of Muslim Conference preached openly the politics of nationalism and thus cleared the fear of communalism from the minds of non-Muslims. As a result, the progressive minded non-Muslims actively participated in the movement, and their participation gave birth to the progressive forces in Kashmir politics.

Emergence of New Progressive Forces and Secularization

The year 1936 saw the emergence of progressive forces in the state politics, which was a healthy development in the growth of secularism. These progressive


63. Ibid.
forces, originated from the leftist forces of both the communities, Muslims and Non-Muslims, because of their dis-satisfaction and disappointment with the politics of their respective communities. The Muslim radicals and non-Muslims progressive were convinced that the politics of their respective communities was middle class politics and factious in character. They believed that this type of politics would hinder the movement in the state. They felt that the need of the time was, therefore, to change the direction of the movement from middle class nationalistic politics to a socialistic one. In other words, the movement had to be brought in line with the progressive socialist movements of British Indian states. The increasing effect of these progressive movements had created socialistic tendencies and new organisational patterns resulting in the formation of the Youth League, the Labour Movement, the Students Federation, the Indian National Congress, the Peasants' Association and the Hindu Progressive Party. The most effective of all the organisations was the Kashmir Youth League, the Student Federation, the Mazdoor Sabha and the Kisan Sabha.

64. P.N.K. Banzai, A History of Kashmir, New Delhi, Metropolitan Book Company (Pvt.) Ltd., p. 709.
The emergence of the Youth League in Kashmir in 1936 was a significant event. The League was actually the direct offshoot of radicalization of Kashmir politics. The League emerged under the influence of radical Muslim elements and progressive Hindu elements. These two elements knew that the association of young elements with politics would make the movement more effective. They believed that the formation of young elements, belonging to different communities and thoughts, and dedicated to the country's cause would lead the movement speedily to a successful conclusion. It was due to these reasons that the League was organised by P.N. Baxaz who had received the consent of Muslim radicals for this purpose. It organised young elements, irrespective of religion, caste and creed for the service of the country.66

Within a short period of time the League was supported by all communities of people.67 The first meetings of the League started with new slogans like 'Long Live the Youth League' "Long Live Young Men' and 'Long Live Our Motherland'. The leaders of both the communities addressed the meetings and stressed Hindu - Muslim unity. Communalism


66. Ibid.

67. *The Hamdard (Weekly)* Srinagar, August 8, 1936, p.11.
was decried and thought harmful for the social growth. Addressing one of the meetings of the League the Sheikh said, 68 Thank God, we are gradually coming out of the mire of communalism and treading the right path. Muslims should associate themselves with youth movement. 69 An organized youth movement began to emerge. The Youth League played a momentous role in forging secular politics. It organised public meetings and processions and imparted nationally oriented political education to the masses. 70 The Youth League not only took a leading part in influencing the people with nationalist outlook, but also paved the way for the appearance of socialistically oriented cadres in Kashmir national freedom. 71

**Labour Movement**

The Labour Movement was started in 1865, with the shawl bauf revolt, which was again repeated in 1924 by the Silk factory workers. 72 Both these movements were crushed due to non-organisational character of the


69. Ibid.

70. *The Hamdard (Weekly)* Srinagar, April 13, 1937, p.11.


72. Ibid.
movement. They could not evolve as organised movements due to the Govermental ban on the formation of associations. Their leaders failed to make them realise their potential strength, till 1937.  

The Mazdoor Sabha came into being in the middle of 1937, by the efforts of youngmen who believed in socialism. They had formed some sort of associations like "Free Thinkers Association" and "Study Circles" where they discussed socialism and its application to Kashmir. They were also in contact with Indian socialists like Comrade Bedi, Mrs. Freda Bedi, Dr.K.M.Ashraf and others.  

They held discussions with them and gave the young men the idea of organising the Mazdoor Sabha. Once the idea was born such associations like the 'Kashmir Motor Drivers Association, the Carpet Weavers Association, the Tonga Drivers Association, began to be organised. All these associations were brought under one association which came to be known as the Mazdoor Sabha. Its membership was open to all without any distinction of religion, caste and creed. The Sabha was above communalism.

73. Labourers were not organised till 1937.  
75. The Hamdard (Weekly), Srinagar, October 23, 1975, p.15.
The Mazdoor Sabha played an important role in the politics of Kashmir. The labourers performed their task very conscientiously which was assigned to them from time to time. They were educated by young cadres in the art of organisation and conduct of the movement in a disciplined manner. By this education, they became more and more conscious of their power and operated more effectively in the conduct of secular politics in the State.

A regular feature of the Sabha was holding of meetings and taking out demonstrations with red flags and banners in their hands. They shouted slogans of secular nature. This reflected the character of the new movement, and its contribution towards the secularization of politics in the State. It made a creditable contribution to the freedom movement and made the people realise that a successful movement could be conducted only on secular lines. It for the first time separated religion from politics and taught people how to fight in an organised way for the fullfilment of their demands.

Peasant Movement

The middle class leadership of the Muslim Conference failed to organise the peasants and to assign them a precise role they could have played in the freedom movement. But the young men radicals did not ignore them. They started organizing the peasantry towards the close of 1937.

Kisan Sabha

This organization came into being in October 1937. The secular role played by the Mazdoor Sabhas made the leaders realise that the Kisan Sabha, should also be organised so that it could also contribute to the secularization of Muslim politics in the state. The aim of the Kisan Sabha was to get the peasants united so that they would fight unitedly for the demands which were ignored by the middle class leadership of the Muslim Conference. By uniting and organising them into a separate body, irrespective of religion, caste and creed, the Kashmir movement was definitely taking on the colour of nationalism and secularism.

77. The Hamdard (Weekly) Srinagar, October 2, 1937, p.2. on September 29, 1937 at a meeting organised by Mazdoor Sabha Sheikh Abdullah said, "his energies would now be directed towards the villages."

78. The first meeting of Kisan Sabha was convened at Hyderpora on 28th and 29th of October and was presided over by Sufi Mohammad Akbar. The Ranbir (Weekly), Jammu, November 1, 1937, p.3.
These movements infused a new dynamic spirit among the masses, bringing about a change which made them realise that in political action they should be united, irrespective of religion and other things, for the fullfilment of their demands. Apart from the role played by these organisations for secularisation, there were other developments also which made their contribution in this direction.

Mr. Jinnah's Private visit to Kashmir and his support for Hindu-Muslim unity

In May 1936, Mr. Jinnah paid a visit to the Valley in his private capacity and delivered speeches in support of Hindu-Muslim unity. He was himself a great lover of Hindu Muslim unity and had worked for it for years together. During the course of his speeches, he said "Since I am not aware of this place, one thing which I feel necessary to tell you is that the Hindus of this state, should always be given an assurance that equality and justice shall be secured to them in the state. It is the duty of the majority to give this assurance to the minorities.... without winning the confidence of the minorities and without assuring them of the equal treatment with the majority, the obstacles in your political party will not be removed." 79

79. The Khalid, Srinagar, July 3, 1939, p. 3.
The devotees of Hindu-Muslim unity took the support of Mr. Jinnah's view in their justification for secularism. Commenting on Mr. Jinnah's view, Mr. Choudhary Ghulam Abbas said, "The sun and substance of Mr. Jinnah's historically important speech... was that the majority must win the confidence and cooperation of the minorities without which it is not possible for the former to succeed in its aim. We therefore necessarily come to this conclusion that Mr. Jinnah had already contemplated the policy of nationalism and the change in the form of the Muslim Conference. 80

Indian National Congress and Kashmir Politics

It was in 1936-37 that many congress leaders like Purushottam Das Tandon, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and K.M. Ashraf came to Kashmir, with a view to create a line of communication between the leaders and different communities in Kashmir and the Indian National Congress. For this purpose many talks were held and K.M. Ashraf delivered speeches in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity and joint action by them. Mr. Tandon was strictly instructed by Pt. Nehru to see Sheikh Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz. 81 The communication between the two parties, resulted in the Nehru - Abdullah Peshawar meet, which was an important event in the growth of secular politics in Kashmir. In

80. The Khalid, Srinagar, June 10, 1939, p.3.
January 1938, Sheikh Abdullah went to Peshawar on an invitation of Nehru, who was already there, on his official tour. He held discussions with Nehru on the changing character of the Kashmir politics. Pt Nehru categorically suggested that the doors of the Muslim Conference should be thrown open to non-Muslims and a new era should be started in the Kashmir politics. The Sheikh was impressed by Nehru's view on Kashmir movement. Soon after his return, he explained to his partymen that there was no alternative to reorganizing the Kashmir movement on national lines and to changing the Muslim Conference into the National Organisation.

The Indian National Congress and the All States Peoples Conference made a tremendous impact on the Kashmir politics during the second half of the 20th century. The main reason for this was the change in the policy of the Indian National Congress towards native states, which was basically effected by the birth of the All India States Peoples Conference in 1927. The Congress, however,

83. The Ranbir, (Weekly), Jammu, February 14, 1938, P. 16.
84. Ibid.
85. Dr. P. B. Gajendragadkar, Kashmir Retrospect and Prospect, (Bombay University, 1967), P. 21.
changed its policy towards the states, when in 1928 at its session at Calcutta, it deleted its policy of non-interference from its programme and urged upon the princes to grant fundamental rights and responsible Government to their subjects. The people of the states were also given an assurance that the Congress would support them in their struggle for the attainment of their legitimate objectives. At the fifth session of the All States Peoples Conference held at Karachi in 1936, Pandit Nehru declared that the Congress movement for freedom included the freedom of peoples of the states also. The Karachi Session of the Conference was significant in that the Congress and States peoples came closer to each other. The close affinity between the Congress and the All India States Peoples Conference was further exhibited as the Navarasi Convention of 1938.

At the Navarasi Session of 1938, the States Peoples Conference opposed the resolution of the Congress Working Committee, which had banned the formation of Congress units in the states. P.N. Bazaz from Kashmir also opposed the resolution and asked for its amendment. The resolution was accordingly amended at the Congress Session held at Haripora in Feb. 1938. The resolution

86. So many organisational units were set up by the All India States Peoples Conference, K.L.Handa, History of Freedom Struggle-Princely States, (New Delhi, Central News Agency, 1908), p.99.

87. Ibid. p.192.
stood for the same political, social and economic freedom in their states, as in the rest of India. 88

The Haripora resolution encouraged and inspired the people of the states to organise themselves and conduct their struggle for freedom. At the same time, it created confidence among the States People Congress. The Congress policy was now clear, aiming at active participation of people's struggle for freedom in the states. The impact of this policy on the freedom movement of Kashmir was felt in quick succession, which quickened the transition of the movement from its communal to national character. 89

Resolution concerning the change in the name of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference

It was on January 4th and 5th, 1938 that the working committee of the Muslim Conference met at Jammu to change the name of the conference, so that its doors could be thrown open to all, irrespective of religion, caste and creed. Moulana Mohammad Syeed Masoodi was the mover of the resolution in support of the change in the name. He proposed that "The name of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference be changed into the All Jammu and Kashmir Political Conference." 90 He wanted to delete the name

88. Ibid, pp.112-113.
89. Pir Mohammad Makhdooomi, op.cit., The Aina (Weekly), Srinagar, June 23, 1975, p.5.
"Muslim". The main purpose of this change, according to him, was to smoothen the way for the establishment of an organisation which provided to both Hindus and Muslims a common platform. This resolution was supported by Raja Mohammad Akbar Khan on the plea that in politics we are concerned with India as a whole and our outlook should be above caste and creed consideration. The resolution was thoroughly discussed by the working committee. But it was passed, as it was against the constitutional provisions of the Muslim Conference to pass such a resolution, except in an annual session of the conference, with a two-thirds majority present and voting in the session, the legal point of the Muslim Conference hindered the working committee from moving ahead. So the resolution was postponed till the next session of the Muslim Conference, which was going to be held on 25th of March, 1938.

At the sixth annual session, the resolution was again moved, but it was again postponed due to the opposition of a few members. Among them may be mentioned Abdul Majid Quraishi and Abdullah Siyakhvi, who did not want to throw the doors of the Muslim Conference open.

91. Ibid.
to non-Muslims, because they thought that the Muslims were less educated and less conscious in comparison to non-Muslims. Allah Rakha and Mohammad Amin, who were representing the Muslims of Jammu proposed that resolution be published for public opinion and a discussion made in the forthcoming session of the conference. The disagreement between the mover and the opponents created a tense atmosphere. Sheikh Abdullah had to intervene, suggesting that the resolution be placed before public for voting. But the public opinion was never sought. The controversy was finally settled down, with the intervention of Pt. Nehru through correspondence, suggesting the new organisation be named as the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

The Resolution of Secularisation Passed by the Working Committee

Until April 15, 1938, the resolution of secularization was not taken up by the Muslim Conference, because the Assembly elections were going to be held on 15th April, 1938. Once the elections were over and the Muslim Conference got the majority, it busied itself with the task of making the people understand the true

94. The Ranbir (Weekly), Jammu April 13, 1938, p. 18.
Pir Mohammad Makhdoomi, op. cit., The Aina (Weekly), Srinagar, July 15, 1975, p. 4.

significance of nationalism. Sheikh Abdullah delivered speeches on secular politics and stressed the need of secularising Muslim politics. The public response to his call and the success of the Muslim Conference in the elections, was a sufficient guarantee to Sheikh Abdullah to move ahead, with his programme of changing the Muslim Conference into a national body. It was under such favourable circumstances that Sheikh Abdullah, on June 28, 1938, placed the resolution of secularisation before the working committee. The resolution was passed by a majority of 14 against 4 votes changing the name of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference.

It may not be out of place here to mention that the Ludhiana Session of February 15, 1939 of the All States Peoples Conference had a special significance for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, as it brought the Kashmir freedom movement in line with the Indian nationalism. Fortyseven delegates from Kashmir attended the Ludhiana Session of the conference. After their return from the conference, the leaders organised public meetings and processions, acquainting the masses with the programme of the All States Peoples Conference. A common platform

98. Muslim Conference won nineteen seats, out of the total elected strength of twentyone seats.
was established where both the Hindu and Muslim leaders addressed public meetings. A new cadre of nationalists was born. The Kashmir Freedom Movement identified itself with the freedom movements of the native states.  

On March 6, 1939, the Sheikh went on a month's tour outside the state. During his tour, he took the opportunity of exchanging views with top Congress leaders like Mahatma Ghandi and Pt. Nehru, about his party and the political movement in Kashmir. On March 14, 1939, he was honoured with the offer to preside over the Tripura Session of the All India States Peoples Conference. The Conference was addressed by top Congress leaders like J.J. Nehru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Bholabhai Desai and Kamla Devi Chattopadiyaya. In his presidential address he assured the Congress leaders that the people

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The Four members who opposed the resolution were Ghulam Abbas, Abdul Majid Quraishi, Choudhary Abdullah Bilaali and Abdul Aziz. They opposed on the ground of muslim were educationally backward.

101. Hafiz Mohammad Ismail, op.cit., March 5, 1939, Item 1.

102. Ibid, March 17, 1939, Item 3.
of Kashmir would end the communal politics and reactionarianism, and that they "will take rest only after having owned the ideal and basic principles of the Indian National Congress."  

Sheikh Abdullah after having accepted and adopted the nationalism and secularism of Indian national Congress as the basis of his own and his party's programme, opposed the Muslim leaders role towards the states and became a vehement critic of the Muslim League. He opposed everything that came in his way of secularisation.

By 1939, he had forcefully preached the politics of nationalism and opposed the official policy of the Muslim League, declaring it as inapplicable to the problems of the Indian states. Like other Congress leaders, he had become a vehement critic of the Muslim League, and advised the League to leave Kashmir alone.

For his pro-Congress attitude, he was opposed by Mr. M.A. Jinnah, Ahmadiyas and especially by group of students, who distributed posters of the masses against the turn coat attitude of the Muslim Conference leaders. This situation created a feeling among the leaders of the

104. The Tribune, (Lahore), April 15, 1939, p.17.
105. Ibid.
Muslim Conference that these forces might not dissuade the members of the General Council from confirming the resolution, which had already been passed by the working Committee of the Muslim Conference. Keeping all this in view, the meeting of the General Council was immediately called to approve the resolution.

General Council Approves the Resolution

On April 25, 1939, the General Council of the Muslim Conference held its meeting at Mujahid Manzil to consider the situation. But it was adjourned to the next day, due to some problem created by S.P. College students, who did not want the resolution to be passed. On April 26th, 1939, the General Council approved the resolution and recommended amendment in the name and constitution of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, in order to enable all progressive elements in the State to join the organisation, for the achievement of responsible government in the state. The General Council also decided "to hold a special session of the conference under the presidentship of Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, ex-member of the State Assembly, on 10th and 11th of June to get the resolution approved by the representative gathering". 

107. The Tribune (Lahore), April 28, 1939, P.1.
In pursuance of the decision by the General Council on 26th and 27th of April, the special session of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was held at Mujahid Manzil on 10th and 11th June, 1939.

The session was attended by one hundred and seventy-eight delegates, out of two hundred constituting the total strength of the general council. Some non-Muslims also participated to witness the proceedings. The session was presided over by Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq. The following resolution was moved by Moulana Sayeed Masoodi:

"This special session of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, convened in connection with the changes in the name and constitution of this conference approves as confirmed and ratified by the General Council in its meeting held on 27th April and resolution No. 5 passed by working committee of the Muslim Conference in its meeting held on June 28, 1938 and resolves that in future the name of the conference will be the All Jammu & Kashmir National Conference. The session also resolves that every adult person could become its member, irrespective of religion, caste and colour."

The resolution of secularisation was supported by Mohammad Syeed Masoodi,\(^{110}\) Ghoudhary Ghulam Abbas,\(^{111}\) Mirza Mohammad Beg\(^{112}\) and Allah Rakha Sagar.\(^{113}\) But at the same time it was also opposed by members like Hamidullah, on the ground that Hindu-Muslim unity was impossible because the Hindus were much more advanced in education than the Muslims.\(^{114}\) Moulavi Rafi-ud-Din and Ghulam Haider Khan, the editor of "Navjawan", also opposed the resolution.\(^{115}\)

Finally, the resolution was put to the vote, one hundred and seventy-five out of one hundred and seventy-eight, who were present in the General Council, voted in favour of the resolution and only three against it, converting the Muslim Conference into the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. As such the process of secularisation was completed.

\(^{110}\) Ibid.
\(^{111}\) Ibid.
\(^{112}\) Ibid.
\(^{113}\) Al-Islah (Weekly) Srinagar-June, 1939.
\(^{114}\) The Khalid, Srinagar, June 21, 1939, P.3.
\(^{115}\) Al-Islah (Weekly), Srinagar, op.cit.