

A Research Review of Political Emergence of Muslim League in India

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Abstract:

Indian Muslims believed the Non-Communal Indian National Congress to be extremely biased towards Hindus, despite the party's official designation. Eventually, a group of influential Muslims decided to launch their own political party to better represent their interests and concerns to the British government. Through the Shimla Deputation, 35 Muslim representatives from India met with Lord Minto, the Governor General and Viceroy of India, on October 1, 1906. Lord Minto backed and pushed Indian Muslims to form their own political party, and Aga Khan III headed the mission. Later, on December 30, 1906, Aga Khan III and Viqar-ul-Mulk called the Muslims of India to Dhaka to organise a new organisation for the benefit of the Indian Muslims; this group would be known as the "All India Muslim League." Now, the Muslim League had been established, with Aga Khan serving as its first president. It was decided to make Viqar-ul-Mulk and Mohsin-ul-Mulk co-secretaries. Adamji Peer Bhai presided over the inaugural meeting of the All India Muslim League, which took place on December 29, 1907, in Karachi. In 1885, the first National Congress met for the first time. Its formation was motivated by a desire to ensure that every Indian's voice, regardless of faith, was heard by the British government. The Indian National Congress was flourishing, and via its collaboration with the British government, it had been able to bring about significant reforms to the latter's organisational framework and policy priorities. The Indian Muslim community never fully trusted Congress despite the party's numerous accomplishments. The Muslims of India felt the Congress was biased against them because of their religion. This inspired the notion of creating a new political party on behalf of India's Muslim population.

Keywords: *Muslims, Indian, Congress, All India Muslim League, Indian Muslims, British, Military System, Reform.*

Content

There are historical reasons that led to the founding of the All-India Muslim League. The All-India National Congress (often known as the INC or Congress) was founded in 1885. Although it claimed to be secular, Muslims saw it as a Hindu group. This led Nawab Viqar ul-Mulk (1841-1917) to try to form a political organisation in 1901 to voice Muslim concerns in Indian politics. When Muslims in British India met with Viceroy Lord Minto (1845-1914; Viceroy 1905-1910) in October 1906, headed by Aga Khan (1877-1957), they were urged to form their own political party. He regarded it as a moderating force among a number of "extremists" in the Congress, who he saw as part of an increasingly radical body politic in India. Because of this boost, on 30 December 1906, prominent Muslims were gathered in Dacca (now Dhaka) by Aga Khan and Viqar ul-Mulk to form the All-India Muslim League (AIML or League). A day before the scheduled end of the All-India Muslim Educational

Conference (established in 1886), the League conducted its inaugural meeting. The new gathering was called to discuss the formation of a "political association," whose goals were to:

1. The goal is to increase patriotism for the British administration among India's Muslim population and dispel any misunderstandings that may exist about the motivations behind any policy changes.
2. The organization's goal is to advocate for the interests of India's Muslim population to the government in a way that is both effective and polite.
3. Without limiting the League's ability to achieve its stated goals, the Muslim League of India was founded to quell any growing anti-minority sentiment within India's Muslim population.

On the eve of the new constitutional changes (the Councils of India Act, 1909), the group was to express "Muslim views" to the government. Thirty-one members and two joint secretaries were selected to represent six regions in northern India, from Bengal to the North West Frontier Province, during the League's first meeting. Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928), the president of the AIML, created a London chapter two years later to use pressure to change British policy towards India. While the Aga Khan served as president until 1913, Syed Wazir Hasan was instrumental in the early years of the party as joint secretary (1910-1912) and secretary (1912-1919).

Except in 1909, the AIML held yearly meetings in different places throughout India to discuss political concerns from a Muslim perspective, counteract anti-League groups, and win over the British administration. It formed Leagues at the provincial and district levels and released pamphlets in many languages; its leaders travelled over India periodically to speak about the party's programme and goals.

The political community of British Indian Muslims was represented by the League, whose leaders addressed the government. For the first 30 years of its existence, the League did very little; nevertheless, by 1916, it had become active enough to sign the Lucknow Pact, an agreement with the Congress on a unified political platform for the aftermath of World War I. The Government of India Act of 1918 mirrored the constitutional ideas outlined in this treaty for use in future constitutions. Although many League members and executives were also affiliated with other political parties, very few League members paid yearly dues. The AIML's annual gathering was its most important event, when many resolutions were proposed and debated outside of the organization's casual connections with the government. There were also occasional resolutions on international events, particularly political problems in the Middle East that impacted Muslim countries.

The main office moved to Aligarh in 1906, and it stayed there until 1910. The ruler of Mahmudabad (1879-1931) donated 3,000 rupees every year to keep the office running when it relocated to Lucknow. Delhi became its new home in 1936, and it stayed there till 1947. There were only about 1,300 members of the party in 1927, and only about 75 people showed up to hear philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) make his famous call for the creation of a state for the Muslims of South Asia in Allahabad, in the northwest part of India, in 1930. Membership was made more affordable by eliminating the five rupee entry fee and halving the six rupee yearly dues to one rupee.

Disputes arose often inside the League as many leaders vied for the position of Muslim India's official spokesperson. Sometimes these disagreements were due to substantive differences in perspective, but sometimes they were the result of simple personality conflicts. Fazl-i-Husain (1877-1937), who stood for rural Punjab interests, and Muhammad Shafi (1869-1932), a city dweller from Lahore, butted heads early on. Muhammad Shafi opposed combined electorates in 1927, but Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), who had joined the League officially in 1913, and his growing number of adherents did not. Sikander Hayat Khan (1892-1942), a prominent figure in Punjab, challenged Jinnah for the League presidency ten years later.

From 1934 until 1947 the name of Mohammad Ali Jinnah was synonymous with that of the AIML, but it was not until 1943 that Jinnah was the undisputed "great leader" (Quaid-i-Azam) of the party. Nonetheless, even after that date Muslim leaders from Bengal and the Punjab, especially Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana (1900–1975; premier of the Punjab 1942–1947), attempted to act in an independent manner, favouring provincial interests over the national ones that the League represented. For his opposition, Khizr was expelled from the League in 1944.

A new era in Indian politics began with the passing of the Government of India Act in 1935. Because Indians, not British, will soon control provincial legislatures, the election of candidates became vital. For the first time in its existence, the AIML became structured as a functional national party because of this. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a rich self-made lawyer and famous Muslim politician since 1909, became the presidency of the party on March 4, 1934. Candidates for the general election were selected by the Parliamentary Board, which was appointed by Jinnah. Despite opposition from the Congress and provincial Muslim groups, notably in Bengal and the Punjab, the party started its sluggish rise to national relevance at this time, with just three wealthy backers keeping it afloat.

Like Jinnah, who spent the most of his time over the following decade leading the League, the independently rich general-secretary, Liaquat Ali Khan (1895-1951), was instrumental in the League's success. The AIML's president and general secretary are both chosen for staggered three-year terms. The president oversaw the core party members, the AIML Council, whose members could vote on League policy, and the Working Committee, which consisted of a dozen or more members selected to represent various sections of India. This was also the theoretical organisational structure used in the provinces. However, the party's organisation was only really functional at the national level after 1937. The League also fielded parliamentary parties at the federal and provincial levels of government, led by Jinnah.

The League ran candidates for half of the Muslim-only seats in the 1936 general election. It won almost 60% of those seats but almost none in provinces with a Muslim majority, with the exception of Bengal, where it won 39 of 117 seats. However, the League's luck was about to change dramatically after these election losses; the Congress cabinets that took power in most Indian provinces were widely seen as being biased towards Hindus at the expense of Muslims. Many Muslims as a consequence broke with the Congress as a result. The League issued two extensively publicised papers in 1939—The Pirpur Report and The Sharif Report—that highlighted

"Congress misgovernment," further inflaming Muslim resentment against the Congress and mobilising Muslims for the League.

Jinnah said there were now three political entities in India (the Congress, the British, and the League) in October 1937 in Lucknow, ushering in a new era of combativeness in Indian politics. A five-year plan for the Muslim community was afterwards drafted by the League, and the All-India Muslim Students Federation was established. In 1940, during its annual conference in Lahore, the League of Nations passed the "Pakistan Resolution," which proposed establishing a Muslim homeland in India's northwestern and northeastern regions. (In 1930, the name "Pakistan" was first used.) Approximately 100,000 people flocked to the historic Lahore gathering. The party's membership peaked at close to 90,000 individuals and was only expected to grow. Dawn, which began as a weekly party newspaper in 1941, gained a nationwide circulation and changed to a daily format the following year. In 1943, the League formed a Committee of Action to impose party discipline and its will among the provincial League parties, and a Planning Committee to organise economic growth in the Pakistani territories. With the help of students and faculty at Aligarh Muslim University—most notably professor Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad (1914–1970)—the Committee of Writers was established in 1944, and over the next two years it published ten pamphlets in its Pakistan Literature Series, a considerable number of newspaper articles, and election campaign material. These works were published by Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf of Lahore, who became the official publisher of the League. Student workers were aggressively sought out by the League, particularly from Aligarh Muslim University and Punjab University, to spread the desire for Pakistan in urban and rural regions alike and to advocate for League candidates during election seasons. As sectarian violence increased in the 1940s, the League responded by establishing the paramilitary Muslim national guard to safeguard League events and provide security for Muslim leaders like Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

A third of the seats in the Punjab, 115 out of 250 in Bengal, and practically all of the Muslim seats it fought in other regions of India were won by the League in 1946 thanks to all of the organisation done between 1937 and 1946. The party had millions of members. This win bolstered Jinnah's argument that the Muslims of India wanted Pakistan because he spoke for them. Even while Congress leaders like J.L. Nehru (1889–1964) and Mahatma M. K. Gandhi (1869–1948) insisted that Congress stood for all of India, including Muslims, the British increasingly saw him as the Muslim community's voice. A growing number of Muslim politicians joined the League after this election triumph, while those who did not suffered significant credibility losses among Muslims. The League has shown itself to be the political party of South Asian Muslims. In 1946, the League joined the provisional administration, putting itself on equal footing with the Congress. Liaquat Ali Khan was elected to the powerful post of finance member in the administration.

Upon India's independence in 1947, the Congress and the British government agreed that the country should be split into the independent nations of India and Pakistan. When Pakistan was officially established on August 14, 1947, Jinnah was named governor-general and Ali Khan was named prime minister. Two separate organisations, the Pakistan Muslim League and the Indian Muslim League, emerged from the AIML's first dissolution.

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