
CHAPTER - I

THE HISTORY OF HINDU-MUSLIM POLITICS

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The growth of Muslim power in India dates from A.D. 1018, since the annexation of Punjab by Mohammad Ghazni followed by the defeat of Prithviraj by Mohammad Ghori in 1192. In the latter part of Indian history various Muslim conquerors who became absorbed by the land they ruled. " The Indian Muslims are descendants of Turk, Afghan, Persian and Mughal invaders"¹. In pre-British days, India had rich cultural tradition and elaborate administrative organization. But society and Government were both authoritarian, ~~autocratic~~, inimical to free social mobility and political association. " Indian Society has not grown as a stable social element unlike the West, the social and economic change did not precede political development"². Percival Griffiths points out, "the advent of Muslims introduced in India, the divergencies of race, religion, language and social tradition and these in turn, greatly marred the growth of Indian nationality"³. Besides the nation

1. Qureshi I.H., Muslim Community of Indo-Pak Subcontinent, New York, 1962, p.82.

2. Hudson H.V., The Great Divide, London, ¹⁹⁶⁹ p.10.

3. Griffiths Modern India, London, 1957, p.67.

was split by various religious conflicts. Lord Dufferin (1885-1888) described the Muslims of British India as "a nation of fifty million, with their monotheism, their iconoclastic fanaticism, their animal sacrifice, their social equality and their remembrance of the days when enthroned at Delhi, they reigned supreme from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin"⁴. The Hindu society believed in caste system as an integral part of Hinduisim. "A Hindu had no freedom to select his caste and status, he inherited it from his father and passed it on to his progeny making the caste order a completely closed system"⁵. F.K.Durani wrote on 'racial exclusiveness' of Hindus as follows: "We Muslims", he observed, came to this country twelve centuries ago as conquerers. We ruled over the country, but have been treated by the Hindus all along as untouchables ... Twelve centuries of the common domicile have failed to break down the Hindu racial exclusiveness"⁶.

The Muslim society also had its own character of religious society. These two great groups of people living together in one country, in same villages, under the same

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4. Hardy P., Muslim of British India, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p.1.
 5. Dixit Prabha, Communilism a Struggle for Power, Orient Longman, 1974, p.118.
 6. Durani F.K.Khan, The Meaning of Pakistan, Lahore, 1946, p.86-87.

Government were yet separated not only by religious creeds and rituals but also in their modes of life and attitudes of mind. Of course, there were many other religious minorities like Sikhs, Christians and the Parsis, which were scattered all over India.

Certainly, Muslims had been empire builders in the medieval India. By 1605 Akbar ruled over the whole of North India and by 1690, the power of Aurangzeb reached as far as South to the river of Kaveri. In British India many Muslims believed that they were natural aristocracy of the country which gave them confidence in politics." The reason was that Muslim rule in medieval India was established by heterogeneous professional immigrant elite, reinforced on occasion by further immigration and maintained by some cooption from among the conquered people"⁷. The Muslim rule was neither a colonial rule from some Central Asian homeland nor national rule by members of a victorious political nation domiciled in India. In 1526, Babar (1483 to 1530), the ruler of Kabul, one of the several Mughal political entrepreneurs of Central Asia, was successful to establish his supremacy over Delhi and the area from Punjab to Bengal. Although Babar's son Humayun (1530 to 1556)

7. Hardly P., Muslim of British India, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p.11.

was expelled from India in 1540 by Shier Shah, he was able to make a comeback in 1555 from Kabul, with the help of forces lent by the Safarid Shah of Iran. His son Akbar (1556 to 1605) created an empire which included not only the Indo-Gangetic plains region, Malwa and Gujarat, but also all of Punjab, Bengal, Kashmir, Sind, Orissa, Khandesh, the Northern Deccan, at last all becoming a dependency of an essentially Indian empire.

His successors, Jahangir (1605 to 1627) and Shah Jahan (1628 to 1658), pursued intermittently a policy of expansion at the expense of the Deccan Muslim Sultans of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda until Aurangzeb succeeded by 1690 in occupying most of the peninsula as far south, though not without a continued guerrilla resistance by the Maratha Chieftains, which ultimately fatally weakened the empire. "Thus authority of medieval Muslim rulers in India derived from their ability to control a racially, and under the Mughals religiously, heterogeneous elite and at the same time to organise successfully internal military occupation of the country"⁸. A Muslim ruler was a political ring master, who only for limited periods under Akabar and Aurangzeb, succeeded in becoming a monopolist. A Dutch factor, Pelsaert,

8. Ibid., pp.12-13.

writing of the time of Jahangir, described political India: "Jahangir possesses the largest area of all the Kingdoms of the world... But it is important to recognise also that Jahangir is to be regarded as King of the plains or of the open roads only... The whole country is enclosed and broken up by many mountains and people who live in, know nothing of any King or Jahangir, they recognize only their Rajas, who are very numerous and to whom the country is apportioned in very small fragments by old tradition"⁹. Akbar the great, perfected an instrument of rule based on patronage in the 'Mansabadari' * 'or office holding system' which he opened to Rajaput Chiefs on the same terms as Muslims. This pattern amongst muslims continued only with slight changes under the Mughals. "Over seventy per cent of Akbar's Mansabdari were Muslims, not Indian Muslims, but Muslims of foreign origin. The thirty per cent remaining were of Indian origin and could secure, by and large, only the lower grade of Imperial services"¹⁰. This high proportion of Mansabdari of foreign origin continued under Akbar's successors. "During the fifty years of Aurangzeb's reign the number of Indian Mansubdars of thousands and above did

9. Ibid., p.14

* Imperial Service.

10. Prabna Dixit, Communalism a Struggle for Power, Orient Longman, 1974, p.13.

not go beyond fifty per cent of the total strength, of whom thirty one per cent were non Muslims¹¹.

The relationship between Hindu and Muslim rulers vested purely on utilitarian grounds. Being a minority it was physically impossible for it to govern vast areas without the co-operation and support of the local people. Thus Indianisation of Government by Turk-Afghan and Mughal rulers was caused by the pressure of the politico-economic exigencies. It need not be regarded as symptomatic of any positive and deliberate liberalism of the rulers¹².

Akbar was, indeed, the greatest of the Medieval Muslim rulers, combining wide ranging curiosity and sympathy with decision and daring, tolerance with efficiency, an acute sense of the possible with ruthlessness in emergency. Akbar had charm, the ability to win the hearts and fire the imagination of Muslims and Rajput, Kayasth and Khatari. In religious sphere Akbar had set the tone of Mughal rule as one of public tolerance. Although in the earlier years of his reign he had bowed in the direction of Islam orthodoxy in order to win the support of Indian born Muslim elite,

11. Ali Atar, Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb, Delhi, 1968, pp.175-271.

12. Mujeeb M., The Indian Muslims, London, 1967, p.247.

by middle years he had adopted the policy of 'peace with all' and set his face in the environment of the Court at least against the Muslim practices, such as cow-slaughter, which were offensive to Hindu sentiment, the discriminatory poll tax on non-Muslims and the 'Jizya' was formally disavowed.

Akbar and his successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, were also tolerant as between Principal Muslim Sects, the 'Sunni' and 'Shia'.

The power structure of medieval India underwent drastic change in the 18th Century as power and status enjoyed hitherto by the Muslim ruling class was successfully challenged by the Hindus. The last quarter of the 17th Century of the Third Battle of Panipat (1761) was a period of serious politico-economic crisis for the Muslim ruling class. The all India status of Muslim ruling class was reduced to only the provincial and local level.

The Hindus, particularly Marathas, Jats, Rajputs were growing more militant and ambitious. In many regions the power vacuum created by this development was filled by the rise of the new Hindu rulers. Faced with these increasing threats, the rise of the power of Maratha and Jats, the Muslims tried to unite themselves by emphasizing the common bond of religion.

It was this changing political scene which created new sense of insecurity in the Muslim ruling class and accounted for Aurangzeb's anti-Hindu fanaticism. Aurangzeb's persecution of Hindus has been generally interpreted as religious fanaticism but not as ^{an} expression of his distorted political ambition. The political struggle between Aurangzeb and Marathas is regarded as an open confrontation between the Muslim emperor, and staunch Hindu Maratha. Aurangzeb spent twenty years in South trying to destroy Hinduisim. "The way the Muslim chroniclers app~~re~~hended Aurangzeb for his measure against 'the enemies of his true religion' show clearly how the 'Shariat was being understood in medieval times"¹³. But his main aim was to destroy the local autonomy of Deccan rulers, Hindu as well as Muslims to make Southern India an intergral part of Mughal empire.

Similarly, the Hindu posture assumed by Shivaji in his struggle against ~~the~~ Aurangzeb and non-Muslims uprisings of the Jats and Satnamis during Aurangzeb's reign gave an impression of mounting 'Hindu reaction' against the Muslim rule. But it is worth remembering here that 'Shivaji had started his political carrer long before Aurangzeb launched his policy of persecuting the Hindus'¹⁴. Shivaji's initial

13. Elliot & Dowson, History of India, Allahabad, 1966,
Vol.II, pp.179-214.

14. Refer Sarkar J.N., Shivaji & His Times, Calcutta, 1948,
p.35.

ambition was to acquire political status for himself by challenging first the Deccan Sultans and later imperial authority of Mughal to open war. "Shivaji did not hesitate in allying himself with Mughal from time to time to gain his political ends"¹⁵. The Satnami rebellion and chhatrasal Bundela rebellions regarded 'Hindu' uprising as an attempt to fulfil their own political ambition"¹⁶. Aurangzeb's effort to save the declining prestige of Mughal empire failed to check the ambitions of Hindu groups which were busy building up their power during his period. Under the pressure of this changed situation. "The latent tensions existing within the Muslim ruling class came out openly on the surface"¹⁷. Its members got divided into small factions. Their internal rivalry and antagonism did not allow them to evolve any constant and definite attitude towards rising Hindu powers.

The Muslims and the British Rule in India:

By middle of the 19th Century the East India Company had become Supreme in India, both in the South and North of Vindyas. The Muslims constituted the fifth of the British

15. Ibid., pp.124, 126 and 160.

16. Refer Dixit Prabha, Communalism a Struggle for Power, Orient Longman, 1974, p.26.

17. Shrivastava A.L., First Two Nababs of Awadha, Agra, 1959, p.51.

India population. The Muslim population ^{was} predominant in Sindh. The British, who were confronted by the Muslims in India, came out successfully, and later controlled the landed class of Muslim India. The English attitude towards the Muslims till 1870 was one of suspicion and repression.

" Lord Ellenborough confessed in 1848 that " the race (Muslims) is fundamentally hostile to us and therefore, our true policy is to conciliate the Hindus"¹⁸.

By 1857, the British in India had persuaded themselves without difficulty that Mughals in Delhi were an anomaly and their existence a matter of indifference even to the Muslim population of East India Company's territories. Various British officers who passed various acts from time to time enraged the Muslim population in India. The establishment of British rule in India brought in a new calamity in upper class Muslim castes.

" They felt as if the end of the world had come. Those who had dominated the Government services felt the rock on which they had stood firmly for centuries was now slipping away from under their feet"¹⁹.

18. Gupta D.C., Indian National Movement & Constitutional Development, Vikas, 1976, p.25.

19. Hussain S.A., The Destiny of Indian Muslims, Bombay, 1965, p.127.

The use of English language by the British in their administration was another blow for the Muslims who were well versed in Persian language. The British Administration substituted English language for Persian since 1838. The use of English language went in favour of Hindus who showed a greater aptitude for learning English. The new political situation did not create in Muslims any new vision.

Perhaps this is why the Muslims lagged behind their Hindu counterpart who gained important position in administration of the British Rule. In the beginning, the Muslim population were fond of 'Persian' language and were not attracted towards the learning of English. British were very much interested in their hold on Indian sub-continent. They encouraged English education because they were in need of personnel for their administration. "The political changes in 19th Century dislodged the Muslims upper class from its social, economic and cultural leadership of Muslims"²⁰. "There was no organic change in the social structure of the Muslim community in early British period. Muslim community retained its medieval character"²¹.

20. Mishra B.B., Indian Middle Classes, London, 1961, pp.387-388.

21. Mujeeb M., The Indian Muslims, London, 1967, p.507.

The East India Company affected Muslims mainly in three ways:

Firstly, it established a strong political authority, with a net-work of judicial and administrative institutions, which left no room for the exercise of political responsibility by a non official or private agency. Cornwallis, completely divested the Bengal Zamindars of their police jurisdiction in 1792. In Bombay and Madras a certain degree of police authority remained attached to persons who collected public revenues.

Secondly, the Governor-General-in-Council appointed a body of revenue laws which defined the rights and interest of all kinds of subordinate proprietors and occupiers. These laws and the record of rights prepared under them made the holders of under-tenure practically independent of their superior overlords who became subject to punishment for the infringement of any of the rights so recorded.

Thirdly, the resumption of the rent-free lands of Zamindars was yet another severe blow to their economic power and social influence²².

22. Mishra B.B., The Indian Political Parties- An Historical Analysis of Political Behaviour upto 1947, Oxford University Press, 1976, pp.35 and 36.

These are the three main causes because of which the socio-economic status of the Muslims was affected. It is because of this that the Muslims lost what was implanted by the Mughal rule in India. These above mentioned acts of the British dislodged the Muslim position.

Besides this, Mughal rule in India and the socio-economic position of the Muslim population had been affected from two angles. The first was the attacks made by the Hindus against the process of 'Muslimisation', and the second was the efforts of British to introduce English education for their own administrative needs.

Hence, the Muslims under British rule had lost much of the status which they enjoyed prior to the advent of the British rule in India. All this feeling of the Muslim population and their sufferings under the British rule came as an outburst in the form of the Indian Mutiny.

Indian Mutiny and Muslims:

It is important to note as to how the Indian Mutiny has also affected the Muslims in India. They rose against the British rule in 1857, not with the ambition of creating a new world, but to save a world, ~~but~~ which was now beyond all saving.

After the Indian Mutiny the Muslims were not looked on favourably by British in India. For the Muslims, the mutiny of 1857,

"was not just a revolt against the British, it was their desperate bid for the recovery of their privileges. The British regarded Muslims to be the mainspring of the rebellion"²³.

Sir William Hunter wrote:

" there was scarcely a Government office in which a Mohammedan can hope for any post above the rank of porter, messenger, filler of ink-pots and mender of pens... after the mutiny the British, turned upon Muslamans as their real enemies"²⁴.

It is since then that the association of educated Indians with the British rule started increasing. Indians, since, 1857, started to play ^{an} increasing role in the public life of the country in association with British. This development was not a result of any plan or conspiracy of the Hindus.

23. Rafiq Zakeria, Rise of Muslims in Indian Politics, Somaiyya Publication, 1971, pp.5-6.

24. Hunter W.W., The Indian Muslman, London, 1871, p.169.

The best elements in the British administration were the Indians. After the revolt of 1857, Lord Robert's attitude can be best illustrated from what he wrote.

" that British should work with their life's best blood... and show these rascally Muslmans that with God's help Englishmen will still be the master of India"²⁵.

It is since then that "it became always a habit of British officials to put the blame for everything that went wrong on the Muslims"²⁶.

For most British observes in 1857 a Muslim meant a rebel. Dr.Metcalf has summed up the typical British attitude.

"The Muslims placed themselves at the head of the movement, for they saw in these religious grievences the stepping stone to political power. In the British view it was Muslims' intrigue and Muslim leadership that converted a sepoy mutiny in to a political conspracy, aimed at extinction of the British Raj"²⁷.

25. Rafiq Zakeria, op.cit.pp.7-8.

26. Ibid.,pp.8-9.

27. Refer Hardy P.,Muslims of British India, Cambridge University Press,1972, p.62.

Further, India's Council Act of 1892 increased the membership of the legislative council. In Lord Dufferin's words, " It increased still wider share in the administration of public affairs to Indian gentlemen"²⁸. The introduction of the legislative council by the British in India created a consciousness of one class or community dominating the political life of the country. It is since then that the successive Viceroys supported the policy of separate or communal representation. Perhaps because of this policy the British adopted a policy of 'divide and rule', rather than working against any community or race. This attitude of the British rule further contributed to religious awareness between the Hindus and the Muslims. Considering the growth of Mughal rule and its confrontation with Hindu rule, the advent of British rule which coincides with them, further created problems which have been ever-lasing. This conflict between the Hindus and Muslims continues to prevail even to this day. 7

British rule in India has left long standing impact on the political life of the country. The study of India's relations with Pakistan cannot escape understanding the role

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28. Hadson, H.V., The Great Divide, London, 1969, p.13.

of the British rule, "because of which a new nation called as 'Pakistan' was created. In Indian politics today this problem is often referred to as minority problem, because of communalism in India. Even to this day, it is found that communal considerations work as a strong force. Indo-Pak relations can not be scientifically understood without understanding the historical background. Indo-Pak relations are certainly influenced by this historical back ground. In this direction Maulana Azad has pointed, " the founding of the Muslim League was the result of British diplomacy"²⁹.

British could rule India for more than two centuries, because of their 'divide and rule' policy. The British since their emergence on Indian soil could realize that India was divided into various castes, cultures, and civilization, each of these communities having their own past and the glorious history. Lord Dufferin in (1881-1888) described India as " composed of a large number of distinct nationalities, professing various religious, practising diverse rites, speaking different languages. The most patent

29. Haq.M.U., Muslim Politics in Modern India, Meenakshi Publication, 1970, pp.82-83.

characteristic being, however, its division into mighty political communities as distant from each other as are the poles as-under, namely the Hindus numbering 190 million and 50 million Muslims"³⁰.

British by their willy diplomacy could set forth one community against the other. "The seeds of communalism were certainly supplied by Muslim chauvinists, but roots were provided by the Britishers. It was Britishers who introduced communal fire in the Indian politics, through devils' work of stocking it"³¹. British exploited whatever possible to see that the British Raj was stable and secure. "British not only patronized separate tendencies but actually created divisions and engineered separate demands"³². The role of the Britishers in introducing such communal tensions in Indian politics can be clearly understood from what the Viceroy informed the Simla Deputation on 1st October, 1906. The Viceroy pointed, " You just claim, your position should be estimated not merely on numerical strength, but in respect to the political importance of your community and the service that has rendered to the empire"³³.

30. Hardy P., Muslims of British India, Cambridge Uni. Press, 1972, p.1.

31. Compland R., The Indian Problem, Madras, 1953, p.35.

32. Refer Kaushik P.D., The Congress Ideology & Programme, Allied Publication, 1964, p.291.

33. Dr. Prasad Ishari, Hindu Muslim Problems, Allahabad, 1974, p.38.

The class of Muslims whose interest had suffered as a result of British rule used religion in their attempts to widen the basis of political appeal, but since the two religions were mutually exclusive, resort to religion was solely meant for the seizure of power. The leadership of Muslim communalism in the 19th Century did not arise from the class of traditional revivalists, nor did it spring from the Muslim middle classes. It arose from the English educated class of Muslims who belonged to a higher order of society, the descendants of foreign Muslims who had under the Mughals formed the landed, military and bureaucratic hierarchy of administration.

The establishment of the Anglo-Oriented College at Alligarh was in fact an expression of British anxiety to speed up the progress of Muslims. "Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, himself opened the College on 8th January, 1887"³⁴. Sayyed Ahmed Khan, formerly a Government servant and founder of the college who represented the aspirations of Muslim aristocracy, assured the Viceroy of his loyal determination "to make (through his college) the Muslamans of India worthy

34. Phillip C.H., The Evolution of India and Pakistan, Select Documents, Oxford, 1965, p.175.

and useful subjects of the British Crown"³⁵.

There was an identity of views between Syed Ahmed Khan and the Viceroy and he made full use of his sympathy for the aristocracy in general and for the Muslim aristocracy in particular³⁶. When Agha Khan, the religious head of the Khoja Community, met the Viceroy, Lady Minto wrote in her journal as follows: " This has been a very eventful day: as some one said to me, an epoch in Indian History... The Muhammedian population, who have always been intensely loyal, resent not having proper representation and consider themselves slighted in many ways, preference having been given to the Hindus..."³⁷. This approach of British had long standing impact on future political history of India.

What the British policy did was, it not only created a difference which already existed between the Hindus and Muslims, but prevented the development of that common consciousness before which the differences melt away by a policy of separate and special treatment. In this policy,

35. Mishra B.B., The Indian Political Parties- An Historical Analysis of Political behaviour upto 1947, Oxford, 1976, p.64.

36. Ibid., p.65. Lytton was specially anxious for Political reasons to secure the sympathy of Indian Muslims at a time when British Policy was directed against Muslim countries.

37. Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, Bombay, 1956, p.100.

the British were aided by the religious-cum-political revivalism among the communities themselves. Both British policy and religious revivalism were complimentary and parallel processes acting and reacting upon each other resulting in the accentuation of communal feeling and the focussing of attention upon the points of difference rather than upon those of agreement. The British never allowed a creation of united India. They have constantly sabotaged the attempts of communal unity made by the Indians. They encouraged the Muslims always to adopt a different attitude towards any constitutional advancement. It is on this ground that Barailsford has pointed in his book 'Subject India', that "It is proper to censure the fanaticism and intransigency of Muslim league, but the responsibility of this tragedy falls on the British India"³⁸.

38. Refer Kaushik, The Congress Ideology & Programme, Allied Publication, 1964, p.294.