SHAMSUL ISLAM

MUSLIMS AGAINST PARTITION OF INDIA

Revisiting the legacy of Allah Bakhsh and other patriotic Muslims

Foreword
Professor Harbans Mukhia

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In memory of
Indu Kant Shukla,
Mukul Sinha,
Atiq Siddiqui,
Praful Bidwai and
R.M. Pal

whose writings and deeds
enriched our discourse against
religious bigotry, fascism, war-hysteria,
exploitation and injustice.
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The search for the real culprits behind the Partition of India in 1947 still continues. This is despite the fact that there is no dearth of writings on the Indian freedom struggle and Partition. The standard narrative which we have discussed in detail earlier is that the Muslim League, led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was fundamentally responsible for this tragic Partition which became a kind of license for both Hindu and Muslim communal and criminal elements to indulge in mass butchery of innocent children, women and men, large-scale rape and other gruesome crimes. Those who subscribe to the Hindutva school of thought cover up the fact that they—like Muslim League—subscribed to the Two-Nation theory and wanted to have an exclusive ‘Hindu Rashtra’ similar to the ‘Islamic State.’ Unfortunately, this kind of discourse is becoming more acceptable among the Hindu middle classes with the recent upsurge of anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Hindutva bandwagon. This narrative does not have any space for patriotic Muslims; those Muslims who risked their lives to fight for a united and secular India.

One such example is of Allah Bakhsh, who was born into the Soomro clan of Sind. He belonged to a family which owned large tracts of land and was in the business of executing government civil contracts. His political career started in 1923 when he was elected a member of Sukkur District Board, later becoming its president. In a major boost to his political career he was elected member of the Bombay Legislative Council in 1926 and led the movement for the separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency. He formed the Sind People’s Party in 1934, which later came to be known as ‘Ittehad’ or unity Party.

After the separation of Sind from Bombay in 1936 he continued to be elected as Sind Assembly member. Allah Bakhsh was a prominent politician of Sind who served as the Premier (those days chief minister was known by this designation) for two terms, starting from March 23, 1938 to April 18, 1940 and March 7, 1941.
to October 14, 1942. In October 1942 Allah Bakhsh renounced his titles of Khan Bahadur and Order of the British Empire (OBE) in protest against the British government’s policy of repression. He was removed from office. Thus Allah Bakhsh became the first Premier of an Indian province to be removed from office. He was murdered on May 14, 1943 by the professional assassins hired by local Muslim League leadership. We will discuss these two happenings later in the book.

He was known for his humble life style and democratic thinking not common during that period. He never hoisted a flag, a symbol of power, on his official car.\(^{153}\) Allah Bakhsh defended rights of zamindars against unjust orders of irrigation department. He denounced the inhuman treatment meted out to political and general prisoners.\(^{154}\) He believed that the greater the police, the more crime would spread. He said:

> If we knew that the people who enter the police service would do so for the sake of serving the people, then I would certainly say, ‘appoint as many as you like’. But these people do not enter the service to serve the people, but to rob them. That’s the material from which they are recruited.\(^{155}\)

According to KR Malkani, he habitually wore khadi [hand spun cloth]. He withdrew the magisterial powers from the vadera [big landlords]. He followed the Congress directive and fixed 500 rupees as every minister’s salary. During his two terms of premierships nominations to local bodies were ended. On one occasion when flood-waters threatened Shikarpur, he breached the canal to flood his own lands—and saved the city. But above all he was non-communal and nationalist.\(^{156}\)

The most crucial and historic contribution of Allah Bakhsh was organising Indian Muslims against the Two-Nation theory and scheme of Pakistan as propagated by the Muslim League. He seemed to be a possessed man when it came to oppose the Partition demand of the Muslim League. He not only laid down the principles of anti-Pakistan movement but also organised patriotic Muslims of India under one umbrella organisation to challenge and oppose the divisive politics of the Muslim League. Azad Muslim Conference (Independent Muslims’ Conference) was his brainchild. This Conference initiated a process of rejuvenating and energising vast sections of Muslims of India who offered great sacrifices in opposing the politics of the Muslim League.
Azad Muslim Conference

Allah Bakhsh organised a powerful and massive nationwide opposition to the divisive designs of Muslim League in pre-Partition days. The greatest contribution of Allah Bakhsh against the divisive Two-Nation politics preached by the Muslim League was when he joined hands with dozens of nationwide mass-based Muslim organisations and prominent patriotic Muslim leaders who claimed to represent a majority of Muslims on one platform named as Azad Muslim Conference (Independent Muslims' Conference). ‘Independent’ signified the fact that it had a separate entity independent of Muslim League and Congress. Significantly, this anti-Pakistan Conference was called into session almost within five weeks of Muslim League’s passing ‘Pakistan Resolution’
(March 23, 1940) at Lahore. It was the largest amalgamation of Muslim lower Castes and working class organizations against the scheme of Pakistan. The then British press, which was mainly pro-Muslim League, had to admit that it was the most representative gathering of the Indian Muslims.\textsuperscript{157}

It held its session in Delhi between April 27-30, 1940 (it was to conclude on April 29 but was extended by one day due to tremendous participation and pressure of work) with 1,400 delegates from almost all parts of India attending it.\textsuperscript{158} The major Muslim organisations represented in this conference were All India Jama'atul Ulama, All India Momin Conference, All India Majlis-e-Ahrar, All-India Shia Political Conference, Khudai Khidmatgars, Bengal Krishak Proja Party, All-India Muslim Parliamentary Board, the Anjuman-e-Watan, Baluchistan, All India Muslim Majlis and Jama'at Ahl-e-Hadees. The Azad Muslim Conference was attended by duly elected delegates from United Province, Bihar, Central Province, Punjab, Sind, NWF Province, Madras, Orissa, Bengal, Malabar, Baluchistan, Delhi, Assam, Rajasthan, Kashmir, Hyderabad and many native states thus covering almost whole of India.\textsuperscript{159} Wilfred Cantwell Smith agreed that these delegates represented a "majority of India's Muslims."\textsuperscript{160}

A leading English daily from Bombay reported that,

\begin{quote}
Scenes reminiscent of Khilafat days, two decades ago, were seen today on the eve of the Muslim Conference. Bands of Muslim volunteers in bright uniforms are going about the city in buses with big placards; 'Freedom Is Our Birthright' and singing patriotic songs. The arrival of large number of leaders has naturally led to informal consultations. Organisers of the Conference are immensely satisfied with the response from all over the country. 'The response has been tremendous. It has surpassed all my expectations', said Dr. Ashraf [a leading nationalist Muslim leader] in the course of a talk. The first great success lies in the fact that all important Muslim organisations all over the country with the exception of the Jinnah League have enthusiastically identified themselves with the Conference and its objects.\textsuperscript{161}
\end{quote}

The whole of the city of Delhi was decorated with gates artistically designed to give a rousing reception to participants and Allah Baksh, the President of the All India Independent Muslim Conference, and his party. Arrangements were made to take out a procession from the historic Jama Masjid.\textsuperscript{162} A large number of Muslim students of theology from different parts of the country came to attend the Conference. They also held a conference of their own with a view to establishing an Independent Muslim Students' Conference. A large number of students of the Arabic College, Delhi, offered their services as volunteers to the All India Azad Muslim Conference\textsuperscript{163} More than 50 students from Aligarh Muslim University arrived to participate in the Conference.\textsuperscript{164}

So far as anti-Pakistan euphoria of the Conference was concerned, thousands of delegates and participants started arriving even before the inauguration of the Conference from various parts of the country. According to a press report the Conference was "sure to be a tremendous success and which promises to create a fresh wave of genuine nationalism and political thought among the Muslims of India."\textsuperscript{165} It was reported that the Muslim League planned to greet Allah Baksh with black flags on his arrival but after witnessing the mammoth support of Muslims to the Conference, the idea was dropped.\textsuperscript{166}

The Reception Committee rented three large hotels to accommodate delegates. Invitations were issued to the independent Muslim members of various provincial and Central Legislatures and a large number of them had intimated their intention to join the Conference.\textsuperscript{167} The old boys' body [alumni] of the Jamia Millia Islamia decided to organise a meeting of the old boys, many of whom were expected to be in Delhi in connection with the Conference. At a meeting of the Arabic students of Delhi, a resolution was unanimously passed sympathising with the object of the Conference and volunteering their services to make the Conference a grand success. An appeal was issued to Muslim ladies to attend the Conference, and a large attendance of them was expected. Special arrangements were made for the purpose in the pandal to accommodate about 5,000 ladies.\textsuperscript{168} There was great excitement among common Muslims regarding the deliberations at this Conference in which decisions of far-reaching importance in regard to the position and the status of the Muslim community.
and the part they were going to play in the struggle for freedom were to be taken.469

According to The Hindustan Times,

A mammoth procession, the first of its kind in Delhi, was taken out on 26th April afternoon through the streets of Delhi to enable the public to do honour to Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh, the President-elect of the Conference who was dressed in 'khaddar'. The procession terminated at Jama Masjid, in front of which a public meeting was held and was addressed by the President-elect, who assured the audience that the Conference would give a right lead to the Muslims of India. He was glad to see that the Muslims were in no way behind their Hindu brethren and were equally keen to achieve freedom for India. Scenes reminiscent of the old Khilafat agitation days were witnessed throughout the entire route of the procession, which was tastefully decorated by the Muslim public. On a modest estimate, about 50,000 Muslims participated in the procession at one place or other and many more, including a large number of women, watched it from the balconies of the houses on the route. Despite the scorching sun, it was a huge sea of human heads that was seen to welcome Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh.170

After the conclusion of the huge procession Allah Bakhsh told the press, "the enthusiastic scenes of the procession indicate that the major section of the Mussalmans of India is equally anxious to break the bondage of slavery like Hindu brethren." Allah Bakhsh exhorted common Muslims to rise to the occasion and hoped that the Azad Muslim Conference would give the correct lead.171

In the light of the tremendous response of the Muslim masses towards the Conference it was decided to enlarge the pandal which was originally erected to accommodate 50,000 persons.172

According to another leading English daily:

The procession passed through more than two dozen gates. Muslims shopkeepers of Turkman Gate, Chawri Bazar, Hazur Qazi, Lal Kuan and Chandni Chowk decorated their shops with buntings and pictures, and national flags were also seen at places. The entire Muslim population of Delhi displayed remarkable enthusiasm, despite the efforts of a prominent Muslim League leader to dissuade them from joining in the programme. The processionists shouted slogans like Inquilab Zindabad [Long live revolution], Hindustan Azad [Independent India], Pakistan Murdabad (death to Pakistan), and Allah Bakhsh Zindabad [Long live Allah Bakhsh]. While one end of the procession was at the Jama Masjid the other end had reached as far as Lal Kuan. In view of the persistent request from the Muslims of Dariba Kalan the procession also passed through Esplanade Road and reached the Jama Masjid at about 4.45 p.m., where it converted itself into a huge mass meeting in the park outside the Jama Masjid. Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh was given a tremendous ovation when he came to the meeting to address a few words to the huge gathering. On one side of the Khan Bahadur a national flag was flying prominently.173

The All-India Independent Muslims Conference, which opened on April 27, 1940 in Delhi, if judged from the number of delegates and the visitors attending the Conference and the popular Muslim enthusiasm displayed on the occasion, was a much more representative organisation of Muslim opinion all over the country than the Muslim League session held a month back at Lahore. This was the general Muslim feeling inside and outside the pandal. The whole ground in the Queen's Garden presented an animated scene, with a huge array of Gandhi caps and khadi-wearers. The pandal, which took shape up under the supervision of Maulana Abdullah, an old energetic artist of Delhi, had three gates, which represented the Mughal Indo-Saracenic architectures. The main gate was decorated with calligraphic quotations from the holy Qur'an. The inside of the pandal was artistically decorated with patriotic verses. According to The Hindustan Times, which covered the Conference extensively,

At 6 p.m. when the proceedings commenced the pandal was packed to suffocation. A separate enclosure for women was reserved. A huge crowd that could not get admission into the pandal on account of its being regulated by tickets was following the proceedings from outside which were being broadcast through microphones. The crowd inside and outside the pandal that listened to the speeches of the Chairman and the President consisted of more than 50,000 Muslims...The proceedings commenced with the recitation of poems. The well-known national poet Saghar Nizami's poem on the motherland's patriotic call to Indian Muslims was particularly received with thunderous
cheers. The climax was reached when the poet declared that they would give a royal battle to those who were attempting to vivisect their beloved motherland.

According to another press report very animated scenes were witnessed at the opening. Long before the arrival of the President, Allah Bakhsh, thousands of delegates and visitors, coming from every part of the country, had gathered at the beautifully decorated pandal. A striking feature of the Conference, was the presence of a large number of ladies in the purdah enclosure. 'Freedom through national unity', the keynote of the Conference, was powerfully brought out in the very mottoes inscribed in bold letters over the dais and on the sides. 'We are Indians and India is our home,' 'The freedom of Islamic countries depends on the freedom of India' and similar sayings met one's eyes as one entered the pandal.

For well over an hour, poems and songs full of patriotic fervour were sung from the dais, which evoked great enthusiasm in the huge gathering. These songs paid homage to the motherland and expressed the determination to strive for unity and freedom and fight those who wanted the vivisection of the country. One song which was warmly applauded included a couplet which said that even in the darkest and most difficult days of Islam and Prophet had not thought of creating a separate homeland for Muslims like Pakistan. One young boy in his song said that those who talked of dividing the country were really aiming the postponement of freedom for mother India who had given birth to them.

After the recitation of poems, Mohammad Jan, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, rose to deliver his speech and called upon Muslims to end the system of separate electorates drawing huge applause. He was again cheered when he characterised the Partition scheme as utterly impracticable and absurd. Then rose Asaf Ali, a member of the Congress Working Committee, to welcome Allah Bakhsh, on behalf of the citizens of Delhi. Asaf Ali expressed his pleasure on the unique gathering in the pandal. He pointed out that it was after a very long period that such a large number of representatives of Muslims had gathered there on a common platform and agenda. It had a special significance in as much as it indicated the present trend of Muslim thought and feeling. It, undoubtedly, answered the call of the time. He reminded the huge gathering that the country and Muslims were passing through a critical period. There was unrest and excitement all around. The demand of the hour was to close their ranks once and for all, unite on a common platform and, after due deliberation, take a bold and wise step so that they might secure an honourable place in India and the world. No single individual could solve such a knotty problem. The whole body of delegates would have to give proof of their wisdom and statesmanship. The decisions of the Conference, asserted Asaf Ali, would reflect the united voice of the whole community. It would be the decision of the crores of Muslims, whose representatives had assembled there.

Shaukatullah Ansari, a leading personality behind the Conference, then read the 200 or so messages received specially from Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Congress President, Sharif ex-Minister, C.P., the Burmese delegation and Zahid Ali, the son of the late Maulana Shaukat Ali, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, Mohammed Bhoy Rowjee, an ex-Sheriff of Bombay and a member of the Agha Khan Supreme Council and Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, Assam. Maulana Azad in his message urged for the communal unity and appealed to the Muslims to remove the blot that they are standing in the way of India's constitutional progress. He wished for the success of the Conference and hoped that deliberations would be fruitful for the great cause of the freedom of the country and the Muslims.

Mr. Rowjee's message said:

The forces of communalism and narrow-minded bigotry supported by Mr. Jinnah and his comrades of the Muslim League deserve no quarter. If they are allowed to parade the country unchecked, the result is bound to be disastrous for the country as a whole and for the Muslims specially. In the name of 'Islam in Danger' they have been exploiting the masses till now and playing havoc with the sentiments of innocent Muslim public. It is therefore, the duty of every true and self-respecting Muslim to come forward to do his duty and denounce the communal bogey with one voice and shake off the claim of Mr. Jinnah and his Muslim League to speak on behalf of the whole Muslim India.
The message of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, Assam, said that due to assault on president, secretary and members by the Leaguers they were unable to attend the Conference but wished all success to it. 178

The leading politicians from Bengal Humayun Kabir, Nawabzada Hasan Ali Choudhury, Dr. Ahmad, K. M. Zakaria, ex-Mayor of Calcutta, and several others in a joint congratulatory message after wishing success to the Conference said that,

A Conference such as this must declare that Indian civilisation of today is the creation of the joint efforts of Muslims and Hindus, and any attempt at disrupting the unity of its spirit is a betrayal of the history of a thousand years. The Muslim League’s scheme or partitioning India, if taken literally, is against the true spirit of Islam... 179

A report in a leading English daily of Delhi noted that,

All previous records of public gatherings at Delhi were broken on the second day of the open session of the Independent Muslim Conference itself. The spacious pandal presented a spectacle of a vast concourse of humanity. The attendance was not less than 75,000...This conference was truly representative of Indian Muslims who desire to secure the fullest freedom of the country consisting of delegates and representatives of every province. 180

Presidential address of Allah Bakhsh

This historic Conference was presided over by Allah Bakhsh who declared at the outset that “it is this conference and this conference alone today, which is in a position to evolve a constructive scheme to bring the political deadlock to an end.” 181 Calling upon Indians belonging to different faiths Allah Bakhsh said:

Whatever our faiths we must live together in our country in an atmosphere of perfect amity and our relations should be the relations of the several brothers of a joint family, various members of which are free to profess the faith they like without any let or hindrance and all of whom enjoy equal benefits of their joint property. 182

He lamented the fact that Muslims were being made a scapegoat by the British rulers for not granting independence to India. According to him,

Britain should be the last to challenge India’s right to exist as a sovereign and completely independent state and should, therefore, not obstruct its people if they desire to frame their own constitution. Sooner or later this principle on which the whole of that civilisation is based and for whose preservation millions of English men and Frenchmen are ready to lay down their lives cannot fail to be recognised by Britain. 183

While criticising the Muslim League for being a part of the British rulers policy of divide and rule, he said:

By the unwise action of the All India Muslim League, however, England, for the time being has found it possible to bring the Indian Muslims to the fore and has declared that since the Congress, whose representative position in eight out of eleven Provinces cannot be constitutionally questioned, has not yet made its peace with the Muslim League the encashment of the Dominion Status cheque must be deferred indefinitely.

Allah Bakhsh also reminded the British rulers that,

No Mussalman with the slightest sense of realism and self-respect can possibly tolerate for a moment that he should be made political scapegoat and that the evil consequences of the process should be allowed to react unfavourably on his own and his coming generation’s political and material future. The proposal, if not promptly and authoritatively repudiated by representative gathering like this is calculated to cause infinite harm to our Indian co-religionists throughout the Muslim and non-Muslim parts of the world and mean more so at home. 184

While contesting the claim of the League to be the sole representative body of the Indian Muslims, he emphasised that,

The representative character of the Congress as a political party with a majority in seven, and controlling power in the eighth, provinces was comprehensive. But what credentials beyond public meetings does the League present to be recognised as the representative of the majority of Indian Muslims? The only way to test its representative character would be to send the League to the
palest in the specific issue of the policy it has declared at Lahore. For, whatever may have been its support before in the Provinces, where the Muslims are in a minority, it has definitely injured it beyond repair by suddenly throwing the minority Muslims overboard and propounding a wholly impracticable scheme of creating a sovereign state of some 10,000,000 Punjabi, Sindhi, Pathan and Baluch Muslims in the north west and another of about 25,000,000 Assamese and Bengali Muslims in the north-east, separated by over 1,000 miles.18

Consider Allah Bakhsh’s prophetic words on the fate of eastern Pakistan when he said that,

North-East Pakistan is ten times more fantastic and a hundred times more fragile. In the conception of the North-Western Pakistan, or the Punjab there is at least a possibility of its being linked up with more powerful Afghan, or Russian, Muslim neighbours, but Bengal and Assam Pakistan will be an isolation quarantine, with no superfluity of martial races to its credit, and which, therefore, may not take long to be quickly absorbed by its more enterprising neighbours.186

Strongly repudiating the supporters of the two nation theory and scheme of Pakistan he said:

A majority of the 90,000,000 Indian Muslims who are descendants of the earlier inhabitants of India are in no sense other than the sons of the soil with the Dravidian and the Aryan and have as much right to be reckoned among the earliest settlers, of this common land. The nationals of different countries cannot divest themselves of their nationality merely by embracing one or another faith. In its universal sweep Islam, the faith, can run in and out of as many nationalities and regional cultures as may be found in world.187

Referring to the grotesque and ill-conceived Two-Nation theory Allah Bakhsh while underlining the long history of joint heritage of Hindus and Muslims told the gathering,

As Indian nationals, Muslims and Hindus and others inhabit the land and share every inch of the motherland and all its material and cultural treasures alike according to the measure of their just and fair rights and requirements as the proud sons of the soil. Even in the realm of literature one finds common classics like Heer Ranjha and Sassi Pannu, written by Muslim poets, equally and proudly shared by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the Punjab and in Sind; to quote but only one example. It is a vicious fallacy for Hindu, Muslim and other inhabitants of India to arrogate to themselves an exclusively proprietary right over either the whole or any particular part of India. The country as an indivisible whole and as one federated and composite unit belongs to all the inhabitants of the country alike and is as much the inalienable and imprescriptible heritage of the Indian Muslim as of other Indians... Those who talk of separate and limited homelands for certain sections of the Indian Muslims are free, if they so choose, to divest themselves of the right to live as Indian nationals. By far the vast majority of Indian Muslims who live in every part of India, and who have the right to choose to live wherever they like in the country, will definitely, positively and peremptorily reject such a preposterous and suicidal proposal and continue to claim the fullest possible rights of Indian nationals throughout and in the remotest nooks of their homeland. No majority, Hindus or others, of the regions in which even one Muslim resides or chooses to reside or carry on business shall ever have the right to deprive him of one iota of the plenary rights enjoyed by all other Indian nationals, and quite obviously every Hindu and every other Indian shall have the same rights of equal citizenship even if it happens to be just one in the midst of millions of Indian Muslims anywhere in India. We are equal partners with the Hindus and the other inhabitants of our country in the whole of this country in every sphere and in every walk of life to the measure of our just requirements, and no power and no false or artificial sentiment unwisely propagated can alter this position. No power on earth can rob anyone of his faith and convictions, and no power on earth shall be permitted to rob Indian Muslims of their just rights as Indian nationals. As Indians we have both equal rights and responsibilities with our fellow nationals, and we shall neither suffer the slightest curtailment of our rights, nor for a moment shirk any of our responsibilities to the country. I am confident, gentlemen, that we who are assembled here are all agreed that our country has to be helped to occupy a free and an honourable position in the world and we are all determined to see it arrive at this goal without any further delay.188

Allah Bakhsh reminded the huge gathering that every Muslim going for pilgrimage to the holy Mecca was invariably described as
a Hindu by Arabs and all Indian Muslims were similarly known as
Hindustani in Iran and Afghanistan and as Indians throughout the
world. After describing the bonds that knitted the Hindus and the
Muslims in the various walks of human life, Allah Bakhsh asserted
that,

No segregated or isolated region but the whole of India was the
homeland of all the Indian Muslims and no Hindu or Muslim of
any other country had the right to deprive them of an inch of
their home land.189

Referring to the World War situation, Allah Bakhsh described the
contemporary war as the birth pangs of a new world order. He
said that the Nazi and fascist aggressors had been condemned by all
right thinking men as a menace to human freedom and civilisation.
Warning against the rise of totalitarian ideologies he said:

Where ultimately all this will lead none can clearly foresee yet, but
one thing is certain beyond a shadow of doubt that unless the
brutal and ruthless methods of the aggressor are checked, and also
the ambitious maps of all the empires are rolled up whether they
are based on democratic or totalitarian ideologies, the peace and
prosperity for which the vast bulk of mankind has been pining
will not come into sight.190

Allah Bakhsh smelt a design of empire building in Jinnah’s call for
Pakistan and was categorical in rejecting any project of the empire
building by the leaders of any creed which only would cause
miseries to common people. According to him Jinnah’s project
aimed at,

Not service but rule, not fruitful co-operation but domination, not
a general elevation of the level of common prosperity and material
benefits but the enrichment of a few individuals at the cost of
millions of their supporters...It means Hindu and Muslim masses
grovel in the dust and squalor of their villages and urban
slums, these have been the main aspects of the history of all the
Hindu, Muslim and British empires in the world up to now.9

He reminded Jinnah that Islam did not permit empire building. It
did not prevent anyone from developing his natural gifts to the full
and enjoying the fruits of his skill and labour. It forbade
exploitation in all shapes and forms and all parties concerned must
note that any attempt to found a structure of government in which
domination, coercion or exploitation of the Muslim masses was
reality could not be permitted.191

Muslims like Allah Bakhsh who opposed the Muslim League
and challenged its communal politics had done thorough
homework as was clear from the following contents of
presidential address delivered by him in Hindustani. He advanced
historical arguments to counter the positions of the Muslim
League and invited its leadership to respond to the ideological
issues raised. While decrying the concept of a religion-based state
he made a highly significant statement when he said that,

It was based on a false understanding that India is inhabited by two
nations, Hindu and Muslim. It is much more to the point to say
that all Indian Mussalmans are proud to be Indian Nationals and
they are equally proud that their spiritual level and creedal realm is
Islam. As Indian nationals—Muslims and Hindus and others,
inhabit the land and share every inch of the motherland and all its
material and cultural treasures alike according to the measure of
their just and fair rights and requirements as the proud sons of the
soil.

It is a vicious fallacy for Hindus, Muslims and other
inhabitants of India to arrogate to themselves exclusively
proprietary rights over either the whole or any particular part of
India. The country as an indivisible whole and as one federated
and composite unit belongs to all the inhabitants of the country
alike, and is as much the inalienable and imprescriptible heritage of
the Indian Muslims as of other Indians. No segregated or isolated
regions, but the whole of India is the homeland of all the Indian
Muslims and no Hindu or Muslim or any other has the right to
deprove them of one inch of this homeland.192

He made it clear that communalism was the creation of ruling
Castes and classes among Muslims and Hindus:

These feelings and ambitions among those who hope to constitute
the ruling caste among Hindus or Muslims, as successors of the
present Imperial Rulers, revive and invent excuses for popular
consumption from historical or other sources, and by securing the
support of groups, manoeuvre themselves into a position to play
the political chess, which promises a possible prospect of success in
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their aim of becoming the rulers of the masses either integrally of the entire country or of a delimited region.192

Posing a question to the Muslim League regarding the creation of an Islamic state, he said:

Had the imperialistic structure of society been a guarantee of the prosperity of the Muslim masses and had empires not carried the germs of their own decay in them, then the mighty Omayyad, Abbasid, Saracen, Fatimid, Sasanian, Moghal and Turkish empires would never have crumbled, leaving 1/5th of the human race, who live by Islamic faith in the condition in which they find themselves today-disinterested and destitute in the bulk. Similarly, those Hindus who entertain similar dreams, and who out of tendentiously written pages of history or out of the stimulating examples of the modern imperialists select ingredients for the nourishment of their imperial dreams, or dreams of exploitation, imposition and domination will be well advised to discard such ideals.193

Allah Bakhsh in his address strongly defended the composite Indian culture in the following words:

When they talk of Muslim culture they forget the composite culture which the impact of Hindus and Muslims has been shaping for the last 1000 years or more and in which is born a type of culture and civilisation in India in the production of which Muslims have been proud and active partners. It cannot now merely by creating artificial States be withdrawn to segregated areas. To art and literature, architecture and music, history and philosophy and to the administrative system of India, the Mussalmans have been contributing for a thousand years, their share of coordinated, composite and syncretic culture which occupies a distinctly distinguished place in the types of civilisations which hold a prominent place in the world. It would be a disastrous loss to civilisation if it was proposed to withdraw all this to two corners of India and leave nothing behind the ruins and debris of this contribution. Such a proposal can only emanate from defeatist mentality. No, gentlemen, the whole of India is our motherland and in every possible walk of life we are co-sharers with other inhabitants of the country as brothers in the same cause, viz., the freedom of the country, and no false or defeatist sentiment can possibly persuade us to give up our proud position of being the equal sons of this great country.195

Allah Bakhsh was candid in exposing the communal politicians while talking to a press reporter said: “It is better to put the communalists in a cage so that they may not spread the hymn of hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims.”196 Allah Bakhsh, winding up the proceedings, declared that the Pakistan Scheme was impracticable. The Conference, he said, had provided him with an opportunity to see that for the first time in recent years, seven influential Muslim organizations, had come on the same platform and given expression to their views on problems affecting their communities. He held out an assurance that Muslims had nothing to fear in a free India and freedom would be theirs only when Hindus and Muslims reached an understanding. Finally, he reaffirmed that the system of joint electorates was conducive to cordial and harmonious relations between the different communities and exhorted all to strive their utmost to attain their goal.197

Allah Bakhsh, while calling upon the people to guard against communalism, declared that the goal of the anti-communal movement must be, “to build up a vigorous, healthy, progressive and honoured India enjoying its well-deserved freedom.” These prophetic words of Allah Bakhsh hold key to the salvation of India even today. He was right in complaining (which also throws light on how Muslim League got prominence) that, “Indian Mussalmans have a legitimate cause of complaint against the Congress on the ground that it has not found it possible so far to confer with them for a settlement of the communal issue.”198

Asaf Ali presenting vote of thanks said that a handful of people with no sacrifices to their credit were misleading the Muslims by holding out false promises that could never be realised. He asked the leaders on the platform and others whether they were not largely responsible for this deterioration, as they had neglected their duty towards the Muslims. He was convinced that the present trend in Muslim politics was the result of their inaction. They had left the field open for those who were misleading the Muslims politically. He was, however, glad that the freedom-loving Muslims met on a common platform in Delhi. He hoped
that the movement they had started in Delhi would spread to the nine crore Muslims.

Concluding, Asaf Ali said that every inch of land in India belonged to them. Indian civilisation and culture was the common heritage of the Muslims and Hindus of this country, the result of their co-existence during the last one thousand years. The Conference concluded at about 3:30 a.m. in the morning amidst shouts of Allah-o-Akbar and Inquilab Zindabad [God is great and long live revolution].

It was also announced at the end of the conference that intensive propaganda would be carried out throughout the country in support of the resolutions passed by the Conference at Delhi by holding provincial and district conference. A regular office was opened in Delhi with Shaukatullah Shah Ansari as secretary. It was also decided that Azadi Day (Independence Day) should be celebrated all over India where the Independence resolution adopted by the Conference would be read, explained and adopted. Literature, explaining the present political situation vis-à-vis Muslims would be prepared meanwhile for distribution among the Muslim masses.

The Azad Muslim Conference ended at a note of great enthusiasm and hope. According to The Hindustan Times,

Enthusiastic scenes marked the concluding stage of the All-India Independent Muslim Conference which ended its deliberations after a four-day session in the Gandhi Grounds yesterday morning [May 1] at about 3-30 a.m. More than a lakh of Mohammedans from Delhi and outside attended the Conference. Keen interest was maintained throughout the session on account of the high level of the debates. Despite the odd hours during which the open session of the Conference met on all the four days, the attendance went on increasing day by day.

One significant aspect of the Conference was that it did not stop at exposing the unsoundness of the Partition scheme and the dangers inherent in it. It went further and did something positive by bringing all Muslim organisations together and putting forward jointly a common scheme for preserving national unity and winning freedom, with due regard to Muslim interests.

A section of the Muslim press did raise the issue of representative character of the Conference arguing that Muslim League was not invited. Spokesperson of the Conference took note of it and responded in the following words:

We have been particularly taken to task for not inviting the representatives of the All India Muslim League to the Conference. It is, therefore, contended by some publicists that the All parties Independent Muslim conference is unrepresentative of the Indian Muslim opinion and uncalled for in the present circumstances.

Jafri Mohammed in a forceful response explained the reasons why Muslim League was not invited. Firstly, it was not participating in the freedom struggle. Secondly, it stood for Partitioning of the country as it believed in the Two-Nation theory. Thirdly, it represented ‘haves’ of the Muslim society only.

It is on such vital and decisive issues that the organisers of the Conference invariably find themselves at variance with the leaders and promoters of the All India Muslim League and it is to define these objectives in concrete terms that the All Parties Independent Muslim Conference is being convened in Delhi.

The Muslims against Partition stressed the fact that Muslim organisations which joined hands under Azad Muslim Conference were individually weaker than the League as separate entities. But the position reversed with their joining hands under Azad Muslim Conference. The Muslim League was naturally alarmed and attacked it from the day of its inception. In fact holding of this Conference was itself,

a challenge to the League and threatened the position of Mr Jinnah and his satellites. It also checked the lying propaganda of British imperialists who sought to represent to the world outside the opinion of the League as the voice of Mussalmans of India. For both these achievements the main credit goes to Mr Allah Bakhsh.

Leading newspapers from four corners of the country commented editorially on the Conference. The Hindustan Times, Delhi, in an editorial described the Conference as,

a far more representative gathering of Indian Muslims than the
Lahore Conference whose decision has been the provocation for its being convened. By trying to commit Indian Muslims to a cause so fatal as the division of the country on communal lines the Lahore session of the League has roused all the latent feelings of patriotism and love of liberty within the community of which today's conference has become the focussing point. Sponsored by seven powerful organisations of Muslims and attended by delegates from all over the country, today's conference is more competent to reflect the minds of the masses of Indian Muslims than the gathering of Nawabs and Knights, reactionaries and self-seekers toadies at Lahore, which has brought dishonour on the community and given a handle to British Imperialists to perpetuate foreign rule. The insensate lengths to which Mr. Jinnah and his colleagues have carried their hatred of the Congress has brought about its inevitable reaction and it will not be long before the better mind of the community rises up in revolt and repudiates a leadership which has subordinated the interests of the community and country alike to feelings of personal rancour and spite. 206

According to Hitvada, Nagpur,

The All India Independent Muslim Conference which met at Delhi is an event of great political significance... Though it could not be claimed that the Conference was fully representative of the Muslims of India, yet it cannot be denied that it was at least representative of those Muslims of India who were outside the influence of the Muslim League. Important Muslim organisations like the Bengal Krishak Proja Party, the Jamiat Ulama, the Majlis-Ahrar and the Mominis were represented in the Conference. The Presidential address of the Conference, delivered by Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh, ex-Premier of Sind, was a fitting reply to the recent propaganda of the Muslim League. The resolutions passed by the Conference state the political standpoint of the Independent Muslims without ambiguity or equivocation. 207

Independent India edited by M. N. Roy wrote,

We welcome the mobilization of Muslim opinion against the anti-national scheme for the Partitioning of the Indian nation... From all reports it appears that the Azad Muslim Conference held recently at Delhi was a very successful conference. 208

Commenting on the Conference, The Bombay Chronicle wrote in an editorial that,

Rarely has there been in Delhi so huge a gathering displaying mass enthusiasm on a scale among Muslims which was known only in the Khilafat days. There was practically no opposition to the official resolution— in fact the opposition such as it was from the young radicals who wished to go much further than the resolutions themselves. After this conference it can no more be claimed by the Muslim League that it represents Muslim opinion. Whatever may be the nature and extent of the following behind Mr. Jinnah, it has now been made clear that there is vast body of Muslims and Muslim organisations who think differently... One could see at the conference that all provinces in the country were represented. In fact all the important Muslim organisations in the country, with the exception of the Muslim League, were identified with the objects of the conference. Naturally Congress Muslims, though they did not keep away from it, refrained from taking any prominent part, for they were anxious that independent Muslim organisations which were for the first time trying the experiment of joint discussion should take the lead. The discussion showed that Muslim opinion was only waiting for an opportunity to assert itself. The blunder committed by Mr. Jinnah in forcing the Pakistan issue served to unite Muslim ranks in solid opposition to the threatened disruption of the country. 209 [Emphasis added]

Anand Bazar Patrika of Calcutta underlined the fact that Muslim League was used to making claim of being the sole representative body of the Muslims and sole custodian of their rights and privileges. However, the deliberations of Azad Muslim Conference had proved that this Conference was far more representative body of Muslims and a far more zealous advocate of Muslim rights and interests. Decrying the British attitude towards patriotic Muslims it wrote:

It is quite possible that the British Government will ignore the opinion of the Azad Conference, as they did regarding the claims of the nationalist Muslims to be represented at the Round Table Conference, even by one person. Already Lord Zetland has given the certificate of sole agency for Indian Mussalmans to the League, and there is little doubt that there will be no change in the old tactics. But we may all take it for granted that the British
Government will not be convinced. They will further be strengthened in their attitude by the Pact that Sir Subhas Chandra Bose has made with the Muslim League, letting down the nationalist Muslims.

The Searchlight from Patna wrote that in Azad Muslim Conference, Mr. Jinnah has got his reply. The deadly blow he had aimed at the motherland has at last recoiled on his own head. In the madness of his vanity and in the frenzy of his arrogance, he had sought veritably to betray his motherland and his community. That has received a check. He had sought to sully the honour of the brave and patriotic Mussalims of India for the sake of his own exaltation to the status of the supreme dictator by exposing his community to the world as enemies of the freedom of their own country. As an inevitable reaction he has himself been exposed to others. His claim has been repudiated. The voice of the nationalist Mussalims of India has spoken through the Azad Muslim Conference at Delhi and it has spoken repudiation of all that Mr. Jinnah has been saying. This voice is unmistakable, for it is in tune with one of the noblest sentiments that God has implanted in the heart of man. Say what Mr. Jinnah's hypnotised henchmen may, the nationalist Muslims who have found their voice will no more be silenced by their coax or cajole. The death-knell of Muslim reactionarism has begun to ring. It is also the herald of the birth of a new League—a truly representative organisation of the Mussalms as an integral component of the Indian nation which will strive to unite and not disrupt the forces that have united in a stigmatic whole through the centuries that have gone by.

Lauding the patriotism of Azad Muslim Conference it said:

The resolution that has been adopted by the Azad Muslim Conference at Delhi leaves absolutely no room for ambiguity. It is the clearest reiteration of the reality of Indian nationhood. It is a ringing demand for the independence of India as a whole. It is a clarion call to the Mussalms of India to merge themselves in the bigger life of the nation and to fight shoulder to shoulder with all others who inhabit this country for freedom of them all.

It lauded the leadership of Allah Bakhsh and suggested that the leaders of the Delhi Conference should now go to the masses and help them to recognise their own strength.

Despite a promising and historic Azad Muslim Conference of April/May 1940, the tempo could not be built in the coming couple of years. Many factors were responsible for it. Involvement of Allah Bakhsh in local Sind politics which was inherently unpredictable and intriguing always, kept away this master brain of the project of Muslims against Partition confined to Sind. He was appointed Premier of Sind on March 7, 1941. Simultaneously, hostile attitude of the British rulers, non-cooperative response from the Congress and attacks by the Hindutva camp made this movement almost non-functional. Allah Bakhsh admitted in February 1942 that “unforeseen circumstances” had made the whole movement inactive but assured that a meeting of the Board would be called on February 27 and 28 at Calcutta.

This meeting could take place in Delhi in November 1942 only. It came out with a resolution which read:

This meeting of the Azad Muslim Board calls upon the people of India to realise their duty to the country and community in this grave crisis and concentrate all their efforts towards the consolidation of inter-communal unity and trust. India is the common motherland of Hindus, Muslims and others. All have the duty to promote and secure its welfare. It is, therefore, the special responsibility of Mussalms and their organisations to expose the utter hollowness of the British plea that Indian Muslims don’t want independence and national Government. This is the more incumbent on them when it is remembered that the menace of war threatens more imminently the provinces with a Muslim majority.

This meeting of the Azad Muslim Board therefore appeals to Mussalms to mobilise public opinion effectively to press the demand for a declaration of independence with immediate transfer of power to the people and the establishment of a Provisional Coalition Government.

The Azad Muslim Board also passed a resolution to the effect that a deputation be sent to the United Nations, Britain, United States, Russia and China, to acquaint them with the Indian situation. By another resolution the Board condemned the dismissal of Allah Bakhsh as Premier of Sind “in spite of the enjoyment of confidence of a majority of the members of the Sind Legislature.”

The Azad Muslim Board reiterated the fact that it represented the vast majority of Muslims who were artisans and socially
When Lord Amrey, Secretary of State of India doubted the credentials of its being representative of Indian Muslims the following statement was issued by Shaukatullah Ansari, Secretary of the All-India Independent Muslim Conference:

The cabled report of Mr. Amery’s reply to M/s. Sorensen and Silverman, M.P.’s relating to the Independent Muslim Parties’ Federation commonly known as the All-India Azad Muslim Conference is more misleading than it appears to be...It is true that the League voices the political opinion of a considerable body of Indian Muslims even today. But the Azad Muslims’ Federation claims to voice the political and religious opinion of a more considerable body of Muslims.

The contemporary records show that the Azad Muslim Conference was the biggest conclave of Indian Muslims held against the Two-Nation theory and divisive politics of the Muslim League. Importantly, it happened immediately after Muslim League’s passing of Pakistan resolution at Lahore. This Conference proved once again that a large section of Muslims did not subscribe to the Two-Nation theory and they were ready to challenge the politics of Muslim League head on.

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154 See Bright, Jagat S., **India’s nationalist No 1: Mr Allah Bux**, Hero Publications, Lahore, 1943, p. 28.
155 Bright, Jagat S., **India’s nationalist No 1: Mr Allah Bux**, Hero Publications, Lahore, 1943, pp. 31-2.
156 Malkani, K. R., **The Sindh Story**, Allied, Delhi, 1984, p. 119.
157 The Statesman, Calcutta, May 2, 1940.
158 The Hindustan Times, April 25, 1940.
159 According to records available with the reception committee of the Conference, the number of delegates from major provinces was as follows: United Provinces 357, Punjab 155, Bihar 123, Bengal 105, N.W.F. Province 35, Sind 82, Baluchistan 45, Bombay 60, C. P. 12, Madras 5, Orissa 5, Ajmer, Mewar 12, Assam 25, Delhi 112, Indian States 12. The Hindustan Times, April 28, 1940.
161 The Bombay Chronicle, April 27, 1940.
162 The Tribune, Lahore, April 23, 1940.
163 National Herald, April 23, 1940.
CHAPTER 6

Allah Bakhsh Confronts British Rulers

Apart from leading the Indian Muslims for an all-inclusive united India against the communal politics of Muslim League, Allah Bakhsh chose to challenge the totalitarian British rule in India. The Congress call to the British to Quit India in August 1942 stirred the whole nation. Allah Bakhsh was the Premier of Sind during the eventful days during this Movement as head of the Ittehad Party (Unity Party) which was not a Muslim party but represented all communities and sections of Sind. Allah Bakhsh and his party were not part of the Indian National Congress but when British Prime Minister Winston Churchill made a derogatory reference to the Indian freedom struggle and the Quit India Movement in a speech in the British Parliament, Allah Bakhsh renounced in protest all titles conferred by the British Government.

Allah Bakhsh in a letter dated September 19, 1942 informed Viceroy, Linlithgow (Victor Alexander John Hope Governor-General and Viceroy of India 1936-1943) that he had decided to renounce his titles of Khan Bahadur and Order of the British Empire (OBE). His communication read:

I beg to inform Your Excellency that I have decided to renounce both the honours I hold from the British Government as I feel I cannot consistently with my views and conviction retain them any longer.\textsuperscript{218}

It further said:

India has been struggling for the national freedom for a long time past. Upon the outbreak of the present war it was hoped that under the very principles and ideology, in defence of which Allies were waging in a titanic conflict, India would be made free and participate in the world struggle as a free country. Convinced as I am that India has every right to be and that the people of India should have conditions in which they could live in peace and harmony, the declarations and actions of the British Government have made it clear that, instead of giving their cooperation to the various Indian parties and communities in settling their differences and parting with power to the people of the land and allowing
them to live happily in freedom and mould the destinies of their country according to their birthright, the policy of the British Government has been to continue their imperialistic hold on India and persist in keeping her under subjugation, use the political and communal differences for propaganda purposes, and crush the national forces to serve their own imperialistic aims and intentions.  

Allah Bakhsh concluded his letter with the following words:

The latest speech delivered by Winston Churchill in the House of Commons has caused the greatest disappointment to all men of goodwill who wish to see rendered to India justice which is long due to her. As that hapless pronouncement withholds such justice from India and adds to the volume of evidence that Britain has no desire to give up her imperialistic hold on India, I feel I cannot retain the honour I hold from the British Government which in the circumstances have arisen I cannot but regard as token of British imperialism.

Allah Bakhsh's above letter was in response to the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's speech in the House of Commons delivered on September 10, 1942, denouncing the Quit India Movement and Congress led by MK Gandhi. According to Churchill:

The Indian Congress Party does not represent all India; it does not even represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organisation built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests... The Congress Party has now abandoned the policy in many respects of non-violence... and has come into the open as a revolutionary movement designed to paralyse communications by rail and telegraph and generally to promote disorder, looting of shops and sporadic attacks on the Indian police accompanied from time to time by revolting atrocities—the whole having attention or at any rate effect of hampering the defence of India against the Japanese invader who stands on the frontiers of Assam and also upon the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal.

He went on to the extent of alleging that, These activities by the Congress Party have been aided by Japanese fifth column work on a widely extended scale and with special direction to strategic points. It is noteworthy, for instance, that communications of the Indian forces defending Bengal, the Assam frontiers have been specially attacked. In these circumstances the Viceroy and the Government of India with the unanimous support of the Viceroy's council, the great majority of which are Indians patriotic and wise—have felt it necessary to proclaim and suppress the central and provincial organs of this association which has become committed to hostile and criminal courses. Mr. Gandhi and other principal leaders have been interned...

Churchill further declared that "many martial races, divided by unbridgeable gulfs from Hindu Congress, will never consent to be ruled by it." There is no doubt that the British rulers were shocked by this public pronouncement of Allah Bakhsh. Since Allah Bakhsh did not resign from his office, it made it a more complicated issue for the British rulers. For them it was ' tiresome', 'a nuisance', 'unfortunate' and 'embarrassing'. They wanted to dismiss him immediately. But the problem was, "all this will look a little unreal if the world hears that a Prime Minister has been dismissed for returning his O. B. E."

Sind Governor Hugh Dow tried to coerce Bakhsh into resigning. When the latter did not oblige, Dow finally dismissed him on October 10 declaring that Bakhsh no longer possessed the Governor's confidence. It was the only instance during the British rule in India when head of a provincial government was removed for renouncing his titles.

The dismissal of Allah Bakhsh created an embarrassing situation for the British Government in the House of Commons. Amery, Secretary of State India and Burma, replying to a question in the House of Commons regarding the displacement of the Muslim Premier of Sind, Allah Bakhsh, while referring to the October 10 communique issued by the Governor of Sind, said:

I had of course been consulted on the situation created by the Premier's publication made in September of his letter to the Viceroy and had agreed as to the impropriety in the light of it, of his continuing in office, but the final decision to dismiss him was taken by the Governor only after a personal discussion, which owing to the Premier's absence from Sind could not take place until October 10.
When asked by the Labour M. P. Sorensen whether the reason for the dismissal of this particular Muslim Premier was the return of the titles conferred upon him, Amery replied:

No. That was an indication of his general attitude which was one of direct disapproval of the measures taken by the Government of India to restore order in a grave crisis and the complete identification in his published statement of himself with the attitude of the Congress.226

Even the press in Britain expressed its anger on this brazen removal of Allah Bakhsh. This action of the Sind administration was described as staggering. Two prominent British papers *The New Statesman* and *The Nation* wrote editorials decrying the abjectly subordinate position of provincial ministries which turned ministries into British puppets.227 The Indian press, generally, welcomed the daring decision of Allah Bakhsh. It was regarded as an impressive expression of the growing hostility in India to the British imperialism. According to an editorial in *The Bombay Chronicle* it was no personal vendetta but in national cause that Allah Bakhsh surrendered the titles:

As President of the Azad Muslim Conference he had been bitterly disappointed at the British Government's failure to give India the freedom for which they claimed to wage the present war. But their declaration to India and their doings here thereafter made it clear to the Premier that instead of giving their co-operation to various Indian parties and communities in setting their differences and parting with power to the people of the land the policy of the British Government has been to use political and communal differences for propaganda purposes and crush the national forces to serve their own imperialist aims.228

The dismissal of Allah Bakhsh Government in 1942 and his subsequent murder in 1943 by the goons hired by the Muslim League paved the way for entry of Muslim League in Sind. It is not known generally that after the dismissal of Allah Bakhsh government in 1942 in Sind, the British Governor appointed a coalition of Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha which was led by VD Savarkar at that time to form a new government in Sind. In fact, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha ran coalition governments in Bengal and NWFP also in the same period. In Sind one could see the open ganging up of the British rulers, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha in achieving the political liquidation of Allah Bakhsh and his kind of anti-communal politics. The British rulers admitted that the removal of Allah Bakhsh as Premier of Sind paved the way for growth of Muslim League in Sind. “There has undoubtedly been a great extension of League membership in Sind since the discomfiture of Allah Bakhsh.”229

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227 Ibid., p. 96.
228 Ibid., p. 97.
230 Ibid., p. 99.
234 Ibid.
235 *The Hindustan Times*, May 16, 1943.
CHAPTER 7

Murder of Allah Bakhsh

Allah Bakhsh was murdered on May 14, 1943 by hired assassins. According to the First Information Report, Allah Bakhsh was killed on the outskirts of Shikarpur town of Sind Province, when he was returning to his house in a tonga (horsecart) from the small Begari Canal, where he had gone to see a certain pir (holy man) who was found to be absent. He was accompanied by his friends Nabi Bakhsh Phulpoto and Ghulam Rasul Jhulan. A group of three assailants fired upon the tonga when it entered the town. Allah Bakhsh received two revolver shot wounds in the chest and died on his way to hospital while some of his companions were hurt.

The funeral of Allah Bakhsh took place in Shikarpur on May 15, 1943. According to contemporary press report a procession of more than 10,000 persons which included members of all communities, accompanied the body to the burial ground. Shikarpur and other towns of Sind observed hartal. Several local newspapers did not take out editions as homage to the deceased.

He twice became the Premier of Sind. He first became Premier in 1937 after the defeat of the Hidayatullah Cabinet and continued to be Premier until the beginning of 1939. Toward the end of the same year he came back in the Ministry of Mir Bundeh Ali Khan Talpur as a minister as a result of the Azad Pact. At the beginning of 1940, the Mir Ministry fell and, Allah Bakhsh again became Premier with the support of the Congress Party. He continued till he was removed from office for renouncing his titles in 1942.

Allah Bakhsh's murder created a sensation not only in Sind but throughout the country. The Hindustan Times described him as one of the finest of Sindhis, one of the truest of Musalmans, one of the noblest sons of India who loved his peasants for he loved the land; and he used to wear khaddar even in the twenties, for he loved the poor. Both the Hindus and Muslims looked up to him as a leader. With an ability unusual for a Sindhi Muslim, he was a great Finance Minister, and could play with his figures like a juggler. He
had an all-India mind and in the midst of division and strife, pinned his faith on an independent united India, and dreamt the dream of the united State of Asia in the years to come. He was the first President of the Azad Muslim Conference and laboured for a united Muslim front for the freedom of the country. He was the first Premier to challenge the arbitrary exercise of the Governor's power and the first to be dismissed for honest expression of opinion. During the last six months he led a quiet life, hoping for better days to come. But he had made many enemies and knew that he was shadowed. He had been warned several times, but with a rare courage, born of a good and fearless heart, he went about unattended and alone wherever he was called. But no one had imagined that the end would be so soon.

The same newspaper in an editorial described his murder as a 'national calamity'. In the following words,

Allah Bakhsh was a firm nationalist in his convictions. After he was freed from the shackles of office he threw himself with even greater zeal into the task of promoting national unity and counteracting the separatist tendencies of communally-minded organisations...had he lived, he would have undoubtedly been of great service to his province and to his country in this task of bringing the different communities, together.

This was the second time that an attempt was made to murder Allah Bakhsh, the first having been made by an untraced assailant at Hardoi, in the U.P. in March, 1940. He was 43 years old at the time of murder. Incidentally, Allah Bakhsh was the third Sind law-maker to be shot dead. The other two were H.S. Pamman, who was killed near Sukkur, and Sitaldas Perumal, who was shot dead in his village near Mirpurkhas both in Sind.

The Times of India recalled that Allah Bakhsh created a country-wide sensation last September when he renounced his titles of Khan Bahadur and O.B.E. as a protest against the British Government's policy in India. Mr. Allah Bakhsh was later removed from his office of Premier by the Governor as he no longer had the Governor's confidence.

A prominent English daily from eastern India editorially wrote:

Mr. Allah Bakhsh was one of the most vigorous personalities, endowed with a high sense of duty and rare courage of conviction, who easily commanded the respect and admiration of all, even of those who differed from him on some or other public questions...If an intercommunal settlement is reached it could only be through the efforts of men like Mr. Allah Bakhsh who have the courage to do the right thing and the backbone to face opposition...A life so full of promise has been cut short. And India is much poorer today by the death of the young man of 42 whose sturdy patriotism and devotion to duty would be cherished long after the present unhappy situation has ended and India has come into her own. The manner of his death, mourned by all sections of his countrymen, should serve, as a warning to all as to the serious danger of seeking to inflame the fanatical passions of the multitude by the threat of bloodshed to political opponents, as was unfortunately done at the last Delhi session of the Muslim League...Allah Bakhsh is dead, but the sincerity of his conviction lives and Indian unity and freedom can only be built on respect for that quality.

Homages came pouring in from friends and foes. C. Rajagopalachari in his message said:

Numberless friends all over the country will feel the grief along with the bereaved family. We have to remember that sometimes public service gets paid in this manner. India has lost one of her most ardent and self-sacrificing spirits; one who may have probably played a great part in her future.

Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, Premier of Sind remembered him as "colleague and friend" and "one of the cleverest men in Sind" who had played a very important part in the destinies of this Province. "He had a great future before him still which, unfortunately, has come to a tragic close..."

Saifuddin Kitchlew, a prominent patriotic Muslim mourned:

At this critical period of the freedom movement in the country the death of a man like Mr. Allah Bakhsh is a thundering blow to the forces of nationalism. Mr. Allah Bakhsh was a thorough going nationalist. Mr. Allah Bakhsh is dead but his work will remain.

S. A. Barelvi, editor of The Bombay Chronicle treated his death as national loss. According to him Allah Bakhsh in a very short time, had achieved much and his death at the age of 42 had cut short a
career of increasing usefulness in the service of the country. Dr Khan Saheb, ex-Premier of NWFP paid homage to him as a great nationalist and not only of Sind but the whole of India.

R. K. Siddhwa, a renowned Sind Congress leader who had worked with Allah Bakhsh recalled that,

Allah Bakhsh possessed remarkable qualities. Honest, straightforward, he sincerely believed in Hindu-Muslim unity... He had no special educational qualifications but he had plenty of acumen, intelligence and commonsense. He was a first-class parliamentarian and was a match in debate to any trained legislator.

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, editor of Zamindar, a prominent Urdu journal from Lahore described murder of Allah Bakhsh as an act of terrorism by intolerant forces. He said:

It was a duel between the argument and the bullet. Extraordinary efforts should be made in this connection because if a person can be murdered on the basis of differences of views and creeds then the other leaders also cannot escape the revoler, for if once argument gives place to bullet then the leader of no party can be safe. If this terrorism, of which the beginning has been made with this tragedy, is not stopped, its end would prove a permanent menace.

Kiran Sankar Roy, leader of Bengal Congress remembered him as one of the important Muslim leaders to question the claim of the Muslim League to be the only organisation to speak on behalf of the Muslims of India. A political rival of Allah Bakhsh and a prominent Muslim League leader of Sind, Khan Bahadur Muhammad Ayub Khuhro (Revenue Minister, Sind), who was alleged to have planned Allah Bakhsh’s murder, also came out with a condolence message which read:

Mr. Allah Bakhsh's death is a definite loss as it removes from the political field a man of exceptional ability and unusual charm. The dastardly deed that snatched him from his dear ones and friends deserves to be thoroughly condemned and the heartfelt sympathy of every one will go to the members of the bereaved family.

Pro-British and Muslim League press was quick to declare that "there is nothing communal or political in the murder. It is believed that the crime was the culmination of a personal quarrel." It was emphasised that since during Allah Bakhsh's premiership Syed Sibghatullah Shah Pir Pagaro, leader of Hurs was hanged, these were his followers who murdered Allah Bakhsh out of revenge. However, there were contrary facts available which made it clear that it was Sind Muslim League which organised this murder as Allah Bakhsh was proving to be a great hurdle to its politics at the all India level.

There were reports in the contemporary press which linked the murder to the Muslim League. According to Hindi daily Prabhat Allah Bakhsh’s was a political murder. “The foes of Allah Bakhsh depicted him as the enemy of Islam. This murder is lit by communal madness.” Another newspaper, Vir Bharat wrote, “whether this is a political murder or not, the fact cannot be ignored that the hymn of hate sung by Mr. Jinnah is responsible for such happenings.” The prominent English daily from Lahore, The Tribune (May 15, 1943) specifically stated that,

Late Mr. Allah Bakhsh was the most powerful opponent of the League in Sind and, consequently, it becomes difficult to dissociate the foul outrage which has sent a chill throughout the country, from the latter-day tendency of the League leaders to condemn their co-religionists who differed from them not merely as opponents but as traitors to the community. Such preaching can have only one effect and the murder of Mr. Allah Bakhsh is a crime for which many besides those who actually took part in the murder have to answer.

In the light of the linkages of the Muslim League leaders with the killers of Allah Bakhsh the Sind British administration had to initiate Second Allah Bakhsh Murder Case against Muslim League leader Muhammad Ayub Khuhro, his brother, Haji M. Nawaz and three others. They were charged under Section 120-B read with Section 302 Indian Penal Code (IPC) for having been parties to a criminal conspiracy to commit the murder of Allah Bakhsh. They were also charged under Sections 109 and 302 IPC for having abetted the commission of the said murder. It was tried by sessions judge B. B. Paymaster. While acquitting all the accused he made the following significant observation in his judgment (August 3, 1945).

No criminal offence has been proved against any of the accused,
though I do not agree with them that the whole prosecution case is necessarily false and concocted. I have only held the charges to be not proven and have given the accused the benefit of the doubt.\footnote{248}

As regards Khan Bahadur Ayub Khuhro, Judge Paymaster's conclusion in the judgment was that though the prosecution case against him had not been proved beyond reasonable doubt the trial had not completely cleared him of all suspicion of complicity in the crime. The judgment went on to mention certain items of evidence against him which had not been satisfactorily explained by the defence.\footnote{249} Thus despite the fact that the prosecution case was not "necessarily false and concocted" and Khuhro was not clear of "all suspicion of complicity in the crime", the Muslim League leaders were acquitted.

The prosecution story in brief was that Khan Bahadur Khuhro and his brother Mohamad Nawaz conspired to have Allah Bakhsh murdered by the Hurs because of keen political rivalry. The Khuhro brothers, it was alleged, entrusted the job to Daresh, head of Khan Bahadur Khuhro's servants about two years before the murder, promising to pay a reward of Rs 12,000 to Hurs if the murder was carried out. Daresh summoned a Hur gang headed by absconder Mohabat—on whose head there was still a prize of Rs 500. The conspiracy was hatched in one of Khan Bahadur Khuhro's fields and, according to Daresh's statement, he communicated to the Hurs Khan Bahadur Khuhro's offer. Daresh is said to have told the Hurs that Allah Bakhsh was an enemy of Khan Bahadur Khuhro and the latter would pay Rs 12,000 if Allah Bakhsh was done away with. The Hurs accepted the offer and killed him. The prosecution further alleged that after the murder, Daresh was sent into hiding at the instance of Khuhro brothers. The political motive alleged by the prosecution rested on the theory that Allah Bakhsh, although in minority in the legislature, was in the opinion of Khan Bahadur Khuhro, still capable of overthrowing the League Ministry and that Khan Bahadur Khuhro, being a strong devotee of the Muslim League, would be interested in getting Allah Bakhsh out of the way. This political motive was refuted by Khan Bahadur Khuhro in his statement in which he said that he and Allah Bakhsh were on the best of terms socially and used to dine together when they visited each other.

The judge was of the opinion that despite a strong prosecution case there were no independent witnesses to prove the conspiracy. Delivering the judgment Judge Paymaster said that the prosecution had not been able to produce sufficient evidence against the accused that they conspired with Daresh, their servant, to get Allah Bakhsh killed. Adding that the approver's evidence was not truthful while corroborative evidence of the other witnesses was weak, the judgment brought to an end one of the most sensational conspiracy trials in Indian criminal history in which a political motive was alleged as the motivating force for the murder.\footnote{250}

The pro-Muslim League press naturally hailed the judgment. The pro-Congress and anti-Khuhro press emphasised the adverse remarks contained in the judgment against Khuhro and \textit{The Sind Observer} of Karachi demanded in an editorial that Khuhro in the light of adverse comments was unfit to hold political office again and should retire from public life. However, he served as a minister again for several years in various governments.\footnote{251}

It is true that linkages of the murderers to Muslim League, though well-known, could not be legally proved in the court of the sessions judge. Surprisingly, the state did not go in for appeal against this judgment in higher courts. However, the British rulers who had better access to information, were convinced of the complicity of Ayub Khuhro in the crime. Archibald Wavell Viceroy of India (1943-1947) in a secret communication to Secretary of State of India and Burma, Leo Amrey on July 11, 1944, described Sind Muslim League leader Muhammad Ayub Khuhro as "a somewhat disreputable Minister who is generally supposed to have had a good deal to do with the murder of Allah Bakhsh."\footnote{252}

Wavell hinted at the involvement of Muhammad Ayub Khuhro once again while referring to a discussion of his with the Governor of Sind in his diary dated August 24, 1945. He wrote:

We spoke of the acquittal of his ex-minister Khuhro, who will now probably become Premier before long, to be suspected of murdering one's enemies, or even to be known to have done it, is a qualification rather than a hindrance in Sind politics.\footnote{253}
The Viceroy in another secret communication to Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India and Burma, wrote:

In Sind the acquittal of Khan Bahadur Khuhro, an ex-minister who was charged with complicity in the murder of Allah Bakhsh, a former Premier, seems to have caused a sensation; and it is reported in the newspapers that the present Premier, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, and his colleagues met Khuhro at the railway station on his arrival in Karachi and took him out in a procession. Sind politics are most peculiar and although Khuhro is well known to be a scoundrel, he may easily be included in a Ministry again.\footnote{The Hindustan Times, May 16, 1943}

There is a meaningful parallel between the acquittal of the pro-Muslim League accused in the Allah Bakhsh Murder Case in 1945 and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar’s acquittal in the Gandhi Murder Case in 1949. These were Khan Bahadur Khuhro and his brother Mohammed Nawaz (both leaders of the Muslim League) who were discharged of the accusation of conspiring to kill Allah Bakhsh.

In the Allah Bakhsh Murder Case, despite the statements of two approvers (Daresh and Mohammed Khan) and in the Gandhi Murder Case, despite Digambar Badge’s testimony (that it was Savarkar who played the most important role in the conspiracy to kill Gandhi), the persons who were accused of conspiring were released because there was no ‘independent evidence’ to prove the conspiracy. The law demanded that when conspiracy was being hatched, and if it was to be proved in a court of law, there should be corroboration by some independent witness. Of course, it would be an impossible task to find an ‘independent evidence’ when conspiracies are hatched in the utmost secret surroundings. However, this was the law and persons accused of conspiring to kill Gandhi (Savarkar) and Allah Bakhsh (Khuhro brothers) were let off.

Allah Bakhsh needed to be eliminated because he was able to muster massive support from common Muslims throughout India against the scheme of Pakistan. Moreover, Allah Bakhsh as a great secularist with massive support in Sind and opposed to the formation of Pakistan could prove to be the greatest stumbling block in the physical formation of Pakistan as without Sind, the ‘Islamic State’ in the west of the country could not have materialised. His ideas against religious nationalism were a cause of serious concern for Muslim League. Only his physical removal could silence him and eliminate the most formidable Muslim leader of the anti-Pakistan movement.