

## PART TWO

### Majority Government and Minority Rule

*Conceivably, if the system of representation had been wholly non-communal [i.e. joint-electoral] a beginning at least might have been made of inter-communal co-operation for political purposes. But representation of communities undermined the foundations of parliamentary government of the British type. The result was a steady growth of communal self-consciousness in politics as in everything else.*

Reginald Coupland, 1944.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936-1942: The Constitutional Problem in India, Part III* (London, O.U.P., 1944), p. 17, in J. Chiriyankandath, 'Democracy' Under the Raj: Elections and Separate Representation in British India,' *op. cit.*, p. 59.

## CHAPTER 4

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### The Communalisation of Provincial Politics

The previous chapters have shown that the creation of Sind as a province was the result of the processes of activating the Muslims' sense of the political importance of their religious and ethnic identities. The tendency to perceive the political environment increasingly through communally-oriented lenses was self-perpetuating and expansive. As politicised religious identity became the most important framework of provincial politics, communities' elites interpreted and re-interpreted events entering the political arena from within the context of how the events served or threatened the interests of their religious communities. This chapter will show that this situation produced a danger since representatives of politicised religious communities, emphasising their distinctiveness from other communities, used the structure of the Assembly as a tool to serve their own functions. In doing so, they ran the risk of destroying the structure itself.<sup>1</sup> The nature of the approach of many of the elites (that the Assembly was the forum to consolidate their own bases of power within their community) vitiated the basic assumption of democracy. In constructing representation on the basis of religious identity, the raj had in effect redistributed political power. The Assembly operated within the structures of this altered distribution of power, but the processes of ministry-making offered opportunities for power to be again redistributed.

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<sup>1</sup> A useful case-study portraying the destructive characteristics of over-emphasising communal identity in democratic political forums is R. Khan's 'Charminar: Communal Politics and Electoral Behaviour in Hyderabad City', in S.P Varma and Iqbal Narain (eds), *Fourth General Election in India*, Vol. 2 (Bombay, Orient Longmans, 1970).

The establishment of the Sind Assembly and its institutions was a novelty for all but a handful of the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). Few had experience in modern political institutions. The only training for those who had not been in the Bombay Assembly was the brief Sind Advisory Council (April 1936 - February 1937), which had functioned without any semblance of inter-party politics as an advisory committee under the firm hand of the Governor.<sup>2</sup> The new Assembly was, essentially, a microcosm of the changes which Sindhi society was experiencing in its transition from a society where power had been based upon kinship, caste and religious authority, to that of a modernised, democratic power-sharing arrangement.

The Assembly was the 'state arena' where issues confronting Sindhi society were not only being presented for solution, but were reshaped by the superimposed, non-traditional structure. The processes of the Assembly were in sharp contrast to the traditional power structure in which all participants had clearly-defined roles. In delimiting spheres of representation for respective religious communities through the Communal Award the characteristic of conflict was built into the Assembly's processes by the inherently competitive nature of the institution. For example, the structure of the Provincial Assembly effectively invested an immediate dichotomy of minority versus majority religious groups, and fuelled the competitiveness of elections and the mode of teams or parties competing for the positions of Government. The Provincial Assembly became the arena in which tensions between political groups were expressed in terms of conflict between Hindus and Muslims. The Assembly became a crystallisation of the conflicts occurring within Sindhi society. Importantly, the Assembly had the potential for providing a superstructure for rivalry between religious communities to be acted out. It also had the potential to trigger responses in Sindhi society through the failure or success of elites to protect their communities' interests

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<sup>2</sup> For details of the Sind Advisory Council, see Mitra, *JAR*, Vol.1, January-June 1936, p. 24.

through actions such as legislation. The dynamics of the Sind Assembly promised to be one of considerable fluidity as members of distinct segments developed strategies and rules for playing the parliamentary game from the base of their own traditional sets of cultural values and instincts.

This chapter seeks to establish whether the elected elites were able to carry out the overt functions of office, or if they were too deeply ensnared in the web of an overly politicised sense of their religious identities. To do this, the chapter will assess the first few years of provincial Government in Sind (1937-1939). The historical importance of these years can be located in four themes that will emerge: the first concerns the extent to which a communal orientation was manifested among key groups in the Assembly, the second theme is the involvement of the national organisations of the Congress and the Muslim League in Sind's affairs; while the third theme arises from the involvement of the Muslim League in Sind, and is centred on issues of the divergence of agendas between the Sindhi Muslims and the All-India Muslim League. The fourth theme relates to the consequences that occurred when the expectations of religious communities were not fulfilled in the state arena. Together, the four themes underlie the course for Sind's subsequent politics.

## I

How 'communal' was the perspective with which the political elites approached their roles in the Assembly? The 'minority syndrome' pattern evident in the electoral analysis of the last chapter established that those communities with minority status were more politically activated than majority communities. The processes of redefining political roles within communities, which were informed by fears of a perceived threat to community identities, began to be portrayed on the stage of electoral politics. Such fears were potentialities for communal

antagonism, and when the electoral results were translated into the distribution of political power, these fears came to play influential roles in the arena of provincial administration. In Sind, the expectations of the Muslim political leaders and the fears of the rural Hindu minority set the stage for powerful interactions as the elites acted out their desires to protect or extend the political positions of their respective religious communities.

In Sind, as in other parts of India, the constructions of community had developed separately from the institutional structures of the imperial state. However, those with leadership roles who sought to embed the political identity of their religious communities in the new system of administration were forced to construct their politics to deliver political advantages for those communities. Freitag has argued that:

when north Indian community activists attempted to transfer the successes enjoyed in the public arenas to the state infrastructure, they discovered that this process required more than the development of an ideology. The measure of their success became, implicitly, the degree of concrete state protection extended to important community issues.<sup>3</sup>

This raised the question of the extent to which the Sindhi political elites approached their roles in provincial administration with the goal of providing concrete state protection for their respective religious communities.

The election results generated a dilemma as there was no party with a clear majority. The Sind United Party, the largest in the Assembly, had failed to have either of its leaders (Haroon and Bhutto) elected. The other leading Muslim politicians (Hidayatullah, Majid, Syed and Khuhro) failed to attract a majority of MLAs, while the two minority parties, the Hindu Party (12 members) and the Congress (8 members) refused to coalesce. Thus, while the electoral processes

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<sup>3</sup> Freitag, *Collective Action*, p. 222.

had contributed to the politicisation of religious identity, they had not evolved to a stage where all members of respective religious communities coalesced.

### **The first ministry: Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah 1937-1938**

While the Muslims saw no reason to act collectively as Muslims, the Hindu Party showed it was the only party that had clearly defined its political course.<sup>4</sup> However, it was not simply a party with a clear vision. It was a group of the more dominant rural Hindus that was working to an overtly communal agenda. Led by Bhojsingh Pahlajani (of Sukkur) and Mukhi Gobindram Pritamdas (of Hyderabad) the Hindu Party realised that the failure of the Muslims to unify provided the Party with the opportunity to play the central role in the Sind Government. Pahlalanj and Bhojsingh formulated their conditions for agreeing to a coalition ministry, and at meetings under the auspices of the Sind Hindu Progressive Association, the Party agreed to negotiate with Hidayatullah (who had been offered the Chief Ministership by Graham because of his experience).<sup>5</sup> The Hindu Party's objective in the negotiations was to lock in the Muslim leaders to concretely stated and guaranteed measures to protect Hindus' interests.<sup>6</sup>

In light of the Muslims' political disunity, Hidayatullah had little choice but to accept the Hindu Party's conditions if he were to form a government. Following his acceptance of its conditions, Hidayatullah tried to refashion the alliance of the Hindu Party and his main supporters, the Baluchi *mirs*, into the 'The Sind Democratic Party,' yet the Hindus refused to dissolve their identity as members of the Hindu Party. The Hindu Party's refusal to subsume its identity with the more secular-titled 'Sind Democratic Party' mirrored Jinnah's refusal to merge the UP Muslim League with the Congress (following the election) in exchange for

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<sup>4</sup> Both the Hindu Party and the Muslims ignored the Congress, and it was left to provide the thrust of the Opposition in the Assembly. *BC*, 8 March 1937.

<sup>5</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 22 March 1937, in Chopra, *op. cit.*, p. 262. Sir Lancelot Graham was the Governor of Sind, April 1936 – March 1941.

<sup>6</sup> *BC*, 11 March 1937.

ministerial positions. However, unlike Jinnah (whose refusal to dissolve the UP League resulted in its exclusion from the ministry), the Sindhi Hindus succeeded in their recalcitrance. Both examples reveal the importance that minority community groups placed on maintaining the overt political identity of their communities, and the importance which majority community organisations placed on dissolving it.

The lack of party structure and cohesion revealed the inherent weaknesses in the political outlook of the Sindhi Muslim political elites. The Muslims were in a political void in that there were no issues to direct their political actions. There was no perception of a threat to Muslim political identity or to Islam. The separation of Sind had been the achievement of their goal, and as the majority community they expected power to come their way naturally. Ironically, despite the Muslim orientation of the Sind separation movement, the Muslims were no longer communally cohesive, yet the rural Hindus were.

In contrast, the rural Hindus exhibited a well-defined objective and strategy. The structures of modern democracy in Sind located their political status as a minority, and with this status came fear. The insecurity that provincial status aroused consolidated their political identity to the extent that religious and political identity fused. The immediate result of the Muslims' lack of purpose, and the Hindus' well-defined purpose, was that the 12 rural Hindus were able to force the Muslim Chief Minister of the first Sind ministry to accept the programme and conditions set by the minority religious community. Significantly, the conditions were not of a particular ideological program (such as the socio-economic development of the peasantry or the re-structuring of the agrarian sector), beyond that of extending Hindu interests and curbing Muslim political power.

The perspective of the Hindu Party had been heightened by the reinforcement of a 'minority consciousness' built into the structure of the new provincial Assembly. As previous members of the Bombay Legislative Council, some of the Hindu MLAs had been part of the Hindu majority in that Chamber. However, in the Sind Assembly these same members were reduced to a perpetual minority. The sense of minority-status was reflected in the Hindu Party's activities in rejecting the United Party's invitation (for it contained too many Sind separatist leaders), and demanding the contractual agreement with Hidayatullah's Muslim party. Both instances clearly reveal the Hindu feelings of political insecurity, fear of social domination and loss of cultural identity.

There soon developed a growing unease amongst Muslims as to how far Hidayatullah would go to appease the Hindus. Majid resigned as parliamentary secretary when an Hindu translator was appointed as Director of Public Information ahead of two Muslim candidates.<sup>7</sup> Although Majid later withdrew his resignation, his initial action indicated the level of frustration with the amount of influence which the Hindu Party possessed. The incident came on top of Hidayatullah's agreeing to the Hindu Party's demands to withdraw several bills which Hindus had vehemently opposed; the Tobacco Bill (raising license fees on tobacco sales), the District Police Amendment Act, and the Irrigation Amendment Act.<sup>8</sup> More significant though were his assurances to the Hindu Party that he would replace the system of nominations and separate electorates to district local boards with joint-electoraltes.<sup>9</sup> These measures threatened to weaken considerably the position of Muslims in the urban boroughs. The existing franchise qualified significantly fewer Muslim voters than the more affluent Hindus, and so nominations and separate electorates were vital in maintaining the number of

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<sup>7</sup> *BC*, 5 October 1937.

<sup>8</sup> Sind Fortnightly Report for the First Half of September, 20 September 1937, [Sind Fortnightly Reports are hereafter SFR], L/P&J/5/251, OIOC.

<sup>9</sup> *BC*, 27 August 1937.



positions of Muslims on the local boards. Moreover, the system of nominations performed a crucial role in the distribution of local power amongst the Muslim political elites because it formed an important nexus between the MLAs and the lesser, though still influential, district elites.

Faced with threats to erode their political positions in their own bases, the Muslims in the Opposition mobilised to reach a Muslim alliance in order to outmanoeuvre the Hindu Party and thereby break its control over the Government. Khuhro, Syed and Majid had seen an emasculation of Muslim political strength in the inability of Hidayatullah's ministry to carry through legislation beneficial to Muslims. Now the Hindu Party's attempts, in the abolition of separate electorates and nominations to local boards, threatened to break an important nexus between the Muslim leaderships and their local intermediary clients.

The Muslim alliance of Khuhro, Syed and Majid joined the ministry and its immediate effect was to negate Hidayatullah's reliance upon the Hindu Party. The new Muslim alliance quashed the Hindus' proposed legislation and implemented its own legislation aimed at reducing economic domination by Hindus.<sup>10</sup> Two bills in particular illustrated that communal considerations were the driving force of the Muslim alliance. The Debt Conciliation Bill sought to curtail the *baniyas'* power to charge interest and recover debts, while the Land Alienation Bill was designed to restrict the ownership of agricultural land to Muslims.

The reaction of the Hindu Party underscored the communalism of provincial politics. The Hindu Party firstly advocated a joint 'Hindu Party-Congress' coalition.<sup>11</sup> This was a considerable shift on the part of the Hindu Party from a year

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<sup>10</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 5 November 1937, L/P&J/5/251, OIOC.

<sup>11</sup> Pritamdas was forced to resign when bankrupted in the crash of the cotton market. Vazirani came from Karachi Rural district - notably an area in which rural Hindus were at their weakest population strength in relation to Muslims.

previously when it had spurned the Congress for allowing Sind to be separated. The suggested coalition represented the rural Hindus' recognition that they needed a broader base in order to keep the Muslims in check. To achieve this, they were willing to submerge their significant class and ideological differences with the Congress for the sake of a communal alliance.

The second plank of the Hindu Party's revised strategy was to destabilise the new alliance of the Muslims. Vazirani was able to undermine Syed's and Bakhsh's commitment to the alliance by playing on their frustration with Hidayatullah's failure to achieve anything tangible for the province's Muslims or themselves. Despite the intentions of some of the Muslim leaders, they were unable to sustain any lasting unity and the alliance collapsed. Although Hidayatullah tried to buy back the *zamindars'* support by an impromptu announcement that his Government had decided to postpone the recovery of the Barrage Assessment rates, and with an offer to increase his Cabinet by two more ministers, his ministry was ignominiously defeated in the Assembly and the Government dissolved.<sup>12</sup> The Muslim-majority Government had lasted less than three months. The first Sind ministry, founded on the sands of patronage, floundered on the rocks of communal spite.

The Muslim leaders had sought to exert a collective Muslim power, but the conflicting identities of traditional roles of power resulted in their alliance dissolving, as it had done following the announcement of Sind's separation from Bombay. Conversely, the rural Hindus remained clearly focused on their role of preventing any advance of the Muslims' power. The bills which were proposed, withdrawn, and passed during this first ministry was indicative of the Assembly being used as an extension of politicised religious identity by some groups. The noteworthy feature of Hidayatullah's Government was the manifestation of the

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<sup>12</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 22 March 1938, J/P&J/5/251, OIOC.

Muslims' inability to reach any lasting unity as *Muslims* in a co-operative effort to govern, despite their chaffing at the amount of control the minority Hindus held. The lesson was clear: without unity the Muslims would be dependent upon the Hindus and subject to their conditions. In spite of its simplicity, this message was lost on all but a few of the Muslim leadership. However, the Congress and Muslim League leaders took note, and the effects of their observations became apparent during Sind's second ministry.

## II

### **The second ministry: Allah Bakhsh 1938-39**

With the new ministry emerges the second major theme of the early ministerial era of the incursion of national organisations into provincial affairs. The decision of the Congress to be included in the formation of Sind's second ministry heralded a turning point in the course of Sind's politics. The role of the Congress in the new ministry was to have profound consequences on the relationships between Muslim and Hindu elites. The ministry was formally constructed of an alliance between a faction of the United Party and the Hindu Party. The two groups had fallen short of a majority and could only govern with the support of the eight Congress members. At this juncture the Congress High Command directly entered Sindhi affairs. Vallabhbhai Patel refused to allow the Sindhi Congress to be directly involved in the ministry, but while the Congress was never formally recognised as part of the Government, it established an agreement with Allah Bakhsh that it would provide support to the ministry so long as Bakhsh adhered to the Congress programme.

That the Sind and national Congress had agreed to allow Allah Bakhsh's ministry to function on the basis that he complied with the Congress programme shows an intensification of the pressure by which Muslim MLAs were being

excluded from exercising political authority.<sup>13</sup> Many of the Muslims saw parallels with the Congress and the Hindu Party's dictation to the previous ministry. Both ministries had had a Muslim Chief Minister, but both ministries excluded most Muslim MLAs and were locked into programmes established by non-Muslims. However, one important difference between the Hidayatullah and Bakhsh ministries was that while Hidayatullah's Government had been a coalition with one Hindu group, the Bakhsh Government was now dominated by both of the non-Muslim groups in the Assembly.

At one level the ministerial combination theoretically provided the basis for a successful Sind Government in that it contained components of the main political groups of elite Sindhi society: Muslim landowners of the Sind United Party, the Hindu landlords and *panchayat* representatives of the Hindu Party, and the non-Muslim urban interests in the Congress. Yet the potential of the alliance was at risk from the conflicting agendas of the coalition members, the pressures on the alliance brought by the Congress-Muslim League antagonism at the centre, and the overactive communal identities of local political groups in Sind. The Hindu Party's commitment to Hindu power, the Congress ideology and organisation set by a centrist, national body, and the United Party's lack of its own direction, all posed Bakhsh with a more formidable task than had Hidayatullah's juggling act. The volatility of the mix, combined with the usual interpersonal rivalries which were becoming a distinctive characteristic of Sindhi politics, was underscored by the fact that the Opposition members consisted entirely of Muslims while all the Hindu members of the Assembly supported the Government. Although by no means unified in opposition, the Muslim MLAs were again alarmed about the minority community's control of the Government. Like the

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<sup>13</sup> Ghanshyam Jethanand (Leader of the Sind Congress Assembly Party) to Graham, 21 March 1938, L/P&J/5/251, OIOC.

Congress and the Muslim League High Commands, they too were watching the developments in the Ministry untold with a keen eye.

Allah Bakhsh's ministry sent a clear message that it would indeed follow the Congress line. Bakhsh's first legislation was the standardisation of ministerial salaries to conform with that of Congress provinces, the abolition of nominations to local boards, the abolition of honorary magistracies, and the cancellation of *durbars*.<sup>14</sup> The measures deliberately struck at the Muslim leaders' means of dispensing patronage to their supporters and their displays of status. Moreover, Bakhsh handed control of the ministry to the Congress Parliamentary Board, allowing it to determine how the Government's programme was to be carried out.<sup>15</sup>

It seemed as though Congress would succeed in manipulating Bakhsh. Before long the ministry was releasing political prisoners,<sup>16</sup> withdrawing prosecutions against Congressmen involved in a recent riot,<sup>17</sup> lifting the ban on organisations which had taken part in the last Civil Disobedience Movement,<sup>18</sup> and restoring the pension of Kodumal Bhatia, a Congress 'champion' against the British.<sup>19</sup> Left to themselves, the Muslim ministers would not have taken the action, but did so because they owed their positions to Congress and were required 'to please the Congress Party'.<sup>20</sup> Legislatively too, Bakhsh did what was required of him. By mid-June his Government had carried through 9 bills which Congress had demanded, the most important imposing ceilings on the salaries and allowances of ministers and MLAs, and amended the Removal of

<sup>14</sup> Policy statement of the Allah Bakhsh ministry, 29 March 1938, quoted in *BC*, 30 March 1938.

<sup>15</sup> *BC*, 28 March 1938.

<sup>16</sup> *BC*, 7 and 8 April 1938.

<sup>17</sup> The ministry directed the District Magistrate to drop proceedings against Congressmen arrested for their involvement in the civil disturbance. *BC*, 25 June 1938.

<sup>18</sup> The ministry also lifted the ban on the *Nav Jawan Bharat Subhas* which had been outlawed in the last Civil Disobedience movement. *BC*, 25 June 1938.

<sup>19</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 25 June 1938, L P&J/5/252, OIOC.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Disqualification Bill (to prevent the continued use of parliamentary secretaryships as a means of patronage).<sup>21</sup> Although the Bills had not been without their controversies, it was shortly after their passing that an issue arose which not only threatened to destroy the coalition, but brought into question whether representative government could continue to function in the province. The issue was the revised assessment rates for the Barrage areas.

The Barrage spanned the Indus at Sukkur and was the largest of its type in the world. Its operation brought a revolution in irrigation to previously barren tracts in the north-west and south of Sind. At the time of the Barrage's construction in 1932 there were three million acres under cultivation, yet by 1938-39 this area had increased to four and a quarter million acres. The new cultivable lands produced cotton and wheat, and their output profoundly affected the revenues of Sind. To fund the construction of the Barrage the Government of India and the Bombay Government had agreed that the debt charges were to be met through a graduated increase in revenue from the newly irrigated lands. The agreement had not been easily reached, however, for it had been such a contentious point in the Sind separation debate that the Sindhi Muslim *zamindars* even agreed to an increase in their taxation levels to pay for the Barrage if this was the price for provincial autonomy.<sup>22</sup> The cost of the Barrage had been enormous and to ensure its repayment the British Government wrote into the Government of India Act of 1935 the provision that the Governor of Sind was empowered with the special authority to override any provincial Government action which hindered the debt's repayment.<sup>23</sup>

Graham now sought action from the ministry to increase the Barrage assessments. While Bakhsh was determined to oblige, he soon found that his

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<sup>21</sup> For a full list of the bills, see SFR Second Half of May, 10 June 1938, L/P&J/5/251. OIOC.

<sup>22</sup> A. Haroon to editor, *Times of London*, 21 July 1932.

<sup>23</sup> Section 52 (2), Government of India Act 1935, 26 Geo. V.

coalition was refusing to support him. The prices for crops grown on the Barrage lands were at the time very low (since the cotton market had not yet recovered from the 1937 collapse) and so any increase in taxes would have been highly unpopular and difficult to enforce. The affected *zamindars* and cultivators became restless as rumours of the new taxes spread. Agrarian unrest broke out in the Tando division,<sup>24</sup> and the co-incidental likelihood of remissions being granted to the non-Barrage areas provoked further unrest.<sup>25</sup> At this juncture the Congress stepped into the breach and directed Bakhsh to reject the assessments.<sup>26</sup>

To reject Graham's authority on this matter would cause the assessments to be brought in through the use of his reserve powers under the Government of India Act, an action that would result in the immediate fall of the ministry. Yet to spurn the Congress's directive was to court a similar fate because the Congress members would withdraw their support. However, Bakhsh discovered that he had one last card up his sleeve. It was not a card which he held easily, but once played it triggered a series of events which markedly altered the direction of Sindhi politics.

His card was simple: the further Congress and the Hindu Party threatened to withdraw their support, the more it strengthened the hand of the only other figure likely to be in a position to cobble together a majority: Hidayatullah. As the position of the ministry became more tenuous, defectors from the Sind United Party drifted into Hidayatullah's camp, and his numbers quickly increased. Congress, according to Graham, 'feared him more than any other Greek', a reference to their complete lack of trust in him.<sup>27</sup> Yet, it was not merely a personal dislike of Hidayatullah, or his history of supporting the Government against

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<sup>24</sup> Mitra, *JAR*, 28 May, Vol. I, January-June 1938, p. 277.

<sup>25</sup> *BC*, 5 July 1938.

<sup>26</sup> Ghanshyam Jethanand to Allah Bakhsh, quoted in Graham to Linlithgow, 4 July 1938, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/93, Doc. 69, OIOC.

<sup>27</sup> Graham to Brabourne, 23 July 1938, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/93, Doc. 82, OIOC.

Congress in the Bombay Legislative Council prior to separation, that held the Congress back from an open break with Allah Bakhsh. Hidayatullah had recently joined the Muslim League, and the prospect of the Muslim League coming to power threatened to produce the worst case scenario for the Congress.

The Muslim League was able to find a place in Sind where one had not existed two years earlier. The development reflects the deteriorating relationship between Hindus and Muslims in Sind. There are several reasons why the League was now seen as an asset to the Muslim political elites. Firstly, there was a growing bitterness amongst Muslims over Bakhsh's breaking of the first alliance of Muslims under Hidayatullah. The latter stage of that ministry produced a fragile Muslim bloc which had begun to curtail the influence of the Hindu Party, and the ministry was in the process of introducing legislation favourable to Muslims. The desertion by Bakhsh had resulted in the proposed bills to curb Hindus' power being aborted. Secondly, the utter dependence of a Muslim premier upon the Congress and Hindu Party further angered Muslims. The involvement of Congress alarmed the rural Muslim elites as they feared the potential of the Congress Mass Contact Campaign would undermine their control of the tenants and link the province to an Hindu-dominated Congress.<sup>28</sup>

Thirdly, instrumental in bringing the League to Sind was Abdullah Haroon. He was showing signs of supporting a resurgent League at the centre, brought about by Jinnah's persistent tirades against the Congress and forming pacts with the Punjabi and Bengali premiers. The pacts were the most significant milestones in the League's regenerative period (1935-1940), and allowed Jinnah to represent Bengali and Punjabi Muslims nationally while the premiers represented Muslims

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<sup>28</sup> The rural Muslims' fears had been heightened by the League's propaganda portraying Muslims being suppressed by Congress Governments in the Muslim-minority provinces, particularly Bihar. G.M. Syed, *Struggle for a New Sind* (Karachi, Sind Observer Press, 1949), p. 12-13, and *Daily Gazette*, 22 March 1938, cited in Jones, *Muslim Politics*, p. 142.



within their provinces. Jinnah's closest confidante in Bengal, Mirza A. Ispahani (a leading industrialist and member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly), believed that Sikander signed the pact because it would strengthen his ministry in the face of Congress's Muslim Mass Contact Campaign.<sup>29</sup> Talbot considers that Sikander Hyat Khan (Premier of the Punjab 1937-1942) saw the pact as an opportunity to assume complete control of the fledgling Punjabi League 'thereby removing a potentially dangerous provincial party but clearing the ground for any future attempt to challenge Jinnah's position in national politics.'<sup>30</sup> Gilmartin, on the other hand, believes that Sikander wanted to be loosely linked to the League because this would provide the Unionists with a political symbol of Muslim community that would legitimise the Unionist authority in the eyes of the Punjabi Muslim peasants (since Unionist authority rested upon class, not Islamic, principles).<sup>31</sup> Gilmartin saw the pact emphasising the use of Islam 'as the touchstone of political legitimacy for state power' and clarified that Jinnah, not Sikander, was Indian Islam's final political arbiter.<sup>32</sup>

The two pacts had a considerable impact on Haroon, as did the recent Lucknow session of the All-India Muslim League (October 1937). The session, described by Jinnah as one of the most critical that had taken place in the League's history, established the broad course of the League's direction for the next decade. The essential provision of the session was that Muslims could no longer expect justice or fair play from the Congress, its policy ostensibly targeted at deliberately dividing and weakening Muslims. The enemies of the Muslims were identified as those Muslims who had 'surrendered unconditionally' to the Congress, for it was they (such as Bakhsh) who were corrupting the strength of the Muslims.

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<sup>29</sup> M.A. Ispahani, *Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah as I Knew Him*, second edition (Karachi, Forward, 1966), p. 54.

<sup>30</sup> Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 125.

<sup>31</sup> Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, p. 174.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 180.

The League was quickly able to attract the province's more ambitious Muslim politicians: Haroon, Khuro, Miran Mohammed Shah, Gazdar,<sup>33</sup> Syed and his *pir* bloc, and Hidayatullah and his Baluchi *mir* followers. In line with the central League's and its own agenda the target of the Sind League's activities became Allah Bakhsh. Gazdar and Majid articulated the Muslim elites' level of frustration at the prominence of non-Muslims in the affairs of the Government when they charged Bakhsh with surrendering to the Hindus,<sup>34</sup> and warned that through the connivance of Bakhsh the Muslims were in danger of being wiped out and a '*Ram raj*' established.<sup>35</sup> The antagonisms felt by the Leaguers were further fuelled by taunts such as those of Sidhwa (president, Karachi Congress provincial branch) who ridiculed suggestions that the Muslims might ever unite under the League's banner to form a ministry.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout the summer the League organised branches in the *mofussil* to enrol members and to counteract the Congress propaganda.<sup>37</sup> Before long it claimed that forty new branches had been established with an enrolment of over 15,000 members.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, the recruiters targeted the province's *pirs*. The early branches were established in areas where *pir* activity was greatest. As *pirs* joined the League they were rapidly incorporated into the recruitment and propaganda drives. For example, at public meetings, *pirs* of the stature of the

<sup>33</sup> *BC*, 7 February 1938.

<sup>34</sup> A meeting of the ministerial Coalition Party was broken up by Muslim League demonstrators using the slogan 'Islam in Danger'. *BC*, 30 March 1938. The use of the slogan had its first success by the Muslim League in the Bundelkhand (UP) by-election of July 1937. For details, see M.J. Akbar, *Nehru: The Making of Modern India* (London, Penguin, 1988), pp. 288-289.

<sup>35</sup> Statement of M.H. Gazdar in the Sind Legislative Assembly, 30 March 1938, cited in Mitra, *JAR*, 30 March 1938, January - June Vol. 1, 1938, p. 276.

<sup>36</sup> R.K. Sidhwa (n.d), cited in *BC*, 13 April 1938.

<sup>37</sup> SFR Second Half of May, 10 June 1938 L/P&J/5/252, OIOC.

<sup>38</sup> Majid to Secretary, All-India Muslim League, 30 November 1938, File No. 241, pp. 73-74 (Karachi, Freedom Movement Archives), cited in Ansari, *Sufi Saints*, p. 117.

Makhdum of Multan in the Punjab were brought in to address the crowds.<sup>39</sup> At these meetings the League raised the cry of 'Islam in Danger'<sup>40</sup> and urged Muslims to pressure the Government to enact legislation which would protect them from Hindu money-lenders and land alienation.<sup>41</sup>

Alarmed at the League's incursions into Sind, and with the potential of a Muslim League ministry being achieved because of the intransigence of the local Congress with Allah Bakhsh over his position on the Barrage assessments, Vallabhbhai Patel and Maulana Azad flew to Karachi to direct the Sindhi Congress on dealing with the situation.<sup>42</sup> They arrived after a deadlock had been reached when the local Congress, by now less inclined to abandon Bakhsh but still unwilling to retreat from their position on the assessments, was unclear as to which way to turn when Bakhsh requested written guarantees of their support for his ministry.<sup>43</sup> Uncertain which way to move to make, the local Congress turned to the High Command.

Unwilling to jeopardise the influential position of the Sind Congress, the Congress High Command sent Patel and Azad to Karachi. Azad's solution was to recruit Syed and Khuhro into the Congress, but Patel dismissed the strategy as he distrusted their level of communalism.<sup>44</sup> Patel found that the Sind Congress had blundered in attacking Bakhsh on the assessment issue, and thought the Barrage

<sup>39</sup> A.K. Jones interview with Hafiz Khair Mohammed Ohidi, in A.K. Jones, 'Mr. Jinnah's Leadership and the Evolution of the Pakistan Idea: The Case of the Sind Provincial Muslim League Conference, 1938,' in A.H. Dani (ed.), *World Scholars on Qaid-i-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah* (Islamabad, Quaid-i-Azam University, 1979), p. 181.

<sup>40</sup> SFR First Half of May, 18 May 1938, L/P&J/5/252, OIOC.

<sup>41</sup> For example, the Muslim League conference at Sultankot (Sukkur district) in late July 1938. See SFR Second Half of July, 4 August 1938, L/P&J/5/253, OIOC.

<sup>42</sup> Sardar Patel's Press interview, 23 August 1938, quoted in BC, 24 August 1938.

<sup>43</sup> The ministry had proposed that if the Congress provided written assurances that it would *never* pass a motion of 'no-confidence' against it, it would meet the Congress condition of placing the assessments issue before the Sind Assembly. BC, 17 August 1938.

<sup>44</sup> Garrett to Brabourne, 31 August 1938, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/94, Doc.2, OIOC.

plan was not unreasonable.<sup>45</sup> Patel struggled for a solution that would not only save the face of the local Congress but also stabilise the Allah Bakhsh ministry. Both Patel and Azad intimated to the local Congress that they must support the present Ministry, and that before opposing any issue they must obtain orders from the High Command.<sup>46</sup> Instead the local Congress served Bakhsh with an ultimatum in September that unless his ministry agreed to postpone the entire settlement for one year, the Congress would remain neutral on any 'no-confidence' motions raised in the Assembly.<sup>47</sup> The decision was completely unexpected, and in turn effected a further destabilisation in the Government's position and in the relations between the communities. Coupland contends that the Sindhi Congress rejected Patel's overtures for compromise because of a local backlash against the High Command's interference in Sind.<sup>48</sup> Provincial patriotism, it seems, served to filter the degree of influence the Sindhi Congress allowed the High Command to exercise.

### III

The third theme to emerge concerns the contradictory agendas underpinning the relationship between the Sindhis and the extra-local political organisations of the Congress and the Muslim League. The theme is clearly evident in an event that came to break the stalemate in Sind's ministerial crisis and which proved to be a turning point in Sindhi politics: the holding of the Sind Provincial Muslim League Conference at Karachi, in October 1938.

In bringing in the All-India Muslim League to the province, and through the content of the Conference, a core group of the Sindhi Muslim elites was

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<sup>45</sup> R.G. Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936-1942: Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, Part II [hereafter *Indian Politics*] (London, O.U.P., London, 1943), p. 67.

<sup>46</sup> Garrett to Brabourne, 31 August 1938, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/94, Doc. 2, OIOC.

<sup>47</sup> Garrett to Brabourne, 7 September 1938, *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Coupland, *Indian Politics*, p. 67.

attempting to redefine the course of political action for Muslims in the province. By linking provincial Muslim politics with the agenda of an overtly communal organisation, it was trying to re-locate Muslim political action within the parameters of a communalised Muslim identity. The objective was to make actions such as Bakhsh's alliances with Hindus illegitimate since they would be outside the redefined notions of what was considered acceptable as political action to the Muslims of Sind.

### **The Sind Provincial Muslim League Conference (October 1938)**

The reason for Jinnah's involvement in a Sind provincial conference was clearly to target Bakhsh and unify the Muslims behind the League. The 1937 elections had shown Jinnah that the Muslim majority-provinces were 'up for grabs' between the Congress and the League, and he feared that Azad and Patel's involvement in Sind might cost him the province. However, was it the intention of the Sindhi Muslims that the province fall into the hands of Jinnah?

On the one hand, the rhetoric of the Conference displayed the shared antagonism of the Sindhis and All-India Muslim League dignitaries to Hindu political influence. Yet, at a deeper level, it revealed that the central League's and the Sindhis' solutions were divergent. The importance of the Conference lies in the revealing of the two issues that formed the touchstone of an evolving political direction of the Sindhi Muslim elites. The first issue, the desire of the Muslims to hive off Sind from India, evidenced with the resurfacing of their separatist tendency and portrayed the rationale underscoring their relationship with the All-India Muslim League. The second issue, the encouraging of Sindhi Muslims to use forms of action outside the legislature (including violence) to obtain their goals, will be addressed in the fourth theme of this chapter.

The opening address of Abdullah Haroon established the framework for the Sindhis' argument to break the Muslim provinces away from India and form a federation in which each province would constitute a distinct Muslim state. Basing the argument upon communal disunity as the driving force, Haroon warned that unless the Muslims of India were afforded their due rights, and hinting that they had little patience left, they would 'have no alternative left but to seek their salvation in their own way in an independent federation of Muslim States.'<sup>49</sup> Haroon was drawing upon earlier proposals of Mohammed Iqbal<sup>50</sup> and the Aga Khan,<sup>51</sup> and directly extended the All-India Muslim League's resolution at the recent session in Lucknow. That session had redefined the League's goal as full independence, and in doing so had produced a carrot to entice the Muslim-majority provinces. In explaining its adoption of the demand for 'full independence' at Lucknow as its objective, the League carefully contrasted its position with that of Congress, which:

wanted a unitary form of Government, while the Muslims were totally opposed to such a form. The League wanted a federation of free states in India.<sup>52</sup>

The resolution had been a clinching proposal in restoring the relationship between the Sindhi Muslims and the All-India Muslim League because it appealed directly to the provincialism of the majority-provinces' Muslims and presented an attractive alternative to a strongly-centralised Congress-dominated centre. To the Sindhis, the key lay in the notion of 'free states.' The Sindhis elaborated on the theme in their draft resolution at their provincial conference in Karachi. Abdul

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<sup>49</sup> A. Haroon, Karachi, 8 October 1938, quoted in Mitra, *IAR*, Vol. 2, July - December 1938, p. 352.

<sup>50</sup> At the Twenty-First Session of the All-India Muslim League, Allahabad, 29 December 1930, Iqbal stated that 'the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of the North-West,' in Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, p. 159.

<sup>51</sup> Refer to Chapter Three of this thesis for Haroon's admiration of the Khan's proposal for an alliance of the north-western Muslim-majority provinces.

<sup>52</sup> Hasrat Mohani, Resolution II, October 17, Twenty-Fifth Session of the All-India Muslim League, Lucknow, 15-18 October 1937, quoted in Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, p. 274.

Majid and Pir Mohammed Ali Rashdi put forward to the Subjects Committee the resolution stating that the Sind Provincial Muslim League considered it absolutely essential:

in the interests of abiding peace "that India may be divided into federations, namely, the federation of Muslim states and the federation of non-Muslim states."<sup>53</sup>

In discussing the roots of the Pakistan demand, A.K. Jones explains that some members of the All-India Muslim League leadership, particularly Jinnah, considered the proposal too extreme since the Indian Muslims were as yet too unorganised to talk in terms of long-range goals.<sup>54</sup> Instead, the resolution was altered by the national Leaguers to recommend simply to the All-India Muslim League that it devise a suitable constitution for India which would secure an honourable and legitimate status for Muslims.<sup>55</sup>

The importance of the draft resolution, which has been overlooked by scholars whose angle of vision has been to explain Pakistan's creation solely within the context of communal division, is the underlying premise of the plurality of Muslim states within a federation. In over-emphasising the importance of the two-nation theory in the Muslim-majority provinces, scholars have failed to appreciate that the resolution was not arguing for the unification of Muslims, but expressly articulated a multitude of Muslim states albeit in a federal framework.<sup>56</sup> The full draft of the Sindhis' resolution had even allowed for 'any other Muslim

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<sup>53</sup> *Statesman*, 11 October 1938, quoted in S.R. Mehrota, 'The Congress and the Partition of India', in C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives 1935-1947* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1970), p. 206.

<sup>54</sup> Jones, 'Mr. Jinnah's Leadership and the Evolution of the Pakistan Idea: The Case of the Sind Provincial Muslim League Conference, 1938,' *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>55</sup> Resolution V, Sind Provincial Muslim League Conference, 8-10 October 1938, in Jamil-ud-din Ahmad, *Historic Documents of the Muslim Freedom Movement* (Lahore, Publishers United, 1970), pp. 255-258.

<sup>56</sup> For example, Jones, *Muslim Politics*, and R.J. Moore, 'Jinnah and the Pakistan Demand,' *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 17, no. 4 (1983).

state beyond the Indian frontiers; to join the federation.' The Sindhis' proposal was not one analogous to the United States of America, but more akin to the proposed European Union. At the hub of the resolution lay the notion of the creation of several Muslim states, each of which retained control over its internal affairs. It was this prospect of independence that attracted and motivated the Sindhi Muslims, rather than 'Muslim unity.'

Conversely, the Sind Conference reveals that Jinnah's sole focus was to unify the Muslims in the name of the League. The objective had been clear in his presidential address at the Conference as he told the Sindhis it was their 'duty and responsibility which calls upon you to conduct the affairs of the Government of Sind' as their majority strength demanded.<sup>57</sup> Such a duty, of course, could only be effected when unity had been achieved. 'Unity', he told the delegates, drawing on the idiom of Islamic identity, was a 'sacred duty', and pleaded for the Sindhis 'to close ranks and stand solid and united *at any and all costs*.'<sup>58</sup> However, through his rejection of the Sindhis' proposal for a federation of Muslim states, Jinnah exposed his greatest weakness, because he had nothing concrete to offer the Sindhi Muslims.

His tactics to unify the Sindhi Muslims further exposed this weakness. For example, in attempting to resolve the thorny issue of the Barrage assessments, Jinnah decreed that Sikander Khan would determine the ministerial policy. However, placing such a key issue of Sindhi affairs under the authority of the Punjabi premier was hardly likely to find favour amongst the Sindhis, because it struck at the heart of their independent-mindedness and their claim for separation amongst the envisaged Muslim states.

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<sup>57</sup> Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Presidential Address, 8 October 1938, in Mitra, *JAR*, p. 352.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p. 352.



The instances of both the Sindhi Congress's rejection of Patel's order to support the Bakhsh ministry and Jinnah's failure to win over enough of the Sindhi Muslims at the 1938 Conference exemplified the attitude inherent amongst Sindhis to extra-local bodies. The Sindhis were clearly interested in relationships that served their own respective needs rather than having the wider perspective, such as the trans-Indian 'communities' that the League and Congress both claimed. The failure of the national organisations to assert its will was clearly a case of provincial patriotism reacting against extra-territorial influence; the cry was raised of 'Sind for Sindhis'.<sup>59</sup>

The lack of alignment between the national organisations and the Sindhi groups was further evidenced in the Congress's change of heart towards Bakhsh. At the Congress headquarters in Wardha to discuss the future of their relationship, Bakhsh learnt the true context of the High Command's stand towards his ministry. While Patel and the Sindhi Congressmen had swung back towards Bakhsh through fear of Jinnah establishing a League ministry, Maulana Azad was unwilling to yield. Nor would the High Command overrule Azad, for it could result in his resignation, which was an act to be avoided since Azad was the only prominent Muslim in the Congress High Command, and this would have done little to establish the credibility of the 'Muslim Mass Contact Campaign'.<sup>60</sup> Azad used Bakhsh in an attempt to have the Governor override the ministry (if it backed out of the Barrage assessments) by exercising his special powers to enact the assessments. In doing so, Azad hoped to validate the Congress claim that the functioning of democracy under the Government of India Act was insincere as it was dependent entirely upon the inclination of the Governors.<sup>61</sup> Equally indicative

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<sup>59</sup> Coupland, *Indian Politics*, p. 67.

<sup>60</sup> A useful discussion of the campaign is presented in Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contact Campaign: An Attempt at Political Mobilisation,' *op. cit.*

<sup>61</sup> Garratt to Linlithgow, 21 November 1938, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/94, Doc. 15, OIOC, and M.A.K. Azad, *op. cit.*, p. 14. Graham warned shortly afterwards if Bakhsh 'persisted in serving Congress ahead of his province, then he would rather lose the ministry than put up with dictation by the Congress.' Graham to Linlithgow, 9 December 1938, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/94, Doc. 18, OIOC.

of the central League's failure to connect with Muslim aspirations in Sind was Hidayatullah's unexpected desertion of the Muslim League, shortly after Jinnah left in October, for personal reasons which he refused to elaborate.<sup>62</sup>

The events in Sind had revealed an important learning point for Jinnah. The 1937 elections had shown that he needed the majority province Muslims, and to a superficial extent he had achieved this through the pacts with Huq and Sikander. However, his experience in Sind illustrated that the All-India Muslim League lacked the substance to draw in and unify all Muslims. Pleas for unity simply fell on deaf ears. Clearly, there had to be something to push the Muslims together, and the Sindhis had revealed the seed of that something in their draft resolution: provincial independence.

As he left Sind in October 1938, Jinnah demonstrated that he had learnt from the Sindhis. In a Parthian shot fired at the Congress, designed to appeal to the Muslims' parochialism, Jinnah claimed that the:

Muslim League didn't seek, like the Congress, to control a ministry from outside by a High Command. Each Muslim League ministry would be autonomous, and in the event of violation of Muslim principles, the only action taken would be expulsion from the Muslim League.<sup>63</sup>

However, the nexus between the All-India Muslim League and the Sind branch required a more solid basis and strategic alignment if it was to succeed.

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<sup>62</sup> Hidayatullah to the Secretary of the Sind Provincial Muslim League, 9 January 1939, quoted in *BC*, 10 January 1939.

<sup>63</sup> Garratt to Brabourne, 17 October 1938, Linlithgow Mss. Eur.F.125/94, Doc. 12, OIOC.

## IV

The fourth theme to emerge concerns the inter-relationship between the forums of the state and public arenas. The political events of the first ministries which occurred in the public arena and the associated violence, serve as important barometers of the developing sense of frustration and ill-will that groups were beginning to express at the failure of the state forums to meet their needs. The inability of the Legislative Assembly to deliver expected benefits for groups had the consequence of those groups turning to alternate forms of political action. There were actions of both a violent and non-violent nature, and it is significant to identify which groups resorted to what form of action. Moreover, the use of political action outside of the Assembly is important to understand as it can do much to explain the Sindhis' perceptions of contextual relationships between the state and public arenas.

The decision of the Congress to refrain from involvement in the Hidayatullah ministry caused the Congress MLAs to use several non-violent demonstrations in order to exert an influence on the Government. For example, in September 1937 Congress MLAs led a demonstration in which two thousand vehicles in Karachi carried Congress flags and banners demanding the rejection of the amendment to the District Police Act,<sup>64</sup> a display which significantly contributed to Hidayatullah's decision to back down and withdraw the Bill.<sup>65</sup>

In contrast, the response from the Hindu Party was of a different order. In the course of mid-1937 a series of violent communal disturbances occurred in the

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<sup>64</sup> *BC*, 2 September 1937.

<sup>65</sup> SFR First Half of September, 20 September 1937, L/P&J/5/251, OIOC.

northern districts resulting in the deaths of a number of Hindus.<sup>66</sup> Responding to the growing alarm amongst the Hindu community, all Hindu MLAs were summoned to Karachi by the Hindu Party in order to devise ways to combat the physical threat to the community. The Party organised the establishment of military-style Hindu Volunteer Corps, but these contributed to flare-ups throughout the remainder of the year rather than preventing them.<sup>67</sup> The solution of establishing military-style corps; portrays the idea that it was force that was required to manage communal conflict, and that a religious community believed it had the right to produce that force. The outbreak of communal violence reveals that the Hindu Party's agreements were not binding on the wider Muslim society; a development which forced the Hindu Party to rethink its strategy for protecting the cultural identity and physical safety of Hindus. The Hindu Party's response illustrates the mistaken belief that communal issues could be controlled by agreements made in the Assembly by elites who did not fully command the authority to direct Muslims as *Muslims*. In unilaterally guaranteeing the protection of Hindu interests, Hidayatullah had unrealistically accepted responsibility for communal problems over which he had no real control. Moreover, it was his own agreements with the Hindu Party that had contributed to the Muslims' ire.

The most important development to occur was the Sind Muslim League's use of violence as a tool to achieve its ends. While there had been spasmodic outbreaks of violence in Sind between groups, more often than not between Hindus and Muslims, the violence had not occurred as orchestrated events designed to achieve long-term objectives. It was the failure of the Muslims to control two successive governments, and the involvement of the All-India Muslim

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<sup>66</sup> The available evidence establishes that people and property were targeted solely because of their religious identity. The incidents occurred in Mirpur (Upper Sind Frontier), *BC*, 8-April 1937; Hyderabad, *BC*, 16 April 1937; Sukkur, *BC*, 22 April 1937; Shikarpur, *BC*, 24 May and 10 June 1937; and Dadu, *BC*, 22 September 1937.

<sup>67</sup> SFR First Half of June, 28 June 1937, I/P&J/5/251, OIOC.

League, which led the more communally-minded Muslims to advocate violence as the mechanism to reduce the position of Hindus and achieve their political goals.

In a sense the frustrations of the local politicians were being reconstructed into frameworks for political action (including violence) that were now extended and being encouraged by politicians outside Sind. For example, in October 1938 the joint Karachi District Congress Committee/Jamiat ul-Ulema meeting was broken up by Muslim League demonstrators. The topic of the meeting was the increased Army Recruitment Bill in the Central Legislative Assembly (in which Jinnah was a prominent debater).<sup>68</sup> The issue of army recruitment was irrelevant in Sind as the number of Sindhis in the army was negligible and was never again taken up by a Sindhi politician prior to independence. Previously, political violence in Sind had occurred between groups who were not overtly identified with specific political parties, but the issue and timing of the clash (the eve of the Provincial Muslim League Conference) suggests that the use of violence was a tool to project the sense of assertion of the physical strength of the local League leadership.

More insidious than the relatively minor clashes was the formal adoption by the Sind League of the rhetoric of political violence. The Sind Provincial Muslim League Conference marked the local League's warning to the Hindus of Sind that only 'if they played their part rightly' would their rights in the province be safeguarded'.<sup>69</sup> That is, when the Hindus of Sind let the Muslims rule by exercising the level of political power appropriate to their numerical status, they would be legitimately incorporated by the Muslims into the political system and allowed to maintain the physical freedom they currently enjoyed.

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<sup>68</sup> SFR Second Half of September, 3 October 1938, L/P&J/5/253, OIOC.

<sup>69</sup> [Author's italics] A. Haroon, 8 October, quoted in Mitra, *JAR*, Vol. I, July-December 1938, p. 356.

Nevertheless, while Haroon stopped short of articulating what the consequences would be if the Hindus of Sind did not 'play their part rightly', the communal tone of the Conference implied a warning to the Hindus for their physical safety. This represented a departure because previous Muslim discourses had only sought to curb the economic and political power of Hindus and had not implied a threat to their physical well-being.

The theme was emphasised by other speakers at the Conference, but it was the Bengal Premier who extended the aggressiveness of the Muslim position when he firstly targeted Hindus as he told the Sindhi Muslims that:

you have the power to make Governors and Ministries and bring about their downfall. If they do not hear you, punish them.<sup>70</sup>

His second target was Bakhsh and the non-League Muslims as he warned the nationalist (i.e. non Muslim-League) Muslims:

that they must remember that Indian Muslims will fight them. If they do not come to our fold, it will be constructed as a challenge.<sup>71</sup>

Huq urged the Sindhi Muslims to unite and form a ministry so that they would

give a fitting answer to the treatment meted out to the Muslims in the Congress-governed provinces of Central Provinces and Orissa. You are in the majority in the Assembly and you must reap the fullest harvest from that majority.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, Sindhi Muslims were being directed by their political leadership to *punish* Hindus if Muslims were not allowed to control the Government, to treat the actions of Muslims who rejected the League as a *challenge* to their sense of community, and to seek *revenge* on local Hindus for alleged mistreatments of Muslims in the minority provinces.

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<sup>70</sup> Fazlul Huq, 8 October 1938, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 356.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

The messages were simple: Muslims across India, majority or minority provinces, were being exploited; and it was time for Muslims to take action against their aggressors. It was a message with which the Sindhi Muslim elites agreed. The Sind Muslims' disunity had placed them in a similar position to that of the Muslim minorities of central and eastern India, in that they were dominated in government by Hindus. However, in Sind the majority Muslims were repressed by an handful of Hindus. The words of Haroon, Huq and others were specifically targeting Hindus and legitimising whatever course of action the Sindhi Muslims chose to interpret as being appropriate.<sup>73</sup> It was not long before the Muslim leadership began to take those concrete steps to have the Hindus 'play their part rightly'.<sup>74</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Muslims' lack of cohesion in the Assembly was undermining their position as the majority. It was not a question of some Muslims acting out a secular ideology with non-Muslim groups, for their alliances were based upon conformity with a communalised Hindu agenda. What the events of 1937-1939 illustrate is that two developments had occurred for a core group of Sindhi Muslims. Firstly, the League's provincial conference revealed that the Sindhis saw the long-term solution to their problems lying in the extension of their separatist demands. Just as the Sind separation movement had been about eliminating Hindu competition to Sindhi Muslims, the resolution of October 1938 continued the theme that the answer to their problems was to remove the province from extra-territorial control. Moreover, in linking the Sindhi Muslim state to a larger Muslim federation, control of the position of the Hindus would be guaranteed because they would be disconnected from any assistance from a larger political organisation such as the

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<sup>73</sup> It was reported that the Sind CID investigated claims that speeches designed to ferment hatred between the communities were made and that open violence against Hindus was preached. *BC*, 19 October 1938.

<sup>74</sup> The most important manifestation was the Manzilgah agitation of late 1939. See Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Hindu Mahasabha or Congress. Thus, while separatism was essentially a Muslim solution, the Muslim component was only half the equation; it was as much Sindhi as it was Muslim. It was not essentially about Muslim unity, but about Indian Muslim disunity and the desire of scions of the majority religious community to dominate their province completely.

Secondly, Muslims had been unable to unify simply through the creed of unity based upon religious identity. Instead, Islam was becoming a political means for communalised groups to break opponents who, by maintaining alliances with Hindus, enabled the Hindus to effectively dominate the Government. The tool adapted by the Sind Muslim League was the threat and use of violence. When neither the limited use of violence (such as breaking up opponents' meetings) nor the direct threat brought results, the League re-assessed its options. The option it chose (discussed in the next chapter), altered the course of Sindhi politics and redefined the relationships between the religious communities as the communalised notion of religious community expanded to powerful new forms of expression and action.



## CHAPTER 5

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### **Mandli, Mosque, and Riots**

Riots are not an irrational phenomenon: they have their causes in a rich context that extends well beyond the immediate event. Essentially, riots can be understood as an expression of force outside of the state's definition of legitimate force. The distinction for the participants between the legitimate and illegitimate use of force do not accord with those of the state, and this is particularly the case where riots are centred upon issues involving pre-eminent symbols of religious identity.

The previous two chapters have explained how the processes of the communalisation of provincial politics were determining the channels into which Sindhi politics flowed. Through the structure of the organs of provincial autonomy (with their emphasis upon representation by religious community), politics in Sind was being shaped by community identity in a manner that was marginalising other forms of identity. By 1940, the process of the communalisation of provincial politics resulted in devastating riots between Hindus and Muslims in northern Sind. In this context, as with all riots and acts of collective violence, the events were not discontinuous or isolated from the processes of 'normal' politics.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is proposed in this chapter that the riots were a logical outcome of the processes of the state structures of politics and the failure of groups within those structures to have their aspirations fulfilled. The *Om Mandli* dispute, the Manzilgah mosque

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<sup>1</sup> This notion is taken from J. Spencer, 'Problems in the Analysis of Communal Violence', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, New Series, Vol. 26, no. 2, (1992), p. 271.

agitation, and the Sukkur riots provide a window on the direction that the relationship between Sindhi Hindus and Muslims was taking. It serves as a portrayal of the nexus between the state and public arenas, and how elite politics and the masses were connected in a paradigm that was deeply enmeshed in the evolving concepts of what the place of their respective religious communities would be in the hierarchy of political power.

It is beyond dispute that in 1939 the leadership of the Sind Provincial Muslim League selected the agitation to restore a disused mosque to the Muslims of Sukkur as a means of bringing down the Hindu-dominated coalition Government.<sup>2</sup> However, the potency of the agitation and the devastating riots that followed cannot simply be explained by contending that political elites consciously selected important religious symbols as an instrument merely to achieve their own political ends. Nor would the suggestion, that the agitation by Sukkur's Muslims was symptomatic of a 'primordial' assertion of Muslim identity in order to distinguish themselves from non-Muslims, accurately locate the event in its true historical context.<sup>3</sup> The British found the mosque abandoned in 1843 and used it as a storehouse. Why did it become an issue that Muslims were willing to die for in 1939?

This chapter will seek to answer that question as it explains two dimensions unfolding and shaping Sind's politics. Firstly, the carriage of politics had reached the stage in Sind where the expression of political conflict between groups had become constructed in a discourse located in the centre of religious identity. The processes in the state arena were proving to be unsatisfactory mechanisms for

<sup>2</sup> Haroon and Khuhro admitted to this purpose, and it was the finding of the judge inquiring into the causes of the agitation. *Report of the Court of inquiry appointed under Section 3 of the Sind Public Inquiries Act to Enquire into the Riots which occurred in Sukkur, 1939* [hereafter *Weston Report*] (Karachi, Government Press, 1940), L/P&J/2892, OIOC.

<sup>3</sup> An application of Brass' and Robinson's respective 'instrumentalist' and 'primordialist' theses suggest those interpretations. See Introduction to this thesis for a discussion of their hypotheses.

groups to achieve their goals. The inabilities of the Sind Provincial Muslim League, the Hindu Party, and the Congress to consolidate an arrangement where either (or all) delivered tangible benefits for their constituents led increasingly to collective action occurring outside the state arena.

The second dynamic that influenced the course of Sindhi politics was the developments in the relationships between the provincial branches and the central political organisations. By 1940 both the central Congress and Muslim League leaderships had despaired of their provincial bodies' apparent lack of commitment to their ideals and agendas. However, the main historical writings focusing on late colonial India are centred upon the conflict between the Congress and Muslim League. To understand this conflict, the organisations themselves must be understood. The relationships between the All-India Muslim League and the Sind branch are important as they profoundly shaped their respective politics. This chapter explores the ambiguity in the respective roles of the central and Sindhi League branches (especially concerning the use of violence), and how this shaped the leaderships' capacities to forge a politically cohesive relationship. Equally influential to their relationship was the danger the Sindhi League faced as the pressures of communalising politics pushed it to the brink of 'Islamising' Muslim politics to an extent beyond their control.

## I

### **The *Om Mandli* affair**

The activities of an Hindu religious institution, known as *Om Mandli*, caused great consternation amongst the influential Hindu *Bhaibund* communities of Hyderabad and Karachi in early 1939. The orthodox *Bhaibund* leaders accused the *Mandli's* organisers of subverting the minds of young women, and they had grave concerns about the morality practised at the institution. The *Bhaibund* groups had been

unable to close the *Om Mandli* through legal channels and so they appealed to the Hindu members of the Assembly for assistance. The unsuccessful appeals turned to protest and before long a rally of 10,000 Hindus converged on the Secretariat building to demand that, unless the Hindu ministers took action, *satyagraha* would commence against them.<sup>4</sup>

Unused to being the target of collective action by Hindus, the Hindu ministers deftly passed responsibility to Bakhsh to resolve the issue. The ministers in turn threatened to resign from the ministerial alliance if he did not close the institution.<sup>5</sup> Following the arrest of more than one hundred *satyagrahis* and the Secretariat being placed under police protection, the entire Hindu Party members avoided attending the Assembly through fear of Muslim repercussions resulting from their bringing down of another Muslim-led ministry.

Bakhsh capitulated to the Hindu Party and agreed to a more demanding set of conditions for its support than previously. Not only did he agree to ban the institution and to ensure that the ban was enforced,<sup>6</sup> but further, he agreed to consult with the Hindu Party on all important matters and to enforce a recruitment ratio to the Services in Sind which heavily favoured Hindus.<sup>7</sup> The last act in particular was in sharp contrast to the demands of the various Muslim political groupings across the province. Even Graham noted that it was distressing 'that the Government are merely doing the bidding of the Hindu minority in the Assembly'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> BC, 13 March 1939. Also note the use and context of the term '*satyagraha*' in the Manzilgah agitation below.

<sup>5</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 9 March 1939, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/95, Doc. 32, OIOC.

<sup>6</sup> On 18 May, the *Om Mandli* was declared an unlawful association under s.16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1908. BC, 19 May 1939.

<sup>7</sup> BC, 1 April 1939. In January 1939, only 10.9 percent of senior Government positions were filled by Muslims. *Sind Civil List*, January 1939 (Karachi, Government Press, 1939).

<sup>8</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 16 May 1939, L/I & J/5/254, OIOC

The decision by Baksh to become involved in a dispute that was essentially for the Hindu leaders to resolve was to have far reaching consequences. The agitation had primarily been a dispute by sections of the local Hindu communities of Hyderabad and Karachi against a reformist religious sect. However, the *Bhaibund* lobbyists and the Hindu Party transformed the matter into an issue of whether the province's leading Muslim politician could effectively safeguard the orthodox Hindu community against schisms from *within* the Hindu fold. Thus, a dispute concerning Hindu ideology and moral practices was transformed into the political arena as a means 'to put the screws on the [Muslim] Chief Minister.'<sup>9</sup> The event serves as a useful example to illustrate the extent to which the process of communalising religious identity was reshaping local, intra-community competition into problems between members of different religions.

The *Om Mandli* agitation was an important focal point in the developing sense of alienation and frustration among the Muslim elites with the political role of Hindus in the province. Yet it was not the only event following the Sind Provincial Muslim League's Conference (October 1938) to contribute to communal tension. Since the Conference, the pace of communal antagonism in Sind had noticeably increased. The Arya Samaj organisation in Sind had grown in strength since Sind's separation from Bombay and in the spring of 1939 its members joined a campaign to destabilise the Nizam of Hyderabad (Deccan).<sup>10</sup> The propaganda and processions of the Aryas in towns throughout Sind to recruit *satyagrahis* for the Deccan added much to keep alive a state of communal ill-will,<sup>11</sup> despite the movement not essentially being centred on a Sindhi issue. The Sind Muslim League reacted by forming a Hyderabad Protection Society (headed by Gazdar) whose objective was to undermine the Aryas' agitation against the Nizam. The

<sup>9</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 9 March 1939, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/96, Doc. 32, OIOC.

<sup>10</sup> For the context of the campaign in Hyderabad, see I. Copland, 'Communalism in Princely India: The Case of Hyderabad, 1930-1940,' *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 22, no. 4 (1988).

<sup>11</sup> SFR Second Half of April, 17 May 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

Society organised bands of Muslim youths to physically prevent the dispatch of the *satyagrahis* to the Deccan. The Government was unable to prevent numerous violent clashes, the worst being a riot in Karachi in which 21 people were injured.<sup>12</sup> Stemming from the riot was the decision by Muslims to boycott Hindu shops and hotels,<sup>13</sup> and the Muslim National Guards' demand that the Sind Government suppress the Arya Samaj organisation.<sup>14</sup>

The Sind Muslim Leaguers were keen to maintain the rhetoric of the October conference and were building momentum through a series of anti-ministry rallies in Karachi and key rural districts.<sup>15</sup> The rallies fed the theme of Hindu oppression and the suppression of the political rights of the Sindhi Muslims. In April 1939 the League was bolstered by the All-India Muslim League's strategy to inform the Muslim-majority provinces of the sufferings of Muslims in the minority provinces.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the Sind League attempted to shield Sind's Muslims from Congress's propaganda by portraying it as an entirely pro-Hindu organisation that was committed to an Hindu raj. The League did this by carefully constructing the image of its role as the champion of Muslim interests. For example, in responding to the Arya Samaj's challenge to the Nizam of Hyderabad, the League cast itself as the local protector of the Nizam's authority to rule. Again, when the Congress attempted to entice the Muslims through the 'Mass Contact Campaign' the Leaguers sought to close off to the Congress access to Muslims by highlighting its alleged atrocities against Muslims in the minority provinces.

<sup>12</sup> SFR Second Half of March, 11 April 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>13</sup> SFR Second Half of April, 17 May 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>14</sup> SFR Second Half of June, 11 July 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>15</sup> SFR First Half of January, 21 January 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>16</sup> The All-India Muslim League produced several reports detailing the alleged bias and victimisation of Muslims. See 'Report of the Inquiry Committee Appointed by the Council of the All India Muslim League to inquire into Muslim Grievances in Congress Provinces, 1938', [a.k.a Pirpur report], reprinted in S.R.A. Jafri, *Rare Documents* (Lahore, Mohammad Ali Academy, 1967), and the 'Report of the Enquiry Committee Appointed by the Working Committee of the Bihar Provincial Muslim League to enquire into some grievances of Muslims in Bihar' [a.k.a Sharief Report], (publisher unknown, March 1939).

The nature of the incidents demonstrate an important dimension emerging in Sindhi politics. The visits by Jinnah and the premiers of Bengal and the Punjab in the previous year; the violent clashes between the Congress and League supporters; the Aryas taking issue with the Hyderabad Nizam; and the deputations of minority province Muslims to Sind, reveal the rising significance of issues not originating in Sind but being transferred to and played out in the Sindhi political arena.<sup>17</sup> In the arenas of communalised provincial politics, antagonisms between Hindu and Muslim groups occurring outside Sind were now frequently evident amongst Sindhis. Local arguments became communal conflicts as they were interpreted by Sindhis in terms of their significance to the larger conflicts between political organisations at the centre of Indian politics. The political agendas of national organisations were now clearly fuelling local political contests. This dynamic in turn served to further the process of communalising politics.

Following Bakhsh's latest alliance with the Hindu Party, the Sind Leaguers realised that the key to their political relevance lay in dismantling the Hindu Party's willingness to co-operate with a Muslim Government. The League needed an issue which would challenge the Muslims as a religious community, and Haroon found this in the dispute between the Sukkur Muslims and the Bakhsh Government over the control of the Marzilgah mosque. Khuhro, who had replaced Hidayatullah as the leader of the Muslim League in the Assembly, considered that:

it was obvious, therefore, that with a floating Muslim membership in the Legislative Assembly and a hostile Congress-supported Government in power, we needed a big issue to rally the Muslims of the province behind the League. Such an issue was providently provided by the Masjid Marzilgah of Sukkur.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The context of communal symbolism is similar to that suggested by Freitag for Kanpur (1931), where such dynamics 'can be taken as a measure of the success in interpreting national-level antagonisms in locally meaningful terms.' Freitag, *Collective Action*, p. 238.

<sup>18</sup> M.A. Khuhro, 'Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Directive to Celebrate 'Day of Deliverance'', in Dani, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194.

## II

**The Manzilgah agitation**

In the spring of 1939 Haroon and Khuhro identified a building on the banks of the Indus at Sukkur as the fulcrum from which to prise Bakhsh from power. The mosque, Masjid Sharif Manzilgah (literally, and ironically, meaning 'place of rest'), had been constructed by a prominent *saiyid* in the seventeenth-century but had been used as a storehouse since annexation by the British. Beginning in the 1920s, the leaders of Sukkur's Muslims had unsuccessfully petitioned to have the mosque returned and during the 1930s the demand was quietly but persistently maintained. However, the tone of the demand altered after Bakhsh's rejection of Jinnah in October 1938 and it was observed that:

from that time certainly there was imported into the Manzilgah argument a political bitterness having its origins not in Hindu and Muslim differences but in the cleavage between Muslim Leaguers and those Muslims who did not acknowledge the authority of the Muslim League.<sup>19</sup>

In May, the Sind Muslim League assumed control of the demand and produced the most forceful illustration of the importance of a communal definition of power in Sind. The agitation to restore the mosque turned into the most violent civil disturbance in colonial Sind's history. The riots left a legacy of bitterness between Sukkur's Hindus and Muslims that never healed and its devastation impacted on the demography of upper Sind.<sup>20</sup> The use of the Manzilgah issue by Hindu and Muslim leaders represented the view that violent collective action was an appropriate weapon against each other to achieve political ends. The affair demonstrates not only the extent to which the agendas of national communal organisations were being incorporated into provincial political affairs by local elites, but it also illustrates the escalation in the level of violence such agendas

<sup>19</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 4 January 1940, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/96, f.1, OIOC.

<sup>20</sup> The importance of the demographic change is discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis.



engendered. It showed that collective action by political parties was constructed in terms of communal violence.

The revitalised Manzilgah demand flared in mid-year when the Government was issued with an ultimatum that unless the mosque was restored to Muslims, a *satyagraha* campaign would commence.<sup>21</sup> The issuing of the ultimatum (shortly after the Hindu lobbyists' campaign over the *Om Mandli* situation) was designed to take advantage of the difficulties which that dispute had caused the Government. In the *Om Mandli* agitation, the Hindus had achieved their demand and the Hindu Party had successfully extended its control over the Government. The Sukkur Muslims now considered the time had come for them to reassert the Islamic symbolism of Muslim identity in a rejuvenated political voice. The Sukkur Muslims turned to the Provincial Muslim League and formally invited it to assist them to overcome anticipated opposition from Hindus.<sup>22</sup>

A Restoration Committee was soon established with Haroon as the chair and the initial office-bearers of Khuhro, Majid, the Pir of Bharchundi, and several of Sukkur's Muslim leaders. The Committee's strategy was to link the demand to a claim of the illegitimacy of the Government's moral authority to govern Muslims. The Committee called on the Muslim members of the Sind Assembly to withdraw their support of the Government if it refused to turn over the building and 'to form an alternate Government which would render true service to the Muslim community.'<sup>23</sup>

The period of waiting for the Government's response to the ultimatum

<sup>21</sup> *BC*, 22 April 1939. Note the term '*satyagraha*' (meaning 'truth force') was coined earlier by Gandhi to describe his method of non-violent passive resistance. The term became loosely used by many groups to describe various forms of collective action. While the participants of the Manzilgah campaign referred to themselves as *satyagrahis*, their manner of action and purpose was significantly different to Gandhi's intended use of the word.

<sup>22</sup> *Weston Report*, p. 8, in Jones, *Muslim Politics*, p. 187.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

produced an heightening of communal tension across northern Sind. The tension was added to by the murder of three *moulvis*;<sup>24</sup> the founding of a Sind branch of the Ahrars for the purpose of subverting the activities of the Muslim League;<sup>25</sup> and the assault on Abdul Rahim, the son of the Pir of Bharchundi, by a Hindu gang in Sukkur. Rahim had been successful in converting a number of Hindus to Islam and this had angered many Hindus of Sukkur. The *murids* of the Pir and many Sukkuri Muslims swore vengeance on the Hindu community for the attack.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the Muslim League's involvement in the Manzilgah demand, and their proclamation that 18 August was to be observed across Sind as 'Manzilgah Day' further fuelled Hindu resentment at the assertiveness of the Muslims in making their demand of the Government.<sup>27</sup> During the next month further violence occurred across upper Sind.<sup>28</sup>

While the Restoration Committee continued to hand down ultimatums to Bakhsh and threatened to launch a *satyagraha* campaign,<sup>29</sup> Hindus in Sukkur mobilised their forces in anticipation of a clash with the Muslims. The Hindus contended that to restore the mosque would disrupt the use of the Sadh Belo temple, and Jones adds that the agitation was a threat to the Hindus' position of dominance and control.<sup>30</sup> The *mahant* of nearby Sadh Belo, Sind's most important Hindu temple complex, organised meetings of Hindus in upper Sind and orchestrated a propaganda campaign against the return of the building to the Muslims. The *mahant* was supported by local *panchayats*, such as that of Shikarpur, which commenced their own agitations to have recently constructed

<sup>24</sup> BC, 16 June 1939.

<sup>25</sup> Report on the Political Situation for May/June, 30 June 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>26</sup> SFR Second Half of July, 2 August 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>27</sup> SFR First Half of August, 16 August 1939. Earlier, the Chief Secretary advised the central Government that the local Muslim League seemed 'to be bent on inciting communal hatred.' SFR Second Half of July, 2 August 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>28</sup> BC, 5 October 1939.

<sup>29</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 17 August 1939, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/95, Doc. 76, OIOC.

<sup>30</sup> Jones, *Muslim Politics*, p. 186.

mosques in their vicinity demolished.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the Karachi Hindus were not willing to be outdone by the Muslim League so they too commenced a *satyagraha* campaign to have the recently demolished Hanumanji temple rebuilt.<sup>32</sup> Allah Bakhsh, unwilling and probably unable to fight campaigns on two fronts against both the Karachi Hindus and the Sukkur Muslims, opted to maintain support from the Hindu Party. His accession to their demand further infuriated the Sukkur Muslims and hardened their resolve.

The granting of the Hanumanji temple demand produced an intensification of the recruitment of volunteers for the Manzilgah campaign. By late September, several thousand volunteers had gathered in the vicinity of the Manzilgah mosque and their numbers were swelling as fresh recruits arrived. In the surge of the enthusiasm and emotion of the massed Muslim volunteers the Restoration Committee lost control of the ground forces and Wajid Ali (who advocated immediate and violent confrontation) assumed control of the agitation's leadership. Despite efforts by Haroon and Khuhro to avoid an actual physical clash with the authorities by forcing Bakhsh to accede to their demands through negotiation, preparations were made by Wajid Ali to occupy the site. Islamic symbolism was drawn upon as 313 volunteers were selected to court arrest: the figure was reminiscent of the number of supporters the Prophet Mohammed had in the first battle in the name of Islam at Badr in 624 AD.<sup>33</sup> On 1 October the Muslims charged the police barricades and on the third day the police lines broke and the Muslims gained control of the building. Once the Manzilgah mosque was occupied, the energy of the Muslims dissipated and the Leaguers were able to reclaim control of the movement.

<sup>31</sup> BC, 2 October 1939.

<sup>32</sup> The temple had originally been constructed partially on Government land and when the *bawa* refused to respond to the Government's injunctions, the authorities demolished it. SFR First Half of August, 16 August 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>33</sup> SFR Second Half of September, 5 October 1939, L/P&J/254, OIOC.

The occupation of the Manzilgah mosque brought intense pressure to bear on Bakhsh's leadership. Prior to the occupation he had equivocated, unwilling to oppose the agitation through fear of unleashing a Muslim backlash, and yet unwilling to lose his Hindu supporters by conceding to the Muslim League's demand. His ministry split along communal lines on the issue, although while his Muslim ministers favoured the return of the building to the Sukkur Muslims, they wanted to avoid any action which would give advantage to the Sind Muslim League by strengthening their leadership claims over the Muslims.<sup>34</sup> In attempting to walk a tightrope, Bakhsh ordered all the arrested Muslims to be released as 'an act of goodwill to improve the atmosphere for a settlement.'<sup>35</sup> This act did nothing to weaken the resolve of the agitation's leaders, since the Muslim volunteers saw it as the Government's giving way to their claims.

The Restoration Committee took further advantage of the situation by threatening to picket the homes of the ministers until they capitulated.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, Illahi, Pirzada, and the Talpur *mir* bloc threatened to resign if the Manzilgah mosque was not fully restored to the Muslims.<sup>37</sup> Worse was to follow for Bakhsh when he continued to allow the Muslims to remain in the mosque. Hindus from other provinces joined the Sind Hindus' condemnation of the ministry for its failure to evict the Muslims and its offer of terms to the Restoration Committee.<sup>38</sup> The All-India Hindu Mahasabha joined the fray as Savarkar demanded that 'the Government chastise the Muslims for their lawlessness,' and warned that if it succumbed to the Muslims 'the whole frontier will be set ablaze by Muslim

<sup>34</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 15 October 1939, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/95, Doc. 87, OIOC.

<sup>35</sup> Those arrested already included a considerable number of the Muslim religious nobility, including Pir Ghulam Mujadid Sarhandi, Pir Abdul Aziz, 36 *sayids*, 11 *moulvis*, and 36 *hafizes*. SFR Second Half of September, 5 October 1939, L/P&J/5/2: 4, OIOC

<sup>36</sup> SFR First Half of October 1939, 17 October 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Weston Report*, p. 34, in Jones, *Muslim Politics*, p. 192. See also *BC*, 14 October 1939 for the attitude of the Sindhi Association of Bombay, and for Bangalore, see 'Resolution of Sindhi residents of Bangalore City, 7 November 1939, to R. Prasad' (Congress President), reprinted in V. Choudhry (ed.), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 4 (New Delhi, Allied, 1984-1991), p. 276.

fanaticism.<sup>39</sup> At the most critical stage of the occupation (late October) the All-India Hindu Mahasabha held a conference in which Moonje, described as 'one of its most uncompromising leaders',<sup>40</sup> rallied Hindus to pressure the ministers to desert Bakhsh and bring down his Government.<sup>41</sup>

The effects of these actions was substantially to increase the already tense communal atmosphere.<sup>42</sup> In effect, the role of the Hindu Mahasabha, which originally had no prior claim on the Manzilgah mosque, now overshadowed that of the Government as it led a vociferous challenge to the Muslims. Moreover, it now threatened that if the mosque remained occupied by the volunteers, it would bring down the Government. Bakhsh's response again demonstrated that he relied more on Hindu support than the Muslims when he ordered the police and military to clear the mosque and arrest the Restoration Committee.<sup>43</sup>

### The Sukkur riots

The forced clearing of the mosque brought forth the full effect of communalisation of Sindhi politics. The culminating of anger at the arrest of Syed and Wajid Ali, taunts by Hindus, and the knowledge that the mosque had been reclaimed solely because of Hindu pressure on the Government, provoked the Muslims to violence and devastating riots broke out.<sup>44</sup> Fuelled by the consistently bitter communal articles and editorials of newspapers, which grossly exaggerated the outrages committed by the 'other' community,<sup>45</sup> Sukkur was racked by rioting, then large scale outbreaks of communal violence and murder spread rapidly across northern

<sup>39</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 21 October 1939 Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/95, Doc. 90, OIOC.

<sup>40</sup> Coupland, *Indian Politics*, p. 69.

<sup>41</sup> SFR Second Half of October, 3 November 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>42</sup> SFR Second Half of November, 12 December 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Weston Report*, p.43, in Jones, *Muslim Politics*, p. 197.

<sup>45</sup> Hindu newspapers published reports of threats of violence against the *mahant* of Sadh Belo and claimed that *sadhus'* cattle were being slaughtered by Muslims in the Manzilgah. Such activities, they suggested, took Sind back to the wildness of the *mirs'* days. The Muslim papers responded, particularly the *Al-Wahid*, with a plethora of diatribes against the Hindus. SFR First Half of October 1939, 17 October 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

Sind. Hindu *gurus* and Muslim *moulvis* were slain,<sup>46</sup> and entire Hindu populations of villages deserted and fled to the relative protection of their fellow Hindus' quarters in Sukkur and other major towns. Only when the military stepped in and posted garrisons throughout Sukkur district did the violence abate.

In Sukkur, both communities had suffered a similar casualty and death toll, but in the *mofussil* almost 200 people were slain in several days - most of them Hindu.<sup>47</sup> The countryside around Sukkur remained disturbed as Hindus fled back to Sukkur and Shikarpur each time another Hindu in the vicinity was murdered - a frequent occurrence that lasted for several years. The bitterness caused by the riots permanently scarred Hindu-Muslim relations in Sind and fuelled further attempts by respective leaders of the communities to gain political advantage over the other by playing on the communal fears of their constituents. Only a few weeks after the Manzilgah mosque was retaken by the Government, the Hindus of Rohri organised a *satyagraha* to have the Muslim shrine of Zind Pir restored to their guardianship as they claimed it had originally been an Hindu temple.<sup>48</sup>

### III

The Manzilgah issue was rich in a symbolism that lay at the core of Muslim identity. In the agitation to restore the mosque, the League leadership had selected an issue which utilised key symbols of Muslim identity. The mosque, as the pre-eminent symbol of classical Islamic solidarity,<sup>49</sup> represented the most primordial symbol of the Muslim community since its purpose was the location (in

<sup>46</sup> For example, the noted mystical poet Bhagat Kanwar Ram, SFR First Half of November, 22 November 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>47</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 22 December 1939, 'Manzilgah Occupation' File. 4447 of 1939, f. 243, L/P&J/7/2892, OIOC.

<sup>48</sup> SFR Second Half of November, 12 December 1939, L/P&J/5/254, OIOC.

<sup>49</sup> Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, p. 100.

time and space) where Muslims gathered as a *community* to worship. Therefore, any attack on a mosque was perceived as an attack on the community itself. To the Muslims involved, the question as to the legal validity in British colonial law of their claim was irrelevant. A mosque, when dedicated as *waqf* (pious endowment) to God, remained a mosque forever.<sup>50</sup>

The siting of the Manzilgah building was especially important, for it was built on the river bank immediately opposite an island which held the Sath Belo temple. It has been stated that the temple was Sind's most important Hindu edifice and its *mahant* held considerable political sway amongst the Hindus of northern Sind. Importantly, any agitation occurring in or around the Manzilgah mosque was in full view of Hindus from the temple and so was difficult to ignore. Politically too, the location of the mosque in Sukkur was of prime importance. Sukkur was the heartland of Hindu power in the province and it was the provincial base of the Sind Hindu Conference and the Sind branch of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha. Furthermore, Sukkur had witnessed some of the province's worst communal riots in the agitation to separate Sind from Bombay. The District Magistrate noted at the time of the riots that the Sukkur Muslims:

were a poor community of little influence and have for long been smarting under the oppressive behaviour of the more wealthy and influential Hindus who control the Municipality and can easily obtain the ear of the Ministers...the demand for the restoration of Manzilgah is therefore an expression of the desire among the Muslims to assert themselves.<sup>51</sup>

The Sind Leaguers had not been original in their adopting of important community symbols. Several years earlier in Lahore, the Ahrar leaders had clashed with the Government and the Sikhs in their agitation for the restoration of

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 102.

<sup>51</sup> File note by R.M. Maxwell, 'Manzilgah Occupation' File. 4447, L/P&J/2892, OIOC, quoted in Jones, *Muslim Politics*, p. 185.

the Shahidganj mosque.<sup>52</sup> The Ahrars had used a leading rural *pir* to head the Shahidganj Restoration Committee which they hoped would unite the urban and rural religious leadership behind the cause. The agitation assumed considerable importance in the affairs of the Punjab's politics at the time as it placed significant strain on British authority and on the local aspect of the Unionists' political alliance between the Sikh and Muslim elites, especially when a number of Muslims were killed by the authorities. The issue of the mosque, the involvement of the religious leadership, and the portrayal of the slain Muslims as 'martyrs' symbolised a regeneration of Muslim political elites as defenders of the Islamic community. In this sense, the Manzilgah campaign paralleled the Shahidganj agitation.

The Manzilgah dispute also mirrored Shahidganj in the leadership dilemmas it exposed. In the Shahidganj agitation, the *pirs'* inability to unite the rural and urban religious leadership and to make the necessary decisions to direct the movement had led to its failure.<sup>53</sup> However, in Sind the League had been able to involve *pirs* who were not only influential but also highly capable and dedicated to the cause. On the Restoration Committee was the Pir of Bharchundi, while the popular Sirhindi and Rashidi *pirs* were instrumental in undertaking propaganda activities. In August, Pir Mohammed Umar Jan Sirhindi convened meetings of his *murids* at Matiari for the purpose of recruiting for the agitation,<sup>54</sup> as did Pir Mohammed Hussain Jan Sirhindi in September at the Jamiat-i Mujaddidiya Sind Conference.<sup>55</sup> The involvement of Sind's most prominent *pirs* considerably contributed to the success in attracting several thousand Muslims from the town and surrounding districts.

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<sup>52</sup> The Shahidganj agitation was a campaign in 1935 to remove Sikhs from a disused mosque near the Landa Bazaar Gate. The movement ultimately failed and the mosque was destroyed. For details, see Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, pp. 99-107.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>54</sup> *Al-Wahid*, 6 September 1939, cited in Asari, *Sufi Saints*, p. 118.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 September 1939.



Unlike Shahidganj, there had not been a conflict between the urban Muslim *ulema* and the rural *pirs*. The *pirs* had a close involvement in Sukkur's Muslim politics and their influence reached deep into the cities and towns of the province. The differences amongst the Sindhi leadership occurred between the Sukkur Muslims and the Muslim League. In an assessment of riots in Bengal (1905-1947), Suranjan Das has found that in outbreaks of communal conflict the authority of traditional leaders has been challenged by others who find in the conflict an expedient way to appropriate symbols of constructed communal identity in order to establish their own legitimacy.<sup>56</sup> The involvement of the Sindhi Leaguers in the Manzilgah agitation suggest that this was also the case in Sind. The locational bases of power of Haroon (Karachi), Khuhro (Larkana), Syed (Dadu) and Majid (Hyderabad), and their statuses (industrialist, *zamindars*, and journalist) were not closely connected with Sukkur or with Muslim religious identity. Apart from Syed's connections with the *pir* fraternity, the authority of the League members outside of their own locations rested upon their roles in the imperial political structure of provincial administration. This structure did not possess an Islamic centre and so the link between the Leaguers and the *pirs* was crucial in validating their leadership of the Manzilgah movement.

The importance of the Manzilgah movement for historians is located in its use as an illustration of how closely religious and political identity had merged during the decade (1930-1940). In the *Khilafat* movement, the *zamindars* refused to support the *pirs* in their campaign to protect Islam's holy sites and institution. Apart from being anti-British, the movement was located in the discourse of Islamic ideology, an area which the *zamindars* had left well alone (unless they were also *pirs*). However, by the late 1930s, the new political structures and environment in Sind had channelled the conduct of politics firmly within the

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<sup>56</sup> P. Gossman reviewing S. Das, 'Communal Riots in Bengal, 1905-1947', (Oxford, O.U.P, 1991), in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 52, no. 3. (1993).

framework of communalised religious identities. In embarking on the Manzilgah campaign, the Leaguers were obliged to cement their politics to symbols of Islamic identity and 'Islamise' their politics in order to mobilise Muslims to confront the Government.

The necessity for the League to construct its identity as a champion of Islam produced a contradiction within the League. While the Leaguers needed to construct their political image and conduct their politics as Muslim leaders, essentially they were not Islamic leaders. They were Muslims who had leadership roles of groups of Muslims, but as industrialists and landowners their roles in society were not centred in Islamic values. The League leaders relied on the use of rhetoric to construct an image of their Islamic credentials. While they were not averse to organising physical intervention in their opponents' meetings, they were clearly at the perimeter of their frame of reference to lead a movement centred upon Islamic values. This aspect can be seen in the aggressive style of rhetoric adopted at the 1937 Lucknow session. The Sind League adopted the same rhetoric at its provincial conference in October 1938, and it became its discourse against its Hindu opponents in subsequent confrontations.

The contradiction between the Sind Leaguers' social-political roles and an Islamic legitimacy was manifested in the use of tactics to restore the mosque. The Muslim League leadership had wanted to avoid the use of force to recover the mosque as they had feared that the emotive appeal of the campaign, and the numbers and the intensity of *satyagrahis*, would produce a situation where control of the movement would be lost. Moreover, once control was lost, the value of the movement as a political tool would be seriously jeopardised. Just as the processes of provincial politics had locked the League into undertaking political action within the idiom of communalised religious identity, once embarked on the stage as Islamic actors the Leaguers were compelled to maintain their political

actions in accordance with the values accepted as the Islamic ideal by the Muslim volunteers. The evidence indicates that in order to retain their leadership roles in the League, both Haroon and Khuhro were compelled to support the radical method of *satyagraha* (in this case, violent force) against their wishes.<sup>57</sup>

The use of physical force would also jeopardise the Sind League's relationship with the central League, a relationship which Haroon considered to be particularly important for both the fledgling Sind branch and for enhancing Jinnah's position at the centre stage of national politics. When the Muslims stormed the mosque, Haroon immediately hurried to Delhi to explain why force had been used because the provincial branch had repeatedly been denied approval from the All-India Muslim League to lead a campaign centred on collective action. Haroon won support from the Working Committee to have a sub-committee established to investigate the Manzilgah issue (ostensibly in order to legitimise the Sind League's actions). However, an angry Jinnah overruled the Working Committee and aborted the appointment of the sub-committee on the grounds that the Sind League had acted inappropriately by associating itself with an agitational campaign not sanctioned by the All-India Muslim League.<sup>58</sup>

Jinnah's decision concerning the Sind League's handling of the Manzilgah issue reveals two important points on the nature of the relationship between the central and Sind Leagues, a relationship which may have had parallels in other provinces. Firstly, the refusal by Jinnah to allow the Working Committee's sub-committee to investigate was a form of punishment to the Sindhis for undertaking the campaign without the central League's permission. This suggested an anticipated level of involvement by the central League in the province's affairs that

<sup>57</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 11 October 1939, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/95, Doc. 83, OIOC; *Weston Report*, pp. 28-29, and G.M. Syed to Jinnah, pp. 1-3, Quaid-i-Azam Papers, F.460 (Islamabad), cited in Jones, *Muslim Politics*, p. 190.

<sup>58</sup> Sind Criminal Investigation Department Report, 20 December 1939, enclosed with letter from Graham to Linlithgow, 23 December 1939, Linlithgow Mss., Eur. F.125/95, Doc. 126, OIOC.

the Sindhis did not share. Although not in a League ministry, the Sindhis were told by Jinnah a year earlier that the 'Muslim League didn't seek, like the Congress, to control a ministry from outside by a High Command. Each Muslim League ministry would be autonomous.'<sup>59</sup> Thus, the lines of control in the relationship of the central and Sind branch of the League were not clearly established and appeared to be contradictory.

Secondly, the ambiguity over the use of violence by the Muslim League was coming back to haunt the League and weaken the centre's relationship with the provincial branch. The recent detailed portrayal of the sufferings of Muslims at the hands of Hindus in the Shareef and Pirpur reports had implied the need for retribution. The League's overall argument was that provincial governments and the League's place at the centre could not adequately protect the rights of Muslims within the organs of the state. The goal of the All-India Muslim League (1939) was to obtain a constitution that provided Muslims with sufficient political power, but the tone of the Shareef and Pirpur reports and the central League's rhetoric suggested that collective action by Muslims outside of the official mechanisms was necessary. The exhortations of Haroon and Fazlul Huq at the provincial Conference in October 1938 explicitly told the Sindhi Muslims that as a community they were being challenged and that, unless they obtained their appropriate measure of political power, they were expected by Indian Muslims to punish their opponents and seek revenge on the Hindus.<sup>60</sup>

The Manzilgah mosque agitation is a lucid example of the rhetoric of political violence translating into physical action in the public arena. The structured campaign for the mosque's restoration to the Muslims served as a symbolic primer for the riots that followed. It is apparent that the rioters seemed to obey a moral

<sup>59</sup> Garratt to Brabourne, 17 October 1938, Jinnalithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/94, Doc. 12, OIOC.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 4 for details of Haroon's and Huq's speeches.

imperative. A recent analysis of riots suggests that those 'who actively participate in riots do so in the belief that they are acting morally, imposing a justice which the official organs of the state cannot or will not impose.'<sup>61</sup> The targeting of victims in the Sukkur riots establishes a link between the violence and the League's rhetoric. Reports from Sukkur and surrounding villages consistently identify that Hindu businesses were targeted, and the mode of destruction was incendiarism. The homes of Hindu Sabha officials were also burnt (e.g. Bhajan Ajwani, the General Secretary of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha).<sup>62</sup> The evidence suggests that the Muslims of northern Sind were punishing the local Hindu politicians and *banias* for not, as Haroon advocated in October 1938, 'playing their part rightly' in Sind's politics.<sup>63</sup> Therein lay the contradiction, because when Sindhi Muslims punished the Hindus, they were castigated by the All-India Muslim League.

The lack of political direction and strong leadership for Muslims contributed to the use of violence. The Muslim League had been able to take up the demand for the mosque's restoration and play the prominent role in the movement's leadership because there had been no effective counter Muslim opposition. There were certainly many individuals who opposed the League, yet there had been no organised body to present the Muslims with an alternative to its strategies. In contrast to the neighbouring Punjab in the late 1930s, where the provincial League was politically insignificant outside of Lahore, in Sind its claim to represent the political conscience of the 'Muslim community' was given some legitimacy. In the Manzilgah issue it had been able to achieve this by its successful recruitment of the religious elites. Without the support of numerous rural *pirs*, it was difficult for any alternate Muslim opinion to oppose them on the issue of the protection of Islamic symbols. However, the League's reliance on the *pirs* demonstrated that it was unable to establish a separate institutional base which could operate

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<sup>61</sup> Spencer, 'Problems in the Analysis of Communal Violence', *op. cit.*, pp. 267.

<sup>62</sup> *BC*, 21 and 22 November 1939.

<sup>63</sup> A. Haroon, cited in Mitra, *JAR*, Vol. I, July-December 1938, p. 356.

independently of the existing frameworks of the local power holders.<sup>64</sup>

The Sindhi Leaguers were largely traditional landed elites: they were already important figures in the existing structure of local power and so any notions of establishing an alternate structure had not arisen. More important was the fact that if the Muslim League were to gain legitimacy in leadership roles outside of its own constituencies, it would have to conduct its politics from within the paradigm of Islamic symbolism and ideology. The fact that the most important mediating roles in Sind's Muslim society was performed by rural *pirs* ensured that mass communal politics were conducted in the idiom of Islam.

The dilemma of leadership identity for the Sind Leaguers was forcing them to decide if they should: rely on the rural *pirs* to be their linkages to the Muslim peasantry (with the potential danger of the *pirs* assuming control of the League through their roles at the centre of rural Islamic culture); or further attempt to appropriate Islamic leadership postures; or fall back on their status in the hierarchy of Muslim society. With this problem they could expect no automatic help from Jinnah, for the casting of his own legitimacy as leader of India's Muslims was his most challenging problem.

#### IV

The reports of inquiry into the Manzilgah agitation and riots reveal much about the extent communalism had reached in the Assembly's parties. The official report found that narrow communal attitudes of both religious groups found expression in the emotions raised in the Manzilgah agitation.<sup>65</sup> However, it is Congress's own report that is most revealing. Sir Abdul Qaiyum of the NWFP

<sup>64</sup> Ansari, *Sufi Saints*, p. 120.

<sup>65</sup> *Weston Report* (released 11 September 1940) cited in *BC*, 12 September 1940.

(deputed by the Central Working Committee to inquire into the riots) found that the Muslims of Sind considered that 'Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha were interchangeable terms,'<sup>66</sup> a view shared by prominent Muslims such as the President and the General Secretary of the pro-Congress Jamiat-ul-Ulema of Sind, as well as Dr Mohammed Umer Khan, president of the Sind Provincial Majlis-i-Ahrar.<sup>67</sup> Qaiyum Khan was alarmed to discover that prominent Congress members had been involved in organising and participating in the controversial All-India Hindu Mahasabha Conference (Sukkur, November 1939) which had contributed to the riots, and that the tribunal appointed by the Sind Congress to inquire into the Manzilgah dispute had divided on communal lines. In his report to the Congress High Command he concluded that the Sindhi Muslims would sustain a feeling of resentment and suspicion against the local Congress 'as long as it is confined to urban Hindus and acts as a cheap edition of the Hindu Mahasabha.'<sup>68</sup>

In the blurring of distinctions between the Sind Congress and the Hindu Party, the Hindu *panchayats* of northern Sind moved to take control of Hindu politics in the province. An executive committee of representatives of the rural Hindu *panchayats* established a council (the Federation of Panchayats of Sind Hindus) and effectively removed the role of negotiating conditions for Hindus from the hands of the Hindu Party. The Council was formed for the purpose of pressuring the Hindu members of the Assembly into ensuring that an 'Hindu charter' of minimum demands was carried out by whoever was in office.<sup>69</sup>

Through the negotiations for an alternative ministry (early 1940) the Federation not only determined the conditions for the coalitions to be established, but also pressured the Congress into supporting the Hindu Party's 'no-confidence'

<sup>66</sup> Report of Sir Abdul Qaiyum Khan, quoted in *BC*, 10 October 1940.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> SFR First Half of January, 7 February 1940, L/P&J/255, OIOC.

motions against Bakhsh,<sup>70</sup> forced the resignations of the Hindu ministers Vazirani and Doulatram,<sup>71</sup> and was personally involved in the negotiations with other parties for coalition alliances.<sup>72</sup> The insertion of the Council into the state arena represented a loss of authority for the Hindu Party MLAs and a greater direct involvement in elite politics of the conservative Hindu groups.

The hardening of the Hindu position was equally apparent outside of the Assembly as more militant Hindu organisations formed and displayed a prominent physical presence. Militant Hindu brigades became established, such as the *Arya Vir Dal* in Hyderabad and Upper Sind Frontier,<sup>73</sup> *Gothani Fouj* (Village Army), and numerous volunteer corps paraded the streets of Sind's towns.<sup>74</sup> In the *mofussil*, gun licences were being distributed at a rate that alarmed the British, and Hindu villagers refused to employ Muslim *chowkidars* for protection.<sup>75</sup> The extent of Sind's Hindu militancy became apparent as it was the only province in India which met the Rashtriya Sewak Sangh's enrolment target of adult males,<sup>76</sup> and the Hindu Party and the Panchayat Council drew up plans for a Hindu military college in the province. In the press, communal antagonisms assumed disturbing proportions as the League's *Al-Nahid*, the pro-Congress *Qurbani*, and the Hindu *Sansar Samachar* were prosecuted for inciting communal hatred.<sup>77</sup>

Conversely, after the riots, the Muslims were noticeably quiet. The reason lay with the League's inability to consolidate its support from the *pirs* in the political debate as to who would control the Assembly. The League had certainly won support amongst Muslim society over the Manzilgah issue, but mobilising that

<sup>70</sup> BC, 29 January 1940.

<sup>71</sup> Graham to Linlithgow, 26 January 1940, Linlithgow Mss., Eur.F.125/96, Docs. 19 and 20, OIOC.

<sup>72</sup> BC, 21 February 1940.

<sup>73</sup> SFR Second Half of February, 4 March 1940, L/P&J/5/255, OIOC.

<sup>74</sup> SFR Second Half of January, 2 February 1940, L/P&J/5/255, OIOC.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> K.R. Malkani, *The Sind Story*, (New Delhi, Allied, 1984), p. 87.

<sup>77</sup> BC, 6 March 1940.



support for sustained political action was not seriously pursued or developed by the Sind League leadership. The League had enthusiastically recruited *pirs* around Islamic symbols, but its own leadership was not in a position to maintain the emphasis upon Islamic ideology in the Assembly. Consequently, the League failed to link the *pirs* to mainstream politics and use their influence to pressure non-League MLAs to support the Party. There was a fine distinction between Muslim politics and Islamic politics, and after the League's experience into Islamic idiom, it was hesitant to allow the *pirs* the opportunity to 'Islamise' Muslim politics out of its reach.

In drawing back from an overtly Islamic identity and restricting further use of the *pirs* to support an Islamised politics, the Sindhi Leaguers were evaporating the potential influence that the Manzilgah's collective action could have brought. In an environment where the communalisation of politics had reached a point where relations between members of differing religious communities were erupting into collective violence, the Sindhi Leaguers found themselves unsure of their ground. In the Manzilgah agitation, the Muslim League had mobilised Muslims around core symbols of Islamic identity, but they were unable to control the potency such symbolism had unleashed. For the Sind League, the challenge was to restore the conduct of their politics within their traditional roles of authority, but without disconnecting the potential Islamic power that Muslim politics held. However, such power had to be controlled, and the Leaguers recognised that they lacked the necessary framework to harness the most potent mobilisers of Muslim sentiment: the *pirs*. Without such a framework, they were presently incapable of controlling a popular movement.

The immediate result of the conundrum was a split in the Sind Muslim League. Haroon shared Jinnah's reasoning and advocated a concentration on establishing unity and discipline within the ranks of the Muslim elites. However,

the generation of Khuhro, Syed and Majid turned away from the League and advocated a coalition with the Hindu Party. Most historians interpreting Muslim League history have considered the willingness of the Sind Leaguers to discard the League's authority as a clear demonstration of their selfish ambition. However, Syed has stated that the reason for their actions was because 'the tragic events of Sukkur did not fail to touch our (Muslim) sense of responsibility.'<sup>78</sup> Jones accepts this view and considers that it represented a general tendency amongst the Sind Leaguers to withdraw into Sird's affairs and concentrate on 'ways to heal communal relations so severely disrupted by Manzilgah.'<sup>79</sup> Yet could the Leaguers so easily step outside the processes of communalism?

Would the League ministers be able to use their status from the Manzilgah campaign to prevent the Hindus from dominating the ministry, or would they simply replace Bakhsh as junior partners in the next Government? Was Jinnah really irrelevant to Sindhi politics? This thesis will go on to explore the ramifications of the League's actions and addresses the questions their behaviours raise. Central to this explanation is the understanding that Sind's role in national politics was about to assume a new level of importance as Jinnah redefined the stakes of politics at the centre stage with the launch of the Pakistan movement.

## Conclusion

The introduction of provincial autonomy profoundly shaped the processes of politicising religious identity in Sind. The mechanisms of provincial Government (especially separate electorates) determined that state structures inextricably linked religious identity to the distribution of political power. The effect of the devolution of Government in Sind was to channel intra-community competition into

<sup>78</sup> G.M Syed, *Struggle for a New Sind*, cited in Jones, *Muslim Politics*, p. 202.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

a framework that increasingly led politics to be defined rigidly within the discourse of inter-communal conflict. As communalised religious identity became the most important framework for provincial politics, events, issues and actions were understood solely within the context of how the events affected the interests of elites' respective religious communities. Other forms of identity rapidly became politically marginalised. By 1936, the situation was reached whereby participants in the premier state institution of the Assembly functioned solely within paradigms of communal identity.

The involvement of national political organisations in Sind's affairs contributed to the processes of communalisation. The communal discourse of the All-India Muslim League and the failure of local Muslims to control the Assembly exploded in devastating riots across northern Sind. However, the relationships between the Sindhis and their central bodies were undermined by contradictory agendas, not the least being Sindhi provincialism.

This sub-plot, overshadowed by the open confrontation between Hindu and Muslims, was to hold the key to Sind's politics in the next decade. In the case of the central and Sind Muslim Leagues, they shared a determination to reassert Muslim political power, but not at the cost of tolerating infringements on their respective spheres of influence. The contradiction of a shared, communalised Muslim identity, but one which failed to unite Muslims, served to confuse the political direction of the Sindhi Muslims. Similarly, the Sindhi Muslims had asked the All-India Muslim League for help on one hand, but pushed it away with the other when it became too involved in Sindhi affairs. Just as the state structures and communal politics were influencing the course of Sind's politics, so too was the discordant relationship between the central League and the independent-minded Sindhis. As the era dawned of Jinnah's solution for India's Muslims (the partition of the sub-continent), the stakes in the struggle for control of Sind

increased dramatically. Was the issue of Pakistan simply to be a contest between Hindus and Muslims, or was it just as much a struggle between Muslims?