
Quid-e-Azam's Visit to Kashmir in 1946 and its Impacts on the Politics of Muslim Conference and National Conference

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ABSTRACT

"Establishment of the Muslim Conference in 1932 was a historical moment in the history of the political consciousness of Kashmiri Muslims. In 1938, Muslim Conference was reorganized, and its nomenclature changed to "National Conference". The objective behind this purpose was to bring the monitories living in Kashmir under the platform of the National Conference and bring them into the mainstream of the political struggle of consciousness in Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah led the National Conference. The failure of capturing the minds of Kashmiri Muslims by the National Conference resulted in the restoration of the Muslim Conference led by Ch. Ghulam Abbas. Muslim Conference as well as National Conference acclaimed to be the real representative of Muslims of Kashmir. Muhammad Ali Jinnah visited Kashmir in 1944 at the request of Ch. Ghulam Abbas and Sheikh Abdullah. The purpose of this invitation was to get the favour of Mr Muhammad Ali Jinnah on their respective political stance. This article will analyse the visit of Quid e Azam to Kashmir as a political success of the stance of the Muslim Conference over the issue of representation of Kashmiris. This study also highlights the impacts on politics of the National Conference after the visit of Quid e Azam in Kashmir and the total inclination of the National Conference towards Indian National Congress."

INTRODUCTION

Foundation of Muslim Conference

To formulate a constitution for the foundation of a political party in Kashmir, the prominent Kashmiri leaders in 1932, constituted a committee. Hence the foundation of "All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference" was immersed as the first political party that was founded by the Kashmiri Muslims in Kashmir. The first session of the newly formed political party was held from October 13th to 15th, 1932 (Mir, 2004). The session for the inauguration of the newly formed All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was held at Pather Masjid Srinagar under the presidency of Sheikh Abdullah (Saraf, 1977). Sardar Ibrahim Khan in his writings penned these dates as October 15th to 17th, 1932 (Khan, 1965). In this session, about 0.3 million people participated (Mir, 2004). Sheikh Abdullah, Ghulam Ahmed Ashai and other prominent Muslim leaders addressed the occasion, and the party flag was approved (Saraf, 1977).

The Official name of this organization was "All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference". Srinagar was selected as the headquarters of this organization. The main objective of this organization included the protection of the political rights of Kashmiri Muslims, the promotion of Muslim unity and the social, economic and educational development of Kashmiri Muslims.

Every Muslim resident of Kashmir could become a member of that party (Azad, 1992).

Sheikh Abdullah was elected as the president of the party, Sheikh Abdul Hameed as the Vice-President while Ch. Ghulam Abbas was the general secretary and Molvi Abdul Rehman was elected as the secretary of the Muslim Conference (Saraf, 1977). Objectives of the Muslim Conference were to frame a legislative assembly and made civil administration answerable to the legislative assembly. The Muslim Conference asserted pressure on Maharaja to elect a legislative assembly as soon as possible. The political struggle of the Muslim Conference resulted in the formation of a franchise Committee by the Dogra Government headed by Chief Justice Sir Barjour Dalal and four other members including Mr L.W Lardine (Vice Chairman), Rao Bahadur Sardar Thakar Kartar Singh, Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Qaiyum and Mr Ram Nath Sharma (Saraf, 1977). The committees recommended the structure of the first legislative Assembly of Kashmir. Legislative Assembly (Praja Saba) elections in Kashmir were held in 1934. At the eleventh hour, Muslim Conference boycotted the elections due to the reason for not releasing the political prisoner by the Dogra administration. However, Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues continued the polls. The results of the election were very encouraging for the

Muslim Conference. Sixteen Candidates of the Muslim Conference were elected unopposed on 21 reserved seats of Muslims (Saraf, 1977). It is very important to note that The State of Kashmir being the first princely state to hold the Legislative Assembly elections makes it distinct.

The total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly was 75. Out of which, 35 members were to be nominated by Maharaja and on 40 other seats it was decided to hold elections. Though Muslims were 78 % of the total population, merely 21 seats were reserved for them. Ten elected seats were reserved for the Kashmiri Hindus and 02 elected seats were reserved for Kashmiri Sikhs. Twelve Non-Muslim members were also elected unopposed (Saraf, 1977). The elections were held in September 1934 and Muslim Conference won 16 seats. The thirty-five nominated seats included the individuals of the Dogra family and certain Jagirdars (feudal lords). The criteria set for voters to vote was such that only 08 per cent of the total population of the state qualified by employing the set criterion (Azad, 1992).

Muslim Conference was not satisfied with the performance of the Legislative Assembly. Later in 1936, Muslim Conference demanded a "Responsible Government" in the state of Kashmir.

In 1937, elections were again held for the Legislative Assembly. The Muslim Conference repeated the same performance as it was in the elections of 1934. But after the resignation of certain members of the Legislative Assembly and re-elections on vacant seats, the Muslim Conference was able to get 21 seats in the legislative assembly (Khan, 1965). There were 40 elected assembly members after the elections in 1937 (Pandit, 1991). There were 12 elected non-Muslim members in the second legislative assembly and 18 others were nominated by Maharaja (Saraf, 1977).

Foundation of National Conference and its inclination towards Indian National Congress

Sheikh Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz deliberated about the accomplishment of the scheme based on non-communal patterns of politics in 1935. Both had the same philosophy regarding the socio-political issues of the Kashmiris and their settlement based on Kashmiri nationalism. Religious involvement in the political affairs of the state should be discouraged. For the promotion of this ideology, they started a weekly journal "The Hamdard" in 1935. The main objective of the Journal was the promotion of Kashmiri Nationalism (Saraf, 1977). For the promotion of this ideology, they also assisted in the founding of a student organization, "The Kashmir Young League" in 1936. During the second annual session of the Kashmir Young League, the "Mazdur and

Kasan Sabha" was founded in 1937. That session was presided over by Dr. Muhammad Ashraf who was the secretary of the Indian National Congress (Saraf, 1977). The events were a great show for the promotion of Kashmiri Nationalism supported by the Indian National Congress.

Sheikh Abdullah and Ch. Ghalam Abbas renamed the party as National Conference in 1938. The reason behind the change of party name was to provide an opportunity for non-Muslim subjects of the state to become members of the party. The political model of the All India National Congress was accepted for the politics of the party. The meeting of the working committee was held in June 1938 in Srinagar which presented a resolution: "Whereas in the opinion of the working committee, the time has now come when all the progressive forces in the country should be rallied under one banner to fight for the achievement of responsible government" " (Khan, 1965).

The General Council recommended the working committee, ensure the participation of the people who desire to be part of the political struggle in the forthcoming annual conference session and also that the working committee has to ensure that by making it easy to become a member of the Conference if desired, irrespective of the caste, creed or religion, It is very important to note that although Sheikh Abdullah remained president of National Conference until 1953-54 yet he failed to get any satisfactory support from Hindus, Pandits or other non-Muslim Kashmiris. In 1939, the National Conference passed a resolution in favour of joint electorates that was against the policy of the All India Muslim League and it disappointed Indian Muslims. This resulted in the decline of the popularity of the National Conference among Muslims of Kashmir.

The ancestors of the Pandit Jawaher Lal Nehru belonged to Kashmir. Moreover, his wife Kamla, was also a descendant of Kashmiri Pandits (Saraf, 1977). This relation always compelled Nehru to take a keen interest in the affairs of the state. Nehru was also well aware of the geo-strategic and socio-political importance of the state of Kashmir concerning India; he could not let a free hand to the Muslim Conference work under the ideology of the All India Muslim League in Kashmir. In May 1940, Pandit Jawaher Lal Nehru visited Kashmir for 10 days. During meetings between Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah, Nehru projected his narrative that the provision of rights and social welfare was not the issue of Kashmiri Muslims only but the rest of the religious communities of Kashmir were also facing the same issues. Sheikh Abdullah became very close to Nehru and the inclination of the National Conference was completely tilted towards Congress (Mir, 2004).

This situation resulted in restorations of the Muslim Conference by Gohar Rehman and Ch. Ghulam Abbas with the ideological plan of the All India Muslim League. The approach of Sheikh Abdullah to favour the ideology of the Indian National Congress regarding the mechanism of joint electorate resulted in the bestowment of the title of Sheikh Abdullah as "Kashmiri Gandhi" (Khan, 1965).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as under

1. To narrate the political events of the visit of Mr Jinnah to Kashmir in 1946
2. To find out the impacts of Mr Jinnah's visit on the politics of the Muslim Conference.
3. To highlight the post-visit consequences of the political reshaping of the National Conference and its inclination towards the All India National Conference.

Significance of the study

The study enables the reader to understand the stance of Mr Jinnah on the issue of political representation of Muslims in Kashmir. This study also highlights the political activities and events during the visit of Mr Jinnah to Kashmir. The study also discusses the clear supporting stance of Mr Jinnah in favour of the Muslim Conference as the sole representative of Kashmiri Muslims. The study also highlights the cause of the political inclination of Sheikh Abdullah (National Conference) towards the Indian National Congress after the visit of Mr Jinnah to Kashmir.

Events of Visits

Mr Muhammad Ali Jinnah visited Kashmir in 1944 during the premiership of Sir B.N. Rau. Though he was not willing to allow Jinnah to visit Kashmir at the request of the Muslim Conference and National Conference leadership it was allowed unwillingly, he was frightened of the mighty wave of Muslim sentiments. Jinnah sent his visit plan to Ch. Ghulam Abbas through a telegram on 06 May 1944. He asked Abbas to inform Sheikh Abdullah and Mir Waiz Youshaf Shah about his visit (Suharwardy, 1983). Quid e Azam was very keen to bring the Kashmiri leadership under a single political platform.

As Sheikh Abdullah also invited Quaid-i-Azam to visit Kashmir in May 1944. Sheikh was planning to get the consent of Mr Jinnah for the integration of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. On the other hand, Ch. Ghulam Abbas also invited Jinnah to visit Kashmir and address the session of the Muslim Conference. Quaid reached Sialkot on 08 May 1944 with his sister Fatima Jinnah from where he entered Jammu via Socheet Garrah (Pandit, 1991).

Ch. Ghulam Abbas, Mr. A. R. Sagir, Ch. Hameed Ullah and Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad along with thousands of Muslims welcomed him. On their way to Srinagar, near Banehal, Molvi Mir Waiz Muhammad Yusuf Shah also joined them. Quaid-i-Azam reached Srinagar on 10 May 1944 and remained stationed in the valley for two months (Suharwardy, 1983). Quaid e Azam was strongly and warmly welcomed by the leadership of the Muslim Conference at Jammu. As the leaders of the National Conference at Jammu, including Girdhari Lal Dogra and Mr Mulak Raj Sharif were pro-Congress and anti-League, the reception of Jinnah by the National Conference was empty of any enthusiasm. But the Muslims from all walks of life warmly welcomed Jinnah (Saraf, 1977). From Socheet Garrah to Ramban, the convoy of Jinnah was led by the platform of the Muslim Conference. From Bahnihal to its onward journey to Srinagar, it was the power show of strength under the banners of the National Conference (Saraf, 1977). The Kashmiri Muslims gave Mr Jinnah a royal reception at Srinagar. Jinnah stayed at "Koshak" a bungalow of Sir Muratab Ali. Later, he shifted to a boat house named "Queen Elizabeth" (Saraf, 1977).

Mr Jinnah stayed in Kashmir for two months and seventeen days (Pandit, 1991). The reason for this long stay was an eventful schedule of different political and social activities.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Impacts of the visit of Quid e Azam on the political performance and subsequent popularity of Muslim Conference

The first and the most powerful impact of the visit of Mr Jinnah to Kashmir was the failure of the plan of the National Conference on the issue of joint electorates. Sheikh Abdullah and his team were expecting Quid e Azam that he might support their point of view of the joint electorate in Kashmir, but they misjudged Jinnah's political approach, free of equivocation and prevarication. How could a principled man let alone Quaid-e-Azam stand for one principle in India and for a different one in Kashmir? Mr Jinnah repudiated Sheikh Abdullah regarding his desire to support him in favour of joint electorates. Mr. Jinnah said, "You are young enough to be my son and you must listen. I too was in the congress, but their approach and intentions disgusted me. Why are you repeating the same experiment" Suharwardy (1983). Jinnah on addressing the annual session of the Muslim Conference in Srinagar clearly stated that National Conference sought to mislead the minorities in Kashmir in betrayal, the same way as the Congress did in India. Mr Jinnah's statement not only fell like a bombshell to Sheikh Abdullah but also had shaken the very foundations of the National Conference. The stance of the Muslim Conference

in favour of a separate electorate in Kashmir gets the consent of Jinnah which led towards the acceptance of the Kashmiris (Suharwardy, 1983).

The party policy of the Muslim Conference was to work on the pattern of the All India Muslim League. As the AIML was working in British India by claiming it as the sole representative of Indian Muslims. This manifesto of AIML was reciprocal to Congress, which was launching the slogan of Indian nationalism. Similarly, in Kashmir, Muslim Conference was working purely for the cause of Kashmiri Muslims. On the other hand, National Conference was claiming the ideology of not only Kashmiri Nationalism but also manifesting the slogan of impartiality. As Nehru was the descendant of Kashmiri Pandits, National Conference is naturally aligned with the political philosophy of Nehru (Saraf, 1977).

During the private visit of Mohammed Ali Jinnah to Srinagar in 1936, Mr Jinnah personally investigated the state of Kashmiri politics. He was offered the task of trying to sort out the differences between the Muslim Conference and the National Conference (leaders of both bodies having first called on him in Lahore and Delhi) although knowing that the task was unrewarding, yet Mr Jinnah again visited Srinagar in 1944. The mediation was unsuccessful, it was after this that Mr Jinnah showed his clear disapproval of Sheikh Abdullah's secularism and approved that the only body that truly represented the Muslim majority in Kashmir was the Muslim conference." Unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, at this period was extremely reluctant to get himself directly involve (or the Muslim League which he headed) in the internal affairs of a Princely State: according to him such actions were constitutionally improper." The historical record, however, leaves one in no doubt that in his mind Muhammad Ali Jinnah believed that the Muslim Conference enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the people of Kashmir Valley at least, and in all probability the rest of the State as well (Lamb & Alastair, 1991).

During the stay of Mr Jinnah in Srinagar, the 12th annual session of the Muslim Conference was held on 16 June 1944. Jinnah was the chief guest of that session. Jinnah addressed the session on 17 June 1944. In his address, he agreed with the stance of the Muslim Conference and Ch. Ghalum Abbas declared that Muslim Conference is the representative of the Muslim League in Kashmir (Pandit, 1991). During his address, Jinnah stated that he met with people of different schools of thoughts during his stay at Srinagar, 99 % people of Kashmir are in favour of the stance taken by the Muslim Conference (Saraf, 1977).

After the visit of Quid e Azam, not only the popularity of the Muslim conference was increased but it also increased the speed of its political activities. Muslim Conference got popularity among Kashmiri Muslims due to its demand for a "Responsible Government" in Kashmir. Jinnah made it very clear during his address that the Muslim Conference is the sole representative of Muslims in Kashmir. At the time of his departure from Kashmir, Jinnah advised the Kashmiri public to unite under the platform of the Muslim Conference (Saraf, 1977). In 1947, elections were again held for Legislative Assembly based on separate electorates. Muslim Conference got 15 seats out of 21. For the remaining 06 seats, the nomination papers of the Muslim Conference candidates were rejected for one reason or the other. On the other hand, National Conference boycotted these elections because its demand for joint electorates was not entertained (Khan, 1965). After the success of the Muslim Conference in the elections of the Legislative Assembly in 1947, the Kashmiri Muslims proved the views of Jinnah who stated the Muslim Conference was the sole representative of Kashmiri Muslims.

After the 3rd of June Plan in Indian Politics, Muslim Conference passed a resolution on 19 July 1947 in favour of the accession of Kashmir with Pakistan. In that resolution, it was also demanded from Maharaja that he might announce the internal independence of the state. The departments of defence, communication and foreign affairs should accede to the constituent assembly of Pakistan (Khan, 1987). In the words of Sardar Qayyum, the visit of Mr Jinnah to Kashmir, in the mid of 1944, upset both Maharaja and National Conference (Khan, 1987).

Impacts of the visit of Quid e Azam on politics of National Conference

Mr Jinnah was invited by Sheikh Abdullah to Kashmir in May 1944. The purpose of the invitation from Sheikh Abdullah was to show his power of public standing and wanted to prove himself as the most popular leader of Kashmiri Muslims. The object of the nationalists was primarily to make a show of their strength to impress Mr Jinnah and persuade him to give the decision in their favour. On reaching Srinagar, Mr Jinnah was given a warm reception by Sheikh Abdullah, such a welcome was unprecedented and incomparable in the history of Kashmir, to which in his welcome address Jinnah said, "This was the welcome which kings might envy" Suharwardy (1983).

Sheikh Abdullah tried to convince Mr Jinnah of the working objectives of his party. He put his arguments in favour of Kashmiri Nationalism. He was in favour of a joint representative mechanism

regarding communal stratification in Kashmir. He also tried to assure Mr Jinnah that National Conference is a Muslim Political Party, and it will continue to work for the cause of Muslim welfare in the state. The doors of the party were open for other communities to make them part of this party. According to Sheikh Abdullah's ideology, he wanted to show the world that, Kashmiri Nationalism is based on a greater spectrum of national cohesiveness irrespective of religious affiliation (Saraf, 1977).

During the address of Jinnah at the annual session of the Muslim Conference in Srinagar, he questioned the participation of minorities in the National Conference in the last six years (from 1938-1944). He garmented that the members majority of the National Conference are Muslims and very low representation of other communities was witnessed in the National Conference, which means, the body of the National Conference is merely dividing the Kashmiri Muslims. National Conference on the one hand presented the objectives of Nationalism (a congress program) and on the other hand, accepted the stance of the Muslim League and the foundation of Pakistan in British India. National Conference was showing a dual stance of Nationalism in Kashmir and on partition in India. The National Conference was adopting the policy of Congress regarding the representation of all communities in Kashmir as the Congress claimed to represent all the communities. However, Sheikh Abdullah admitted that National Conference was working for the interests of the Muslims in Kashmir (as Congress was working for Hindus in India). Jinnah could never tolerate this dual standard of National Conference, which he had already denied in British India to the All India Congress (Saraf, 1977). Jinnah, in his address at the session of the Muslim Conference, termed this attitude of the National Conference as "deception" The party politics of the National Conference was contradictory to the principal stance of Jinnah over Indian politics. Sheikh Abdullah was expecting that Jinnah would recommend and support his party policy.

However, it was very hard for Jinnah to adopt a different policy in Kashmir. National Conference

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was in favour of joint electorates in Kashmir. During his addresses and statements Mr Jinnah, he announced the same policy for Kashmiri politics, which was the objective of the Muslim League for Indian Muslims. Mr Jinnah also addressed the annual session of the Muslim Conference, which made the stance of the Muslim Conference more obvious, which also enabled it to get its status as representative of the Muslim League and Mr Jinnah in Kashmir. The visit of Mr Jinnah greatly tarnished the image of Sheikh Abdullah and his association with Muslim circles inside and outside Kashmir (Suharwardy, 1983).

The Hindus and Congress were jubilant, as now an unbridgeable gulf was created between Sheikh Abdullah and the Muslims League (Suharwardy, 1983). Moreover, Sheikh Abdullah was greatly disappointed by the clear stance of Jinnah over the issue of representation in Kashmir. It ultimately resulted in Sheikh Abdullah's inclement toward Congress (Saraf, 1977).

CONCLUSION

The visit of Mr Jinnah to Kashmir in 1944 put a great impact on the future politics of Kashmir. National Conference led by Sheikh Sheikh Abdullah was working for the promotion of Kashmiri nationalism by involving the scheduled castes in Kashmir through the platform of the National Conference. Sheikh Abdullah was working on the same principles of politics on which the All India Congress was manipulating its politics in India. On the other hand, Muslim Conference was purely a political party representing the Kashmiri Muslims only. Ch. Ghalum Abbas was leading the Muslim Conference on the Principle of Separate Representation for the scheduled castes in Kashmir. Jinnah supported the stance of the Muslim Conference, which not only enhanced the popularity of the Muslim Conference but also parted the ways of Sheikh Abdullah and Ch. Ghalum Abbas. The outcome of the visit of Jinnah resulted in the complete inclination of the Sheikh Abdullah to Congress which later resulted in his support for India during the accession of Kashmir with India.

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