Muslim quest for space in india: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract:

For centuries before the British occupation of the subcontinent, the Muslims were the rulers of the land. Being dislodged from the rule and finding themselves as a minority, subjected both to British wrath and Hindu highhandedness, the Muslims found themselves in troubled waters. "There was a strain in Indian Muslim attitudes that gave the communal division a peculiar political importance and objective. From its earliest days, Islam has been a conquering and proselytizing faith. Its tradition in India was one of conquest and empire. The tides and currents of invasion and warfare had flowed to and fro, and great Hindu kingdoms had risen in the wake of periodic Muslim retreats, till the time of the Marhatta Empire. But for hundreds of years, no Hindu Raj had loaded it over Muslims either in India or in the great basins of the Indus and the Ganges.

Key Words: Colonialism, Ahrars, Khaksars, Quest, Separate space

Introduction

British Colonialism in India decided to transform Indian political and socio-economic structures during the 19th century. The process of modernization was initiated, which resulted in a number of structural reforms in administrative, political, and legal structures. The monarchial structures were going to be gradually replaced by representative structures. The legal and constitutional reforms were introduced for the political empowerment of the Indians in different spheres. The Westernisation and modernization of India’s educational and social structures created a new class of Indian nationalists who were aspiring for more political positions, more shares in power, more jobs, and more avenues of participation in different branches of the state. The Muslims remained a backward, underdeveloped, and marginalized community in India. They developed grievances and were looking for some safeguards, including constitutional protections, the reservation of job quotas, and the reservation of seats in representative houses. So, the quest for separate space ultimately resulted in the demand for a separate state. This study is an attempt to explore various stages of this journey.

Development of the Idea for Separate State:

At the all-India level, a search for separate space began as early as the year 1906, when a delegation of prominent Muslims (Syed Razi Wasti, 1993), led by Aga Khan, met the Viceroy. The motive of this meeting, as it was evident from its address, was that "the position accorded to the Muslim community in any kind of representation, direct or indirect, and in all other ways affecting their status and influence, should be commensurate not merely with their numerical strength but also with their political importance" (Tara Chand, 1972).
As the Punjab was given a Legislative Council later than the eastern provinces, awareness of political rights came later. After the introduction of Legislative Councils and the consequent ‘devolution’ of powers, the Muslims in the British Punjab were enjoying power with the help of the Hindus and the Sikhs. The philosophy of the Unionist Party, a tool of the British to secure the province from political upheavals, was functioning in the province; thereby, the gulf between the communities was not being widened. Another very important factor, blocking the segregation among the communities of the Punjab was the absence of any threat of being overpowered or dominated by any other community. It was for this reason that a person who later challenged the idea of Indian nationalism was initially "contributing to the symphony of 'patriotic' music with his impartial encomium of glorious India, Sare Jahan se acha Hindustan humara" (David Page, 1987).

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms drew the prospects of democratic rule closer. This development caused a strong stir among the Muslim ranks. "The enlarged opportunities were, however, taken seriously by all three communities" of the Punjab. Mian Fazl-i-Hussain’s efforts to uplift the Muslim community helped it come on par with other communities in the province. An interesting development of this period was that the Sikhs reorganized politically. They liberated their gurdwaras from the Hindu mahants, thereby establishing themselves as a distinct community.

In the post-Montague-Chelmsford Reforms period, two other important developments occurred. Indian politics witnessed the Lucknow Pact in 1916 between Congress and the League. Although, this pact opened new avenues for cooperation, it soon culminated with the end of the Khilafat Movement. Congress denied all those agreements that it had accepted under the Lucknow Pact. Similarly, Congress did not accept the suggestions put forward by Jinnah under the Delhi Proposals. Thus, soon the future politics based on separate spaces for each community began to emerge.

It was at the annual session of the All India Muslim League in December 1930 that Dr. Iqbal delivered his famous address. He challenged the idea of Indian nationalism in an unprecedented way. He pointed out that a common and united Indian nation might have emerged "if the teaching of Kabir and the divine faith of Akbar had seized the imagination of the masses of this country.” But it could not happen. On the contrary, he noted that experience, however, shows that the various castes and religious units in India have shown no inclination to sink their respective identities into a larger whole. Each group is intensely jealous of its collective existence. (Bhaghat Kabir and Mughul King Akbar)

Iqbal’s analysis of communal relations was piercing, but it was undeniable too.

Iqbal did not take an apologetic stance in defence of his Muslim nationalistic views. His brand of communalism was in fact in stark contrast to the narrow concept of communalism, which gets its inspiration from ill feelings towards other communal groups. In fact, his brand of communalism was based on the principle that each group is entitled to freely develop along its own lines. He opined that there was a Muslim India within India because, to him, India was a sub-continent and its units were not territorial as they were in the case of European countries. Based on this principle, he declared that "I would like to see the Punjab, Northwest Frontier Province, Sindh, and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire; the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India.” (Iqbal’s 1930 Presidential Address).
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Being a Punjabi Muslim and having a deep understanding of his native province’s politics, he was aware of the aftereffects of the creation of such a state, on the nature of communal relations among different religious communities in the province. Therefore, he was not hesitant to add that the exclusion of Ambala division and perhaps some districts where non-Muslims predominate will make it less extensive and more Muslim in population. He also took certain exceptions to some provisions of the Lucknow Pact and stressed that if territorial redistribution was not accepted, the Muslims of the Punjab would not be satisfied with a "less than clear majority" in the provincial council.

As the theory of ‘every action has a reaction’ is also applicable in politics, the reaction was expected in the press, particularly the Hindu press, which termed it a "recipe for permanently involving India in civil war.” (A. R. Tariq, 1985) It also labelled this address as a "deadly poison for the peace of India." The reaction from the Muslim press was favourable, as one paper noted that Dr. Iqbal rejected the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity, so far considered indispensable for the freedom of India. Not Hindu-Muslim unity, but Hindu-Muslim adjustment, is the only key to the situation. From the Hindu point of view, Iqbal’s address was a destabilizing factor for Hindu-Muslim relations. They were very concerned about it. There is hardly a Hindu who has not spurted venom against the address. Actually, the address is the first successful attack on the Hindu conception of ‘nationality’ or the establishment of the Hindu Raj in India. Sir Muhammad Iqbal removed the mask from the secret and hideous moves employed to set up a purely Hindu Raj in India and impose Hindu rule on all non-Hindus, especially the Mussalmans. He did not want to grab the country of the Hindus from them and make it over to the Mussalmans. The Hindu community could not meet Sir Muhammad Iqbal’s argument and was atoning for its helplessness by using abusive language towards him.

Iqbal fully understood the repercussions of his proposal on the nature of communal relations, particularly in Punjab. Therefore, he suggested partitioning the province on communal lines. In the early 1930s, such talk of a separate state, or states, for the Muslims of the subcontinent seemed like a far-fetched idea. But the vision was prophetic. However, the Muslim community itself was not yet prepared for a parting of ways. In fact, the stage had not come, and Congress had not shown greater interest in accommodating the League’s claim of representing Muslims. The Congress displayed unnecessary impatience in its lack of accommodation vis-à-vis the League. (Kesari,1931). Iqbal stressed a new solution, changing his thinking on nationalism. He shifted from ‘communal unity’ to ‘communal settlement’ between two equal parties or nations—Hindus and Muslims. The idea presented by him was forceful and had momentum in itself. Chaudhary Rahmat Ali, a student at Cambridge hailing from the
Punjab, came up with the name "Pakistan" in a pamphlet titled "Now or Never: Are We Live or Perish Forever?" He pleaded for the thirty million Muslims "living in the areas of Pakistan who were being sacrificed on the altar of Hindu nationalism." Rahmat Ali's works depict the first forceful assertion of what later came to be known as the two-nation theory. Separating the Muslims from the Hindus, he argued, "In the five northern provinces of India, out of a total population of about forty million, we the Muslims constitute about thirty million [seventy-five percent]. Our religion, culture, history, tradition, economic system, and laws of inheritance, accession, and marriage are basically and fundamentally different from those of the people living in the rest of India. These differences are not confined to the broad basic principles; far from it, they extend to the minute details of our lives. We do not inter-dine; we do not inter-marry. Our national customs and calendars, even our diet and dress, are different." (Aitzaz Ahsan, 1996). Rahmat Ali declared that the constitutional safeguards, being offered to the Muslims at that time could never be a substitute for the "loss of separate nationality." (*Inqilab*, 1931).

Some Muslim leaders extended cooperation to the Simon Commission, like the Jinnah-led faction that appraised it. Congress also opposed the Simon Commission, like the Shafi League, and greeted its members with a general strike when they landed in Bombay in February 1928. The Congress Working Committee attempted to achieve a consensus on constitutional documents by organizing an All Parties' Conference in February and again in May of the same year. To break the stalemate on communal issues, Congress formed a special committee under the chairmanship of Moti Lal Nehru in May 1928. (K.K.Aziz, 1978)

In this report, popularly known as the Nehru Report, a joint electorate was proposed instead of a separate electorate. Thus, it was a complete departure from the already agreed-upon terms of the Delhi Muslim Proposals and even the Lucknow Pact of 1916. It was, therefore, a disturbing development for the Muslims. A handful of Muslim politicians were willing to accept the proposals, provided some concessions were made. The concessions demanded by these leaders included that the representation in Punjab and Bengal should be proportional to the population. Moreover, reforms in the NWFP and Baluchistan were demanded, as was the separation of Sindh from Bombay. In addition, it also asked for one-third Muslim representation in the Central Legislative Assembly, against the 25 percent recommended by the Nehru Report.

But the provisions of the Nehru Report not only rejected a separate electorate but also refused to accept the reservation of seats in Punjab and Bengal. As the impasse was not broken, Jinnah tried to convince Congress at the All Parties' Convention held in December 1928 to reconsider the Nehru Report. But Jinnah's efforts could not succeed. This failure was indeed a parting of ways. The Nehru Report was termed "the end of the road for Hindu-Muslim unity". (David Page, 1987). From that point onwards, communal relations in the Punjab and in India could not remain the same as they were in old times—fighting with each other but still living together. Thus, the efforts of the Nehru Committee to close the communal breach had, in fact, widened it, and as it later turned out, permanently". Jinnah, as a reaction to the Nehru Report, came up with his Fourteen Points. This sonnet of Jinnah could be termed the charter of the Muslim quest for a separate identity within India. The Punjab, with its highly communal character, was much more prone to these changes. The immediate impact of these quick developments was the unification of the Shafi and Jinnah factions of the All India Muslim League in March 1929. Referring to the demands by the Muslims for separate electorates and higher weightage in provincial and central governments as well as in civil services, "It was not yet Pakistan, but almost its early embryo, within a weak federal womb" (Stantly Walpert, 2003).
The years 1928 and 1929 witnessed more political upheaval. Activities in the constitutional arena on the one side, and revival of terrorist activities on the other. Punjab became the staging ground for such activities. In December 1928, Bhagat Singh and his companions shot dead a British officer. They also carried out an attack on the Central Assembly in April 1929. They were apprehended and prosecuted. The case was known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Bhagat Singh and his companions were hanged in March 1931. These terrorist activities or confrontations convinced the British government that India needed much more than the Simon Commission. Therefore, in October 1929, Lord Irwin announced the setting up of a Round Table Conference.

The Round Table Conference paved the way for a federation of princely states and British Indian provinces. On the question of safeguards, the Muslims made it clear that their community would not accept any constitution without safeguards. (I. H. Qureshi, 1965). The acceptance of the principle of federalism was an important achievement for the Muslims of the Punjab and Bengal because it made it possible for them to envision autonomous provinces within the federation. But as the Muslim majority in both the Punjab and Bengal was marginal, they demanded constitutional safeguards as well. While the Hindus were willing to offer constitutional safeguards to the Muslims in minority provinces, they were unwilling to offer them to the Muslims in Muslim majority provinces, Punjab and Bengal. To make headway, Sir Shafi proposed that Muslims do not insist on 56 percent and agree to have 49 percent of the seats of the Punjab provincial legislative council through electorates while having the right to contest two percent of the special seats. The Hindus felt that it was perhaps the best possible option to prevent the deadlock; therefore, they did not offer "uncompromising opposition to the proposal. But the deadlock persisted as the Sikhs were not prepared to accept less than 24 percent representation, which would leave only 27 percent for the Hindus—a ridiculously low percentage for a community that constituted 32 percent of the population. (S.Qalb-Abid, 1992)

The Punjab's communal problem was not only a Hindu-Muslim affair; the Sikh factor made it a complex triangle. The Sikh reaction to the Muslim demands was very aggressive. One Sikh paper demanded that either the Muslim majority areas be detached from the Punjab or central Punjab be made a separate province if representation was to be given on communal lines. By March 1931, the Gurumukhi language paper, Akali, was demanding 30 percent representation for the Sikhs, which was in fact 6 percent more than the actual population of the community in the province. The Sikh paper went to the extent of declaring that the Sikh community will never tolerate the "rule of the Muslims and will strain every effort to destroy such a rule." For the Muslims, the invention of the Sikh problem owed its origins to the Hindus. A Muslim paper wrote that the 'Sikh problem' is only an invention of the Hindu mind. It was one of the cleverest tricks ever devised in the history of India to deprive the Muslims of their political power. (Mashirul Hassan, 1994)

The second session of the Round Table Conference continued from September 7, 1931, to December 1, 1931. New arrivals included Gandhi, Dr. Iqbal, and Madan Mohan Malaviya. This session was important in the sense that it decided on matters like provincial status for NWFP and Sindh, yet the question of minority rights and federal structure remained unresolved. Gandhi asserted that communal disputes should be put aside and the formulation of the constitution should be continued. All the leading minority communities’ representatives, including the Muslims, the Depressed Classes, the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians, and the resident British Community, concluded with Congress' scheme of eroding separate electorates and announced a joint statement supporting separate electorates. Gandhi’s claim that Congress represents all groups in India was not acceptable to many participants in the conference.
Parleys were held between Gandhi and the Muslim delegates. Iqbal, in one of his statements, recalled what exactly occurred during those parleys. He stated that Aga Khan even offered to be Gandhi’s camp follower in the political struggle against the British, if he agreed to the Muslim demands. Gandhi, in turn, imposed many conditions. First and foremost was his dubious willingness to accept the Muslim demands in his personal capacity without giving any guarantee that his party would also accept them.

Second, he demanded that the Muslims oppose the right to a separate electorate for the ‘untouchables. These conditions put forth by Gandhi were not in favour of the Muslims, therefore, negotiations failed. On his return to India, Gandhi restarted the non-cooperation movement.

The British government announced the communal award in August 1932. (Sachin Sen, 1974) It gave Muslims 48.8 percent, while Sikhs were offered 18 percent representation in the Council. Although the Muslim representation was far less than the population percentage of 57 in Punjab, the Muslim population was 16,217,242 out of the total population of 28,418,819, yet they were compensated by being allowed to compete on ten special seats, reserved for landholders, universities, and labour. The Hindu press apprehended that more than half of those reserved seats would go to Muslims, making them the majority as per their demand. (K. L. Tuteja, 1995)

The Muslim media argued that the Muslim members would still require the support of non-Muslim members of the Council to have a working majority. The Sikhs were very disappointed in the award. Khalsa Review commented, “There was nothing left for us now but to raise a standard of wholesome agitation and protest against this partisan award, which reduced us to a state of utter subservience to a community whose record of tyrannies was written in letters of blood.

Towards the end of 1932, the third session of the RTC was held, but because of the absence of Congress and Jinnah, it turned out to be a non-event. This session built upon the work already done and finalizing the details, as new initiatives could not be started without the participation of an important stakeholder like Congress. The proposals arising out of the three sessions were published as a white paper in March 1933. After its approval by the parliament, a Joint Select Committee was setup to make recommendations, on the basis of which a bill was to be drafted. It was finally on the basis of the report of the committee that a bill was introduced in parliament, which, after its approval, became the Government of India Act 1935. This Act did not modify the separate electorate for the Muslims, nor did it change the communal distribution of seats already laid out in the Communal Award. After enactment of the new Act, the Muslim correspondent of the Civil and Military Gazette commented on the issue in the following words: “Within reasonable limits, Muslims were prepared to turn the future, but they refused to allow any safeguards that existed for their protection to be destroyed at this stage. Though they would only be delighted if the occasion for the use of these safeguards never arises and they become a dead letter through rejection.

The Punjab, being the home of divergent communities, was the key province for the competition for power. The deep communal divide, which was revealed by the constitutional debates about the future, The state of Muslim politics has been described in these words: by the end of the 1930s, “All India Muslim politics had become in essence the sum of the politics of Muslim provincialism, and all the Indian Muslim politicians without a provincial base had either to withdraw from politics or submit to these forces.” (David Page)
The decade of the 1930s witnessed great changes in Hindu-Muslim relations. Not only were there communal riots on a large scale, but there were also demands for partition on communal lines, along with debates on constitutional rights for each community. Due to the execution of Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru, and Sukh Dev in 1931, however, communal sentiments subsided temporarily. Even those who were opposing such activities were shaken by their execution. Zamindar, a Muslim paper, noted, It is gratifying to note that those who were bitterly opposed to the line of action adopted by Sardar Bhagat Sigh and his companions have been moved by their sacrifice.

In 1931, a Hindu police constable insulted the Holy Quran in Kashmir. This led to disturbances there. Majlis-i-Ahrar, organized mainly by urban Muslims and the ulema, took the opportunity to launch an agitation. Ahrar termed the defence of Kashmiri Muslims "the defence of Islam. Majlis sent people to support Muslims physically against the Hindu Maharaja. For Hindus, it was a great conspiracy by the Muslims to destabilize the Hindu Raja. The Hindu press wrote that "under the cover of Muslim rights, a mentality is developing, the sole aim of which is to injure the Hindus." Another paper wrote that Kashmir was a Hindu state and that certain nasty Muslim agitators from the Punjab were responsible for the distress. The Tribune went even further and deeper to bring 'the pick of the branch' argument, which stated that at the bottom of this engineered agitation there were two menacing ideas. One was to divert attention from the burning issues of India's constitutional deliverance. The other was to further the professed aim of the Iqbal School to have a chain of provinces and states under the Muslim Raj in north-west India. Considering the strength of the agitation and the support of the Punjabi Muslims, Hindu papers demanded that there be no attempt to communalize the administration of Kashmir or politically empower the communal majority. They argued that if such developments took place in Kashmir, Hindu India could not stay aloof and would be bound to intervene as an all-out majority in the country.

In early 1932, the Ahrar Movement started losing momentum, yet the religious and emotional idealism initiated by it could not be curbed. The Ahrar movement had a radical impact on communal relations in the Punjab. In December 1931, Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Lahore. Ahrars were held responsible for the origin of the riots by the Hindu press, while the Muslim press linked the beginning of the riots to the Mahasabhi mentality of the Hindus. These attacks and counterattacks were having a spiralling effect on deteriorating communal relations. The following quote from a Muslim paper (Muslim Advocate, 1933) depicts how communally charged the atmosphere of the province was at that epoch of history:

Anything done to injure the cause of a minority is called nationalism in the Hindu lexicon. If you want to be a nationalist, sell your man at the hands of Gandhi, live on Congress stipends, revolt against your religion, crucify the interests of your community, wear Khuddar, and delude the world with the false name of ‘nationalist.’ If you cannot do so, you are a traitor, a communist, a Tory, and what not. The nationalism of a Hindu is to aggrandize his community, but the same ‘ism’ with a Muslim means self-aggrandisement, treason with the community, and support for the abominable Congress’ cause to exploit the Muslims with the aid of British bayonets.

Ironically, for communal relations, the Hindus too mirrored these views. The Hindus, the most advanced and industrious community of the Punjab, believed that they were confronted with a majority that was "lay" because it had been "spoon-fed, slow to change, egocentric, and educationally backward." In fact, Muslims were behind both in economic and educational fields. For that very reason, they demanded separate communal representation even in higher services, but such Muslim demands were termed "monstrously iniquitous" by the Hindus. So when the
Home Department issued a resolution in 1934 regarding the representation of Muslims and other minorities in the services, the Hindu press was quick to criticize it. Targeting the Muslims directly, Hindu papers named Iqbal and Haji Rahim Bakhsh and wondered whether they were willing to pay taxes in the same proportion in which they demanded representation in the services.

The atmosphere was so highly charged in the Punjab that it facilitated moots from both sides for partitioning the province on communal lines. The Hindus wanted to divide the province in such a way that the majority of Muslims could be neutralized. The Eastern Times was severely critical of a proposal from Mahasabhte Hindus to detach some eastern districts from Punjab and form a new province with Delhi as its capital. The Hindus, of course, were ‘blaming’ the Muslims for conspiring to establish ‘Pakistan’. An interesting proposal, however, presented by the daily Herald, surfaced in 1935. The paper concluded that the solution to the communal problem lay in the partitioning of the province. However, it was proposed that Muslim majority districts of Derajats should be inducted into the NWFP and the rest of the province should be given to Hindus and Sikhs. The Muslim reaction to this novel proposal was quite harsh. A Muslim paper made it vividly clear that either the "whole of India will split up in hundreds of parts" or the Punjab will remain intact and "Hindus will have reluctantly accepted the Muslim majority."

There was practically no representative voice for the Muslims in such a gloomy period. The All India Muslim League had split into two factions. M. A. Jinnah, leader of the League, was so disappointed by the situation that he quit India to settle in England. In the meantime, there was a growth of regional Muslim parties like Ahrar-i-Islam, the Khaksar, and the KhudaiKhidmatgar. Khaksar’s activities had grown to such an extent that the government considered notifying it as an unlawful association in Punjab. Although these parties further weakened the already fragile position of the League, despite that, they infused a spirit and pride of Muslimhood in the community. They also provided experience with political organization and agitation of their own. Unlike the Khilafat Movement, this time the Muslims were themselves masters of their fate. In turn, the League successfully utilized the spirit and experience of these regional parties in later years.

Apart from these parties, some individuals also worked to infuse spirit among the almost-dead crowd of Muslims. Maududi was notable among those who gave intellectual leadership to the Muslims. As the Congress was propagating the slogans of Indian nationalism, socialism, and atheism, Maududi was keen to know and describe the outcome of it for the Muslims of the subcontinent. He opined that "we cannot support the nationalists in their struggle for freedom because it is more cursed than the slavery of the English people." Despite his later leaning towards the Congress, he pointed out that the Congress’ claims for democracy and Indian nationalism were poisonous for the Muslims, as these referred to a united democratic India where the Muslims would always remain subjected to the Hindu majority rule. "The rule of democracy as conceived and practiced by the Indian National Congress would forever give three votes to the Hindus and only one vote to the Muslims." He considered that a combination of democracy and Indian nationalism was not workable in India. He opined that Hindu nationalism and Indian nationalism should not be merged together. A democratic system in which two nations of different complexions are united will obviously lead to the assertion of hegemony by the bigger nation over the smaller one. The bigger nation will be self-determined, while the smaller will be helpless. So far as the Muslim nation was concerned, they should have political power because, without it, no society could keep itself intact. All the political and religious leaders of the Muslims had failed to understand the real problems of the Muslims. Those who were
Muslims and wanted to remain Muslims should give up the idea of nationalism. They must disassociate themselves from the movement that wanted to dissolve Islamic nationalism into territorial nationalism.

Maududi not only identified the problem but also proposed certain alternatives to meet the challenges. He proposed that to produce a democratic state on sound footings in India, an international federation or a state of federated nations should be established, or autonomous states should be demarcated within India for different nations. He also identified certain areas that should be given to Muslims under this scheme. Moreover, if both earlier options were not applicable, then there should be separate national federal states, one for the Hindus and the other for the Muslims. In the last of the mentioned options, he had roughly recommended a nation-state for the Muslims of India. This was along the same lines that were lately followed by the Muslim League in Pakistan Resolution, though in a roundabout way. Maulana Moududi also criticized the ulema and other Muslim leaders who were in support of Congress, for their shortsightedness.

The Hindus wanted to keep Punjab and India intact. From the Muslims point of view, a democratic India without the presence of the British was a horrible scene to imagine. They were well aware of the Hindu mind. They considered it right that the process set by the British would continue even after their departure. The Muslim leaders thought that then they would be at the mercy of the Hindus. Although they were a majority in Punjab, their number was not much more than the combined opposition of the Hindus and the Sikhs. Therefore, a feeling had developed that if Punjab remained united and independence was awarded to India, there could be no functional majority of Muslims even in this province. Moreover, the Muslim government of the province would also have to face the government of the Hindus in the centre. The search for separate space was exclusively a Muslim drive, but the Hindus, through their attitude towards Muslims, provided the propulsive power for it. Jawahar Lal Nehru, wrote that the essential spirit of Hinduism was that the Muslims wanted to coexist with the Hindus, but their bad experiences after the 1857 War of Independence taught them hard lessons. They experienced that practically, ‘to live and let live’ was non-existent in Hinduism. The genuine fear of Hindu dominance had pushed the Muslims to look for safeguards and eventually to search for separate space. Having witnessed the Hindu attitude during the functioning of the Congress ministries, the Muslims believed that their real fight was against the Hindus. Conscious of the fact that only forty five million British had practically swallowed the whole world by becoming powerful, they feared that if these 22 crore Hindus, who are equally advanced in learning, intelligence, and wealth as in number, became powerful, then they would swallow Muslim India and gradually even Egypt, Turkey, Kabul, Mecca, Medina, and other Muslim territories (B. R. Ambedkar, 1976).

**Conclusion:**

Muslims’ quest for a separate state started with the demand for job quotas and the reservation of separate seats in different representative institutions. The Minto-Morley reforms of 1909 provided a separate electorate for Muslims, which resulted in active Muslim political participation. In 1916, through the Lucknow Pact, the Indian National Congress also accepted Muslims’ right to separate representation and promised to provide one-third representation to central legislatures. The pact further facilitated communal harmony, and Hindus and Muslims joined hands during the Khilafat movement. The short-term harmonious relationship started deteriorating in 1922, and the introduction of the Nehru committee report largely reversed the political consensus between Congress and the League. The promised
concessions and guarantees were largely reversed, and Congress refused to entertain Muslims’ amendments presented by Jinnah in his fourteen points. The failure of roundtable conferences further widened the gulf between the two communities. The 1936–37 elections reflected these political polarizations. Although Congress won the elections and emerged as the majority party, it failed to win Muslims’ confidence. The conduct and behaviour of Congress ministers further sharpened the cleavage, and Muslims’ perception of Congress as Hindus representatives’ party largely gained wider acceptance. Ultimately, Muslims were forced to demand a separate homeland for themselves in Muslim majority areas to safeguard their political, economic, and social concerns. So, the Muslims’ political journey from the demand for a separate electorate culminated with the demand for a separate Muslim state in Pakistan.

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