

Partition and Rehabilitation

Road to the Partition

- The major obstacle to an unruffled transfer of power in India was the Hindu-Muslim divide
- The 1940 Lahore resolution had elevated the Indian Muslims from the status of a “minority” to that of a ‘nation’ and subsequent developments projected M.A. Jinnah as their “Sole Spokesman”
- Recognition of this national identity of the Muslims and their right to self determination, as well as ‘parity’ of representation with the Hindus at the center now became the non-negotiable minimum demands for Jinnah and the Muslim League

- Jinnah rejected the Cripps proposal precisely because it did not recognize the Muslims' right to self – determination and equality as a nation
- Between 1942 and 1943 League ministries were installed in Assam, Sind, Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province through active maneuvering by the British bureaucracy.
- The demand for Pakistan was, however, still not well defined at this stage.
- At the constitutional front, what Jinnah wanted was autonomy for the Muslim majority provinces in a loose federal structure, with Hindu-Muslim parity at the central government, the minority Hindus in the Muslim majority provinces serving as security for the Muslim minorities elsewhere.

Rajaji Formula vs Jinnah

- The Congress tried to meet Muslim demands through top level political negotiations.
- In April 1944 C. Rajagopalachari proposed a solution:
 1. a post-war commission would be formed to demarcate the contiguous districts where the Muslims were in absolute majority, and there a plebiscite of the adult population would decide whether they would prefer Pakistan
 2. In case of a partition there would be a mutual agreement to run certain essential services, like defence or communication; the border districts could choose to join either of the two sovereign states
 3. the implementation of the scheme would wait till after full transfer of power
- In July 1944 Gandhi proposed talks with Jinnah on the basis of the 'Rajaji formula', which indeed amounted to an acceptance of Pakistan demand.
- But Jinnah did not agree to this proposal and Gandhi-Jinnah talks in September 1944 broke down.

- This issue surfaced again in June 1945 when Churchill permitted Wavell
- During his visit to London in March 1945 he finally convinced Churchill of the desirability of a Congress-League coalition government in India as a preemptive measure to forestall the political crisis he predicted after the war
- He, therefore, convened a conference at Simla to talk about the formation of an entirely Indian executive council, with the viceroy and commander-in-chief as the only British members
- Caste Hindus and Muslims would have equal representation, while the Scheduled Castes would also be separately represented; and doors would be open for discussion of a new constitution

- The Simla conference of 25 June-14 July 1945 crashed on the rock of Jinnah's demand for parity
- He claimed for Muslim League an exclusive right to nominate all the Muslim members of the cabinet.
- Congress refused to accept it, for that would amount to an admission that Congress was a party only of the caste Hindus.
- Ironically, at that time, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the Congress president! Wavell called off the meeting, as a coalition government without the League would not work

- Ayesha jalal has argued that at no point between 1940 and the arrival of the Cabinet Mission in 1946 did either Jinnah or Muslim League ever coherently define the Pakistan demand.
- But it was this very vagueness of the demand that made it an excellent instrument for a Muslim mass mobilisation campaign in the 1940s, the primary objective of which was to construct a Muslim national identity transcending class and regional barriers.
- Muslim politics during this period began to attract support from a cross-section of Muslim population, particularly from professionals and business groups for whom a separate state of Pakistan would mean elimination of Hindu competition.
- And to this was added the political support of the leading ulama, pirs and maulavis who lent this campaign a religious legitimacy, " Muslim politics at a national level was now being institutionalised and Jinnah gradually emerged as its authoritative leader, establishing his control over the provincial branches of the League.

KPP AND UNIONIST PARTY

- Those provincial groups or leaders, who did not toe his line, like A.K. Fazlul Huq and his Krishak Praja Party (KPP) in Bengal or Sir Sikander Hyat Khan and his Unionist Party in Punjab, were systematically pulled down and politically marginalised
- Both Huq and Khan were censored in July 1941 when they agreed to join without Jinnah's approval-the Viceroy's National Defence Council
- which in terms of its membership structure did not recognise the Muslim claim of parity.
- During the closing years of the war, both the KPP and the Unionist Party were gradually shoved out of the political centre stage in the Muslim majority provinces of Bengal and Punjab where Pakistan demand became an ideological rallying symbol that helped overcome the various fissures within a heterogeneous Muslim community.

- Fazlul Huq and his KPP had thrown here a major challenge to the Muslim League in the 1937 election
- but soon after the election, they came to terms with the League by forming a coalition government with them
- Huq soon began to lose popularity, as he gravitated more towards zamindar and rich peasant interests and reneged on a number of election promises given to the tenant and poor peasant constituencies of the KPP
- He joined the League in 1937 and was given the honour of introducing the Lahore Resolution in 1940
- But he never fully endorsed Jinnah's politics and in 1941, when reprimanded by him, Huq resigned both from the National Defence Council and from the Muslim League, with a stinging letter of complaint against the authoritarian leadership style of Jinnah.

- Particularly when later that year he formed a coalition government with the Hindu Mahasabha, with Shyama Prasad Mukherjee as the co-leader.
- This Progressive Coalition ministry was ultimately toppled in March 1943 with the active connivance of the Bengal Governor and a Muslim League ministry was then installed under the leadership of Khwaza Naziruddin
- This boosted League's image, local branches of the Muslim League were opened throughout Bengal and a mass mobilisation campaign was launched
- This campaign was however more symbolic and emotional than programmatic.
- 'Pakistan' was presented as "a peasant utopia" which would bring in liberation for the Muslim peasantry from the hands of the Hindu zarnindars and moneylenders.
- As a result, by the mid- 1940s, Pakistan as an ideological symbol of Muslim solidarity gained almost universal acceptance among the Muslim peasants
- Abul Hashim, the Bengal League leader travelled extensively throughout east Bengal countryside campaigning for Pakistan and his draft manifesto, that outlined the moral, economic and political objectives of the movement, also appealed to the Muslim middle classes, particularly the students.
- The Nazimuddin ministry had to resign in March 1945; but by then the Muslim League in Bengal had emerged as the only mass based political party of the Muslims

- In Punjab the structure of politics was sharply divided along ruralurban lines
- While the Unionist Party held sway over rural politics the Muslim League acquired a base among the urban Muslims
- The Unionist Party was in control, as Punjab landowners accounted for 60 percent of its much restricted electorate, organised along agricultural 'tribal' constituencies
- The Unionists after the 1937 election formed a coalition ministry in Punjab with Sir Sikander Hyat Khan as the premier
- But Sikander soon came to terms with Jinnah through what is called the Jinnah-Sikander Pact of 1937
- Although the alliance was full of tensions, this gave the Unionists some sort of legitimacy among the Punjabi Muslim population, while Jinnah found a springboard to further his mission to project Muslim League as the centre of South Asian Muslim politics
- Sikander also contributed to the organisation of the 1940 Lahore conference and to the drafting of the resolution.
- But he never fully accepted 'Pakistan' as a separatist demand. "If Pakistan means unalloyed Muslim raj in the Punjab", he announced in the Punjab Assembly in March 1941, "then I will have nothing to do with it"

- But Sikander died suddenly in December 1942 and his mantle fell on relatively inexperienced Malik Khizr Hyat Khan Tiwana
- Jinnah continuously pressurized him for more and more political leverage, first to form a Muslim League Assembly Party and then to rename the coalition government as "Muslim League Coalition Ministry"
- Khizr refused to oblige and stood his ground, he was expelled from the Muslim League in April 1944
- Hereafter, Jinnah launched a well orchestrated mass campaign to popularized the idea of Pakistan in rural Punjab, with the help of some of the disgruntled elements in the Unionist Party, the young enthusiasts of the Punjab Muslim Students Federation and the *sajjad nishins* (custodians of *sufi* shrines) who were now pressed into the political service of Islam
- He even befriended the Communist Party, which supported the Pakistan demand

- When the *pirs* with their huge rural influence, issued *fatwas*, support for Pakistan became an individual religious responsibility of every Muslim
- As the election of 1946 approached, the entire power structure of the Punjabi Muslim community—from the rural magnates and the landowning *jaildar-lambardar* class which previously supported the Unionist Party to the ordinary Muslim peasants in western Punjab—all drifted towards the Muslim League
- The wartime scarcity and food procurement policy also contributed to this groundswell

- If the League undercut the Unionist support base in the west, the Congress did the same in east Punjab; the Akalis mobilised too.
- So in the election of 1946, the Unionist Party got just 18 of the 175 seats in the Punjab Assembly; Congress got 51, the Akalis 22 and the Muslim League 75, almost sweeping the rural Muslim constituencies
- But this did not immediately mean the demise of the Unionist Party, as Khizr now cobbled together another coalition ministry with the Congress and the Akalis-much to the chagrin of the Muslim League
- However, although still kept away from power, the election results for Muslim League certainly signalled a popular acceptance of Pakistan as a religious definition of state and community by the Punjabi Muslims

- The Muslim League also did reasonably well in the election in the other Muslim majority province of Sind and in the whole of India it got 74.7 per cent of votes in the Muslim constituencies
- Although the electorate was heavily restricted this was interpreted as a popular mandate for Pakistan
- An unfettered Hindu raj or Pakistan, Jinnah had announced in an election meeting: "That is the only choice and only issue before us"
- The League, claims Anita Inder Singh, had thus "presented the elections as a plebiscite for Pakistan "
- Congress election manifesto: "the freedom and independence of our motherland, from which all other freedoms will flow to our people"

- Agreement on the Cabinet Mission proposal looked likely when on June Muslim League accepted it on the assumption that “the basis and the foundation of Pakistan” had been in the plan and this would ultimately lead to “the establishment of complete sovereign Pakistan”
- Why Muslim League accepted the Cabinet Mission plan, which in its preamble categorically rejected the Pakistan demand
- Ayesha Jalal, the Mission plan was a perfect “way forward for...Pakistan Jinnah was after”, for he never really wanted partition; and the Muslim League reiterated Pakistan demand as its ultimate goal only as a face saver

- But the short-term plan to constitute an interim government also fell through on the sticky issue of parity, as Congress wanted to include a Muslim candidate among its nominees.
- For Jinnah it was the ultimate betrayal by the Congress
- On 29 July the League Working Committee withdrew its earlier approval of the Mission's long term plan and gave a call for 'direct action'
- This popular agitation for Pakistan was to commence from 16 August 1946, which was chosen as the "Direct Action Day" and it was on this day very day that hell was let loose on Calcutta
- It was not just Bengal that witnessed such communal polarisation at a mass level
- The RSS was most strong in Bihar, the Bombay region, the Central Provinces, Greater Punjab (including Delhi and Himachal Pradesh) and UP. Here the RSS appealed to the students and youth, who were attracted to paramilitary training, were distrustful of Gandhian methods, and nurtured deep anti-Muslim feelings

- Back in 1946 when the Cabinet Mission was deliberating, Viceroy Wavell had proposed a "Breakdown Plan", in case of disagreement, the British should withdraw to the six Pakistan provinces leaving the Congress to deal with the rest of India
- But the plan was then rejected, as it was found to be dishonorable for Britain to leave without a universally agreed arrangement for the transfer of power
- Again in September Wavell predicted that British rule would not last beyond the spring of 1948 and again proposed a "Breakdown Plan" of phased withdrawal by that date
- Attlee and Ernest Bevin did not like his "defeatist" attitudes and decided to replace him with Lord Mountbatten in December
- But they could hardly postpone the withdrawal any longer, for as Attlee confessed in January 1947: "It would be quite impossible ... for a few hundred British to administer against the active opposition of the whole of the politically minded of the population."
- So on 20 February he declared that power would be transferred by June 1948 to such authority or in such a way as would seem most reasonable and be in the best interests of the Indian people.

- Mountbatten arrived in New Delhi on 22 March with plenipotentiary powers and a clear mandate to expedite the process of withdrawal
- He realized on his very arrival that it was virtually impossible to hand over power to a united India. On the contrary, there is also a view that it was his "forced march" to the demission of power that further heightened communal tension and made partition inevitable
- In April he produced what is known as 'Plan Balkan'
- It proposed the partition of Punjab and Bengal and handing over power to the provinces and sub-provinces, which would be free to join one or more of group Constituent Assemblies on the basis of self-determination
- while the Interim Government would remain until June 1948
- Demission of power to the provinces and the absence of a strong centre would certainly lead to Balkanisation of India
- It is therefore not surprising that Nehru rejected these proposals on the ground that "instead of producing any sense of certainty, security and stability, they would encourage disruptive tendencies everywhere and chaos and weakness"
- Jinnah cast them aside too, as he was not yet prepared to accept the partition of Punjab and Bengal which would give him only a "truncated or mutilated, moth-eaten Pakistan"

- The alternative plan that Mountbatten proposed was to transfer power to two successor Dominion governments of India and Pakistan
- Nehru, who was opposed to the idea of dominion status was won over, although according to his biographer, he accepted it only as an "interim arrangement"
- As for partition, he is reported to have confessed later about the "truth", that "we were tired men and we were getting on in year too We saw the fires burning in the Punjab and heard everyday of the killings. The plan for partition offered a way out and we took it. "
- On 3 June Mountbatten announced his new plan and proposed to advance the date of transfer of power from June 1948 to 15 August 1947
- The plan provided for the partition of Bengal and Punjab;
 1. the Hindu majority provinces which had already accepted the existing Constituent Assembly would be given no choice;
 2. while the Muslim majority provinces, i.e., Bengal, Punjab, Sind, North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan would decide whether to join the existing or a new and separate Constituent Assembly for Pakistan;
 3. this was to be decided by the provincial assemblies; there would be a referendum in the NorthWest Frontier Provinces, and in case of Baluchistan, the Quetta municipality and the tribal representatives would be consulted.
- Nehru, Jinnah and Sardar Baldev Singh on behalf of the Sikhs endorsed the plan the following day¹⁶¹ and thus began the fast march to transfer of power.

- The Partition resulted in one of the greatest migrations in the history of the world.
- Ten to twenty million people crossed the newly created borders.
- The displacement resulted in the severance of old roots, longing for old ties, and a feeling of nostalgia.
- The migration also caused a heavy loss of life on the way to cross the borders.
- All these themes have been represented in the Partition Literature.
- The loss of home and hearth, the worries for the near and dear ones who were left behind, the anxiety of starting life afresh in a new land, the utter helplessness, and poverty have been captured in literature.

- Krishan Chandar, Rajindar Singh Bedi, S.H. Monto, Ismat Chughtai, QurratulainHyder, YashPal, Bhisham Sahni, Rahi Masoom Raza, Kamaleshwar, Badi-uz-Zaman, Khushwant Singh, Amrita Preetam, etc., have created some fictional works of enduring value.
- They have created some unforgettable characters and contexts to reflect different facets of the holocaust of the Partition.
- For the first time, the Partition Literature posed a set of different questions about life, politics, religion, culture, and values.

- important theme of the Partition Literature is the identity crisis.
- The displacement and migration pose different questions:
 1. Where does the individual actually belong to?
 2. What is his/her heritage and tradition? What is his/her history?
- These questions were very relevant after the partition.
- The migrated people could not easily accept the new land as their *homeland* for they could not forget the old *homeland* or *motherland* that had been theirs for ages.
- They could not easily identify themselves as the citizens of a new nation.

- At the same time, they could not be easily accepted as their equals by the natives.
- This question of identity has been pondered over by many writers/Artists like Harris Khalique, Krishna Sobti, Kamalleshwar, S.H. Monto, etc., in their fictional writings.
- Monto tried in vain to 'separate India from Pakistan and Pakistan from India' .
- He said:
- What my mind could not resolve was the question: what country do we belong to now, India or Pakistan? And whose blood was it that was being so mercilessly shed everyday? And the bones of the dead, stripped of the flesh of religion, were they being burned or buried? ... Everyone seemed to be regressing. Only death and carnage seem to be proceeding ahead. A terrible chapter of blood and tears was being added to history, a chapter without precedent. India was free. Pakistan was free from the moment of its birth, but in both states man's enslavement continued: by prejudice, by religious fanaticism, by savagery.

- The Partition Literature gives us a complete picture of the Partition.
- The social, religious, and political conditions of the pre-Partitioned times
- The harmony that existed then the composite culture that emerged as a result of living together for a thousand years;
- The beginning and growth of communal differences; the widespread violence and suffering
- The abduction of women; the break-up of families; the separation of relatives, friends, communities and regions; the migration and dislocation of people
- The refugee problem; the feelings of alienation; the nostalgia
- The question of identity; the rehabilitation of the displaced people; the impact of the Partition on the people; the continued feelings of suspicion and hatred between the two nations; etc., have all been represented in different forms of literature

