

**FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND BIRTH OF
POLITICAL PARTIES IN BALOCHISTAN, PAKISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

Balochistan is one of the borderlands of subcontinent and it remained out of the colonial control of British Raj until the emergence of The Great Game. British Raj was not interested in the control of barren lands of Balochistan as it would not give them any economic benefit. As the dawn of 20th century brought global changes in the colonial politics and emergence of Russian colonies in Central Asia become a direct threat to British colony of India, Resultantly, Balochistan became important because of its strategic location. Then Balochistan was colonized (directly and indirectly) by Raj. As the colonial role started in this part of South Asia, it also introduced western concepts of politics and governance at very limited level. The present paper is an attempt to find the genesis of organized politics and birth of political parties in Balochistan with especial focus on the role of these parties in the freedom movement against British Raj during colonial period.

Keywords: Balochistan, Freedom Movement, Political Parties.

INTRODUCTION

Balochistan is one of the large land-treks with scattered and thinly populated areas of Pakistan. The cultural history of the region goes back to Neolithic period of c.7000 BCE when for the first time in south Asia, the bands of hunting gatherers started to settle down on the banks Bolan River (Kenoyer 1998). The next stage in the cultural history of Balochistan witnessed rise of Indus Valley Traditions during which there were small and scattered sites throughout Balochistan (Jarrige, 1993). After the decline of Indus Tradition, the cultural activities in Balochistan came to a halt and it resumed during the Achaemenian Empire when Gedrosia (present day Makran) became one of the satrapies of mighty Persians (Blochistan, 2008). During historical period, Balochistan remained only the passing gate of conquerors coming from Central Asian steppes or Persian

highlands but no prominent conqueror established its rule in Balochistan until the Arab conquest of coastal areas of Balochistan. The Muslim rule in the region resumed in bits and pieces over a long period of time with both local and foreign dynastic rules until the fifteenth century. Mughal ruler made this land part of their Indian Empire but their rule was more virtual rather than real as the local governors were virtually independent as this region was very far from Mughal capital geographically and less profitable economically. As the Mughal rule started to decline in India, the local principalities started to mushroom and Balochistan was not an exception to it. The birth of Khanate of Kalat emerged during this period (Axmann 2008). As the time elapsed, the Khanate became more and more powerful until it conquered the lands up to modern day boundaries of Sindh province.³ The Khanate of Kalat remained a confederacy rather than becoming a kingdom. The political structure of Khanate was based upon the tribal structure where Sardars were next to the Khan in the nobility of the state. The state was divided into the crown land, which was directly controlled by Khan and tribal lands where local chief and Sardar were powerful internally but acknowledged Khan as their head. Khan would not receive any tax from these lands but in times of crisis Sardars were supposed to provide men with arms and in peace times, Sardars were responsible for the safe passage of caravans from their territory (Axmann 2008). This was the affair when British arrived on the scene in 1839 (first Anglo-Afghan war). At the beginning British Raj did not want to have direct control in Balochistan rather they followed a policy of "Closed Border" but in the late 19th century, the policy started to change and now British followed "Forward Policy" and this policy was advocated by Sandeman Assistant Commissioner in Punjab and later on first commissioner of Balochistan (Yapp, 1980). When British directly started rule in Balochistan, they created two types of administrative units i.e. direct control in northern areas called British Balochistan and indirect rule in Kalat state where British agent was appointed who manipulated the business of administration. This was the state of affairs in Balochistan until the 1947 partition.

³ Thanks to Nadir Shah who snatched Sindh territories and gave them as gift to Khan of Kalat and also gave the territory its present name 'Balochistan' in 1740.

BIRTH OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The system of representative governance is a concept born in Europe and its introduction to other part of the world are brought by the European colonialism. Since subcontinent was also part of the British Empire so they brought this concept here too. The political parties in South Asia were introduced in the last decades of 19th and early 20th centuries. The political parties soon become communal in nature as India was a multi-ethnic and multi-communal land. Indian national congress was the first political party which claimed to be the representative of the all peoples of India, but soon it was dominated by the Hindu majority and it would only protected the larger interests of Hindus at the cast of other ethnic groups. This Hindu attitude of dominance alarmed the Muslims, who were already victims of British wrath, and it compelled Muslims to form a political Party for protecting Muslim rights and making good relations with British Raj and removing misgivings between the two. This was the main cause behind the birth of All India Muslim League (AIML). Since its inception AIML struggled to protect the rights of Muslims all over the subcontinent and with the passage of time it proved that it was the genuine representative of Muslims around India.

BIRTH OF PARTIES IN BALOCHISTAN

Balochistan was one of the neglected areas of subcontinent and it was divided in two parts i.e. British Balochistan and Khanate of Kalat. This area did not get status of a province rather it remained under the direct rule. This was one of the main reasons that Balochistan remained aloof from the reforms introduced in other parts of the subcontinent. The reason behind it was simple that this land was directly in connection with Afghanistan and Russia so British felt threatened and they would advocate that this land should be under their direct control and if they allow any kind reforms then people would be more aware and possibly pressurize in times of crisis which would help Russians to intervene and hurt the colonial interests of British Raj. The political winds in Balochistan started to change as there emerged first political parties in 1920s as Mir Yusuf Ali Magsi and Abdul Aziz Kurd founded the first political party, Anjuman-e-Ittehad-e-Balochan wa Balochistan, that united Balochis and Pathans both in the demand for constitutional reforms and an autonomous united Balochistan (Axmann, 2008, Awan, 1985 and Baloch, 1987).

The party was based in Kalat and its membership was limited to the prominent figures of Balochistan. Since the ethnic composition of Balochistan is tribal and multi-lingual, there emerged some problems in the political deliberations and soon this party became factional based on the ethnic nationalism rather than foreseeing the common interests of all individuals. Anjuman-i-Ithad-i-Balochaan was Balochistan soon bifurcated into new parties i.e. Anjuman-i-Watan and Kalat State National party. The Kalat State National party was a pure Baloch party where Sardars were dominant under the umbrella of Khan of Kalat while Anjuman-i-Watan party was Pashtoon nationalist party headed by Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai.

The lack of mainstream political leadership and vision were the main reasons behind narrowing interests of the nationalist leaders and it deteriorated the possibility of any reform in Balochistan or becoming a province equal to other provinces of India. This internal division on the basis of ethnic rivalries were in the favour of British Raj, who would play the game of 'Divide and Rule' at geographically important place, where disturbance was not wellcome at a time when British Raj was not in strong position to use forceful means for controlling large territories with meagre and scattered population.

ALL INDIA MUSLIM LEAGUE AND BALOCHISTAN

The political awareness among the people of Balochistan was realised after World War I and now prominent figures from British Balochistan also realised that the need of the time was that they should use all means for getting reforms pertinent to Balochistan. The people of Balochistan also realised the importance of propaganda and they started to bring issues of Balochistan in larger population's attention and for this purpose in 1927, Abdul Aziz Kurd and Nasim Talwi started a newspaper called "Balochistan" in Delhi. Yousuf Ali Khan Magsi, chief of Magsi tribe, published an article for a Lahore based newspaper *Zamindar* in 1929 entitled 'Fariaad-e-Balochistan' or, 'The Wail from Balochistan' (*Zamindar*, July 23, 1929). Again in May, 1939 he published a pamphlet called 'Balochistan Ki Awaz', or 'The Voice of Balochistan', especially for the British Parliamentarians in London so that people at policy making level should be aware of problems at frontier region of India (May, 1939). This all was being done under the guideline of Jinnah as this fact is clear from the example that when in February, 1934, Yousuf Ali

visited England in pursuit of his political objectives and on both occasions of his going and coming he consulted Quaid-i-Azam.

The emergence of organised political parties in Balochistan started in late 1920s. The All India Muslim League wing in Balochistan was not effective until 1938 when Qazi Isa and other muslim leaders started to realise that the only option of bring change in the attitude of British Raj, in terms of reforms in Balochistan, was to be part of a main stream political party and done away with the factional and narrow interest based politics. The need for reforms in Balochistan were equally felt by mainstream political leadership of Muslim League as Qaid-i-Azam had long ago demanded reforms in Balochistan in his famous "Fourteen Points". Qaid-i-Azam visited Balochistan in 1943 remained there for long period and during his visit, Qazi Isa presented him a sword in public session of Muslim League and the sword is reported to historical one because it belong to King Ahmed Shah Abdali and uttered historic words while handing over it to Jinnah: "Throughout history, the sword had been the constant companion of the Muslims. When the Muslims did not have an Amir, this sword was lying in safe custody. Now that you have taken over as the Amir of this nation, I hand over this historic sword to you. This has always been used in defence, in your safe hands also, it will be used only for this purpose" (Isa, 1976:229-30).

Handing over of sword in Balochistan's tribal setup is a symbolic allegiance of accepting some one as their leader and the above mentioned piece of event suggests that muslims of Balochistan had accepted Jinnah as their spokesperson in terms of political leadership. Jinnah was much involved and concerned in Balochistan affairs in the 1940s and he went to Kalat State on the personal invitation of Khan of Kalat. He was there for persuading Sardars for joining Muslim demand of Pakistan.

The Muslim League was betterly opposed by All Indian Congress supported party of *Anjuman-i-Watan* lead by Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai and they claimed a nationalistic manifesto. This challenge was responded by another Muslim Leaguer from Balochistan, Nawab Muhammad Khan Jomezai and he had pledged to support the "Old Islam" and to oppose "New Islam" which was sponsored by the Congress and the *Anjuman-i-Watan*, led by Abdul Samad Achakzai (*Zamindar*, Lahore, June 30, 1939). Balochistan was at the marginal lands of India and the people were comparatively less

educated, so the way of molding public opinion was not through newspapers and other media channels rather it was conducted by having public gathering in which people were directly contacted. In this perspective, it was necessary that mainstream leadership should visit region and address public gatherings. Prominent leaders who visited Balochistan included, among others, Nawab Bahadur Yar Jang, Maulana Abdul Hamid Badayuni, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Liaquat Ali Khan. They toured the area and helped turn the public opinion in favour of the League point of view. The first such tour was reported by the Weekly *Intelligence Summary* of August 4, 1939, when Maulana Zafar Ali Khan reached Quetta on July 28, 1939, and was warmly welcomed at the Railway Station. Even Khaksars presented him a Guard of Honour. The next day there was large public gathering who came to listen the words of leaders. The number of people were so enormous even the space was seen to be less than the crowd poured in (Secret Police Report, 1939).

As the 1940s was the decade when demand for Pakistan was gathering great number of support in its favour, Balochistan was not an exception to it. This time Qazi Isa wanted mainstream leadership to visit more and let people of the region know that how Muslims can demand for a separate home land. The religious sentiments of the people were more appealing than their nationalist one and this is one of the main reasons that why Muslim League was able to secure more support than the both Kalat State National Party and Anjuma-i-Watan Party. 1940s was the War time era and Balochistan being the borderland was much important in terms of its strategic location, the Indian Congress stance of anti-War and noncooperation in such critical movement would have been reason of disturbance if they had a leverage in the region but since Muslim League was cooperating that is why there was no disturbance in Balochistan throughout this period. This clearly depicted that Muslim League had more support in the region where people had direct ethnic relations with Afghanistan and if their nationalistic affiliations were exploited than they could have been mobilised for disturbances. Apart from this, the strategy of persuasion of Muslim League to the Sardars and noble men were more successful than the Congress. As almost all prominent tribal heads along with Khan of Kalat was in direct contact of Jinnah that is why Muslim League was more influential in Balochistan. Unfortunately Balochistan was never granted a provincial status so the

Shahi Jirga was the only platform where the political leadership could be persuaded for the support of Pakistan cause.

Nationalist parties were not the only threats to the Muslim League rather there was another party which was also claiming to be the Muslim representative party and it had also religious appeal to the common masses i.e. *Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Islam*. This challenge was countered by the Muslim League through mass campaign and in this perspective the ulama of the community were used. In such a gathering of Juma Prayers, Haji Zaman, Imam of Loralai Jamia Mosque, in a public meeting held on October 6, condemned the speeches of Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Islam's leaders demanding the ouster of British from India. He further said "If they were driven out it would result in the Ram Raj (Hindu-Raj)". He added that the British government had adopted policy of religious tolerance and he advised the Muslims to join the Muslim League and help the British in its war efforts (Kausar, 1976:42-44).

The political activities of Muslim League were much extensive in early 1940s and Jinnah himself was much involved in the mass contact throughout India and Balochistan was not an exception to it either. In this perspective Jinnah visited Balochistan and he tried to persuade the people that they have to allow their women in political participation. His visit of 1943 depicted manifestation of women participation as he was accompanied by his sister, Fatima Jinnah, and Lady Abdula Haroon, Jinnah impressed upon the Muslims of Balochistan the need to keep women along in every walk of life. The conservative tribal leaders were generally opposed to women's education and, consequently, their participation in political affairs. Jinnah's initiative, however impressed them, and Begum Qazi Isa and some other educated women of the province came forward to set a precedent. The Muslim League Newspaper reported the details of Jinnah's tour and people would rush to see the glimpse of their leader. The purpose of Jinnah in this tour was to mobilise the people and he was of opinion that women should also participate so that the cause of Pakistan should be rooted in the family and social life of the Muslims. Jinnah's visit of 1943 was motivational tour for all walks of life and in public gathering on 3rd July 1943 he said :

"Baluchistan has got a wonderful history but you have (you will forgive me), lived the same life. You have not made progress with the world or even with India; you have still your own system. You have

been indifferent to what was going on in the world. I wanted to awake you up from fast sleep” (Rais Ahmad Jaafri, n.d.:380-83).

During this tour the students also came in direct contact with Jinnah and his words moved youth in such a level that Yahya Bakhtiar, Vice President of the All India Muslim Students Federation, moved a resolution demanding more resources and opportunities for education in Balochistan and Sardar Usman Jogezi seconded this resolution forcefully (Al-Islam, July 6, 1943). The result of Muslim Leagues efforts were depicted in the awakening of political consciousness of the people which are clearly manifested in the subsequent times. As the leaders started demands of political reforms in Balochistan its manifested in event when the British parliamentary delegation reached Karachi in 1946, Mir Jaafar Jamali (member Sindh Legislative Assembly and Vice President BML), Malik Usman and Maulvi Ubaidullah Soomro presented a memorandum for introduction of political reforms in Balochistan (Kausar, 1976:241-43). The concern of Muslim leaders were so intense that when they got a chance of opting for joining Pakistan in 1947, the leaders at once moved a resolution in favour of Pakistan.

CONCLUSIONS

The long journey of Muslim struggle of emancipation is full of the stories of campaigns and counter campaigns of the parties but this long marathon was won by Muslim League. There are number of factors advocated by different scholars of freedom movement but there is a common point in all authors and this was long, unabated and sincere efforts made by the common supporters and leaders of Muslim League. Jinnah’s efforts of staying in Balochistan’s remote town of Mustong for a period and persuading Sardars and other prominent leaders to join Pakistan speaks volumes about the commitments of the leaders. Although Muslim League started very late an organized political party in Balochistan but their decision came in a time when it was one of the turning points. The response of the people of Balochistan was much positive and it was one of the main reason that leadership of Balochistan at once favoured the Pakistan scheme and declared that they would be part of new home land of Muslims during the historic event of ‘Shahi Jirga’ in Quetta.

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