

UNIT 28 – UPSC - Formation of Muslim League

India's History : Modern India : Formation of Muslim League : 1906

The Muslim League



The foundation of Indian National Congress in 1885 was an attempt to narrow the Hindu-Muslim divide and place the genuine grievances of all the communities in the country before the British. But Sir Sayed and other Muslim leaders like Ameer Ali projected the Congress as a representative body of Hindus and thus, thwarted the first genuine attempt in the country for Hindu-Muslim unity. Poor participation of Muslims in Congress proves it. "Of the seventy-two delegates attending the first session of the Congress only two were Muslims". Muslim leaders opposed the Congress tooth and nail on the plea that Muslims' participation in it would create an unfavorable reaction among the rulers against their community.

Muslim orthodoxy or its patrons in elite sections in the community with the sword of 'religious identity' and slogan - 'Islam is in danger' continuously challenged the political awakening in Indian society if it directly or indirectly affected their superior status and influence. They therefore viewed the democratic and secular movement launched by the Congress - as challenge to their supremacy over the Hindus. Acceptance of Devanagari script and Hindi as an official language of United Province now Uttar Pradesh in place of Persian in 1900 by Lieutenant Governor A. Macdonnel was another significant development to stir the Muslims on communal line. No such aggressive resistance was made when the British replaced Persian with English in late thirties of nineteenth century. Sir Sayed Ahmed died in 1898 but his followers in defense of Urdu language launched agitation against the decision of the representative of British power in United Province.



On first October 1906 a 35-member delegation of the Muslim nobles, aristocracies, legal professionals and other elite section of the community mostly associated with Aligarh movement gathered at Simla under the leadership of Aga Khan to present an address to Lord Minto. They demanded proportionate representation of Muslims in government jobs, appointment of Muslim judges in High Courts and members in Viceroy's council etc. Though, Simla deputation failed to obtain any positive commitment from the Viceroy, it worked as a catalyst for foundation of AIML to safeguard the interests of the Muslims.

Under the active leadership of Aligarhians, the movements for Muslim separatism created political awakening among the Muslims on communal line. This ideology of political exclusivism in the name of religion gave birth to AIML in the session of All India Mohammedan Educational Conference held in Dacca (December 27-30, 1906). Nawab Salimullah, Chairman of the reception committee and convener of the political meeting proposed the creation of AIML. A 56-member provisional committee was constituted with prominent Muslim leaders from different parts of the country. Even some Muslim leaders within Congress like Ali Imam, Hasan Imam, Mazharul Haque (All Barristers from Bihar) and Hami Ali Khan (Barrister from Lucknow) were included in the committee. Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Viqar-ul-Mulk were jointly made the secrearies. After the death of Mohsin-ul-Mulk in 1907, Viqar-ul-Mulk was in full control of the League. First session of the League was held at Karanchi on December 29 & 30, 1907 with Adamjee Peerbhoy as its President.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a prominent leader of the Congress did not join the AIML till 1913 though, he supported the League movement for separate electorate for Muslims. He even successfully contested against the League candidate for the election of Viceroy's Legislative Council. Within the Congress he however always tried to bargain for one-third reservation for his community.

Formation of All India Muslim League:



The formation of AIML was a major landmark in the history of modern India. The first formal entry of a centrally organized political party exclusively for Muslims had the following objectives:

- To promote among the Muslims of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government, and remove any misconception that may arise as to the instruction of Government with regard to any of its measures.
- To protect and advance the political rights and interests of Muslims of India, and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government.

- To prevent the rise among the Muslims of India of any feeling of hostility towards other communities without prejudice to the afore-mentioned objects of the League.

Initially AIML remained a pocket organization of urbanized Muslims. However, the support of the British Government to the political Islamists in their non-secular intention as well as contemptuous attitude towards majority rule helped the League to become the sole representative body of Indian Muslims. To confront the challenge of modern political system, the AIML successfully achieved the status of separate electorates for the Muslims within three years of its formation. It was the first big achievement of the party, which granted separate constitutional identity to the Muslims. Lucknow Pact in 1916 put official seal on the separate identity of Muslims, which was another landmark in the separatist movement launched by the AIML.

