

JINNAH AND THE ALL-INDIA MUSLIM LEAGUE 1906-1924

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Abstract

The establishment of the All-India Muslim League (AIML) in 1906 was a turning point in the history of the freedom movement in India. However, Jinnah, later on Quaid-i-Azam, did not join the AIML until 1913 and remained a loyal Congress man. The present article is aimed at studying the circumstances behind Jinnah's joining of the AIML as well as clarifying certain confusions connected with his membership of the INC. An attempt has also been made to analyze the earlier political career of Jinnah in connection with Hindu-Muslim unity and to safeguard the interests of the Indian Muslims.

Nearly 3000 delegates from all parts of India assembled at Dhaka and founded the All India Muslim League (AIML) on 30 December 1906.¹ In this organizational meeting included conservatives like Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, Mushtaq Hussain (1841-1917), the Nawab of Dhaka, Khawaja Sir Slimullah (1884-1915) and Mohsin-ul-Mulk, Nawab Mehdi Ali (1837-1907). A.K Fazlul-Haq (1873-1962), Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar (1879-1931) and Syed Wazir Hasan (1874-1947) represented the younger generation. Nationalists like Syed Hassan Imam (1871-1933), Mazhar-ul-Haq (1866-1936) and Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) also attended the meeting. The most significant absence was that of Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), distinguished Bombay barrister. It is reported that Jinnah was openly hostile to the formation of the AIML. Louis' Marey Backer has mentioned four important reasons for this attitude of Jinnah towards the foundation of the AIML. To her, Jinnah had come from commercially advanced family in a Muslim majority area, a back ground which largely freed him both from the feudal ties and from the minority psychology. Secondly, Jinnah obtained most of his education in a secular atmosphere. Thirdly, in his early life he also acquired western habits and dress. Fourthly, from his student days Jinnah was fond of political philosophy of liberalism. This personal background, significantly different from those of most of his coreligionists', indicates the reasons for his absence from the Dhaka meeting of 30 December

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1906². Besides these reasons, it may be suggested that there were obviously some other reasons for his not joining the AIML until 1913.

In 1904 Jinnah had Joined the Indian National Congress (INC)³ under the influence of liberal Hindu leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1927), Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915), Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1925) and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta (1845-1915). By 1905 he was an active member of the INC and its influential leader at least in the Bombay political circles and was chosen to represent the INC delegation to England to plead for Indian self- government.⁴ This, indicates that Jinnah did not join the INC in 1906 as generally admitted by most of his biographers. His criticism on the composition of Simla deputation,⁵ and his opposition to the Muslim demand for separate electorates made him unqualified for Dhaka meeting of 1906.⁶ Even he opposed the reservation of seats for the Muslims.⁷ During Hindu agitation against partition of Bengal in 1905 his silence kept him away from mainstream of Muslim politics and he remained loyal to the INC creed.⁸ He did not join the AIML because he was not in agreement with the pro-British policy and programme launched by the Aligarh leaders. Another reason is that Jinnah could not identify himself with an association which was exclusively Muslim because his aim was to keep the Indian national movement free from religious and communal bias. Jinnah's close association with Surendranath Benerjee, who was known to Indian Muslims through his anti-partition of Bengal stance, is enough to show that he was a loyal Congress man and was proud that he belonged to Congress⁹, and not interested to join any Muslim political organization whose aims and objectives were contrary to political programme of the Congress.

Though a loyal Congressman, he was not yet unconcerned with Muslim interests. For instance, his speeches delivered in the legislative council on the special Marriage Amendment Bill in February 1912 and support to Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill in March 1912 showed his interest in Muslim mass welfare. His efforts regarding the Musalman Wakf Validating Bill in Imperial Legislative Council won him the gratitude of the entire Muslim community. The AIML paid a tribute to him in a resolution passed on 23 March 1913.¹⁰ At that time he used the platform of the INC to safeguard the interests of his co-religionists. At the same time he was convinced that Hindu-Muslim unity was the

condition of India's freedom. He continued to hold this belief till Lucknow session of the AMIL held in 1937. Before 1937 he was busy to prepare the grounds to achieve the Hindu- Muslim unity. He actively participated in the deliberations of the first Hindu-Muslim unity conference which started on 31 December 1910 at Raja Hotel Allahabad. At that time Jinnah was playing an important role to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and had attracted the attention of both the Hindu and Muslim intelligentsia. Proclaiming his creditable share to the cause Gokhale spoke of him as having "That freedom from all sectarian prejudice which will make him the best ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity"¹¹ This unity conference held under the presidency of Sir William Wedderburn (1838-1918), Jinnah served as a cross-bencher to secure an "entente cordiale" between the two communities. But the conference had ended without any tangible results.¹²

The Lucknow pact, signed both by the INC and the AIML, was first and only complete agreement ever reached by these parties on a future constitution of India. The pact was a personal triumph for Jinnah. As the chief negotiator of the pact between the parties Jinnah realized his personal ambition to become a Muslim Gokhale and an "apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity". At Lucknow also for the first time, Jinnah was elected president of the AIML session. He was now playing a triple role as a leader of the AIML, a leader of INC, and a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, a three- fold honor, unique in the annals of Indian political leadership.¹³

Jinnah's election to Imperial Council under the Act of 1909 and in the same days his cooperation to organize the Bombay Presidency Muslim League brought him closer to the AIML.¹⁴ However he formally enrolled as a member of the AJML in 1913.¹⁵ He joined the AIML without any persuasion. It has been reported that Syed Wazir Hasan and Muhammad Ali Johar were responsible to bring him into the AIML. In fact Jinnah was in London to give evidence before public service commission, headed by Islington, as he had appeared before the commission at its Bombay session on 11 March 1913.¹⁶ During his stay at London some major developments left deep impact on Jinnah's mind as it was reflected in his unrecorded speech delivered in Bombay on 20 December 1913 in the meeting of Anjuman-i-Ziaul Islam arranged in his honor. From the speech one can infer some reasons of his joining the

AIML. For instance, the Secretary of State for India's attitude towards the Muslim League representatives and his refusal to see them, tussle between Syed Amir Alt and Syed Wazir Hasan, Turko-Balkan War, Cawnpore Mosque case and the treatment of some sections of the Muslim press by the government in demanding securities and forfeiting them under the Press Act were the main causes.¹⁷

It is not fortuitous that Jinnah joined the AIML in London while earlier in 1912 he had attended the council meeting of the AIML where aims and objectives of the AIML were modified similar to his own ideas.¹⁸ If this change in the constitution of the AIML was a main reason of his joining the AIML as mentioned by almost all the biographers of Jinnah then he should have joined the AIML in India before going to England. There was no reason to postpone the matter. In fact Jinnah was a man who never ignored the objective realities of a given situation. He thought several times before he took a political decision. He was fully aware of the fact that the decisions of politician leave deep imprint on their future career. Besides this, his experience as a member of INC, rational approach and acute observation of the political developments in India enabled him to perceive the role he could assume in Indian politics. By temperament he remained in the center stage of any organization of which he was a member. Whenever he was pushed aside from the centre-stage, as he was done by Gandhi in the Home Rule League (1920) and in the INC (1920), he left that party for good.¹⁹ The Aga Khan and Syed Amir Ali tendered their resignations from the presidentship of the AIML and London branch of the AIML respectively.²⁰ At that time the AIML was in search of a leader and Jinnah desired to lead a party. Consequently, Jinnah decided to join the AIML and signed the League pledge on 10 October 1913.²¹

It is interesting that Jinnah took seven years to join the AIML (1913) and left the INC within same span of time (1920). Several reasons have been mentioned for Jinnah's rupture with the INC. Hence, one thing is clear that he did not leave the INC on the question of Gandhian non-corporation programme as the AIML had adopted the more strict resolution in support of non-corporation, but he did not leave the AIML. In-fact in the presence of Gandhi there was no room for Jinnah in the INC. In the INC Jinnah was one of its main leaders, but in the AIML he could, as leader, hope to rise to the highest position. Gandhi was the key

figure in the drama of Jinnah's rift with INC leading ultimately to his exit from INC.²²

M.A. Jinnah and the AIML were not unfamiliar with the affairs of the Muslims abroad. In this regard, the Calcutta session of the AIML was remarkable. The AIML deputation led by Jinnah proceeded to England to present the point of view of the Indian Muslims over the dismemberment of Turkish territories, position of the Khilafat and Muslim Holy places. A ten point memorandum dated 27 August 1919 was sent to the British Prime Minister along with Jinnah's letter of 4 September 1919.²³ Jinnah while delivering speech before the AIML session held at Calcutta on 7 September 1920 strongly criticized the British Government.²⁴ However, he refused to associate himself with the non-cooperation movement. He was against the strategy and methods to promote the Khilafat cause. On the other hand, through Khilafat movement, Gandhi had succeeded in killing the spirit of the Lucknow pact that Muslims and Hindus were two separate nations represented politically by AIML and the INC respectively.²⁵ Through Khilafat issue Gandhi had acquired a commanding position over national politics and Jinnah was left alone practically. The INC grew more powerful and transformed itself from elite organization to a mass political party. The Ulama had formed their own political party i.e. Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind on 24 November 1919 at Delhi.²⁶

During the Khilafat movement the All-India Khilafat Committee became a soul spokesman of Indian Muslims. The AIML was pushed aside and had ceased to exist for all practical purposes. It was alive on the papers only. Most of its leaders were swept away by the Khilafat movement. Under these circumstances, some Leaguers suggested that the AIML should be disbanded as its existence was no longer nationally useful.²⁷ When the AIML was in a moribund condition, Jinnah took steps to revive the AIML with the help of Punjabi faction of the AIML. Consequently, the AIML session, held at Lahore, on 24-25 May, 1924 had passed an important resolution which later on became a unanimous demand of the Indian Muslims. Here it is to be remembered that the demand presented by Shafi and Iqbal before the Simon Commission, resolution of the All-India Muslim Conference (f. 1929) of Delhi session and Jinnah's 14 points were mainly drawn from this resolution of Lahore session of AIML. Thus the AIML was resuscitated in 1924 at Lahore and

Jinnah was thankful to Punjabi faction of the AIML and also received many accolades from the Muslim leadership of India for achieving this feat.

References

1. There were also 1000 officials and observers. The meeting held at the palace of Nawab Sir Salimullah who had arranged accommodations and food for all the delegates from his own resources, Nadeem Shafiq Malik, ed. *The All India Muslim League 1906-1947*, Lahore, 1997, pp. 17, 25.
2. Mary Louise Becker, "The All India Muslim League; 1906-1947, A Study of Leadership in the Evolution of a Nation," unpublished *PhD thesis*, Radcliff College Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957, pp. 102-103.
3. Most of the biographers of Jinnah held the view that Jinnah started his political career in 1906 from the platform of the Indian National Congress. Dr. Riaz Ahmad held the view that jinnah started his political career earlier in 1897. See Dr. Riaz Ahmad, *Complete Works of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad All Jinnah, Vol-I (1893-1912)*, Islamabad, 1996, p.xivii. These documents produced by Dr. Riaz Ahmad reveal that Jinnah had attended the meetings of *Anjuman-i-Islam*, Bombay and *Bohra community*, Bombay in 1897. But it must be noted that these meetings were not of a political nature. Ibid., pp.4-5 Jinnah attended the first meeting of the INC on 18th July 1904. Ibid., pp. 70-71.
4. Ibid., pp. 72-73.
5. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Ahinad, 'Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: A Study in Pragmatism' *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society*, Karachi, Vol. XL, April 1992, pp. 99-100.
6. M.H. Saiyid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah, A Political Study*, Lahore, 1962, p. 37.
7. Dr. RiazAhmad, *Complete Works*, pp. 80-81.
8. I.H. Qureshi, 'The Founder of Pakistan' Quoted in *Pakistan: 50 Years of Independence*, ed. By Verinder Grover and Ranjana Arora, New Delhi, 1997, p.50. See also M.H. Saiyid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, pp. 22-23.
9. Ibid., p.46.

10. Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan, All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1947*. Vol.1, 1906-1924, Karachi, 1969, p. 279.
11. M.H. Saiyid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, p. 51.
12. For detailed accounts See Dr. Matiur Rahman, 'The First Hindu-Muslim Unity Conference' *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, Lahore, Vol.vii, No.I, January 1970, pp. 1-10 Lovett held the view that the unity conference was never held. See Verney Lovett, *A History of Indian National Movement*, London, 1921, pp. 87-88. This statement is incorrect since no other authentic source testifies that such conference was never held.
13. Muhammad Saleem Ahamd, *The All India Muslim League; From the late-19th Century to 1919*, Bahawalpur, 1988, pp. 151-175, Also see Lovett, *Indian National Movement*, p. 99.
14. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Ahmad, *Quaid-i-Azam: Jinnah*, p. 102.
15. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Ahmad held a view that Jinnah had joined the AIML earlier in 1910. This assumption is not confirmed by any authentic source. Jinnah died in 1948 and Noman had got published his *Muslim India* in 1942 but Jinnah did not negate his membership of the AIML in 1913. Shamsul Hasan, an office secretary of the AIML 1914-1947, also confirmed the date mentioned in membership form available in the AIML record. Many works on Jinnah had been published during the lifetime of Jinnah's contemporaries and office bearers of AIML but they never confirmed Jinnah's membership of the AIML prior to 1913. For Dr. Saleem Ahmad's viewpoint See, *Quaid-i-Azam: Jinnah*, pp. 102-103.
16. M.H. Saiyid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, p. 48.
17. *All India Muslim League Papers* (hereafter MLP) Vol.119
18. Waheed Uzzaman, *Quiad-i-Azam Mohammad All Jinnah: Myth and Reality*, Islamabd, 1985, p.6. See also Matiur Rahman, *From Consultation to Confrontation*, London, 1970, pp.273-275.
19. Sharif-al-Majahid, 'Quiad-i-Azam and Decision Making', unpublished paper, p. 2.
20. K.K. Aziz, ed; *The Aga Khan III*, vol-I, 1902-1927. London, 1998, pp. 463-467.
21. *MLP*, Vol. 225.

22. Muhammad Saleem Ahmad, 'The Emergence of Jinnah's Leadership of the Muslims in South Asia 1906-1920', *Asian Profile*, Vol. 6, No. I, February 1978, pp.73-76. Also See *Annual Report of the All India Muslim League for the Year 1920*, Lucknow 1920, pp. 6-7.
23. Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol-III, 1990, pp. 200-203.
24. Jinnah dubbed the Rowlatt Acts and the Punjab atrocities as “attacks on our liberty” and the spoliation of the Ottoman Empire and Khilafat as "attack on our faith". *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 541-543.
25. According to Professor Balraj Madhok, The Congress by making this pact (Lucknow pact 1916) recognized that the Muslims as a community were different from the rest of the Indians and thus by implications prepared the grounds for two nation theory. Quoted in Professor Muhammad Munawar 'Khilafat Movement: a Pathway to Pakistan' *Iqbal Review*, October-December 1986, p. 88.
26. For Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind see Perveen Rozina, "History of Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind, 1919-1947", unpublished, *M.Phil. Thesis*, Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 1986.
27. For details see Abdul Razzaq Shahid, “The All India Muslim League 1919-1937, An Analytical Study”, unpublished, *Ph.D. Thesis*, Department of History, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, 2006, pp. 85-88.