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Jinnah's Visits to Rawalpindi and their Impacts on local Politics (1936-1947)

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Abstract

Muhammad Ali Jinnah's visits to Rawalpindi played a crucial role in shaping the region's political landscape during the Pakistan Movement. His engagements with local leaders, students, and the general public galvanized support for the All India Muslim League, strengthening its position against the Unionist Party and the Congress. Jinnah's speeches emphasized Muslim unity, the demand for Pakistan, and the necessity of political mobilization, inspiring a surge in League membership and activism. These visits transformed Rawalpindi into a key center of political agitation, with increased participation in protests, civil disobedience, and electoral campaigns. The region witnessed heightened political awareness, the formation of League-affiliated volunteer groups, and the consolidation of pro-Pakistan sentiment among the masses. Jinnah's influence contributed to the erosion of Unionist dominance, leading to widespread support for the League in subsequent elections and reinforcing the city's role as a strategic stronghold in the struggle for Pakistan.

Keywords: Politics, Election, Visits, Masses, Influence, Muslim League, Rawalpindi.



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Introduction

Following the British East India Company's annexation of Punjab in 1849, Rawalpindi was designated as a permanent military cantonment in 1851. Its strategic importance became evident during the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, when local tribes such as the Gakhars and Janjuas remained loyal to the British, ensuring regional stability. The establishment of the Municipality of Rawalpindi in 1867 marked the beginning of structured civic administration. The city flourished as a commercial hub in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with significant infrastructure developments, including the introduction of railway connections in the 1880s, which boosted trade and mobility. By 1901, Rawalpindi had become the winter headquarters of the British Army's Northern Command, reinforcing its military significance. Throughout this period, Rawalpindi's identity as a garrison city shaped its political landscape. The local economy thrived due to the British military presence, leading to urbanization and population growth. However, the city remained relatively insulated from the broader nationalist movements emerging across British India.

As the demand for independence intensified in the early 20th century, Rawalpindi, like many cities in Punjab, experienced a political awakening. It became a focal point for political activities, with various movements advocating for self-governance and the rights of the local population. These developments culminated in the partition of British India in 1947, leading to the creation of Pakistan. Rawalpindi's strategic importance further increased as it became the headquarters of the Pakistan Army, a role it continues to hold today.

Rawalpindi's Political Landscape (1936–1937)

Back in the mid-1930s, Indian politics was undergoing a significant transformation, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah was emerging as a key figure. The Government of India Act of 1935 paved the way for elections in 1936-37, prompting both the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress to jump into action. To enhance its influence, the Muslim League set up the All-India Muslim League Parliamentary Board, with M.A. Jinnah leading the charge. As part of his campaign, Mr. Jinnah traveled to important cities like Lahore and Rawalpindi, where he was warmly welcomed. His arrival made quite a splash, with the English daily *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore) reporting on 6th May 1936, that he had headed to Srinagar after a brief stop in Rawalpindi. The *Rahnuma Weekly*, an Urdu newspaper, detailed his arrival at Rawalpindi Railway Station at 5:30 AM on 5th May, where he was greeted by prominent figures such as Syed Nazim Shah Advocate, Sardar Alam Khan, Mian Abdul Rehman Khan Advocate, Mian Hayat Bukhsh Engineer, and other local leaders (*Rahnuma*, 1936). During his short visit to Rawalpindi, he engaged with local leaders and spoke at a public meeting, emphasizing the importance of Muslim unity. He urged the people to rally behind the League as a national political force rather than relying on provincial parties like the Unionists. His visit energized the local Muslim League and underscored the need for united political action.

Despite M.A. Jinnah's efforts, the 1937 provincial elections were disappointing for the Muslim League, which only managed to secure a handful of seats, particularly struggling in Muslim-majority areas. In Punjab, the Unionist Party held sway, with key constituencies like Rawalpindi and Gujar Khan electing Unionist candidates. The Congress emerged victorious in eight out of eleven provinces, forming governments and solidifying its power. However, the election results served as a wake-up call for the Muslim League, prompting them to reassess their strategies. They recognized the need for a stronger, more united approach.

Impact of World War II on Indian Politics

The outbreak of World War II in September 1939 saw Britain and its allies declare war on Germany. The British Indian government sought support from Indian political parties for manpower contributions. The Indian National Congress offered conditional support, demanding that elected legislatures be allowed to draft India's future constitution and that members of the Viceroy's Executive Council be chosen from those enjoying the confidence of the Central Assembly. They also insisted that the government clarify its war objectives.

However, the British government was unwilling to accept these conditions, stating that such discussions could only take place after the war. In protest, Congress refused to cooperate in the war efforts and directed its ministers to resign in November 1939 (Wolpert, 1977). This decision was a relief for the Muslim League, as it provided them with an opportunity to consolidate their position.

Lahore Resolution 1940: The Punjab Muslim Students Federation, under the leadership of Dr. Zia-ul-Islam, played an active role in organizing the Lahore Resolution session. Special trains were arranged to transport Muslim League members from across the country to Lahore. A list of potential delegates was compiled and distributed, ensuring that Rawalpindi was well represented with two separate delegations. Out of the 270 delegates from Punjab, 19 were from Rawalpindi. Two delegations participated in the historic session of March 1940. From the Rawalpindi City Muslim League, the members were Qureshi Mohammad Usman, the Financial Secretary and owner of Hamdam Boot House, Mian Abdul Ghani, the General Secretary, and Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah Gilani, the Propaganda Secretary from Gilani & Co. in Raja Bazar. Other members included Sheikh Mohammad Umar, President of the City Muslim League from Mohalla Chhachi, Maulvi Khuda Bukhsh (Retd. A.A.C.M.A.) from Mohalla Imam Bara, Sheikh Mohammad Aslam from Kucha Sardar Buta Singh, Mian Hayat Bukhsh, an Electric Engineer from Mohalla Mian Qutabuddin, Syed Lai Shah Hussain from Niya Mohalla, Mian Iltaf-ur-Rehman, an Inspector at Muslim India Insurance Company, and Babu Khuda Bukhsh from Mohalla Imam Bara. Meanwhile, the Rawalpindi District Muslim League delegation comprised K.S. Sheikh Mohammad Ismail (C.B.E.), K.S. Mirza Qutabuddin, K.S. Malik Fateh Mohammad, Raja Sikandar Khan, Raja Jahandad Khan, Raja Ghulab Khan, Maulvi Mohammad Hussain Hydri, K.S. Sheikh Fazal Ellahie, and K.B. Abdullah Khan, all hailing from Rawalpindi (Gilani, 1962). In addition to the official delegates, many other individuals traveled to Lahore independently, eager to hear firsthand about the Muslim League's future plans. Some individuals, such as Malik Mohammad Ibrahim of Pindi-Murree Transport Ltd, even volunteered their buses to transport delegates from Rawalpindi to Lahore.

The Pakistan Resolution was a turning point in the history of Muslim India. It galvanized the Muslim community, uniting them in their demand for a separate homeland. Delegates who attended the session returned to their respective regions and spread the message of the League's leadership with renewed determination. Upon returning to Rawalpindi, Syed Mustafa Shah Gilani, who had led the city's delegation, was appointed General Secretary of the District Muslim League. He focused on reorganizing the party, establishing several new branches throughout the district. One such initiative was the formation of a League branch in Kahuta, where Maulana Abdul Rehman and Sheikh Ghulam Rasool were elected as President and General Secretary, respectively (Gilani, 1962). Muslim students in Rawalpindi were also mobilized to actively campaign for Pakistan.

Visit of the Pakistan Delegation to Rawalpindi: A Pakistan Delegation consisting of Nawab Bahadur Yaar Jang, Maulana Karam Ali Furrukh Abbadi, Maulana Abdul Hamid Badayuni, and Qazi Mohammad Isa traveled from Delhi to Peshawar via Rawalpindi. They arrived in the city on 26th February 1941, via the Frontier Mail and were greeted with a warm welcome (*Rahnuma*, 1941). Public meetings were arranged under the supervision of Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah Gilani and Qureshi Mohammad Usman at Islamia High School. The first gathering attracted an audience of around 10,000 people, including some Hindus. Nawab Bahadur Yaar Jang and Maulana Abdul Hamid delivered speeches aimed at instilling a renewed spirit of struggle among the people of Rawalpindi. The following day, on 27th February, another public meeting was held, attended by an estimated 20,000 people. Nawab Bahadur Yaar Jang presided over the event and addressed the crowd on the challenges facing Muslims, advocating for the creation of Pakistan as the ultimate solution (*Rahnuma*, 1941). Several resolutions were passed, demanding a separate homeland for Muslims. The people of Rawalpindi reaffirmed their confidence in Muhammad Ali Jinnah's leadership and vowed to follow his directives in the struggle for Pakistan.

Reorganization of the Rawalpindi Muslim Students Federation: To further strengthen the Pakistan movement, the Muslim students of Rawalpindi reorganized themselves, enhancing their efforts for the cause. On 11th March 1941, a meeting was held to elect new office-bearers of the Rawalpindi Muslim Students Federation. During the same meeting, it was unanimously decided to celebrate 23rd March as 'Pakistan Day' in collaboration with the local Muslim League to ensure the event's success (*Rahnuma*, 1941).

Pakistan Day Celebrations in Rawalpindi: As mentioned earlier, both the Rawalpindi Muslim Students Federation (MSF) and the local Muslim League put in their best efforts to mark 23 March 1941 as *Pakistan Day* (*Rahnuma*, 1941). On this occasion, several political leaders, including Ghazi Gul Mohammad, Malik Abdul Qaiyum, Taj Mohammad, and Babu Abdul Latif, spoke about the Pakistan Scheme and pledged their unwavering support to the Muslim League. Mustafa Gilani urged the audience to stand by Muhammad Ali Jinnah at this crucial moment, to which the crowd responded with a firm commitment, vowing to make any sacrifice necessary to achieve the goal of Pakistan.

The Rawalpindi Muslim League (RML) launched a well-organized campaign to promote the cause of Pakistan, focusing on strengthening its grassroots presence. As part of these efforts, several primary League branches were established, including one in Gujar Khan tehsil. For years, the local Muslim population had expressed a keen interest in setting up a League organization, but their attempts had been unsuccessful. Finally, in July 1941, prominent League leaders from Rawalpindi, including Mustafa Gilani, Professor Mazhar, and K.B. M. Ismail, visited Gujar Khan. They convened a meeting of local Muslims at the boarding house of Islamia High School, where they formally announced the formation of the Gujar Khan branch, with Qazi Abdul Rehman as President and Sheikh Barkat Hussain as General Secretary (Raja, 1994).

Initially, due to financial constraints, the organizers adopted an innovative approach to spreading the League's message. They used the Jamia Mosque as their platform, addressing the congregation every Friday to directly engage with the people and garner support for the League's program. By November, they had transitioned from mosque-based outreach to visiting villages and remote areas, informing people about the 'Pakistan Scheme'. Within a short span, they successfully established League branches in multiple villages across Gujar Khan. These efforts significantly raised political awareness among the local population, encouraging them to enroll in the Muslim League and actively participate in the movement for a separate Muslim homeland. The Punjab Provincial MSF also played a crucial role in revitalizing local student councils in Rawalpindi.

Prominent student leaders, including Abdus Sattar Niazi and Zafarullah Khan, frequently visited the city, ensuring that the League's ideology gained traction among the youth. The Muslim press in Rawalpindi was equally active in promoting the League's cause. Notably, two Urdu weekly newspapers—*Rahnuma*, published by Mirza Qutab-ud-Din, and *Iqbal*, edited by Mohammad Din Chisti—kept the public informed about India's political affairs and the Muslim League's activities.

Second Annual Session of Punjab MSF in Rawalpindi (1942): In March 1941, the MSF organized a Pakistan Conference in Lahore, during which a Pakistan Rural Propaganda Committee was established with five founding members. One of them, Manzur-ul-Haq Siddiqui from Rawalpindi, was appointed in charge of propaganda for Ambala and the Rawalpindi Division (Siddiqui, 1962). Unfortunately, he struggled to secure adequate support from the City Muslim League. Determined to popularize the Pakistan movement in Rawalpindi, the committee planned a public meeting on 25th July 1941. However, the event proved disappointing, with only ten people in attendance. This failure highlighted the urgent need for serious organizational work in the city. Recognizing this, League leaders convened another meeting on 19th November 1941 at Gordon College, where they resolved to restructure the local League. Subsequently, on 3rd December 1941, a new organizing committee was formed, with Siddiqui as its convener.

On 22nd December, the Working Committee of the Rawalpindi MSF met and decided that the Second Annual Session of the Punjab MSF should be held in Rawalpindi, with an invitation extended to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to preside over the event. To promote the session, the MSF published a pamphlet titled "*Live and Let Live: Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Solution to the Indian Political Crisis*," which was widely circulated. The Rawalpindi branch of the Punjab Muslim Students Federation wanted to hold the Second Annual Session in Rawalpindi. So they published a pamphlet titled "Live and Let Live" It was an eight pages' pamphlet containing Quaid's sayings, portions of Quaid's speech at Lahore Session of 1940, some excerpts of Ch. Rehmat Ah Khan's Scheme, and also Dr. Ambedkar's views about the Partition Scheme. It also had Quaid's article published in the "*Time and Tide*" and text of Lahore Resolution. (Live and Let Live, 1940, *Nawa-i-Waqat*, Lahore, 14th August, 1962). With approval from the Punjab MSF, Rawalpindi's student leaders intensified their efforts, rallying public support for the session. In addition to soliciting donations locally, fundraising teams were dispatched to various cities, including Lahore, Sialkot, and Sheikhupura. A few students even traveled to the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), where they met Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, an opposition leader and Muslim Leaguer, who contributed generously. Other delegations visited Campbellpur, Gujrat, Jhelum, and Kashmir to raise funds for the event. Upon the Quaid-i-Azam's invitation, MSF leaders from Rawalpindi traveled to Delhi to meet him. However, due to pressing engagements in the capital, Jinnah was unable to attend the session. Instead, at his direction, Chaudhry Khaliq-uz-Zaman agreed to preside over the gathering. The event was scheduled for 7th-8th March 1942, with Islamia High School selected as the venue (*Rahnuma*, 1942).

A massive crowd of approximately 25,000 people gathered in Rawalpindi to attend the session, with a notable number of female participants traveling from distant areas of Punjab. Following the recitation of the Quran, Manzur-ul-Haq Siddiqui, President of the Reception Committee, welcomed the attendees and emphasized Rawalpindi's significance in the movement. He criticized the Congress for its anti-Muslim stance, particularly its opposition to the concept of Pakistan. Jinnah's message to the session was then read aloud, in which he expressed his regret for not being able to attend, while also praising the MSF's efforts and urging them to remain steadfast in their mission.

Jinnah's message underscored key themes:

- The importance of removing reactionary elements from the movement
- The inclusion of women in the struggle
- The need to maintain political unity and self-reliance
- The necessity of economic, social, and educational reforms to build a strong nation

He concluded by addressing the youth directly, reminding them that they would be responsible for carrying forward the movement and urging them to prepare for future leadership. Several prominent speakers elaborated on the Pakistan Scheme, including Maulana Jamal Mian Farangi Mahal, Raja Iftikharullah, Sheikh Misbah-ud-Din, Malik M. Sadiq, Z.K. Malik, Pirzada Gulzar Hussain, Hameed Nizami, and Miss Farkhanda Akhtar. On 8th March, Chaudhry Khaliq-uz-Zaman delivered his presidential address, strongly criticizing the Congress and reiterating full support for the Pakistan demand. He warned the British Government that any constitutional framework unfavorable to Muslim interests would be met with fierce resistance (IAR, 1940). At the same event, Fatima Begum highlighted Rawalpindi's significant contributions to World War II, noting that approximately 70,000 local Muslims had served in the British Army. She urged Winston Churchill to consider their sacrifices when formulating India's future reforms. Several resolutions were passed during the session:

- A strong rejection of any constitution that did not recognize Muslims as a separate nation, with complete self-determination in the North-Western and North-Eastern Muslim-majority regions.
- A firm protest against Congress and certain Hindu factions attempting to impose a federation without consulting the Muslim community.
- A demand that Urdu be taught up to the Master's level and made the medium of instruction in schools.
- A proposal for establishing a Chair of Islamic History at Punjab University (IAR, 1942).

This session was a major success for the MSF. Following the event, Hameed Nizami took over as President of Punjab MSF after Bashir Ahmad resigned due to health issues.

Sir Stafford Cripps touched down in India on 23rd March 1942, bringing with him proposals for constitutional reforms that included the idea of a Constituent Assembly and the continuation of British oversight over military and financial matters. Unfortunately, both the Congress and the Muslim League turned down his proposals, which ultimately led to the Cripps Mission's failure. In reaction to this setback, Gandhi ramped up his Quit India Movement (Coupland, 1944). Meanwhile, on 7th May 1942, Murree Tehsil set up its very first Muslim League branch, with Master Khuda Bukhsh stepping in as President and Mahmood Ahmad Manto taking on the role of General Secretary. They called on provincial leaders to pay attention to the overlooked regions (*Rahnuma*, 8th May 1942). In Rawalpindi, the elections for the District Muslim League took place on 19th July 1943, resulting in Mirza Qutab-ud-Din being elected as President and Syed Mustafa Shah Khalid Gilani as General Secretary. Notable figures like K.B. Mohammad Ismail and Agha Mohammad Jan also secured positions (*Rahnuma*, 1943).

Fast forward to the summer of 1944, the Punjab Muslim Students Federation (MSF) became instrumental in broadening the League's influence, splitting the province into zones to better organize propaganda efforts. More than 200 students stepped up to help establish new Muslim League branches across various districts. In June 1944, a significant conference took place in Rawalpindi, led by Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, with Liaquat Ali Khan kicking off the event on June 17. Jinnah sent a message highlighting Punjab's crucial role in the Pakistan Movement, while

resolutions were passed that criticized Punjab Premier Khizar Hayat Tiwana and called for industrialization and educational reforms (Dawn, 1944). A similar conference followed in Murree on 20th June 1944, reinforcing these important demands (Punjab Police Abstracts of Intelligence, 1944).

Jinnah's Second Visit to Rawalpindi (1944)

During a holiday trip to Kashmir, Jinnah was invited by Gilani to address League workers in Rawalpindi. On 26th July, Quaid was warmly received at Kohala Bridge, with Murree's Muslim Leaguers at the forefront (Siddiqui, 1983). Enthusiastic crowds welcomed him with slogans in support of Pakistan and the Muslim League. The streets of Murree were decorated in anticipation of his arrival. During his stay, Quaid addressed a gathering at Ambassador Hall, where he praised the political activism of Muslim youth and women. He also discussed Khizar Hayat Tiwana's defiance and expressed confidence in the younger generation's commitment to the cause.

As he traveled to Rawalpindi, Quaid-i-Azam was greeted at various locations. Upon arrival at Kohati Bazar, he was given a traditional salute by volunteers before retiring to Flashman Hotel for rest. On 27th July, he visited the Faiz-ul-Islam Orphanage, where he commended the efforts of its workers and donated Rs. 500 personally (Siddiqui, 1983). Later, he attended a public meeting at Company Bagh, organized by the students of Islamia High School, with approximately 5,000-6,000 attendees. During his speech, he criticized Sir Khizar Hayat Tiwana's policies and countered anti-Pakistan rhetoric propagated by Hindu Mahasabha leader V.D. Sawarkar.

Following the public meeting, Jinnah engaged with prominent intellectuals, both Muslim and non-Muslim. That evening, he and Miss Jinnah attended a dinner hosted by Sheikh Manzur-ul-Hasan in Rawalpindi, where a donation of Rs. 10,000 was made to the Muslim League fund (Siddiqui, 1983). On 28th July he held discussions with local League leaders before departing. His visit significantly boosted the political awareness and enthusiasm of Rawalpindi's Muslim community, strengthening the network of the Muslim Students Federation in the region.

Punjab Muslim League Delegation in Rawalpindi (January 1945)

A delegation from the Punjab Muslim League, including Nawab Mamdot, Mian Allah Yaar Khan Doultana, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, and Mian Mumtaz Doultana, toured various districts of Punjab in January 1945 to further propagate the demand for Pakistan. On 27th January they visited Rawalpindi, holding public meetings in Gujar Khan, Mundra, Rawat, Rawalpindi City, Kahuta, Malpur, Saidpur, and Taxila. These gatherings drew large crowds, and the delegation called upon Ahrars to collaborate with the Muslim League while criticizing the Punjab Premier, the Unionist Party, and the Zamindara League. In Taxila, a successful meeting was organized by Qazi Fazal Ellahi Mir, where the people of Rawalpindi district collectively donated Rs. 3,100 (*Rahnuma*, 1945). The visit resulted in the formation of Women Muslim League branches in Rawalpindi and Jhelum, significantly expanding the League's influence.

Muslim League's Election Activities in Rawalpindi

Over time, the Muslim League gained increasing popularity in Rawalpindi. Students, particularly from Aligarh and Islamia College Peshawar, played an active role in the election campaign. The elections were not based on adult franchise; only individuals who had at least a primary education, military personnel, and those paying a minimum land tax (*Malia*) of five rupees per annum were eligible to vote. The government announced that new voter lists would not be prepared for the upcoming elections; instead, the existing lists from 1940-41, with minor amendments, would suffice.

The Muslim Student Federation (MSF) actively engaged in the campaign by obtaining voter lists from election offices, reaching out to eligible voters, and guiding them on the voting process. Many students from Islamia High School, D.A.V. College, and Gordon College temporarily abandoned their studies to focus on electioneering. Their efforts resulted in the registration of approximately 20,000 voters in Rawalpindi before the enlistment deadline. Candidates aspiring to contest the elections were required to submit a fee of ten rupees for the application form. The central hub for election activities was established at Macleod Road, Lahore. A significant pre-election development was the joining of the Muslim League by several prominent figures from the region. Subedar Major (Retd.) Farman Ali Khan of Gujar Khan, a former MLA and a well-known social worker, applied for the League's ticket. Similarly, Mohammad Yousaf Khan of Golra, another former MLA and a prominent Unionist, also joined the League (*Rahnuma*, 1945).

The Punjab Provincial Assembly consisted of 175 constituencies, where Muslim constituencies were 84 including 75 Rural and 9 Urban.

Elections to the Central Legislative Assembly

Elections for the Central Legislative Assembly were set for December 1945. In preparation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah extensively toured India, urging Muslims to join the Muslim League and contribute financially to the cause. Confident in the League's success, Jinnah famously stated, "Give us the silver bullets, and we will finish the job" (Ahmed, 1975). He emphasized that every vote for a Muslim League candidate was a vote for Muslim solidarity and the resolution of India's constitutional issues.

By the end of December, election results confirmed the Muslim League's sweeping victory, securing all 30 Muslim seats in the Central Legislative Assembly, while Congress won only 57 out of 102 seats. Notably, Congress failed to win a single Muslim constituency. The Congress secured 91.3% of votes in non-Muslim constituencies, while the Muslim League obtained 86.6% of votes in Muslim constituencies. Since adult franchise was not in practice, voting rights were restricted to titleholders, income taxpayers, and property owners. The League's complete victory solidified its legitimacy as the sole representative of Indian Muslims. In celebration, 11th January 1946, was observed as "Victory Day" (Allana, 1967).

League's Candidates and Campaign in Rawalpindi

Election campaigns in Rawalpindi intensified, with competition from the Unionists and the Khaksars. The selection of candidates was a challenging process, but the League carefully distributed party tickets. Notable candidates included, Sir Firoz Khan Noon (Rawalpindi Division), Ch. Zafar-ul-Haq (Rawalpindi Cantt), Raja Said Akbar (Tehsil Gujar Khan) and Sardar Kala Khan (Rawalpindi East). Campaigning in Rawalpindi commenced before the formal nomination process. The League urged Muslims to unite for Pakistan's cause. Those who had applied for the League's ticket but were not selected were encouraged to support the official candidates instead of running independently, as this would strengthen the League's position.

In Gujar Khan, local Leaguers and the Rawalpindi Muslim Students Federation worked diligently to garner support for Raja Said Akbar. He emphasized that voting for the League was synonymous with voting for Pakistan. In Murree and Kahuta, the contest was more challenging due to the influence of Raja Fateh Khan, a seasoned Unionist politician. However, the League remained optimistic, given that Sardar Kala Khan, their candidate, was a native of Murree. The MSF actively assisted in voter list preparation and public engagement. Meanwhile, Rawalpindi Saddar was considered a safe seat for the League due to the active participation of MSF members from Gordon College and Islamia High School.

Election Results

The Punjab Provincial Assembly had 86 Muslim seats, including two for women. Approximately 500 candidates filed nominations, with a majority belonging to the Unionist Party, many contesting multiple constituencies. The Muslim League fielded 84 candidates, while Congress had 76, Akali Dal 26, the Communist Party 27, Majlis-e-Ahrar 18, and the Radical Party 3. Additionally, 87 Muslim independent candidates participated (Yadav, 1945). Polling took place from February 1st to 15th February 1946. The Congress and the Muslim League emerged as the dominant parties, with Congress securing 930 seats and forming majorities in eight provinces. The Muslim League won 440 out of 495 Muslim seats, including 79 out of 86 in Punjab. The League performed exceptionally well in Rawalpindi Division, with candidates such as Sir Firoz Khan Noon, Ch. Zafar-ul-Haq, Raja Said Akbar Khan, and Raja Kala Khan winning by significant margins. Rawalpindi Division was one of the Muslim constituencies under the Muhammad Urban Constituencies in Punjab. Sir Firoz Khan Noon was the Muslim League candidate. Total number of Muslim votes in the Rawalpindi Division was 30424 and polling ratio was noted as 56.32%. Sir Firoz Khan Noon emerged victorious and he took 14728 votes. Dr. Sheikh Muhammad Alam (KH) took 2346 votes and Shamsuddin (I) took only 16 votes. Rawalpindi District: There were three Muslim Constituencies in Rawalpindi district i.e. Rawalpindi Saddar, Gujar Khan and Rawalpindi East (Murree/ Kahuta). The results of these constituencies were as under:

Rawalpindi Saddar Constituency: This constituency covered the area of Tahsil Rawalpindi. It had 17322 Muslim votes. The polling turnout was 60.50 %. The winner was Ch. Zafar-ul-Haq of Muslim League. He took 5624 votes. Gujar Khan Constituency: This constituency was covering the whole of tahsil Gujar Khan. There were 20220 Muslim votes. The turnout was a bit low than the Rawalpindi Saddar Constituency. It was 51.37 %. Muslim League Candidate Raja Said Akbar Khan was the winner. He took 8956 votes. Rawalpindi East Constituency: This Muslim Constituency was consisted of tehsil Murree and tahsil Kahuta. It had 20931 Muslim Votes. Polling turn out remained 59.53%. Raja Kala Khan of Muslim League won the election. He took 103080 votes (Yadav, 1987).

The League's landslide victory shocked its opponents, who responded by filing legal petitions against its candidates. However, these cases were ultimately dismissed. The elections demonstrated the League's unrivaled support among Indian Muslims, marking a stark contrast to the 1937 elections when it struggled to make an impact. By 1946, Muslims were more politically aware, and the League had grown into a well-organized force. The influence of the MSF, religious leaders, and Jinnah's charismatic leadership played a crucial role in this transformation.

Post-Election Developments

Following its electoral triumph, the Muslim League convened a historic legislators' convention in Delhi on 7th April 1946. Jinnah reiterated the League's demand for Pakistan, asserting that a united India was an impossibility and warning against any attempts to impose a solution against Muslim wishes (*The Indian Annual Register*, 1946). The Congress, unwilling to accept the League's success, began maneuvering to counter its influence. It formed alliances with other parties to prevent the League from forming governments. Despite securing the majority of Muslim seats in Punjab, the League was outmaneuvered when the Congress aligned with the Akali Sikhs and the Unionists to establish a coalition government under Khizar Hayat Tiwana. The 1945-46 elections were pivotal in cementing the Muslim League's position as the sole representative of Indian Muslims. The overwhelming support it received strengthened its demand for Pakistan, intensifying political tensions with the Congress and the British government.

The Punjab Muslim League's decision to initiate a civil disobedience movement against the Khizar ministry played a crucial role in the political history of the Pakistan Movement. Instead of following peaceful constitutional means, the League adopted non-constitutional methods to assert its presence before the authorities, a strategy that ultimately proved effective. The formation of the Khizar government in Punjab on 6th March 1946, ignited resentment against both the British and the provincial government. The Muslims of Punjab strongly opposed the establishment of the Khizar Ministry, leading to a general strike on 9th March 1946 (Fazal, 1970). During a procession in Lahore, police opened fire, killing student Abdul Malik and injuring many others. In response, the Provincial League decided to reorganize the party and its volunteer corps, the National Guards. Rawalpindi, as part of Punjab, was actively involved in these efforts. Large numbers of new members were enlisted, and four Salaars (in-charges of an organized group) were appointed to revamp the ML National Guards. Additionally, a girls' branch of the Muslim Students Federation (MSF) was established in Rawalpindi on 28th April 1946, with the aim of increasing female participation (*Punjab Police Abstracts of Intelligence*, 1946). Women were encouraged to recruit more members and to persuade their male counterparts to join the Muslim League National Guards (MLNG). A significant public meeting, condemning the Khizar government was held in Gujar Khan in late June 1946 (*Rahnuma*, 1946).

A League Conference took place in Murree in late June 1946, chaired by Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, with the Pir of Manki Sharif (NWFP) and the Pir of Jalal Pur Sharif (Punjab) also in attendance. Resolutions were passed, expressing frustration over the British government's perceived betrayal concerning the Interim Government's formation. Another public meeting was held in Rawalpindi in the second week of July 1946, presided over by Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, reiterating criticism of the British government and the League's opposition to the Interim Government (*Punjab Police Abstracts of Intelligence*, 1946). The Muslim Girls Students Federation (MGSF) also held a meeting in Rawalpindi in the third week of July 1946, under the leadership of Begum Noor Jahan Rasool. Participants discussed their role in the political struggle for Pakistan, with General Secretary Suriyah Minhas emphasizing the need for both Western and religious education among Muslim women to combat superstitions. Meanwhile, the ML National Guards in Rawalpindi gained momentum, with regular training sessions and enrollment drives. In the third week of July 1946, 113 MLNG members gathered in Rawalpindi, where Salaar Mohammad Din explained that they had received instructions to maintain discipline by marching in small groups to sustain morale (PPAI, 1946).

Direct Action Day and Rawalpindi ML

The All-India Muslim League (AIML) protested against the Interim Government's formation without its approval and authorized a plan for 'Direct Action.' Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, disillusioned by the British government, declared that the League was compelled to abandon constitutional methods. Liaquat Ali Khan urged Muslims to resort to Direct Action for Pakistan, designating 16th August 1946, as 'Direct Action Day' (Shah, 1999). Protest demonstrations were held across India, including a public meeting in Rawalpindi's Company Bagh, presided over by Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din. Local ML leaders criticized both the British and the Congress, emphasizing the need for civil disobedience if Muslim rights were threatened.

Another significant public gathering took place on 23rd August 1946, at Jamia Masjid, Rawalpindi, led by Syed Mustafa Shah Gilani. Addressing an audience of over 50,000, he denounced the British for their perceived alliance with Hindus and warned of Muslim resistance. In the wake of these meetings, MLNG activities intensified in Rawalpindi. Provincial Salaar Khursheed Anwar visited Rawalpindi on 25th August 1946, rallying local volunteers (PPAI, 1946). Plans were made for a

divisional training camp, while Ahmed Hassan Josh encouraged enthusiasm for Direct Action. Tensions escalated as rumors spread about Hindus stockpiling weapons, allegedly aided by the Punjab Coalition Ministry. ML leaders urged Muslims to remain prepared but not to act aggressively. Women also played a key role in the movement, with the establishment of Women National Guards in April 1946, led by Lady Shafi.

The Punjab government initially remained passive but later cracked down on volunteer organizations suspected of stockpiling arms. On 7th January 1947, 40 MLNG members were arrested in Lahore, followed by a formal ban on both the MLNG and the RSSS on 24th January 1947 (*Civil & Military Gazette*, 1947). The League refused to comply with the government's orders, triggering widespread protests. Prominent League leaders, including Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din and Begum Shah Nawaz, resisted police attempts to raid MLNG offices. In response, the Punjab Muslim Students Federation (PMSF) launched a protest campaign, violating Section 144 and courting arrests. On 24th January 1947, MSF activists held processions in defiance of the ban, leading to widespread detentions (*Nawa-i-Waqat*, 1962). The government escalated punitive measures, detaining 86 students and abandoning them 12 miles outside Lahore as a form of punishment. Women Leaguers also participated, facing tear gas and arrests.

Despite government crackdowns, the League persisted. On 26th January, Premier Khizar Hayat Tiwana released several provincial League leaders, but they refused to leave jail until their demands were met. Upon their forced release on 27th January, they organized a public meeting at Mochi Gate, Lahore, vowing to continue the civil disobedience movement. The event led to further arrests, including that of Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan and Begum Shah Nawaz (Shaheed, 1962). The government also banned the entry of League newspapers into Punjab, prompting students to distribute clandestine news bulletins, including a one-page publication, "*Awaz-e-Haq*," produced by students in Gujar Khan.

Civil Disobedience in Rawalpindi

The movement in Rawalpindi really picked up the momentum because of the backing of the local Muslim League and the Muslim Students Federation. Mustafa Shah Khalid Gilani, the General Secretary, was a crucial figure, managing to avoid arrest while still pushing for change. At first, the authorities were somewhat lenient, but things took a turn for the worse as they resorted to violence. In Gujar Khan, people patiently waited until 25th January before they joined the civil disobedience movement. Volunteers frequently courted arrest, marching in groups of 40, which led to overcrowded jails. Members of the League even raised their flag on government buildings, which prompted the Punjab government to detain key leaders. However, police inspector Shah Alam discreetly tipped them off, allowing many to escape capture. Remarkably, the movement in both Gujar Khan and Rawalpindi saw no fatalities. Activists also blocked railway tracks, which resulted in military control being established in Gujar Khan (Raja, pp. 291-298).

Civil disobedience soon spread to Murree and Kahuta, where ML leaders were arrested, and Section 144 was enforced. The authorities responded with tear gas and lathi charges, injuring a young protestor, but local leaders and a British Deputy Commissioner stepped in to prevent further violence. On 19th February 1947, prominent figures like Mohammad Ali Qasmi and Ahmad Saeed Kirmani were taken into custody, but a compromise on 26th February led to the release of the prisoners. The movement's achievements even forced the Punjab Premier to resign on 2nd March 1947 (*IAR*, 1947). However, non-Muslim leaders opposed the formation of the ML government, which ignited riots. In Rawalpindi, tensions flared on 6th March during Holi when Hindus and Sikhs allegedly plotted attacks on Muslims. In response, Muslim League workers called for

reinforcements, resulting in violent clashes. Unlike other regions in Punjab, Muslims in Rawalpindi, Hazara, and Campbellpur retaliated strongly, overshadowing the communal riots happening elsewhere (Siddiqi, 1947).

Conclusion

The Muslim League pioneered Rawalpindi and its juvenile branch was formed in 1907. But it really took off after Jinnah's first trip in 1936. The holding of a real session of the League took place in Lahore in 1940, the two delegates from Rawalpindi were engaged in this historic session. Through visits of central leaders, regional leaders like Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah Gilani and Ahmad Hasan Josh also consolidated the movement. The League followed that visit with another in 1944—the fiery speeches of Jinnah further igniting local support which culminated, in the 1945-46 elections, in the party's massive victory. Undeterred by opposition from the Unionist government of Khizar Hayat Tiwana, Rawalpindi became a bastion for the League, taking part in the civil disobedience movement. The tensions spiraled into communal riots in March 1947, during which time there was extensive violence and large-scale population movement. Rehabilitation of refugees was one of the major contributions of the Rawalpindi Muslim League to the Pakistan Movement.

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