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**Partition of India: The Case of Sindh
Migration, Violence and Peaceful
Sindh**

Ahmad Salim

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Partition of India: The Case of Sindh Migration, Violence and Peaceful Sindh

Ahmad Salim*

Abstract

The relative harmony among the Hindus and Muslims of Sindh, established over centuries became directly at risk due to many traditional and non-traditional factors. Traditional factors including the economic exploitation of Sindhi Muslim at the hands of Hindu moneylender arose after the British conquest and the resultant British Civil Code, which offered protection and prospects to the Hindu bania (money-lender). These factors jeopardized the possibilities of continuity of non-violent social infrastructure of Sindhi people. Related to these are non-traditional threats that directly devastated peoples' lives. They included social unrest flowing from communal hatreds; increasing poverty amongst the Muslims; as well as other immediate threats to human lives from disturbances and riots. It was demonstrated through incidents like riots of 1831, Larkana riots in 1928, Masjid Manzilgah issue and so on. Thus, it becomes far more imperative to consider these issues in detail for a true understanding of the constituents of the socio-political and economic fabric of Sindh.

Another important issue in the history of Sindh was its separation from Bombay presidency, which left the Sindh Hindus very bitter because they thought that their economic and political interests would be at stake in a government dominated by Muslims thus increasing communal bitterness. Partition of Sindh did not prove to be beneficial to the ordinary Sindhi, the status of hari (tenant) never changed. Although, he underwent a change of masters – from Hindu capitalists to Muslim waderas (landlords).

This study first identifies the key factors that increased communal bitterness and then systematically explores how and why they directly affected the lives and social obligations of the individuals. Second, it assesses the communal atmosphere shortly after the Indo-Pak Partition of 1947. The absence of large-scale violence made the Sindhi experience different from that of the Punjabis and Bengalis. Among the Sindhi Hindus, there were fewer dispositions to panic because of violence; they panicked more because of measures adopted by the Sindhi Muslims wielding political power at the time shortly before and after the Partition. An assessment is also made about how with the influx of refugees in Sindh, Muhajir Nationalism was promulgated and Sindhi culture and its indigenous people became handicapped in the hands of people from Punjab and India.

1. Historical Perspective

Over a number of centuries, Sindh had enjoyed religious, cultural and social harmony where religions, castes and tribes evolved a common culture. Historically, Sindh acquired a rural character, but this did not prevent the establishment of important pockets of urban development, which grew up

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as administrative centres closely linked to trade. The River Indus led the outside world deep into the heartland of northern India and central Asia. First Daybul, and then Lahri Bandar and Karachi became the most important ports on the Indian Ocean. The importance of the Indus as a major channel of commerce through Sindh, in turn, encouraged towns and cities to establish themselves along the river.

Lines of communication in Sindh, like the Indus River, ran from east to west, linking the subcontinent with western Asia through the Bolan, Mula and Lak Phusu passes which led from Sindh into Baluchistan and beyond. Important caravan routes also crossed the Thar Desert to destinations in the Rajputana states and the coastal regions of Kacch, Kathiawar and Gujarat. The towns developed alongside them acting as trading centres as well as '*refuelling stations*' for traders.¹

All the same, the ranges of Kohistan together with the eastern desert proved effective barriers, and Sindh was relatively isolated from events taking place elsewhere in northern India. Sindh was one of the first to be conquered by Arabs and somehow always remained under the Muslim political hold. However, due to Sindh's isolation it never fully drew into the wider political framework of northern India during the period of the Delhi Sultanates or the Mughals. Sindh was ruled either by local tribes such as the Sumros and the Sammas who continually jostled with each other for local supremacy or by the semi-independent representatives of governments whose centres of power lay far away. To Kabul and Delhi, Sindh was a distant frontier province. The preservation of 'stability' along its borders remained their main concern, and so they delegated authority to local holders of power in order to achieve their aim. This pattern of political control remained virtually unchanged right up to the time of the British arrival: the Talpur Mirs, who ruled Sindh at the time of the British conquest in 1843, were under the suzerainty of the Afghan kings, but in practice they, like their eighteenth century Kalhora predecessors, ruled as 'independent' chiefs.

1.1. *Relative Isolation and Communal Fabric*

As far the religious harmony in Sindh is concerned, Hindus and Muslims had co-existed in relative harmony for decades. Sindh's relative isolation was important from the religious point of view. As a 'marginal' region located away from the main centres of orthodox Hinduism, and influenced only indirectly by strongly centralised Muslim states, Sindh developed its own quite distinctive religious character. Before the advent of Islam, a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism dominated religion in Sindh. Combined with the fact that the bulk of Muslim conversions were eventually performed by sufis, this meant that popular Islamic practice in Sindh came to display strongly mystical and syncretic trends. Sindhi Sufism was a harmonious blending of both Vedantic and Islamic cultures, and is exemplified in Sachal's axiom: "*I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim.*" The evening prayer of a Sindhi was often: "*God's blessings be on Hindus, on Muslims and on the rest.*" Sindhi Hindus bowed without hesitation in *durgahs* and Sindhi Muslims spontaneously referred to God as Varuna Zindah Pir.

Therefore, even when the province became predominantly Muslim, Hindus and Muslims continued to share much of the same cultural framework and many of their religious practices overlapped. By the nineteenth century, Sindhi Muslims outnumbered Hindus by three to one. With the exception of local Ismaili and Memon groups, Hindus made up the bulk of the trading and commercial community and dominated the economic matrix. Although, economically, administratively and even politically,

1 HUGES, A. W., *A Gazetteer of the Province of Sind*, Karachi, 1876, p. 85

communities changed positions but Hindus, especially *banias* had a firm grip on the economy of the province. The social effects of rural debt were aggravated in Sindh because the creditors were almost all Hindu, the debtors almost all Muslim. The British rule initiated critical changes in the relationship between debtors and creditors, especially by conferring full property rights on landholders. This put them in possession of a valuable asset, which increased their creditworthiness. The catch was that creditors could seize their land to recover their money, a power that was unthinkable in pre-British times.² This gave creditors the opportunity to acquire land cheaply. *Waderas* did not generally have a strong business sense. They did not appreciate the commercial value their land had acquired. Expressing their status through the size of their estates rather than the efficiency of their husbandry, they often sacrificed profits to buy up additional tracts of unproductive land, mortgaging themselves in the process. According to British officials, this left them prey to predatory *banias*. Forbidden by their religion to lend money on interest, Muslims had traditionally left all financial affairs to the Hindu minority. The latter, like minorities elsewhere, had established a reputation as shrewd merchants and bankers, wealthy but disdained by the majority community.

Most of the Muslims lived in the rural areas, earned their livelihood from the land and were largely illiterate. Although many Sayyid families lived in towns, it was the countryside, which provided the basis of the power of Sindh's religious elite. *Pirs* belonging to important shrines wielded enormous social influence and people who did not have a *pir* as their *murshid* were considered non-believers. Thus, *pir* and the *dargah* provided the main transmission belt along which Islam reached the people of the region. This process of conversion made such a deep impact that intense devotion for *sufi* saints and their lines of descendants became the hallmarks of religious practice in Sindh.³

The resultant harmony of communal relations and the valuable economic service rendered by the different communities to the province as a whole held prospects of undisturbed continuity of the status quo. Regional attachment was considered more important than communal consciousness. Even during the British attack, the Hindu community joined hands with the ruling Muslims to offer a stern resistance. Although the history of Sindh marks relative communal harmony unrivalled in the northern part of the sub-continent, certain levels of ambivalence were also demonstrated in the Hindu-Muslim relationship through incidents like riots of 1831, Larkana riots in 1928, Masjid Manzilgah issue and so on. Thus, it becomes imperative to consider these issues in detail for a true understanding of the constituents of the socio-political and economic fabric of Sindh.

1.2. Hindu-Muslim Riots of 1831-1930

In 1831-32 Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Nussarpur. Built in 989 by Nasir Muhana, about sixteen miles northeast of Hyderabad, the town was the residence of influential Lagari Nawabs.

These riots were caused over a Hindu boy who was badly treated by his teacher and the Muslims gave him refuge in a mosque. This infuriated the Hindu community and the Hindu shopkeepers of the town closed their shops against Muslims. This was way the Hindus usually protested, as the population was dependent on them for their necessities. The Muslims retaliated by polluting the wells used by the Hindus. Seth Naomul Hotchand states that the next day a man called Sayed Nooral Shah walked through the bazaar swearing at Hindus. Hotchand's younger brother, Parshram, protested and argued with the Sayed against his uncitizen-like conduct. At this Nooral Shah charged Parshram with blasphemy – he held that Parshram had abused him and the Prophet (PBUH). He

2 Regulation V of 1827, Chapter V, Section 15, The Bombay Code, 7

3 ANSARI, Sarah F.D., Sufi Saints: a State Power, Vanguard, 1992, p. 13

visited Tatta, Shah Bandar, Mathiari, Halla and Hyderabad, stirring Muslims and soliciting co-operation and aid from every true Muslim in the name of the *musaf* (Koran). This incited the religious sentiments in Muslims who consequently gathered against the Hindus. Hindus were also planning their moves. Hotchand's brother Parshram by that time withdrew from Sindh to Jessulmere. The Muslims assembled in large numbers at Hyderabad, raised a clamour, and prevailed upon Mir Muradali to address a *firman* to Seth Hotchand to send his son Parshram to Hyderabad. Parshram was not at Karachi, therefore Seth Hotchand himself proceeded to Hyderabad accompanied by about two thousand Hindus in obedience to another *firman* from Muradali, directing his presence in the absence of his son. The Mir referred the case to the Pirs of Nussarpur. At Nussarpur the *qazi* doubting the Muslims' intentions refused to listen to the Muslims or to permit a discussion at his place. The Muslims, however, forcibly lifted away Seth Hotchand and went to Tatta and Bagani, a town in the Shah Bandar Division. At Bagani the Muslims began to meditate upon his circumcision and conversion to Islam by force.

In the meantime, Mir Muradali was apprised of their intentions. He repented the step he had taken. Seth Hotchand was liberated at his interference, thus, ending the episode of riots in Nussarpur.⁴

The colonial era, starting in 1850 in Sindh, no doubt changed the status of Hindu moneylenders in the social fabric as British law gave them protection and stability against the creditors, who were Muslim farmers. Hindus had filed a number of cases against Muslim debtors in the courts. The accusations and counter accusations in this regard were indicative of communal antagonisms, which sporadically erupted into violence. The occasional conversion of Hindus to Islam was a common trigger for public disturbances. It provoked angry claims from representatives of the Hindu community that force had been used. This was in itself a measure of their increased security since they would hardly have dared an open challenge on so sensitive an issue if the British had not been there to intervene. Muslim representatives would angrily refute the charges and the debate would be taken to the streets. Disputes over conversions provoked riots in Sukkur in 1872, in the Sehwan area in 1884, in Hyderabad bazaar, for no apparent reasons, while a dispute over the playing of music in a temple in Thattha provoked violence in 1891.⁵ In 1893, a Moharram procession in Sukkur turned into an anti-Hindu riot during which the Town Inspector of Police, a Hindu was badly beaten.⁶

These constituted evidence of friction between the two communities, but there were no specifically anti-*bania* riots in Sindh along the lines of the riots, which took place in Deccan in 1875.

In March 1928, Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Larkana. The riots had been caused by the activities of the Hindu fundamentalists of the Shuddhi, Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha movements who were busy scouring the countryside at the time trying to find and 'reconvert' or *shuddhi* (purify) any person they suspected had been converted from Hinduism. A Hindu convert woman who had been married to a small landowner in a village near Dokri in Larkana District for more than fifteen years and was mother of several children was reported to have been kidnapped by Arya Samajist workers. Her family requested the Collector to issue a warrant. The police had brought her to Larkana but the Collector was very indecisive and kept her as *amanat* (i.e. in trust) in the house of a local notable, Nawab Lahori. The Collector delayed

4 BHOJWANI, Rao Bahadur Alumul Trikamdas (tr.), *Memoirs of Seth Naomul Hotchand*, Oxford 1982, pp.64-67

5 District Sup. Police, to Collr., Hbad., 26 Aug, 1882 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1882, vol. II. Pt. II, compn. 47, 78-84; Comm., Sindh, note, n.d. (As quoted by CHESSMAN, David, *Landlord Power and Rural Indebtness in Colonial Sindh 1865 – 1901*, Curzon, p. 185

6 CHEESMAN, Op.cit., p. 185

taking action to diffuse the situation, but it soon escalated into a confrontation. The husband and the children of the woman came to complain and asked for her return, but the Larkana administration took no notice.

The incident caused a great deal of resentment in the villages around Larkana as the action of the police was considered an attack on the home and family of a respectable man. A number of villagers entered the town and caused a disturbance. They precipitated a minor riot. The extremist elements particularly the workers of Hindu Mahasabha, went around attacking any Muslim they found alone. In the melee about sixty nine people were injured, eleven of whom were Muslims and the rest Hindus, but one Hindu died as a result of his injuries.⁷ Under pressure from Hindu political workers, the police made a large number of indiscriminate arrests. The Muslims felt helpless and unprotected, as there was no voice of protest from their side. The most important Muslim leaders of the town, Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto and Nawab Lahori had refused to come out of their houses or show any interest or sympathy. However, Khuhro responded immediately. He protested to the magistrate about his extremely arbitrary actions, such as arresting Muslims without proof on the behest of their opponents and enemies. He immediately organized a relief committee.

The Defence Committee succeeded in getting most of the arrested people freed, except ten leading citizens who were committed to the Sessions Court.

The communal friction and extremist organizations like the Shuddhi and Mahasabha movements were bent upon stirring up communal trouble. This case was the beginning of the strife between Hindu and Muslim communities in Sindh. The incident was followed by trouble in other towns as both the communities organised themselves for confrontations with each other strictly on communal and religious lines. Hindu households were armed and young men were trained for combat and taught to use arms. The atmosphere was charged with hostility and the failure of the extremists in Larkana was regarded as a defeat which had to be avenged. The tactic of the communal organizations was to create tension with displays of arms and militancy. If this resulted in provoking communal incidents, there was vociferous newspaper propaganda depicting Hindus as victims of *jat* or 'uncouth' Muslims. Cases were then brought against the rioters. In this way, the majority Muslim population would remain involved and helpless, especially as the bureaucracy was Hindu and able to influence the higher levels of officialdom.

From 1929 to 1931 there were frequent incidents of violence particularly in Sukkur, one of the major commercial centres of Sindh. The Hindu community was in a majority in the town and much more aggressive in their proselytizing. In August 1930, an incident occurred in Sukkur in which Muslims were beaten and injured by Hindus. Muslims of surrounding villages poured into the city to avenge the outrage. This resulted in a riot and incidents of looting in the city. The administration, following the Larkana pattern, made mass arrests of the villagers and charged them with the most serious crimes. There was a public outcry about the use of intimidation and punishment by the police of the suspected people.

Another element, which contributed to the communal friction, was the Indian religious exclusivism, which restricted social relations between the communities and the practice of *chhoot* or 'untouchability.' This was not confined to the lower castes of Hindus, but also forbade socializing and eating with non-Hindus. In a majority Muslim province like Sindh this was not a problem but during the British 'neutral' rule, when they also had the economic upper hand, religious exclusivism came out into the open. The

7 KHUHRO, Hamida, *Mohammad Ayub Khuhro – A Life of Courage in Politics*, Ferozsons, 1998, p.73

collapse of Non Co-operation and Khilafat movements had unleashed an intolerant mood in India, which can only be explained by the use of the religious idiom by the politicians.

Inter communal marriages were absolutely taboo. However, in the rural areas it was a fairly common practice that lower caste tribal girls were sold by their parents or by middlemen to well off villagers who converted and married them. The *shuddhi* movement, therefore, not only threatened such households (of which there would be at least half a dozen in a big village,) but also created communal hatred far greater than the actual number of people affected.⁸

The almost century old British rule had seen the erosion of the traditional social equations in Sindh and created raw edges in the relationship of the Hindu and Muslim communities. To a large extent this was the result of the new legal and taxation systems, which allowed the *haris* and small holders to fall into debt and what was worse, lose their land which was the sole source of their livelihood. Those suffering the hardships of the new system found a ready scapegoat in the *bania* and the urban businessmen. The growing power of the latter and their intrusion into agriculture, where they became owners of large tracts of land and orchards, led to resentments across the spectrum of the traditional rural society.

1.3. Economic Matrix and role of the Moneylender

The Sindhi Muslims trembled before the Hindu moneylender's reed-pen.⁹ The Hindu *bania*, the trader and moneylender, was the creditor, who tyrannized over the debtor, imposing harsher and inequitable terms. The Muslim *zamindar* was the perennial debtor. Debt was an intolerable burden on Sindhi Muslims in general, and the *waderas* in particular.

After the conquest the Hindus took advantage of the protection provided by British rule. They started taking up land to establish themselves as landholders. Evidence was provided in 1896 by an investigation into six 'representative' villages from each of the forty-seven irrigated *talukas* in Sindh.¹⁰ The Report estimated that Hindus held twenty-eight percent of the occupied area in 1895-96. This represented a revolution in land ownership for, half a century before, they had held virtually nothing. Moreover, of the 30,839 acres which they had acquired in the selected villages between 1890-91 and 1895-96, only 7,683 acres, roughly a quarter, was new land taken up by them: the rest, 24,143 acres, they had taken from Muslims. They also enjoyed the produce of a further fifteen percent of the land, which was mortgaged to them. Altogether, then, by 1896, Hindus had the benefit of forty-two percent of the occupied area.¹¹

In this context, the growth of indebtedness could have serious political consequences. People who lost their land or witnessed the suffering of indebted neighbours might lose faith in the British Raj. They might cease to cooperate over crime and taxation; they might even oppose the British authorities. British officers, therefore, developed a jaundiced view of *banias*, regarding them as a troublesome complication, bent on eroding the foundations of the British administration. The political sensitivity of debt increased with time. It became explosive in the twentieth century, when

8 KHUHRO, Op.cit., 185

9 BURTON, Sir Richard, Sindh Revisted, vol. 1, p.299, cited in CHEESMAN, Op.cit., p. 161

10 COMMR., Sindh, To Govt., Bombay, Aug. 12, 1896, Note A (P.G.D., R.D.L., 1899 July – Dec., Confi. 798-9

11 CHEESMAN, Op.cit., p.162

Muslim indebtedness fuelled resentment against Hindu *banias*, boosting the popularity of the Pakistan movement.

No doubt the significance of credit in economic development cannot be denied. Some moneylenders were rapacious, but money had to be lent if cultivation was to take place.¹²

Banias were tradesmen. Their interest in land grew out of their trading activities. Some may, like *waderas*, had hoped to boost their *izzat* (respect) through large holdings, but they were more interested in land as an investment. It guaranteed access to raw materials. Hindu merchants were keen to start their own farms. Much of the profit they realized from the growth of Sindh's export trade, based on the produce of Sindhi farms, was invested in land. To keep their overheads down, they preferred smaller, more intensively cultivated holdings than Muslims.¹³

As merchants, Hindus were middlemen. They bought produce from the cultivators at the threshing floor. Some they kept for retailing locally, the rest they sold on to the dealers. As traders, they were a natural source of credit, providing among other things, the investments that enabled agriculture to develop. The system had evolved to suit those engaged in trade. It saved the great merchants from employing a large body of agents to go shopping round the farms, while it provided the *banias* with secure trading contacts. Naturally, this was less advantageous to the producers. But the agriculturists had little choice. They did not have connections among the large dealers. Secondly, they were not simply selling their produce; they were regulating their accounts at the same time. Before they could sell their produce on the open market, they had to pay off the season's debts. Many, though, found themselves as impoverished at the end of the season as the start, if not more so.

The problem lay in the mixture of transactions that took place when farmers sold their produce. First, their *banias* established the value of the crop, with reference to the price they expected to sell it for in the market. This they compared with the outstanding debts. The price credited to the agriculturist represented the difference between the value attributed to the crop and the debt owed. The calculations were complicated by fluctuations in price throughout the year. An agriculturist who borrowed seeds at the beginning of the season, when prices were high, would repay at harvest time, when prices were low. The *bania* had to maintain a record of the prices prevailing at the different times. As one can imagine, the arithmetic could be extremely confusing, 'even if the *bania* were honest and not addicted to taking unfair advantage of the complication.'¹⁴ With illiterate clients who were ignorant of business, the temptation was strong for *banias* to twist the record to their own advantage, and they sometimes succeeded in buying produce at excessively low rates, which bore little relation to those quoted on the markets.¹⁵ Even if the client were literate, it made little difference since accounts were kept in a specialist *bania* Sindhi script, which was incomprehensible to most non-*banias*.

Hindus occupied an ambiguous place in Sindhi society. Evan James gave an interesting account of what the improved circumstances of Hindus meant in day-to-day terms. When he first served in Sindh in the 1870s, Hindus still had an inherent fear of Muslims, not even venturing to ride horses which, it was generally agreed, were noble animals fit only for the superior community. When he returned to Sindh as Commissioner in the 1890s, he noticed that the Hindus who two decades

12 CHEESMAN, op.cit., p.163

13 Ibid. p.164

14 Settl. Offr. 6 Jan, 1873 (B.N.S. 194), Kotri S.R., 38

15 Depy. Collr., U.S.F., To Commr, Sindh, July 18, 1904, cited in Cheesman

previously ‘*never dreamed of riding aught but a camel, now bestride good horses as their former Beluch masters, and never think of alighting to salam whoever it be that passes.*’ Idols and religious pictures, he remarked, were now openly displayed in shops and temples, something that would have been unthinkable during his earlier time in Sindh.¹⁶

The old order was changing to the advantage of Hindus. Lewis Mountford, the Manager of Encumbered Estates, accused Hindus of deliberately enforcing their power, as a community, through the civil courts. Most of the subordinate judges were Hindus. Mountford claimed that, with *baniyas* as friends and relations, they took a warped view of what constituted reasonable interest charges, tending to be overly sympathetic towards the claims of creditors. In other words, Hindus ran the courts for Hindus.¹⁷

When it came to crimes against Hindus, there is little doubt that *waderas* were interested parties who were, at the very least, unwilling to assist the British authorities to enforce justice. Since British rule depended on the influence of the *waderas*, anything, which reduced their willingness to collaborate, was, potentially, a threat to that rule. The problem was most acute in the Hyderabad region but Evan James warned in the 1890s that good relations between Hindus and Muslims were beginning to break down all over the province. This was a result of the improved social position of Hindus and Muslim resentment at the working of the Civil Code.¹⁸ In this context the Sindh government tackled the problem of indebtedness. At worst, it seemed that *baniyas* were depriving indebted *waderas* of their land and therefore of their power. At best, indebtedness created a bad feeling among *waderas* and a sense of disenchantment with British rule. The Sindh authorities accordingly devoted themselves to relieving the debts of the Muslim landed magnates, the *jagirdars* and great *zamindars*.

However, in some way the new circumstances also enhanced the deep roots of communal harmony. Sindhis jointly initiated a number of movements against the British during the second and third decades of the 20th century. For instance, the movement for separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency resulting in Sindh’s achievement of provincial autonomy under the last Reforms Act of 1935.

1.4. Separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency

The separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency was one of the major issues in the first few decades of 20th century. Sindh was part of the Bombay Presidency with a large and populous region including Maharashtra and Gujarat and therefore with an overwhelmingly Hindu population. However, constituted as a separate province, Sindh had a Muslim population of over 75 percent. Therefore, it was a question of Muslim rights. It was also an important issue for the bureaucracy of the Bombay Presidency, as they were not willing to let go of such an administrative prize and related privileges. This debate was conducted not on the question of privilege but on the question of finance. The Bombay officials argued that Sindh would not be financially viable and self-supporting and it would not be able to pay back the debt incurred for the Lloyd Barrage at Sukkur, which was under construction at that time. This was a strong point with the opponents of the separation.

Although in the system of ‘Dyarchy’ introduced in the Reforms of 1919 Sindh got a larger representation in the Bombay Legislative Council, its constitutional position remained essentially

16 Commr. Sindh, Note, n.d., (B.S.C.) JD, File 1, 1894, vol. II, pt. 1, compn. 23, para 3

17 CHEESMAN, Op.cit., p. 165

18 Commr. Sindh, Note, n.d., (B.S.C.) JD, File 1, 1894, vol. II, pt. 1, compn. 23, para 3

unchanged. In view of this, Sindh leaders continued their efforts for the achievement of autonomy. Apart from lobbying the government of Bombay, Rais Bhurgri and his friends came to the conclusion that the issue must be brought to all India political forums. All India National Congress had been made aware of the issue since 1913, now All India Muslim League must also be asked to play its part. In December 1925, in its seventeenth session Muslim League passed the resolution that Sindh should be separated from Bombay and constituted into a separate province.¹⁹

The end of World War I was followed by a number of dramatic political events in India including Jallianwala Bagh incident and Khilafat and non-cooperation movements. The political atmosphere assumed communal spirit after the failure of Non-cooperation Movement. The Shudhi Sangathan movements were started. The communal bitterness and strife spread throughout India in 1920s and its effects were felt in the peaceful, tolerant atmosphere of Sindh as well. Local branches of Shudhi and other movements were organized and sporadic incidents of violence occurred in different places. This rise of communalism affected the demand for the separation of Sindh in a fundamental way. Hitherto, Hindu leaders had put their considerable weight behind the demand for separation. Seth Harchandrai Vishindas had been a close associate of Rais Ghulam Mohammad Bhurgri and their group had been the main protagonists of autonomy. On March 9, 1924, Rais Ghulam Mohammad Bhurgri died at the age of forty-five. He had always carried with himself the most important Hindu leadership. As one of the architects of the Lucknow Pact, he commanded respect both in Congress and Muslim League ranks. His death left no one to fill the gap and the time was not propitious for the growth of leadership acceptable equally to both communities. Besides, there was the change in the attitude of Harchandrai Vishindas who now withdrew his support from the separation movement.

Hindus opposed separation because in Bombay Presidency Hindus were in majority, whereas in separated Sindh they would be a small minority of about 15 percent. The fact that they were a mainly urban, educated and wholly affluent community with practically a monopoly over government service by the Amil class and world wide trading connections of the *bhaiband* class and that they would be more than able to hold their own, appeared not to reassure them. The Sindhi Muslims were as backward in Sindh as Muslims were in the rest of India.

At this critical moment Muslims badly needed new dynamic leadership to champion their cause and to work for autonomy. Fortunately for them such a leadership of men like Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi, Noor Mohammed Vakil, Abdullah Haroon, M. A. Khuhro, G. M. Sayed, Syed Miran Mohammed Shah, Allahbaksh Soomro and Ali Mohammed Rashdi became available.²⁰ These two generations of leaders made the case for the separation of Sindh both on financial and political grounds, strong. The earlier protagonists brought up the issue on both Congress and Muslim League platforms and the latter leadership took Sindh successfully through the last and crucial stage of the struggle for autonomy between the years 1928 and 1935.

In response to Delhi Muslim proposals of March 1927 advocating the separation of Sindh, the All India Congress Committee met in Bombay to consider among other things the important questions of Hindu Muslim unity. Pandit Moti Lal put the following resolution before the AICC: *“The proposals that Sindh should be separated from the Bombay Presidency and constituted into a separate province is one which has already been adopted in the constitution of the Congress on the principle of*

19 Khuhro to Iqbal, November 21, 1952, Khuhro papers
20KHUHRO, Hamida, *Documents on Separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency*, Islamabad 1982, p.xxvii

redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis and the committee is of opinion that the proposal may be given effect to.”

On objections put forward by the Hindus, Pandit Motilal pointed out, that the separation of Sindh would not in any way affect the Hindus adversely. On the other hand, distinguished leaders of Sindh had in the past expressed their disapproval of Sindh being tied to the chariot wheel of Bombay. As for the financial commitments of Bombay in Sindh, such projects as the Sukkur Barrage ‘*it was only a matter of book entry*’ and the Congress was not now concerned with it.²¹

Although, All India Congress had accepted and supported the separation movement more than once, but not all-Hindu opinion concurred in this attitude of Pandit Motilal on financial as well as communal grounds. Jayakar, the Mahasabha leader, insisted that the separation of Sindh be made part of a complete scheme, whereby the entire country would be redistributed on a linguistic basis.

Moreover, the resolution did not propose any comprehensive scheme for the whole of India. It was simply an answer to Muslim proposals. In spite of all counsels of moderation, the Jayakar amendment on Sindh, Baluchistan and NWFP was carried in a slightly changed form. The amendment now read: “*in regard to the proposal that Sindh should be constituted into a separate province, the Committee is of the opinion that the time has arrived for redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis, a principle that has already been adopted by the constitution of the Congress... The Committee is further of opinion that a beginning may be made by constituting Andhra and Sindh and Karnatak into separate provinces.*”

The proceedings of the conference gave a hint of some of the difficulties that would be encountered in the future negotiations between Hindus and Muslims.

N.C. Kelkar while presiding over the Annual Session of Hindu Mahasabha remarked: “*The majorities will hold the minorities as hostages and thus prevail tyranny of majority in any province.*”²² The idea of holding a minority as hostages was for the first time implanted in the minds of the people by Kelkar and this word, later on led to severe bitterness.

1928 to 1935 was a period of hectic constitution making in India. This period saw the arrival of Sir John Simon with his British Parliamentary Commission in 1928 to assess the constitutional needs of India. The Indian politicians responded with a variety of proposals including the Delhi Muslim Proposals, the All Parties Conference, the Nehru Report, M.A. Jinnah's Fourteen Points and the Allahabad Muslim League session of 1930.

There was an intensification of the separation struggle in Sindh with its outpouring of literature, convening of conferences and building up of public opinion. By the beginning of 1930 the game was back in the hands of the Sindh players. This period was undoubtedly one of the most crucial in the history of the sub-continent of India and shaped the subsequent course of history till well after the achievement of independence. A significant result of the period was the achievement of provincial autonomy, the inauguration of fully elected legislatures and fully responsible ministries at the provincial level. The Act of 1935 constituted Sindh into a separate autonomous province. The

21 *The Nehru Report*, 1975 edition, p.49

22 PERVEZ, Ikram ul Haque, *The Contribution of Sindhi Muslims in Pakistan Movement*, University of Sindh, 1984, p.156

struggle for autonomy had lasted over twenty years and was brilliant example of unity of purpose and devotion to a cause by the Muslims of Sindh.

1.5. Change of Masters

The demand for separation of Sindh was strongly advanced by the All India Muslim League in an attempt to increase Muslim provinces in India. The Sindh Muslims, who expected a larger share of political and economic benefits from a separate province, took up the issue. Though the scheme was strongly opposed mostly by the Sindh Hindus, the British government found it practical politics to separate Sindh from Bombay Presidency mainly because Muslim cooperation was necessary to formulate a sound constitution of India and partly because it was thought the separation of Sindh would minimize further communal strife. Separation of Sindh left the Sindh Hindus very bitter because they thought that their economic and political interests would be at stake in a government dominated by Muslims.

As discussed earlier, Hindu community had enjoyed the privilege of protection provided by the British law as the most powerful and economically stable community in the province. The growing indebtedness of Muslim *waderas* and *haris*, to the Hindu moneylenders, complicated the political circumstances. Muslims lost their lands to Hindu moneylenders and were losing their faith in the British Raj. But the partition of Sindh did not prove to be beneficial to the ordinary Sindhi, the status of *hari* never changed. Although, there was a change of masters – from Hindu capitalists to Muslim *waderas*.

Waderas did not have a sense of justice and equity and were mostly illiterate although they were moneyed and well connected. They treated *haris* like domestic animals, who enjoyed no privileges of rationality, no rights as human beings. Such was the condition of the poor *haris* of Sindh who formed the bulk of its population and tilled its land. Even to this day the *haris* of Sindh are no better than serfs, they live in almost primitive conditions without any conception of social, political or economic rights; they have only one interest in life that is food, with which to keep body and soul together. No other interest of life attracts them because the fundamental problem of living remains unsolved for them.²³

The *haris* had no organized life nor had the consciousness of organized living developed in them. They lived scattered, far from one another, in small hamlets consisting of thatched mud houses. Even the wives and daughters of *haris* were not safe from the *zamindars*. *“Fear reigned supreme in their lives – fear of imprisonment, fear of losing his child, wife or life. The zamindar might at any time get annoyed with him and oust him – he might have to leave his crop half ripe, his cattle might also be snatched and he might be beaten out of the village – he might suddenly find himself in the fetters of police under an enquiry for theft, robbery or murder or, more often, under Section 110 of the Criminal Procedure Code. He is frequently threatened by the zamindar with imprisonment, which he believes can be arranged by him through his official friends. He well remembers the fate of other haris who incurred the wrath of the zamindar and were wrongfully locked up in ill-ventilated, congested and suffocating sub-jails for very long periods where they suffered terms of imprisonment under-trial than what they suffered on actual conviction.”*²⁴

23 Hyder Baksh Jatui, Statement of the Accused, Hyderabad, 1997, p.87

24 Minutes of Dissent by Mr. M. Masud Khadderposh

The *zamindar* could at any time send for the *hari* for *baigar* (forced labor) for the construction of his house or sinking of wells, or some other minor works. The *hari* could be called to come with his plough and bullocks to cultivate the private fields of the *zamindar* to spend a few days on shoot with him; or to render some domestic service. He was, thus, always at the beck and call of the *zamindar* and he dare not refuse, as annoyance of the *zamindar* would spell his doom.

Therefore, change of masters did not decrease the plight of the poor Sindhi and his circumstances never changed. However, the train of political events kept on going as the partition of 1947 came nearer.

1.6. The Masjid Manzilgah Issue, Sukkur

In the administrative setup of Sindh and Indian political front, there was a total cleavage of opinion between the Muslims and Hindus on the issue of Partition. The Muslims were demanding Pakistan while the Hindus were for a united India, thus supporting Muslim League and Congress respectively. The Sindh Ittehad Party (Sindh United Party), of all other provincial parties, was the strongest in Sindh, having Muslims as well as Hindus on its membership and was also the majority party in Sindh Assembly. Allah Bakhsh's Premiership depended on the support of this Party.

The strategy of the Muslim League High Command was to disintegrate the unity of such provincial political parties, which were based on collaboration between Hindus and Muslims especially in Muslim majority provinces. Thus, in the case of Sindh, Allah Bakhsh Soomro and his Sindh Ittehad Party was their main target. Muslim League needed an opportunity to challenge the Allah Bakhsh government. It came in 1939 during an agitation resulting from the disputed status of a domed building, Manzilgah in Sukkur.²⁵ The local leaders of Muslim League like G. M. Sayed and Khuhro were quite active against the Hindu community in this movement.

The Sukkur Muslims claimed the building was really a mosque and should be restored to the Muslim community. The dispute was essentially a matter between the government and the Muslim community, but the issue assumed a communal aspect when the Hindus became concerned with its settlement.²⁶ The Muslim demand for the Manzilgah attracted Hindu interest not simply because of its religious nature, but also because the claim bore some relation to the widely disparate socio-economic levels of the two communities in Sukkur.²⁷ The feelings of fear and insecurity aroused during the separation movement days had never entirely left Sindhi Hindus and they viewed the Muslim claim to the Manzilgah as a threat to their position of dominance and control. Thus, they opposed the claim and declared that the building should remain under government control.

Earlier deputations and appeals to the government by Sukkur Muslims had failed but their hope was renewed by the government's successful settlement of the Om Mandli and Hanuman Mandir affairs in May 1939.²⁸ Anticipating the determined opposition of the Sukkur Hindus, the Muslims in Sukkur approached the Sindh Muslim League. Finding a universal positive response from the town's various Muslim *anjumans*, Abdullah Haroon publicly declared League support at a meeting in Sukkur on May 19, 1939.²⁹

25 Manzilgah building and its mosque and rest house built during Akbar's reign, was in the government's hands. See for details, SOOMRO, Mohammad Qasim, *Muslim Politics in Sindh 1938-47*, Jamshoro, 1989

26 *Causes of Sukkur Disturbances*, Appendix B, pp. 46 ff

27 P & J 4889 'Note on the Honourable Home Minister's Tour' by R. M. Maxwell, I.C.S., n.p.

28 SAYED, G. M., *Struggle for a new Sindh*, p. 31

29 *Weston Report*, p.8

The matter attracted common attention in 1938, after the Sindh Provincial Muslim League passed a resolution demanding the government to handover the mosque to the Muslims. The dispute was taken over politically as well as religiously. The government's failure to undertake immediate steps for the Manzilgah's restoration prompted the League to appoint a restoration committee to bring still greater pressure on the government. The first meeting of the committee was held on July 22 and 23.³⁰ During the meeting August 18, 1939, was declared as Manzilgah Day. It was also decided that if the Ministry did not accept the Muslim demand, All India Muslim League volunteers would be asked to start *satyagraha*³¹ to have the Manzilgah on October 1.

Abdullah Haroon stayed in Sukkur and led the agitation. When the agitation later gained strength, the Sindh Premier ordered Abdullah Haroon to leave Sukkur, and M.A. Khuhro was put under house arrest. Afterwards, G.M. Sayed started the agitation and arranged a hunger strike at the doorsteps of the ministers and their supporters. Groups were formed to assist the hunger strikers. It was the concern of the provincial Muslim League to get the mosque back, and, therefore, a Restoration Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Abdullah Haroon. This made the Muslim League a mass Muslim movement in Sindh. The Hindu Association of Sukkur, Hindu Mahasabha and Hindu Panchayat opposed the restoration of Manzilgah to Muslims.

In subsequent weeks the League leadership continued its efforts, but the government failed to grant the Muslim demand; it adopted a policy of avoiding the issue and postponing its settlement. Allah Bakhsh felt unable to take a stand because his pre-eminent goal was to stay in office.³² Therefore, he could not lose his Hindu supporters.

The inability of the moderates, Haroon and Khuhro, to persuade the government to grant the Manzilgah demand, gave ascendancy to the radical wing in the League. In order to retain their leadership in the League, Haroon and Khuhro were compelled to support the radical method of *satyagraha* though they hoped to obscure their action by maintaining a public front of issuing appeals and letter writing.³³ The emergence of the radical wing as the dominant group in the party was clearly reflected in the resolution passed at the next meeting of the restoration committee on September 29, 1939. The resolution called for the commencement of *satyagraha* within three days unless a settlement was reached.³⁴

Haroon and Khuhro invited Allah Bakhsh to Sukkur in a final effort to persuade the government to concede the Muslims' demand. The chief minister arrived on October 1, the day *satyagraha* was scheduled to begin, and held talks with the League leaders. But once again, no agreement was reached and as a result *satyagraha* was begun.

Satyagrahis and volunteers had been streaming into Sukkur over the past several days at the urging of Wajid Ali, a local League leader and a barrister from nearby Shikarpur, who was given the title of 'Dictator'.³⁵ By the second day of *satyagraha* about two thousand people had gathered, and on the morning of the third day, a group of them pushed past the police and occupied the building. G. M. Sayyed was at the forefront of this movement, he states: "*My days with the Congress had taught me*

30 Weston Report, pp. 27 ff

31 SOOMRO, Op.cit., p.54

32 CHEESMAN, Op.Cit., p.135

33 Weston Report, pp.2829

34 CHEESMAN, Op.cit., p.135

35 Weston Report, p.28

that once it has started, it is extremely insulting and damaging to call off an agitation halfway through. Therefore, I took over the leadership of the movement and had the Masjid Manzilgah taken over by force."³⁶ Thus, for the time being, restoration of the Manzilgah was achieved.

The government reaction to the taking of the Manzilgah was one of shock and embarrassment but Allah Bakhsh, undaunted, adopted an unusual tactic that he hoped would return the situation to normal. He gave orders through the Sukkur District Magistrate that all Muslim *satyagrahis* were to be released and all police withdrawn.³⁷ He said he had taken this decision because the jails were full and there was no more food to feed the prisoners, but in reality he hoped to defuse the situation, reasoning the *satyagrahis* would lose their cause and disperse if the government demonstrated leniency.³⁸ But subsequent events proved Allah Bakhsh had misjudged the situation. The *satyagrahis* did not leave. They were overtaken by bitterness realizing the government had no intention of giving up the mosque and became even more determined in their claim.

On the morning of November 19, G.M. Sayed and the other leaders of the restoration committee were arrested in Sukkur, and at noon the police took possession of the Manzilgah, expelling the *satyagrahis* with tear gas. After forty-eight days of Muslim occupation, the Manzilgah was once again in government hands.

The expulsion of the Muslims from the Manzilgah and its reoccupation by the government was followed by a wave of communal disturbance and rioting that began in Sukkur and spread into the surrounding district.³⁹ Both communities suffered comparative losses in the riots in terms of property, injuries and loss of life in Sukkur town, but the Hindus suffered most dramatically in Sukkur District as more of them were killed than were Muslims.⁴⁰

The combined result of these events was the riots of 1939, which, eventually led to the fall of the Allah Bakhsh Ministry in Sindh. It also afforded an opportunity to the Muslim League to push through the resolution demanding a separate homeland for the Muslims, but at great cost to both the League's image and Sindh's communal peace; results that posed serious questions about the League's ability to govern should they now come to power.⁴¹

2. The Partition

Although communal rifts started once again in Sindh, now under the influence of the 1947 partition, the communal harmony remained undamaged. The province had inherited a tradition of religious tolerance from the Mirs (the Muslim rulers displaced by the British conquest). Thus, the separation from India engendered a sense of insecurity amongst the Hindus, but there was less general disposition to give way to panic or despair. "...the Sindh Hindu Mahasabha's membership consisted of Hindu zamindars who aligned with the Independent Muslim Party, which consisted of the Muslim

36 SAYED, G. M., *The Case of Sindh*, Karchi, 1995, p.27

37 IOR, *Linlithgow Papers*, MSS Eur F 125/96, Graham to Linlithgow, no. 1, January 4, 1940, p.1

38 SAYED, G. M., *Struggle for a new Sindh*, p.34

39 IOR, *Linlithgow Papers*, MSS Eur F 125/95, Graham to Linlithgow, no. 124, December 22, 1939, p. 163

40 CHEESMAN, Op.Cit., p.139

41 CHEESMAN, Op.cit., p.140

landed gentry. Religion obviously played no divisive role here as they joined hands to protect their class interest. This was my first insight into upper class, Hindu-Muslim solidarity...”⁴²

2.1 The Case of Hindu Muslim Harmony (Aug-Dec. 1947)

The long-lasting inter-communal harmony and absence of large-scale violence made the Sindhi experience of Partition different from that of the Punjabis and Bengalis. *“This lack of violence could be attributed to the overarching Sindhi identity which transcended Hindu-Muslim differences, a shared language, script and literature, a deep rooted syncretic tradition with shared pirs and saints and even a similarity in food and dress. Added to this was the economic cement in a feudal society where Hindus were well off, owned land and controlled business...”*⁴³ In this scenario, the Hindu immigrants to India took partition as a temporary inter-communal ill will and the apparent intention was soon to return to old houses and old lives. They attributed warmth and co-operation to the Sindhi Muslim neighbours and friends, who escorted many of them to the railway station or harbour. Almost unanimously the deteriorating situation was ascribed to the *“arrival of Muslims from outside, that is, from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar... Another reason for the relatively smooth transition was that the bulk of them came by the sea route. Of the ones who came by train, only one respondent reported ransacking of luggage by Muslims before they crossed the border. One or two suggested that if at all Sindhi women experienced sexual violence, it was in the refugee camps where cramped quarters and lack of privacy contributed to such instances. But no one could give eyewitness or any other credible accounts of such instances.”*⁴⁴

However, in the mean time the media and Muslim leaders launched an organized propaganda to shatter the balance of inter-communal harmony. Gopal Das Khosla states that the Muslim leaders had, for some time before the establishment of Pakistan, carried on a ruthless anti-Hindu propaganda and their utterances were not calculated to promote peace. Mr. Ayub Khuhro during his election campaign for the Sindh Legislative Assembly in 1945-46, is reported to have said, *“I am looking forward to the day when the Hindus in Sindh will be so impoverished or economically weakened that their women, even like poor Muslim women today, will be constrained to carry on their heads the midday food to their husbands, brothers and sons toiling in the fields and market places.”*⁴⁵

Later, as Minister for Public Works, he declared, *“Let the Hindus of Sindh leave Sindh and go elsewhere. Let them go while the going is good and possible, else I warn that a time is fast coming when in their flight from Sindh, they may not be able to get a horse, or an ass, or a gari, or any other means of transport.”*⁴⁶

Khosla adds that Agha Badaruddin Ahmad, M.L.A., Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Legislative Assembly, in a letter, addressed to the Sukkur District Muslim League Conference, said: *“These Muslims are anxiously and restlessly straining their ears to hear the sound of the hooves of galloping horses, the rattling of the swords and the sky-rending slogans of 'Allah-o-Akbar' of Muslim crusaders.”*⁴⁷ Whereas, in the words of Khosla, the Muslim Press in Sindh was equally violent. Dawn, the official organ of the Muslim League, in its issue of September 13, 1947, called upon the Muslim

42 SUCHITRA, *The Sindhi Experience of Partition*, CSDS Archives, Ahmadabad, p.5

43 Ibid. p.3

44 Ibid. p.3

45 Quoted by Parsram V. Tahiramani in *Why the Exodus from Sind?*

46 Ibid.

47 *Alwahid*, Karachi, April 9, 1947

League National Guards to help in searching the baggage and persons of Hindu passengers, both male and female, who were leaving for India. The Hilal-e-Pakistan, a Sindhi daily of Hyderabad, published a fanatical article on October 6, 1947, and called upon the Muslim criminals and hooligans to devote their energies in victimizing Hindus. *“You should neither kill nor rob Muslims. On the contrary, your full strength, valor and weapons should be used to wreak vengeance on those people with whom even today thousands of Muslim women are prisoners... Every Muslim who casts his eye on this article and happens to know any dacoit, thief, aggressor or a patharidar should carry our request to him and should instruct him to convey the exact sense of our appeal to members of his Jamiat... You should inform us about your Association or meet us so that we may give you requisite instructions and directions.”*

This was published after the partition of the country and shows the extent to which the emotions of the Muslim masses were being worked up. The lead given by the Muslim leaders was quickly followed by religious preceptors and the local *zamindars* saw in this anti-Hindu propaganda an opportunity-for the satisfaction of personal greed.⁴⁸

2.2. The Refugee Issue

The issue of assimilation of refugees presented a totally different situation in Sindh as compared to West Punjab. The refugee influx in West Punjab, except for a tiny minority, consisted of Punjabis. They took very little time to assimilate in their new surroundings as they shared the language, customs and culture with the people of West Punjab. *“Even the Urdu-speaking refugees, who chose to make Punjab their home, soon assimilated themselves in their new surroundings, and their next generation become as Punjabi as any Punjabi, particularly if they were not-so-rich.”*⁴⁹

In Sindh, the refugees had distinctive characteristics. Bringing with them non-Sindhi language, customs and culture, they promulgated Muhajir Nationalism, which was soon established as a symbol of bureaucratic, educational and cultural dominance. Contrary to Punjab, the assimilation of refugees in Sindh seemed improbable because of a different language, culture, and system of land ownership.

The government took over administration of Karachi as the Federal capital on May 22, 1948. This *“brought in a massive influx of Muslim government personnel, largely of aggressive Punjabis, and entailed extensive requisition of Hindu residential and business premises in the metropolis which was the seat and centre of Hindu economic domination...”*⁵⁰ The educated and wealthy *“Muslim refugees from all parts of India tended to make for the capital of Pakistan; and Sindh's commerce, industry, and administrative services seemed less handicapped by shortage of trained personnel than those in the other provinces.”*⁵¹ Thus, with a high hand in government, these newcomers captured the most profitable means of production and became the owners of the industries, trade and commerce and most of the urban property. They constituted the Urdu-speaking refugees; the Punjabi refugees – of which, many were given ownership on the basis of claims in East Punjab and several purchased land; and the civil and military officers who had been rewarded with large tracts of irrigated agricultural land. The number of Muslims coming into the West Punjab from East Punjab considerably exceeded the numbers of non-Muslims who departed. Eventually, about a million of them had been diverted to Sindh. But, it also appeared as a sophisticatedly fabricated

48 KHOSLA, G.D., *Stern Reckonings*, New Delhi: OUP, 1989, pp. 244-245

49 Extracts from *Proletari*

50 *The Sindhi Exodus*, p. 355

51 SALIM, Ahmad, *Pakistan aur Aqliattain*, Karachi, 2000

scheme by the top-seat government officials to render the Sindhis without a homeland of their own and establish a constituency of their own instead.

One month prior to the Constituent Assembly's declaration of Karachi as a '*federal area*', the ministry of Ayub Khuhro was dismissed. Official sources said that he was deeply involved in corruption and misadministration. However, varied accounts existed about these charges. It was said that just before the dismissal, serious differences had arisen between Khuhro and the Governor of Sindh, Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, because the latter had reallocated the portfolios without consulting or informing the former. His real '*crime*', however, was intolerable. He had differed with the highest authorities on the issue of Karachi's separation from Sindh and was therefore thrown out.

The separation of Karachi from Sindh and its handing-over to the federal government was a great setback to the political and economic infrastructure of Sindh, particularly, as the benefits of the process of establishment of new industries did not trickle down the Sindhi people. Even the smallest of policies were formulated by the federal government, which, by that time had begun forming '*an invisible government*.'⁵² G.M. Sayed also fought against Karachi's separation from Sindh. Though, he had supported the separation of Sindh from Bombay in his early political career. After his successful struggle for the separation of Sindh from Bombay in 1937, he joined the Muslim League and became so active that he had the Pakistan Resolution passed in the Sindh Assembly – an act that he had been repenting throughout his life.

By the time Karachi was separated, some 25,000 Muslim employees of the Central Government had reached Karachi from Delhi and had nowhere to live. Moreover, despite being cold-shouldered by the Sindh government, about 150,000 refugees from East Punjab had arrived all over the province and spread communal tension of the worst kind. These refugees had neither any place to live nor any means of making a living for themselves. The Sindhis were apprehensive that if an end was not put to the ever-increasing influx of refugees, it might contribute to creating a majority of non-Sindhis in the province, and the avenues for the political, social and economic development of Sindhis would continue to remain closed.⁵³

Immediately after independence, three ministers were toppled within two years. As discussed earlier, on May 3, 1948, Pir Ilahi Bakhsh replaced Ayub Khuhro as minister. In February 1949, Yusuf Haroon formed a new ministry. In the same year, a draft communication was forwarded to the Speaker Sindh Legislative Assembly by G. M. Sayed, leader of the Sindh People's Front Assembly to be submitted as communication from the Assembly under rule 115 to the Governor of Sindh.

G. M. Sayed concluded in his revealing and thought provoking draft communication that the province of Sindh, from historical, geographical, economic, linguistic and cultural viewpoint constituted a distinct nationality.⁵⁴

52 SALIM, Ahmad, "The Separation of Karachi from Sindh," *Pakistan of Jinnah, The Hidden Face*, Lahore: Brother Publishers, 1993, p. 85

53 SALIM, Ahmad, op.cit., Pakistan aur Aqliattain, p. 136

54 SALIM, Ahmad, "*Sindh's Turmoil – A Document that was Ignored*," *Pakistan of Jinnah, The Hidden Face*, Lahore: Brother Publishers, p. 89

2.3. Riot in Hyderabad and Karachi (January, 1948)

As discussed earlier, the inter-communal harmony in Sindh was contrary to the situation in Punjab and the Hindus were not evacuating. But the pressure kept on increasing with the influx of migrants and more and more protest rose from Upper Sindh and week-by-week echoes of these protests mounted as the refugee mass moved southward. By December 1947, the volume of appeal from Sindh for protected mass evacuation of Hindus had become formidable,⁵⁵ as the government personnel imported *en masse* into Karachi. Hyderabad was engulfed by communal riots. Thirty people were killed and many wounded in the attacks on Hindus after which curfew was imposed. The violence was not merely materialistic in nature with the desire to grab Hindu property, but it was more spontaneous and was committed by refugees arriving from Ajmer, India in retaliation for the riots at Ajmer on December 6 and 14-15 (believed to have been perpetrated by Sindhi Hindu refugees on the local Muslims).

The Chief Minister Khuhro had announced during a press conference on November 13 that he would “...soon associate representatives of the Hindus with the administration of Sindh, and exchange views with the Congress members of the provincial assembly about the problems of the minorities.” Then, addressing a dinner gathering in the Karachi Club on November 17 he said, “I am sure that those who left us did so in a hurry and must be feeling the pain of exile and regretting their decision. Therefore, we must do all that we can to get them to come back... If these sons of Sindh can come back we shall celebrate the occasion.”⁵⁶

That is why Grandma Leelan and many other Hindu families refused to go to India, although their homes were attacked in order to force them to migrate. In the words of Dadi Leelan, “At that time I had just graduated and was a music teacher in the training college. We were quite happy at the creation of Pakistan. For me it was as if the Muslims were becoming rulers again after the end of the Mughals. That era had been very good for the non-Muslims, particularly for Hindus. As Pakistan was our home, the new era would be good for us too. We were now free. But very soon our optimism came to an end. Every evening the Muslim refugees would stone our houses and shout why we weren't leaving and vacating the place for them. We got frightened. My brothers left for India, but my father refused to go away, and I decided to stay on with him. During those times the refugees would often be seen standing outside our house armed with sticks. They knew I was all alone in the house with my old father. I would sometimes ask them what they wanted, and they would say we should run away. But I was determined to stay on. I continued to teach in college and serve my country.”⁵⁷

The inter-communal disturbance, which started with the import of refugees into Sindh, kept on mounting till it finally exploded in January 1948. The riots of January 6 were a first organized attempt of massacre and looting in the post-partition Sindh. Much has been said and written about it and quite naturally the details found variations in different accounts. In all these versions, two facts stand out. First, the attacks had come from just one group – the refugees, and that there had been no provocation of any kind from the Hindus and Nanak-Panthis (who, in the Punjab, are called Mona Sikhs, or beardless Sikhs). Second, the only reason for the attacks on non-Muslims was to create panic among the minorities, forcing them to flee from Sindh and in turn the perpetrators would grab their property.

55 *The Sindhi Exodus*, p. 356

56 SALIM, Ahmad, op.cit., Pakistan aur Aqliattain, p. 136

57 Ibid., p. 137

There is some difference of opinion about how the riots started. For instance, Narayan Shahani says that before the attacks the refugees among the government employees had resorted to a pen-down strike. There are two eyewitnesses to the assault cases of January 6 in and around Pakistan Chowk, Karachi. According to them the spirit of amity among Hindus and Muslims in Sindh was so strong that many Hindus had themselves circumcised. These attacks absolutely destroyed this atmosphere of amity and understanding and obliged the Hindus to think in terms of migration. Apart from the terrible happenings in Hyderabad and Karachi, there were no other reports of communal riots or killings on a large scale anywhere in Sindh, but the violence in the two cities was sufficient to force the Hindus to decide on migration.

Sobho Gianchandani, a member of the Communist Party of Pakistan, who was not only a witness to the events of January 6 in Karachi, but was also actively associated with the later efforts to restore peace and sanity, while narrating his story, said, “*The muhajirs thought the Sindhi Muslims were not good, and that they (the refugees) would have to take things in their own hands. Something must be done to make the Hindus run away.*”⁵⁸ He asserts that when curfew was imposed from 2 p.m. some 300 people had been killed according to government estimates, and about 1100 if one went by the figures computed by the community. The intention was not to inflict wounds, but to kill. Along with other workers of the Communist Party, Sobho went around the city the next day and made frantic appeals for bringing back normalcy.

Sobho Gianchandani adds: “*On the night of January 5 at 10 p.m. a tailor comrade told some of us trade union workers that in the Mauladino musafirkhana, a meeting of desperate maulvis was held and it was decided that an atmosphere of terror should be created so that the Hindus should leave and vacate their houses. They were of the view that Sindhi Muslims were not self-respecting enough to force the Hindus to flee.*”⁵⁹

So they had to leave Sindh and escape to India. Narayan Shaham told me that the “*Hindus had to leave Karachi in ships of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company. Sadhu Vaswani came to Karachi from Hyderabad. My father (K.D. Shahani) said to him that even if he went away this would prompt all other Hindus to depart. But Sadhu Vaswani had come determined to leave and had also brought along many Hindu families with the same intention.*”⁶⁰

In the words of Mohan Kalpana, the eminent Sindhi writer, “*The immigrants from Bihar rioted and killed several people. Stray mobs headed towards Ratan Talao... Because of these riots perpetuated by the non-Sindhis there was great trepidation and alarm among the Hindus. And one day we also loaded our belongings on a camel and headed towards the Karachi Port... I wished to turn into a draught of wind and blow over the land, the houses, and the people of Sindh, kissing them; ... First I had the expectancy to go back. I don’t know when this hope died. Now my only wish is to see Sindh...*”⁶¹ A great sense of longing and suffering is found in most of the accounts. Mohan Kalpana adds that he wrote a letter to Jay Ram Das: “*You ask me to forget Sindh. During your governorship of Bihar, your ancestral ring fell in the pond while boating. On official expense you drained the pond to retrieve but a ring!! What had you lost? Just a ring – we have lost our homeland sain!*”⁶²

58 Sobho Gianchandani, interview with the author

59 SALIM, op.cit., *Pakistan aur Aqliattain*, p. 139

60 Ibid. p. 139

61 FAROOQI, Musharaf (tr.), Mohan Kalpana, *Excerpts from Ishq*, Bhukh ain, Adab. p. 22

62 Ibid. p. 25

But the immigrants' accounts generally blackout the information. And if it is recorded, the incident is often depicted as a mischief of Hindus. In certain cases the information is provided but it has been given a very mild treatment and riots are shown to be lasting just few hours. Even, Maulvi Abdul Haque, known as Baba-i-Urdu (the father of Urdu), also misrepresented what actually happened in favor of *muhajirs*.⁶³

On the evening of January 6, Muslim mobs carried out a thoroughly organized looting of Hindu property in Karachi. "*Groups of thugs swooped simultaneously on Hindu neighbourhoods... Accounts of the operation by numerous victims agreed that there was little physical maltreatment, but the threatening attitude and the hearty curses of the looters were enough to induce the numbness of terror in the victims.*"⁶⁴

Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was shocked at the turn of events. Addressing a gathering of Muslim refugees on January 9 he said, "*I understand the sentiments of the Muslim refugees and all those who have suffered trials and tribulations and sympathise with them. But they must control themselves and learn to acquire the ways of a responsible people. They should not take undue advantage of the hospitality extended to them, nor should they ignore the steps taken to ameliorate their plight. Once again I warn all Muslims against lawless elements and fifth columnists and urge them to protect their Hindu neighbours from the goondas responsible for the riots. They must create a sense of trust and security among the minorities.*"⁶⁵

2.4. Literary Response

Hundreds of thousand people residing in Sindh were forced, through communal riots, to leave their homes and hearths, to wander across the barren lands in search of rehabilitation. Communal riots and disturbances erupted in some other regions also which resulted in migration of people en masse. In this political upheaval, Sindhi Hindus suffered a lot because, contrary to Punjab, they did not get any land compensation when they arrived in India. Whereas, the dreams of Sindhi Muslims, who had initiated and strongly pleaded for creation of Pakistan, were somewhat shattered into pieces immediately after independence. Mostly backward in the fields of education and technology, as compared to the increasing influx of Muslim immigrants, they could not gain much in terms of political power and employments in the administrative fields of Pakistan.

While Punjab and Bengal were given half of their states, the Sindhi community had to face the permanent scar of separation from their entire homeland. This suffering and deprivation, alienation and anguish, the sorrowful situation of Sindhis, who were deprived of their cultural, historical, geographical and sociological identity, became the subject matter of Sindhi poetry.⁶⁶

The 1947 partition issues have remained favourite themes for Sindhi writers in India and Pakistan. The main literary trends pertaining to partition problems revolve around the attainment of freedom along with communal holocaust, the migration of Hindus from Sindh, their plight in resettlement camps, and their socioeconomic and various other problems of rehabilitation.

63 HAQUE, Maulvi Abdul, *Taqseem-e-Hind ke Fasadaat aur Anjuman ki Hijrat*, p. 187

64 *The Sindhi Exodus*, p. 356

65 SALIM, op.cit., *Pakistan aur Aqliattain*, p. 139

66 MAKHIJA, Menka Shivdasani, Arjan Shad Mirchandani, (ed.), *Freedom and Fissures*, New Delhi

Some of the important aspects of fictional writings pertaining to the theme of partition are: (1) sweet recollections of Sindh where the writer was born and he spent his childhood; (2) deep anguish due to loss of the native place; (3) the feeling of alienation and rootlessness in the new environments in India where the writer is resettled; (4) love for Sindhi heritage, culture and way of living; (5) strong efforts for preservation and development of Sindhi language, literature and culture in India; (6) sympathy for various movements of Sindhi Muslims in Sindh, who are fighting for their rights; and (7) humanitarian outlook, considering Sindhis as a single community.

Remarkably, the Sindhi writers rarely portrayed grim pictures of communal riots and disturbances; instead they have tried to establish communal harmony by portraying inter-communal marriages and sweet relations among Sindhis residing in India and Pakistan.

In a story entitled *Claim*, by Narayan Bharti an old Sindhi man says, “*I am Sindhi. The Sindh region belongs to me. I have every right to register a claim for getting it back.*” In another story ‘*Dastavez*’ (the property deed, 1952) he has reinforced the issue of Hindu-Muslim harmony and love of the homeland.⁶⁷

The partition proved to back a double-edged sword – as both those who left and those who stayed felt the pain of separation. Popati Hiranandani bitterly observed that, “*While Punjabi Hindus and Bengali Hindus received half of their land, Sindhi Hindus were rendered homeless...*”

During the Indo-Pak war in 1965, the great Pakistani Sindhi poet Sheikh Ayaz was faced with a dilemma. He saw the Sindhi poet Narayan Shyam on the other side, and said,

Oh! this war...
In front of me I see Narayan Shyam!
We share the same hopes
and despairs,
The same speech and its lilt
How can I aim gun at him?
How can, I shoot him down?
That. I should do this
Is something not possible?⁶⁸

3. Impact

The absence of large-scale violence made the Sindhi experience of Partition different from that of the Punjabis and Bengalis. Among the Sindhi Hindus there was less disposition to panic because of violence, they panicked more because of measures adopted by the Sindhi Muslims wielding political power at the time shortly before and after the Partition. This anti-Hindu discrimination was perceived to be only a taste of the future. Many Hindus sent their families away, at least till the situation was resolved.

With the influx of refugees in Sindh, *Muhajir* Nationalism was promulgated and Sindhi culture and its indigenous people became handicapped in the hands of people from Punjab and India. *Muhajir*

67 JETLEY, M.K., *Partition of India as portrayed in Sindhi Literature*, p. 104

68 JOTWANI, Motilal, *Of Grass and Roots: An Indianist's Writings*, New Delhi: Sampark Prakashan, pp.204-205

Nationalism was soon established as a symbol of bureaucratic, educational and cultural dominance. This initiated a cultural and political discrimination against Sindhis in Pakistan, which exists even to this day. However, it would have been a different story altogether if there had been unity amongst Sindhis themselves like, for instance, people of East Pakistan. Bengalis of all classes and backgrounds were united in their cause. If Sindhis were to unite like the Bengalis did, the nature and degree of the discrimination and problems that they face would change dramatically.

The other great setback Sindh received at the time was separation of Karachi from Sindh, when it was established as Federal capital on May 22, 1948. This was followed by another blow to Sindh when Sindh University was shifted from Karachi to Hyderabad, in other words, it was moved from the booming industrial centre to the old *chakra* (bull cart) culture. The next step was elimination of Sindhi language from Karachi schools.

The plight of minorities is a chronic issue in Pakistan. Sindh even today has a significant population of the Hindu community as compared to other provinces of the country. These are people who generally did not leave Sindh at the time of Partition due to economic compulsions. Amongst them the urban business class is in a far more miserable condition than the Bhils, Kolis, etc of the Thar area. Their misery could be justifiable in terms that Sindhis in general are treated as second-class citizens, and as Sindhi Hindus, they are treated as third-class citizens. The bitter feelings of Sindhi Muslims towards the pre-partition *banias* add to the communal friction in the province.

In 1955, the One-Unit scheme ignited a wave of fury among the Sindhi population, particularly among the student, intellectual and peasant classes. They had staged province-wide agitations only to be met with merciless resistance by the authorities. The abolition of the provinces under the garb of so-called parity, was aimed at capturing the economic and political life of small provinces, Sindh being the most prosperous and holding an enormous promise for the future. During the agitation against One-Unit, countless Sindhis were detained and many were prosecuted. Unmoved by them, the Khuhro leadership implemented the most hated scheme on October 14, 1955.

However, One-Unit scheme could not last long. In the wake of the dissolution of One Unit, demands for the rectifying many of the wrongs of that era grew intensely in the smaller provinces. One of these demands was the restoration of the status of Sindhi as the provincial language of Sindh. Sindhi language had enjoyed this status since 1851, but it had been eroded by a series of government actions after the creation of Pakistan. The newly elected provincial government of Mumtaz Ali Bhutto moved a bill in Sindh Assembly in July 1972 for the promotion of the Sindhi language, without prejudice to the status of the national language, Urdu. However, “*..so much mistrust had already developed between the two communities in the previous two years over this question that leaders of the Urdu-speaking community were not willing to accept anything less than a ‘bi-lingual’ province.*”⁶⁹ Riots broke out in the province even before the bill had actually passed. Although intervention by the then President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the passage of a supplement bill helped cool the passions momentarily, these riots did an irreparable damage to inter-community relations in Sindh and the basis of Pakistan's unity. July 1972 had essentially been the re-enactment of the language controversy scenario of 1952 in East Bengal.

During the Bhutto regime Sindhis received compensation with an exception to Sindhi writers, intellectuals and political workers, who were harshly suppressed. However, for securing political

69 AHMAD, Feroz, “The Language Question in Sindh,” *Regional Imbalances and the National Question in Pakistan*, Vanguard, 1992, p. 139

legitimacy General Zia ul Haq added fuel to the fire of ethnic violence in Sindh. To this day, Sindh is suffering the aftermath of General Zia's regime.

In the conflict between Sindhis and Urdu-speakers, the latter must accept their new Sindhi identity in letter and in spirit. But if all that is taken too mechanically, if no allowance is made for the logistical difficulties and human failings, and if the resistance of a minority of diehard Urdu-bigots is answered by a particularism, which attempts to stem the logical growth of Urdu, then such a movement will, in the final analysis, prove to be utterly reactionary and self-defeating. If the Sindhi middle class fails to recognize the dialectics of the productive forces in society and opposes the development of Urdu as a threat to purity of Sindh, it would essentially be working for feudal restoration in Sindh. Consequently, tightening its chains. The trend of Sindhi nationalism, like that of any other nationalism, is class collaborationist. Because where it speaks against the injustices meted out to Sindhis as a whole, it conveniently overlooks the injustices and humiliation meted out every day to Sindhi peasants. Even on the cultural question the Sindhi feudal politicians have betrayed the Sindhi masses again and again.

As regards resolving the fate of *Muhajir* separatism, MQM (Muhajir Qaumi Movement) had its susceptibilities, which called for the ability of the state to manipulate the political process, the attitude of other ethnic groups towards *Muhajir* nationalism and, above all, the capacity of the *Muhajir* community to eschew its sense of self-righteousness. However, the ice has started melting. Muhajir Qaumi Movement has changed its name to Muthida Qaumi Movement. It will be too early to denounce it as '*just a change in name*' without allotting some grace period to the organization to demonstrate its shift from self-righteousness. Muthida has recognized the reality of Sindh and is facilitating integration. The organization is doing some serious thinking to respect and acknowledge the historical rights of the Sindhis.

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