

## **Muslim Urban Politics in Colonial Punjab: Majlis-i-Ahrar's Early Activism**

**Samina Awan**

*Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan*

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The British annexed Punjab in 1849, and established a new system of administration in form and spirit. They also introduced western education, canal colonies and a modern system of transportation, which had its impact on the urban population. In rural Punjab they collaborated with the landlords and feudal elite to get their support in strengthening the province as 'grain basket' for the British Army. The Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam (hereafter MAI) was an urban Muslim organisation, comprised of ex-Khilafatists, trained in agitational politics during the period 1919-1929, many of whom were ex-Congressites. Ahrar leaders split with the INC over the issue of the Nehru Report in 1929. Soon after the formation of the new party, they decided to participate in INC-led civil disobedience movement of 1930 and were interred in large numbers. The MAI's platform was based on a united India, but one, which was free from imperial control, anti-feudal, with less economic disparities and had an Islamic system for the Muslims of India.

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### **Introduction**

A number of religio-political movements emerged from Punjab during the first half of the twentieth century. A study of the history, politics and social structure of Punjab is necessary in order to understand these movements. The Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam (MAI) was founded in 1929 in Lahore, and reflected a unique blend of religion and politics in the multi-cultural province of Punjab in British India. Its career raised and spawned both concerns and suspicions about its ideology and activism.

Until the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Punjabi peasants did not have any proprietary rights in land; as the community collectively constituted the proprietary unit. It was difficult to alienate land from the cultivator without the consent of the whole community. The communal terms, like 'individual rights', 'property', the 'purchasing power of money' and 'attachment and sale', were beyond the comprehension of cultivators.<sup>1</sup> The rural character of society was encouraged and fostered by giving proprietary rights to the peasants, and integrating the rural aristocracy into the administrative system. The British Legal System, which was based on Rivaj-i-Aam or Customary Laws, did not offend the religious or racial identities of people of Punjab, and provided agricultural classes with proprietary right in land, which was transferable. It gave a sense of security but at the same time was leading the Muslim peasantry

to indebtedness to the Hindu moneylenders. Within a decade of annexation, steps were taken to correct this situation under a new 'Punjab tradition'.<sup>2</sup> The Land Alienation Act of 1900 stopped transfer of land from agriculturalists to moneylenders, and the large-scale canal irrigation brought vast new areas under cultivation.

By 1920, Punjab had been ruled by the British for seventy years, which had brought about changes in the society at all levels. The introduction of western education, new revenue settlement and administrative system, the construction of canals, colonisation of canal-irrigated lands, and the development of railways, had led to major social changes. Once law and order had been established, the British instituted alliances with the rural elite, in order to strengthen their rule. While the presidencies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay helped to maintain trade and commerce, Punjab played the role of a 'grain basket' for the sub-continent, from the late 19th century onwards. Punjabi peasants were recruited in the army and police, in large numbers, which converted Punjab into the sword arm of India. Punjabi society in the early 20th century comprised of a predominantly rural population, which had been further consolidated with the irrigation schemes and land settlements.

The Muslim community in Punjab was founded on a kinship-based system, and in several cases lacked the strict caste-based divisions. The organisation of society depended upon tribal affiliations, and instead of social and economic factors, political allegiance underwrote tribal solidarity; whereas caste reflected only professional and social identity. Identical groups (Jats, Rajputs, Gujjars, Pashtuns, Sayeds, and Qureshis) represented different layers of classes of society, if one could literally use the barometer of such a classification for a rural setup.<sup>3</sup> The politico-administrative arrangements made by the new rulers, the economic changes brought about by their policies and measures, threw up a new middle class, which was more prosperous, literate, and influential than its predecessors. Gradually, this class assumed the leadership of Punjab in social, cultural and political matters. The possibility of participation in the politics of Punjab, kept these Punjabis active in society. The British, though neutral, thought in terms of religious communities. The leaders of this new middle class often reacted to the activities of Christian missionaries, and in a way, their interaction also defined their respective communal identity. The movements for reforms and revival sprang up in Punjab, the way they had been evolving in Bengal and the UP. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, all redefined their collectivities; which were based on their languages, traditions and cultures with Hindi, Urdu and English largely displacing Persian and Punjabi.

The Hunter Education Report of 1882 failed to attract Muslims towards modern western education in a significant way. The rural nature of their community, and a sense of political loss among the Muslim elite, engendered such alienation. They were in a phase of lamentation after losing political power to the British, and were not willing to accept the Hindu majority as equals. The government blamed Muslims for not educating themselves, without understanding, that, they could not afford the cost of modern education, as traditional madrasa education was free and in tune with their cultural and

religious values.<sup>4</sup> Reformation of the traditional Muslim instruction was also overdue, for without appropriate education, every opportunity, whether political or social, was foreclosed on the community.<sup>5</sup> It is not surprising that both the traditional revivalist and the modern reformist movements, sought in their own ways, mobilised Indian Muslims in their cultural and social pursuits.<sup>6</sup> The emergence of several Muslim political organisations from these cultural and educational movements is a complex process, which directly impacted the Muslim elite, *Ashraaf*.<sup>7</sup>

A new political chapter opened in Punjab in the early twentieth century and was dominated by leaders like Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1875-1938), Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928)<sup>8</sup>, Sir Muhammad Shafi (1869-1932)<sup>9</sup>, and Sir Fazl-i-Husain (1877-1936).<sup>10</sup> It was a new phase in agitational politics, and it began to impact on the people at large. These political stirrings resulted in the creation of political organisations, such as the MAI, Khaksars, Mahasabha, Unionist Party and Akali Dal.

### **Formation of the Party**

The Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam<sup>11</sup> was founded in Lahore on 29 December 1929.<sup>12</sup> The dominant group amongst its founders was the dissident Punjab section of the Khilafatists,<sup>13</sup> who were influenced by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1889-1958).<sup>14</sup> The Khilafat Movement was aimed at the preservation of the Ottoman Empire, which was the symbol of the unity of Ummah for the Muslims of India. In the wake of the Khilafat Movement, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had already started his Non-Cooperation Movement against the British government in India, by forming an alliance with the Ali Brothers and the ulama of *Farangimahal*.<sup>15</sup> The guiding spirit and the main financier behind the Central Khilafat Committee was Haji Mian Jan Muhammad Chotani (1873-1932), a businessman from Bombay. Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Shaikat Ali (1873-1938), Maulana Muhammad Ali (1878-1931), Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Dr. Mukhtar A. Ansari, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) and Saif-ud-Din Kichlew were some of the prominent leaders of this Pan-Islamic movement, which created a cadre of political workers tempered and trained in the art of agitation, strikes, mass meetings, processions and willing to be jailed in large numbers. After the Turkish victory and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, while the apprehensions about the independence of Turkey receded, their concerns about the fate of the Caliphate remained amongst the Muslims of South Asia. The Khilafat Movement suffered a setback when M. K. Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement in response to the riots in Kerala. The Khilafat Movement became a lost cause when Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the leader of the revolution in Turkey, abolished the Caliphate in 1924. One of the Khilafat leaders, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, issued a religious decree supporting the action of Ataturk, which the new Turkish government distributed in the form of leaflets.<sup>16</sup> The Muslim movements like Khudai Khidmatgars in the NWFP<sup>17</sup> and Khaksars in Punjab,<sup>18</sup> all came into being with the efforts of the former Khilafatists and pro-INC nationalists. To some extent, Muslims had to forget

their basic differences with the Hindus during the Khilafat Movement. For a short period of time, the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity was fostered by nationalists such as Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari (1880-1936), along with a group of ulama led by Abdul Bari Farangi Mahal (1878-1926).<sup>19</sup>

The primary reason for the formation of MAI was the dissension among the Khilafatists in Punjab. After the decline of the Khilafat Movement, the Punjabi Khilafatists had developed and maintained their autonomous identity within the All-India Khilafat Committee, and their critics denigrated them by referring to them as the Punjabi *toli*.<sup>20</sup> After the break with Maulana Shaukat Ali and the Central Khilafat Committee, the ex-Khilafatists from Punjab sought help and guidance from Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who advised that they should organise themselves into a regular political party. They had been together over the contentious issue of the Nehru Report, and had followed Azad in supporting it, unlike the Ali Brothers. The Punjab Khilafatists had been thinking of forming a new Muslim party for quite sometimes, but it was finally on Azad's 'suggestion and great insistence' that they laid the foundation of this new party, which eventually took the shape of the MAI.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Nehru Report and the MAI**

The Nehru Report of 1928 had brought dissensions between Azad and Ali Brothers into the open, and became a contentious issue between the Punjabi Khilafatists and the Central Khilafat Committee, which had been closely aligned with the INC. The Nehru Report<sup>22</sup> was a joint effort of Hindu and Muslim leaders of India to solve the problem of representation in India, and sought to paper over communal cleavages. It was the most radical document that the Indian nationalists had produced as a basis for the future constitution of India. The process of preparing the Report began towards the end of 1927, when the British Government, in pursuance of the India Act of 1919, had appointed a statutory commission to inquire into the working of the Act, and to offer further recommendations for a future Indian constitution. Sir John Simon chaired this Commission, which consisted of members of the British Parliament, but it had no Indian representation on it. The INC convened an All-Parties Conference to protest against the composition of this all-white Commission, and objected to its terms of reference. The Conference appointed its own committee with Motilal Nehru as the Chairman, and Jawaharlal Nehru as its Secretary.<sup>23</sup> The report that this committee prepared was ultimately known as the Nehru Report. Instead of full independence, the Report's stated goal was the achievement of a dominion status, with complete transfer of all the departments of the central government to a responsible Indian legislature. It suggested a unitary rather than a federal form of government. The Report turned down the Muslim demands for thirty-three percent representation in the central legislature and rejected the principle of separate electorates, which had been a long-standing Muslim demand. The Punjabi Khilafatists had not been in favour of a unitary system of government, and had wanted to establish a federation in India, based on provincial autonomy,<sup>24</sup> yet they signed the document during the All-Parties Conference in

Lucknow, despite their earlier reservations about joint electorates.<sup>25</sup> They even joined hands with the Indian nationalists in defending joint electorates as a means of resolving communitarian differences. The moral pressure of the nationalist leaders like Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sarojni Naidu, Maulana Azad, Lajpat Rai, Zafar Ali Khan and Mohammad Alam had persuaded the Punjab Khilafatists to accept joint electorates, and they dropped their reservations on these issues.<sup>26</sup>

Another reason for their acceptance of the Nehru Report was the adult franchise formula in the proposed text, which was agreed upon for the first time by all the three main communities of India. This formula was deemed to be a way-out of the deadlock among the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities. The Khilafatists realised that the clause of joint electorates would be unacceptable to the Sikhs, because by adopting this, they would become a permanent minority. The reason was, that except for certain areas in Punjab, they were already a minority in other British Indian provinces. The Khilafatists of Punjab believed that the Sikhs would never agree to the Nehru Report, while the Sikhs had similar expectations from the Muslim nationalists. The Report endangered the Muslim majority in Punjab and Bengal, as they were given less representation than their proportion in the population in these provinces.<sup>27</sup> The Sikhs like the Muslims were not happy with joint electorates and therefore did not support the Nehru Report. They feared that by opting for the Report, they would not be able to win a single seat in the Punjab, or in any other province.<sup>28</sup> This Report, however, ignored the Hindu-Muslim issues, and instead focused on an all-India political solution. It also failed to take into account several enduring Muslim grievances.

The central Khilafat leadership also disapproved of the Nehru Report, and gradually, the Punjab Khilafat Committee began to veer towards political isolation. The conflict between the Central and the Punjab Khilafat Committee over the Nehru Report brought out their differences over several other issues. Among these were the communal riots of 1927, King Ibn-i-Saud's policies in Arabia, and the audit report of the Central Khilafat Committee highlighting the issues of corruptions. The communal riots in Multan, Amritsar, Kohat and Lahore, caused enormous human loss, were seen in the context of religious and cultural differences, and economic and disparities between the Hindus and Muslims.<sup>29</sup> These riots proved a political blow for the nationalist cause in Punjab, mainly, Khilafatists, working on the basis of communal harmony. Prince Ibn-i-Saud had replaced Shariff Hussein of Mecca, and tried to promulgate Shariat in his kingdom. As a leader of the Ikhwan Movement, he believed in the preservation of Islam in its original puritanical form. He was encouraged a good deal by the Indian Khilafatists, who believed that he would be able to establish an Islamic Republic in Hijaz on the pattern of the early days of Islam.<sup>30</sup> But their expectations failed, when an Ikhwan leader ordered the removal of all the domed structures from the graves of Muslims held sacred by most Muslims. On the initiative of the Central Khilafat Committee, a delegation led by Maulana Muhammad Ali visited the Hijaz, to lobby against this action, but with no result. On his return, Muhammad Ali opposed Ibn-i-Saud's policies,

while Maulana Azad openly declared himself in favour of the new Saudi king.<sup>31</sup> Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri, the President of the Punjab Khilafat Committee, and other members of it also supported the reformist measures of the Arab Sultan, but differences continued to dog the Muslim leaders.

These differences also occurred due to the audit report of the Central Khilafat Committee Funds, which had resulted in the suspension of Haji Jan Muhammad Chotani, the President of All-India Khilafat Committee, since he was held responsible for the misuse of the Khilafat funds. In his account of the embezzlement issue, Afzal Haq had absolved Jan Muhammad Chotani of any offense and held Central Khilafat Committee responsible for the breach between the Central and Punjab Khilafat Committees. Individuals who had prepared this audit report were assumed to be the opponents of the Central Khilafat leadership like Maulana Mohammad Ali, although they were not Punjabi Khilafatists.<sup>32</sup> During the Calcutta session of the Central Khilafat Committee this 'conflict' between the rival groups of Maulana Mohammad Ali and Maulana Azad became more open, and the Ali Brothers declared the Punjab Khilafat Committee 'unconstitutional', because of its support of Azad. The upper group, or *tabqa-i-oula*, of the Committee, founded the Muslim Nationalist Party; whereas the lower group, or *tabqa-i-adna*, founded the Majlis-i-Ahrar.<sup>33</sup> The Punjab Khilafatists had their own grievances against the Ali Brothers.<sup>34</sup> The Calcutta session of the All-India Khilafat Committee broke into a tussle over the Nehru Report.<sup>35</sup> The leaders of the Punjab Khilafat Committee accepted the Report, but the Ali Brothers rejected it.<sup>36</sup>

The INC, after accepting the Nehru Report during its Calcutta Convention, had fixed 31 December 1929 as the deadline for the acceptance of its recommendations by the British government. The Punjab Khilafat leaders were actively opposing the Nehru Report, as they were generally in favour of separate electorates.<sup>37</sup> Punjabi nationalists tried their best to mobilise Muslims in favour of the Nehru Report, but could not attract large audiences to their public meetings.<sup>38</sup> At an all-India level, issues like Muslim opposition to the Sharda Act<sup>39</sup>, the boycott of Simon Commission and the Hindu-Muslim riots, had already broken the unity between the Hindu Congressites and Muslim nationalists.

### **The Birth of the MAI**

On 29 December 1929, the INC abandoned the Nehru Report at its 44th annual session in Lahore, and instead of dominion status, it demanded complete independence for India. The Punjabi nationalists, who later formed Majlis-i-Ahrar, accused the Congress leaders of not taking them into confidence, before they decided to abandon the Report.<sup>40</sup> This led to the disillusionment of the Muslim Punjabi nationalists with the INC, and they decided to concentrate on forming a new Muslim party. They began with a revolutionary agenda, which stipulated the expulsion of the imperial power from the country,<sup>41</sup> and argued that it was 'useless' to request the British Government or the Congress to grant

reforms, and concentrated on obtaining their freedom through their own struggle.<sup>42</sup>

The idea of forming a new Muslim party took practical shape in the pavilions of Lala Lajpat Rai Nagar, on the banks of River Ravi, a place specially designed for the 44th annual session of the INC in Lahore.<sup>43</sup> When the Muslim members from the Punjab finally left the Congress, they split into two parties. One group held a meeting over which Malik Laal Khan presided in the Hijazi building, outside the Delhi Gate, Lahore. Muhammad Alam, Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri, Mian Siraj Ahmad Piracha, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Malik Barkat Ali, and Shaikh Abdul Qadir attended this meeting. They formed the Muslim Nationalist Party, which eventually decided to work with the INC. The other group led by Afzal Haque, decided to get active from the platform of the Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam. Its leaders gathered at a place outside the Delhi Gate, where Afzal Haq (1893-1942) was designated as the patron-in-chief of the new party, and was deputed to finalise its objectives.<sup>44</sup> Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari (1891-1961) chaired this meeting. Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari was born in Patna (Bihar), where he received his early education in a madrasa, and was a member of the INC and the JUH. When the MAI evolved from an idea into an organisation on March 30 1930, it held its first public meeting at Islamia College in Lahore, under the presidency of Afzal Haq. In his address to this meeting, Ataullah Shah Bokhari urged Muslim youth to come forward and fight for the independence of their country.<sup>45</sup>

Soon after its formation, the MAI adopted a programme in which, amongst other things, it advocated separate electorates. The reason behind this change of policy was that they had lost hope and confidence in the Congress and the central Khilafat leadership. The Ahrar leaders had also realised during their campaign in support of the Nehru Report in Punjab, that despite exhortations from Syed Ataullah Shah, Shaikh Hissamuddin and Habib-ur-Rahman, the general response of the Muslim community to joint electorates had been negative.<sup>46</sup> Afzal Haq and others were now convinced that the joint electorate formula would not be acceptable to the Muslims of the Punjab, although earlier on, these leaders had been carried away by the Congress creed of nationalism.<sup>47</sup> The Khilafatists and Muslim nationalists began advocating separate electorates for Muslims. The propaganda and activities of '56 percent group' in the Punjab, also influenced Muslim thinking. Lal Din Kaiser, a young Punjabi journalist, headed this group, which had raised the issue of Muslim representation in the Punjab. They had argued that 56% Muslim inhabitants in the province must be given proportionate representation based on their population ratio. The MAI accused the editor of *Inqilab*, Abdul Majid Salik, of getting financial support for his paper from Mian Fazl-i Husain, and giving the MAI reduced coverage.<sup>48</sup>

According to a member and chronicler of the MAI, the Party aimed at eradicating the "darkness of imperialism and feudalism", which had developed and flourished under the hegemonic colonial power.<sup>49</sup> It offered a platform from where they could raise the issues concerning Muslims of India, though the focus of reformation remained on the Punjab.<sup>50</sup> Amongst the other Party objectives were complete independence for India, better relations among different Indian

communities, establishment of an Islamic system for the Muslims in the country, and the socio-economic development of India, with special emphasis on the well-being of the Muslim community.<sup>51</sup> The MAI stood for equal distribution of wealth, eradication of untouchability, respect for every religion, and freedom to live according to Sharia. Ataulah Shah Bokhari, in his presidential address at the inaugural session, invited the Muslim masses to cooperate with the MAI in its struggle to safeguard the rights of the Muslims through separate electorates, and the medium of a separate religious organization. Urdu newspapers like *Inqilab* and *Zamindar* of Lahore, identified the Ahrar leaders with INC, although the two parties had parted ways on the issue of the Nehru Report. *Zamindar* welcomed the new party as a fruition of a strong desire to have a central Muslim organization, which would raise the political consciousness of the community, and mobilise it for the attainment of independence from foreign yoke. *Zamindar* even suggested changing the name of Majlis-i-Ahrar to Majlis-i-Watan-i-Islamiyya.<sup>52</sup>

### Component Elements

The prominent founders of the MAI, who were also involved in drafting its initial program were Afzal Haq, Syed Ataulah Shah Bokhari, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana Daud Ghaznavi, Ghazi Abdul Rahman and Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar. Most of them hailed from the Punjab, and had been active in various movements, particularly the Khilafat movement. At its inaugural session, Syed Ataulah Shah and Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar were elected as President and General Secretary respectively of the Majlis.<sup>53</sup> The MAI attracted diverse groups to its ranks, drawn mainly from the educated lower and middle classes; small shopkeepers, artisans, and urban Muslim youth, who had been inspired by the Khilafatists and religious scholars. However, many of those who joined the MAI were inclined towards the Deobandi school of thought.<sup>54</sup> Although the MAI leaders shared the same doctrinal orientation that emphasised the study of law and of the traditions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, but they also inherited a reformist ideology, quite opposed to the prevalent popular Muslim beliefs and practices. They kept a distance from other doctrinal groups like the Barelwis, Ahl-i-Hadith and Shias. Ataulah Shah Bokhari, a prominent leader of the MAI, was given the title of *Amir-i-Shariat* at an annual meeting of ulama in March 1930, which was presided over by Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri, in the presence of almost three hundred ulama.<sup>55</sup>

Some of the leaders and workers mentioned above came into the MAI via the Khilafat movement, and had been actively associated with the INC. These groups had participated in all INC political campaigns, especially the Non-Cooperation movement in the post-War era. They had acquired considerable political experience, organisational and mobilising skills; and by using their oratorical gifts, could easily stir up emotions at public meetings. The second important group of people in the MAI was that of the ulama and workers belonging to the Deobandi school of thought. These ulama had emerged as a new political force during the Khilafat Movement, and claimed the right to lead



Muslims in politics. The result was the infusion of religion into politics. These traditionally educated Muslim religious scholars had existed in Muslim societies for over a thousand years, and played an increasingly important role in Indian politics. Their transformation, discourse and religio-political activism were important for the recent history of the Muslim community in India.<sup>56</sup> Their political aspirations had led them to establish their own party, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind (hereafter JUH) in 1919; which had turned into an anti-colonial organisation of the Deobandi ulama, who followed pro-INC policies.<sup>57</sup>

As a matter of fact, the Khilafatists in Punjab were split into three main factions; those who joined the AIML, those who took refuge in the INC programme, whereas the third consisted of those who had formed the MAI.<sup>58</sup> Another important component of the MAI was a group of the INC Muslim leaders, who were disenchanted with the communalism pervasive within the INC, and felt a need for a new political identity.<sup>59</sup> That is why the MAI used slogans that related only to 'Muslim issues'. Their membership included those people who had lost hope both in the INC and the AIML, and were radically opposed to the British imperial presence in the sub-continent. Led by idealists and individuals with humble economic backgrounds, the MAI's politics were influenced by the INC, while representing Islamic particularism in its religious outlook. The party succeeded in creating a tumult in the British India, especially in the Punjab, where it functioned as an anti-feudal group, and preached Sunni Islam. Punjab remained the main centre of its activities, with Lahore as its headquarters; whereas the Party's main office was situated outside the Delhi Gate. The Party had its branch offices in Amritsar, Delhi, Peshawar, Bahawalpur State and Lucknow. Although the Party's following and influence were mainly confined to Punjab and the NWFP, yet the intensity of its campaigns had an impact on other areas as well.

### **The MAI and the Civil Disobedience Movement**

Before the various tiers of the Party could be organized into a single, homogenous strand, the MAI leaders decided to participate in the civil disobedience movement launched by the INC in 1930. Consequently, they could not devote time to organising the Party till the following year. The MAI had a band of dedicated leaders who were Islamists in their orientation, but also believed in the fundamental unity of India. The Party thus aligned itself with the INC, and subscribed to the INC-led nationalism against the Raj.<sup>60</sup> When the INC had abandoned the Nehru Report at its Lahore session, it had adopted 'complete independence' as its 'ultimate goal', which was closer to the MAI's position.<sup>61</sup> The MAI leaders tried to convince a section of the Deobandi ulama to join the civil disobedience movement of the INC, but they had become divided as a response to the Nehru Report. One faction led by Hussain Ahmad Madni (1879-1957),<sup>62</sup> was cooperating with the Congress; the other led by Shabir Ahmad Usmani and Ashraf Ali Thanavi, had dissociated itself from the civil disobedience movement, because it was in favour of Muslim separatism.<sup>63</sup> Ahmad Saeed Delhvi, the General Secretary of the JUH, tried to unite all

Muslim nationalists on the platform of the civil disobedience movement.<sup>64</sup> During its Amroha session under the presidency of Maulana Moeen-ud-Din Ajmeri, the JUH adopted the 'Complete Independence Resolution' as its policy on 3 May 1930 and resolved to cooperate with the INC. The MAI leaders, and in particular Ataullah Shah Bokhari, the President of MAI, exerted influence from behind the scenes; and in parleys lasting for seventeen hours, convinced the ulama to support the Congress.<sup>65</sup> The MAI's decision to join the Civil Disobedience Movement, established their own anti-colonial credentials. With their training as Khilafatists, they were willing to forge alliances with every other political force arrayed against the alien rulers. When the INC decided to commemorate the 26th of January 1930, as 'Independence Day',<sup>66</sup> the MAI actively participated in all the events.<sup>67</sup> When Gandhi, accompanied by seventy-eight followers, marched to Dandi (Gujarat) on 5 April 1930, and broke the salt law, the MAI leaders and workers joined hands with the INC in a shared defiance of the government's laws, and supported his call for the celebration of a "national week".<sup>68</sup> They picketed the liquor shops, opium dens and foreign cloth dealers' shops on moral and political grounds.<sup>69</sup> The MAI leaders supported and encouraged people who were willing to leave government schools, colleges and jobs.<sup>70</sup> Some legislators resigned from their seats, whereas hundreds of office workers left their jobs. The Ahrar leaders toured towns and villages of Punjab to promote anti-colonial ideas and rally people against the Raj.<sup>71</sup> As a result of their campaign, people began to use locally-made *khaddar* instead of foreign cloth, and denounced the industrial exploitation of India.

The Punjab Government declared the Congress Working Committee illegal, and arrested its top leadership in June, 1930.<sup>72</sup> The new cadre that replaced it and emerged on the Indian political scene, included among its leaders Afzal Haq, who occupied a prominent place in the movement. At this stage, the MAI's support for the Congress movement was steadfast, and many of its leaders and workers courted arrest.<sup>73</sup> Ataullah Shah Bokhari was arrested from Dinajpur, Bengal, while Habib-ur-Rahman Ludhianavi, a leading Ahrari, undertook to make salt and defy the law.<sup>74</sup> The police resorted to a lathi-charge to disperse the Congress rally he was addressing in Ludhiana, and injured several people. Habib-ur-Rahman was put behind bars for one year because he declared:

"I consider the British Government a foreign government. I consider it my duty to expel the British and win freedom for our country. For this, whatever punishment we are given, shall be accepted gladly. So it is the duty of all Indians to boycott British goods and to make the running of the country impossible".<sup>75</sup>

After his arrest, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad nominated Afzal Haq, a member of the Congress Working Committee, as the de-facto leader of the movement.<sup>76</sup> Afzal Haq gave call for a public meeting in Delhi, and was also arrested.<sup>77</sup> Haq was not released until June 1931, while other Ahrar leaders, including Mazhar Ali Azhar, Sheikh Hissamuddin and Daud Ghaznavi, were also arrested during the campaign.<sup>78</sup>

### **Farewell to the Disobedience Movement and the INC**

After the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931, the British Government released all the political prisoners except for Habib-ur-Rahman Ludhianwi, who was released a month later. This was done to create a conducive atmosphere for the second Round Table Conference; a series of negotiations between the British and the Indian politicians on the political impasse.<sup>79</sup> The INC held its annual session in Karachi in March 1931; but the phase of accommodation between the Muslim nationalists and the INC seemed to have ended. The Muslim members from Punjab felt disillusioned with the INC, because of its indifference to the aspirations of Muslims. The MAI had another reason to feel frustrated at the Karachi session; Afzal Haq from Punjab was not nominated to the INC Working Committee, and instead Doctor Muhammad Alam was, on the recommendation of Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri. During the same session, the Chair turned down Zafar Ali Khan's request for adjournment of the session for prayer. He was told, that his right of vote would be forfeited, if he left the meeting. When he tried to move his case in the Subjects Committee on the basis of his privilege as a member, it was again rejected.<sup>80</sup> The Muslim press took up this issue as an anti-Muslim gesture.<sup>81</sup> Zafar Ali Khan dubbed the INC as a Hindu party, and declared that he would boycott its future proceedings.<sup>82</sup> Other contemporary developments also added to the Ahrar frustration. Firstly, the Ahrar candidates in the district Congress elections in Ludhiana and Amritsar, lost to their rivals. Even Ghazi Abdul Rahman, once a close associate of Gandhi, was defeated.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, Syed Ataullah Shah and Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman had advised Gandhi not to participate in the Round Table Conference in London, and especially travelled to Bombay for this purpose, but to no avail.<sup>84</sup> The indifference of the INC leadership towards Ahrar, made them bitter and frustrated. Lastly, the Hindu nationalists in Punjab launched a campaign against the MAI, accusing them of communalism, since the latter had reverted to the demand for separate electorates for Muslims.

### **Reorganisation of the MAI**

After the Karachi INC session in 1931,<sup>85</sup> Afzal Haq resigned from the Punjab Congress and devoted his energies to the MAI.<sup>86</sup> Along with Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari, Sheikh Hissamuddin, Habib-ur-Rahman, Mazhar Ali Azhar, Syed Daud Ghaznavi and Khawaja Abdul Rahman Ghazi, Haq took steps to reactivate the MAI, which had been dormant since the starting of the non-Cooperation Movement in 1930.<sup>87</sup> Finally, in a public meeting in June 1931, under the chairmanship of Ataullah Shah Bokhari, they decided to reorganise their party.<sup>88</sup> About seven thousand attended this meeting in Lahore where the party's branch was formally established; and the establishment of similar branches in other cities of Punjab, NWFP and Sindh followed.<sup>89</sup> The MAI planned a political conference for July 1931 in Lahore, to highlight its objectives; and constituted a reception committee consisting of Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar as its chair, and Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana Ahmad Ali

Lahori, Maulana Abdullah and Ghulam Murshad as members.<sup>90</sup> The MAI elected Habib-ur-Rahman as its President, and Maulana Daud Ghaznavi as the General Secretary. In the same year, the first working committee of MAI was formed, and its nine members included Afzal Haq (Hushiarpur), Abdul Aziz Begowal (Kapurthala State), Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman (Ludhiana), Ataullah Shah Bokhari (Gujarat), Shaikh Hissamuddin (Amritsar), Maulana Daud Ghaznavi (Amritsar), Mazhar Ali Azhar (Batala), Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad and Master Shafi (Lahore).<sup>91</sup> The reception committee decided to send invitation letters for the political conference to all the prominent political leaders, including M K Gandhi. *Inqilab* in its editorial suggested a few objectives for the planned political conference; this mentioned separate electorates for Muslims and the need for a separate Muslim political identity within India.<sup>92</sup>

The first political conference held under the auspices of MAI on 12-13 July 1931, was a spectacular rally of Muslim nationalists, and the formal launch of their Party. Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman Ludhianwi reached Lahore on 10 July 1931 for this conference, following his release from the Gujarat jail.<sup>93</sup> A large number of disillusioned Punjabi Muslims from the INC and AIML, accompanied by Afzal Haq, received him at the railway station, with about fifty red shirted volunteers carrying the new red Ahrar flag with an embroidered crescent.<sup>94</sup> The Punjab government suspected that the reactivation of the Ahrar had the INC support, but it was a misperception; the MAI had not supported the INC on the issue of joint electorates, although it did have some other common objectives. Afzal Haq, in a letter to Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari (1880-1936) on 1 June 1931, suggested, that after the introduction of adult franchise, the formula of joint electorates was not acceptable in the Punjab. Haq also lamented the indifference of Indian nationalist Muslims towards the nationalist Muslims of Punjab, who were compelled to quit the INC.<sup>95</sup> Earlier, in June 1931, the Muslim press had suggested to the Ahrar leaders that they should opt for separate electorates, in order to save the political identity of the Muslims of British India.<sup>96</sup>

The venue for the political conference was the Habibia Hall of Islamia College, Lahore; almost six hundred delegates attended the Conference, which had four sessions spread over two days.<sup>97</sup> In his inaugural speech, Mazhar Ali Azhar reiterated the Party's commitment to the rights of the poor, and criticised the British capitalist system, which, he argued, only oppressed the underprivileged.<sup>98</sup> He focused on the deplorable state of the Muslim middle class, the backbone of Indian society, while demanding equal opportunities for the working classes, so that they could have a better existence.<sup>99</sup> He informed the delegates, that the MAI would carry on its struggle for independence of the country from the British, and protect the poor from exploitation. The new President of the MAI, Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman, stressed the need to organise farmers and labourers of the country.<sup>100</sup> He declared:

“I want to tell all the communities of Hindustan in clear words that, the Ahrar do not want injustice done to any other community, but, at the same time, the Muslims are not prepared to live as a scheduled caste in India. They are equally entitled to have a share

in Indian affairs. They will essentially be equal partners in the Indian Government".<sup>101</sup>

He expressed pride in his association with the INC, but remained apprehensive of a possible scenario whereby in a post-independence India, the Muslim community might suffer at the hands of the Hindu capitalists. His views reflected the symbiotic relationship between the INC and the MAI.

During the same session, Sahibzada Faiz-ul-Hasan also delivered a speech on 'Islam and Socialism'; and observed that socialism was in accordance with the Islamic concept of *musawat*. The unjust distribution of wealth, he argued, was the root-cause of all the maladies and social inequalities. He claimed that 'socialism was a reformist ideology, that had been worked out after thorough research; it was better than capitalism, fascism and other ideologies, and would ameliorate the condition of the poor'. According to Faiz-ul-Hasan, socialism was not yet totally scientific, and the discussion of its merits and demerits had only been theoretical so far. However, he demanded an equal distribution of wealth and resources among the people.<sup>102</sup> Sheikh Hissamuddin discussed the economic backwardness of Muslims, and exhorted them to work towards material progress and social uplift. In the four sessions of the conference, several topics were discussed, including British policy in the NWFP, and the treatment of Muslims in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. For the first time, Muslim nationalists from the Punjab were beginning to sound communal. The MAI also held an open-air meeting for "the bitter condemnation of the fetish of untouchability".<sup>103</sup> Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar moved the most important resolution in the concluding session,<sup>104</sup> which demanded "the retention of separate electorate until the Hindus abandoned their negative attitude towards the Muslims".<sup>105</sup> Afzal Haq and Hissamuddin seconded the resolution, and an overwhelming majority of the delegates passed it; only ten votes were cast against it. The MAI decided to send deputations all over the province to spread its message, in addition to forming a cadre of 10,000 volunteers to launch a fund-raising campaign. The general expectations were that the urban Muslims would use this party "as a stepping stone to power", and therefore the government functionaries observed it closely.<sup>106</sup> The Ahrar leaders toured Punjab, and the public responded positively to their exhortations and appeals for funds.<sup>107</sup> On 6 August 1931, the Ludhiana Majlis-i- Ahrar held a meeting of 1,500 participants, in which a large number of Hindus and Sikhs were also reported to have participated. Ataullah Shah Bokhari presided over the meeting, and justified the MAI's support of joint electorates in the Nehru Report.<sup>108</sup>

### **The Maclagan Engineering College Agitation and the MAI**

The Maclagan Engineering College was a professional college located in Lahore, which imparted science education to young men in Punjab. The trouble arose when a series of articles were published in the *Muslim Outlook*, Lahore, criticising Captain Whittaker, the Principal of the College, and his

administration.<sup>109</sup> The Principal was accused of using words and expressions regarded as offensive by the Muslim community. The Principal responded by suspending the faculty member, who was allegedly behind the publication of these articles in the local press. A delegation of Muslim students met the Principal on 13 May 1931, and tried to convince the Principal to reverse his decision. During this meeting, Whittaker openly expressed his contempt for the Muslim community, and declared himself to be a staunch opponent of Islam.<sup>110</sup> The students contacted the Muslim press and provincial leaders like Allama Iqbal, to take notice of his derogatory remarks and behaviour towards Muslims. On 28 May 1931, fifty-nine Muslim students went on strike, alleging that the principal was “inconsiderate to their demands”.<sup>111</sup> On the same day, the Muslim students of the Rasul Engineering College also went on strike against their Hindu principal. This strike was, however, subsequently settled without any serious trouble. Almost all the Muslim anjumans and newspapers protested against the discrimination meted out to Muslim students and teachers in Maclagan Engineering college.<sup>112</sup> Considerable resentment against the principal was building up amongst the urban Muslim circles, who demanded an official apology from him.<sup>113</sup> Telegrams were sent to the ministers for education, revenue, agriculture, local government and other important officials of the Punjab government. A meeting of prominent Muslims was arranged at Allama Iqbal’s residence, in which the striking students also participated.<sup>114</sup> When the MAI announced the launching of a movement against the Principal, Muslim press supported and encouraged the initiative.<sup>115</sup> The MAI joined the maelstrom, and gained considerable public support, and transformed the rally into a political protest against the Punjab government. An official committee was appointed to enquire into the issue on 19 June 1931.<sup>116</sup> The Punjab government published a communiqué on 31 August, summarising the Report of the Committee; which said that the remarks made by Whittaker, even if not intended to offend, were capable of being misconstrued. It was further decided that the striking students would be re-admitted, but prior to their readmission, they would express regret for their actions. The entire episode helped the MAI in making its political presence felt in Lahore.

### **Role of MAI in the Agitation**

The MAI took up the issue on 9 September 1931, and stepped in to protest against the Report, and the retention of the principal. Muhammad Daud Ghaznavi called for a public meeting outside Mochigate Lahore, on 11 September.<sup>117</sup> It was addressed by Ataullah Shah Bokhari, Ahmed Ali Lahori and Lal Din Kaiser, who advised the students not to appear in the entrance examination scheduled for 17 September. Enthusiasm was again whipped up at a large rally on 15 September, and the following day picketing took place, which resulted in some disorderly scenes. These were repeated again on 17 September.<sup>118</sup> The MAI also invited *jathas* from other towns of Punjab for the purpose of picketing. After a *lathi* charge to disperse the crowd, Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari, Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman and Ghulam Murshad were arrested

by the police.<sup>119</sup> On 2 September 1931, a deputation, which included Mazhar Ali Azhar, went to Simla for negotiations with the Punjab government. It was agreed that the striking students would return after submitting a written apology, and that all cases registered against persons involved in the agitation would also be withdrawn. This agreement brought the agitation to a close, although Whittaker was allowed to continue as the Principal. However, the incident served to increase the prestige of Ahrar, whose influence in urban areas had increased significantly.

### **Conclusion**

The British annexed Punjab in 1849, and established a new system of administration in form and spirit. They also introduced western education, canal colonies and a modern system of transportation, which had its impact on the urban population. In rural Punjab they collaborated with the landlords and feudal elite to get their support in strengthening the province as 'grain basket' for the British Army. The MAI was an urban Muslim organisation, comprised of ex-Khilafatists, trained in agitational politics during the period 1919-1929, many of whom were ex-Congressites. Ahrar leaders split with the INC over the issue of the Nehru Report in 1929. Soon after the formation of the new party, they decided to participate in INC-led civil disobedience movement of 1930 and were interred in large numbers. The MAI's platform was based on a united India, but one, which was free from imperial control, anti-feudal, with less economic disparities and had an Islamic system for the Muslims of India.

This was followed by similar ventures on the human rights situation in other princely states such as Alwar and Kapurthala. Until 1934, the MAI enjoyed its unprecedented popular image as an eminent Muslim party in Punjab, which was soon engaged in a vigorous anti-Ahmadi campaign in Punjab. The Ahrar political conference in Qadian in 1934 opened a new chapter of sectarianism in the subcontinent, which helped the MAI to establish its credentials as the mainstream Muslim body. Their exclusionary approach on the issue of the finality of the Prophet-hood, attracted several members and sympathisers from among other Muslim political parties. This included the Unionist Party, a potential rival within the province.

After gaining appreciation from various Muslim quarters, the MAI tried to cash in on their popularity in the legislatures. They participated in the provincial and central legislative elections during 1933 (bye-election), 1934, 1937 and 1945-6. Their smaller representation proved their inability to work more effectively within the legislative domains of British India, and they began to prefer agitational politics. Muslims regarded the issue of Shahidganj Mosque/Gurdwara, as the litmus test for the MAI. However, the party leadership avoided launching an instant campaign, which disappointed the Muslim community. Their opponents, in order to damage their popularity, amongst the Muslims as a result of their support of the Kashmiris and Meos, exploited their reluctance to participate in the Shahidganj campaign. Although they subsequently launched a campaign for the restoration of the Shahidganj

Mosque; but were never able to regain their erstwhile popularity. They participated in the relief efforts for the victims of the Quetta earthquake and Bengal famine, which helped them sustain their humane image. Their leaders, in their personal capacity, tried to work for the social causes affecting the Muslim community, but owing to financial constraints and weaker organizational structure, they could not accomplish much. The party believed in, and actively participated in agitational politics and found another opportunity to show their strength during the recruitment campaign launched by the Chief Minister of Punjab, Sir Sikandar Hayat, on the eve of the Second World War. The MAI decided to oppose it by launching an anti-recruitment movement within Punjab and, as a consequence, the party leadership courted arrest, while pursuing civil disobedience in protest against the Defence of Army Bill.<sup>120</sup> Almost 11,000 volunteers were arrested in the party's last-ditch effort to destabilise the British Government. That was the first time that the party had extended its campaign into the remotest areas of the Punjab. By early 1940, most of the Ahrar leaders were in jail, and the party was in disarray. The death of Afzal Haq also weakened it. When the Ahrars were released in 1943, the MAI launched Hukumat-i-Ilahiya scheme as an alternative to the demand for Pakistan, which did not attract many supporters. The Ahrar leader's espousal of unitary nationalism as the only solution of the Indian constitutional problem resulted in their progressive isolation.<sup>121</sup> Although they participated in the elections of 1945-46, but got only one seat; the AIML swept the polls to the central and provincial Assemblies. The party was divided on the eve of Partition, one for India and the other for Pakistan. It showed some activism in the anti-Ahmadi campaign of the 1950s, but could not gain its pre-Partition strength.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>S. S. Thorburn, *The Mussalmans and the Moneylenders in the Punjab* (Edinburgh : W. Blackwood, 1886), p. 49, cited in S M Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan: 1858-1951* (Lahore: Shaikh M. Ashraf, 1970) p. 194.

<sup>2</sup>“After the annexation of Punjab in 1849, Arthur Brandreth, and John Maynard, the ICS officers, worked in different districts of Punjab, and highlighted the issues of voluntary transferring of agricultural landholdings and indebtedness. In succeeding years they criticised the rigidness of the British Legal system and raised the economic objections on legal measures taken to restrict the alienation of land. In 20th century India it was the ‘social influences’ which shaped that particular version of the British political tradition, which came to prevail in the Punjab”. See P. H. M. van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition* (London: George Allan & Unwin, 1972), p. 299.

<sup>3</sup>The towns grew only very slowly during the century of the British rule. At its close, the vast majority of Punjabis still lived in the countryside. Traditional rural customs and values lay just beneath the veneer of urban sophistication and



culture, but the urban economic and educational advance during British rule led to an increasing gulf between their religious and social outlook, and those of the rural communities. Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p.15.

<sup>4</sup>The Punjab government in an Inquiry Report asked the Anjuman-i-Punjab, why did the Muslim community not avail facilities extended by the government. The majority observed, that “being tradesmen, they were averse to higher education”. Zarina Salamat, *The Punjab in the 1920s*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization* (New Delhi: OUP, 1999), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>David Page, *Prelude to Partition: the Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-1932* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup>Sir Syed Ahmad Khan’s Aligarh movement began as a drive for an improved vernacular education and always “retained a strong attachment to Urdu as a lingua franca for the Muslim community. Aligarh was also the centre of English education for the North Indian Muslim elite ...It aimed at producing a cadre of Muslims who would ultimately lead the entire community toward modern education, social reform, and renewed political power. Another, more traditional movement was begun by the ulama. Such institutions like Deoband School were founded to reform Muslim education and society from within, rather than adopting English education and infidel culture which accompanied it.” See Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup>See Shyamnandan Shahi, *Lala Lajpat Rai: His Life and Thought* (New Delhi: Chanakya Publication, 1986).

<sup>9</sup>He was a member of Imperial Legislative Council (1912), and a Punjabi politician from Baghbanpura locality of Lahore. He was first General Secretary of Punjab Muslim League and participated in all three sessions of Round Table Conference (1930-1932). He was the President of Muslim League for a short while in 1928. See Hafeez Malik, Yuri V. Gankovsky (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 249.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* He was a politician and remained a member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly (1920), and was nominated as minister for education in Punjab in 1920, and on the Viceroy’s Executive Council during the 1930-1935 period. He was a member of Indian delegation to the League of Nations, and a delegate to Round Table Conference in 1930s. He remained a Vice President on the Governor-General’s Council (1934).

<sup>11</sup>‘Ahrar’ is a plural of ‘hur’, meaning a free or an independent person. Various forms of this word were used during the Khilafat Movement; such as hurriyat (freedom) and leader of freemen (rais-ul-ahrar), a prefix that was used for Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar. The Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam, (trl. League or Committee of Free Men) reflected the quest of Muslim community in British India for a political identity. Maulvi Feroz-ud-Din (ed.), *Feroz-ul-Lughat* (Rawalpindi: Ferozsons, 1973) p. 518.

<sup>12</sup>*Inqilab* (Lahore), 14 January 1930; *SPPAI*, 8 August 1931, vol. 2, pp. 498-99; Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar* (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Tabsra, 1968), pp. 25, 71, 91;

also see M. Rafique Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan, 1947-1958*, vol. 1 (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1986).

<sup>13</sup>The Khilafat Movement was the first mass movement of Indian Muslims to be directed against the British rule in India. As soon as it became apparent that Germany, along with its ally the Turkish Ottoman Empire, would lose the First World War, Indian Muslims became apprehensive about the fate of the Sultan of Turkey who was also the Caliph the spiritual head of the Muslims. The agitation in India became pronounced with the imposition of the Treaty of Sevres (1920), which was harsh and rejected by Turkey. Ever since Indian Muslims had been deprived of political power, the Khilafat had served as a symbolic reminder of past greatness, and its survival a matter of deep sentimental concern. Hafeez Malik, Yuri V. Gankovsky, *The Encyclopedia of Pakistan*, p. 151.

<sup>14</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup>Abdul Bari Farangi Mahal, one of the ulama, who founded the Madrasa Nizamia in Lucknow in 1908, supported by donations from his disciples and Shi'a magnates like Mahmoodabad and Rampur. He took part in Muslim politics in India, and was elected the first-ever president of Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind in 1919. *SPPAI*, 1 February 1919, vol. 12, no. 5, p. 33.

<sup>16</sup>See Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, *Islamic Seal on India's Independence: Abul Kalam Azad-A Fresh Look* (Karachi: OUP, 1998).

<sup>17</sup>See Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the Northwest Frontier Province 1937-47* (Karachi: OUP, 1999).

<sup>18</sup>See Muhammad Aslam Malik, *Allama Inayatullah Mashraqi: A Political Biography* (Karachi: OUP, 2000).

<sup>19</sup>The UP Muslim elites were distributed into different groups like Sunnis, Shi'as, Barelwis and Deobandis. The differences within the influential Farangi Mahal, or divisions between modernists and traditionalists, or generational differences between the 'Old Party' and the 'Young Party'; added to controversy. They united on issues like the Aligarh University, language controversy, wakf, the Cawnpore Mosque dispute, and other Pan-Islamic issues, but only for a short time. They were engaged in defining the ever-changing relationship with the colonial state. For a detailed study of different phases of Muslim politics in British India see Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of Muslims in United Provinces, 1860-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Also see Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1926-1928* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1979).

<sup>20</sup>Clique. Members of the 'Punjabi toli' included Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri, Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman, Afzal Haq, Ataullah Shah Bokhari and Abdur Rahman Ghazi. See Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, pp.13, 25, 27, and 71.

<sup>21</sup>See Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup>For complete text and discussion on Nehru Report see David Page, *Prelude to Partition: the Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-1932* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 162-174, Chaudhry Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan* (Lahore: Longman, 1961), pp. 101-104.

<sup>23</sup>Other members of the committee were M S Aney, M R Jayakar, G R Pardhan, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M N Joshi, Mangal Singh, Ali Imam and Shoaib Qureshi.

<sup>24</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>For more on Jawahar Lal Nehru, see Stanley Wolpert, *Nehru: A Tryst With Destiny* (Oxford: OUP, 1996); also see Katherine Frank, *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (London: Harper and Collins, 2001).

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>See Sandria B Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public arenas and Emergence of Communalism, 1870-1940* (California: University of California Press, 1979), also, see Gyanandara Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: OUP, 1971).

<sup>30</sup>M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics* (London: Brill, 1999), p. 397.

<sup>31</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 81.

<sup>32</sup>Afzal Haq held the breach between the central and provincial Khilafat committees to be a result of infighting and not of embezzlement. *Inqilab*, 14 Jan 1930.

<sup>33</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, pp. 69-71.

<sup>34</sup>Maulana Muhammad Ali tried to keep the Khilafat issue alive up to the time of his death. His views on Khilafat remained unchanged despite the Kemalist abolition of the Khilafat. See Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 68.

<sup>35</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar* (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Tabsra, 1968), vol. 1, p. 80.

<sup>36</sup>Afzal Haq and Janbaaz Mirza the pioneer and official biographer of the MAI, equally justify the view of dissolution of Punjab Khilafat Committee, but Ashraf Ata viewed that the Punjabi toli, as the Ali Brothers called it, genuinely followed and believed in the person and vision of Abul Kalam Azad. Ashraf Ata, *Kuchh Shkistaa Daastanain: Kuchh Pareshan Tazkaray* (Lahore; Sindh Sagar Academy, 1966), p. 52.

<sup>37</sup>Allama Muhammad Iqbal argued at public gatherings that the Nehru Report and its proposed formula of joint electorates would negatively affect the Muslim majority areas of Punjab and Bengal. Generally, Muslim popular opinion was against the proposals of the Nehru Report in the Punjab. Indian Muslims would become more vulnerable in a state dominated by a non-Muslim majority. Apprehensive of such disadvantages, some of these Muslim leaders soon called for the creation of a separate Muslim state. For detail discussion, see Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>38</sup>Ashraf Ata, *Kuchh Shkistaa Daastanain Kuchh Pareshan Tazkaray*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>39</sup> The Sharda Act fixed a minimum age for a girl's marriage. The Muslim community regards it as interference in their religion.

<sup>40</sup> Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, pp. 80-2.

<sup>41</sup> First presidential address of Ataullah Shah Bokhari, *SPPAI*, 4 January 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 28 and Janbaaz Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 82.

<sup>42</sup> *SPPAI*, 4 January 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> *SPPAI*, 4 June 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 32; and Akbar Zaidi et al, *India Demands Independence*, in *The Encyclopedia of the Indian National Congress*, vol. 9, 1925-1928 (ed.) (Delhi: Chand & Company, 1980), p. 562.

<sup>44</sup> *Indian Annual Register*, vol. 1, January-June 1930, no. 1, 2 (Calcutta: 1919), p. 3. In his presidential address, Afzal Haq urged Muslims not to lag behind Hindus in the struggle for freedom, and criticised the Ali Brothers for their desertion of Mahatma Gandhi. A resolution was passed appealing to Muslims to join the Congress because it had now declared complete independence as its goal. *SPPAI*, 4 January 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 28.

<sup>45</sup> A Party pamphlet, Hafiz Ahmad Muawiya, *Pasmanzar Peshmanzar* (Lahore: Majlis-Ahrar Pakistan, 1996), p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ashraf Ata, *Kuchh Shikista Daastanain*, pp. 58- 64.

<sup>47</sup> Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 72-73.

<sup>48</sup> This group demanded 56 percent representation for Muslims in the Punjab, on the basis of population.

<sup>49</sup> Afzal Haq was called the 'mufakkir-i-Ahrar' (Ahrar ideologue), and his colleagues referred to the party as a "party of poor folks". Janbaaz Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. I, p. 82.

<sup>50</sup> According to an official source "it was decided to take steps to arouse the Muslim masses with a view to securing independence". *SPPAI*, 14 June 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 32.

<sup>51</sup> Ikram Ali Malik (ed.), *A Book Of Readings on the History of Punjab 1799-1947* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1970), pp. 557-561; K. K. Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992), p. 133.

<sup>52</sup> *Zamindar* (Lahore), 6 January 1930.

<sup>53</sup> K. K. Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India*, p. 133, Janbaaz Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 141.

<sup>54</sup> For history of the Deoband School, see Zia-ul-Hasan Faruqi, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (Bombay: Asia Publishers, 1963). Thousands of other madrasas, even if these are not affiliated with Deoband, are called Deobandi. Also see Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1867-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>55</sup> Shorish Kashmiri, *Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari: Sawaneh-o-Afkar* (Urdu), (Lahore: Chattan, 1978), p. 272.

<sup>56</sup> For a detailed discussion see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Karachi: OUP, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism And Political Mobilization In India* (OUP: New Delhi, 1982), p. 212.

<sup>58</sup>W. C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (Delhi: Usha Publications, 1946), p. 270.

<sup>59</sup>On 17 April 1937, in his presidential address at the Ahrar Political Conference in Lucknow, Mazhar Ali Azhar spoke on 'Congress and Ahrar'. He admitted that during the civil disobedience movement, the Ahrar followed the Congress programme. He confirmed the cordiality that developed between the two parties during 1930. Shorish Kashmiri (ed) *Khutbat-i-Ahrar* (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Mujahideen, 1944), p. 144.

<sup>60</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: John Lane, 1936), p. 29.

<sup>61</sup>For complete details of the Resolution, see Resolution No. 2, cited in Satyapal and Prabodh Chandra, *Sixty Years of Congress: India Lost, India Regained, A Detailed Record of its Struggle for Freedom* (Lahore: Lion Press, 1946), p. 294.

<sup>62</sup>He was brought up in Madina, and was a Turkish citizen. He was very hostile to the British and was interned with Shaikh-ul-Hind Mahmood-ul-Hasan in Malta, during the First World War. On his return to India in 1920, he contributed towards Deoband's entry into the Non-cooperation Movement. In September 1921, he was tried in Karachi with the Ali Brothers, and was imprisoned. He was given the title of Shaikh-ul-Islam and presided over the fifth session of the JUH, and subsequent session from the twelfth to the nineteenth. He was the principal of the Dar-ul-Ulum from 1926 to 1957, and was criticised by many Muslim political thinkers for his subservience to the INC. Muhammad Iqbal, a poet philosopher, was also one of his critics, who argued against Madni's view that Muslims and non-Muslims could be part of a single 'nation', defined by territorial and other ties. Iqbal argued that according to Quran, it is the religion of Islam alone, which sustained a nation in its true cultural and political sense. For details, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, pp. 34-37.

<sup>63</sup>The Thanavi group founded the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Islam as a political party, which was sympathetic to the demand for Pakistan. Both of these ulama belonged to Deoband, but unlike Madani, they did not believe in a unitary India. For details of Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, and his role in the Pakistan Movement, see Anwar-ul-Hasan Sherkoti, *Khutbat-i-Usmani, Shaikh-ul-Islam Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani Key Milli, Siyasi aur Nazriya-i-Pakistan say Mutaliq Almanah Khutbat, Maktubat aur Mukalmat ka Mukamal Majmua* (Urdu) (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Anwar, 1972).

<sup>64</sup>He tried to unite both factions of the JUH, but failed to do so. Ubaidullah Qudsi, *Azadi Ki Tehreekain* (Lahore: Idara-i-Saqafat-i-Islamia, 1988), p. 237.

<sup>65</sup>Janbaaz Mirza, *Hayat-i-Amir-i-Shariyat* (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Tabsra, 1967), p. 136.

<sup>66</sup>The Intelligence Department reported that, 'the day will be an occasion for a good deal of oratory'. *SPPAI*, 25 February 1930, vol. L-3, no. 4, p. 75.

<sup>67</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 95.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid*, p. 90.

<sup>69</sup>The Ahrar leaders followed this programme until 1931, when an Ahrar, Ghazi Abdul Rahman, was reported to have started picketing the liquor shops in

Amritsar. Although the official view was that 'it would be for a short time only, yet the campaign went on for some time.' *SPPAI*, 27 June 1931, vol. L-3, no. 25, p. 298.

<sup>70</sup>*SPPAI*, 25 February 1930, vol. L-3, no. 4, p. 75.

<sup>71</sup>It was reported that the 'local leaders were tired of covering the same ground over and over again in their speeches, and were anxious for a new programme'. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>72</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 95.

<sup>73</sup>According to Janbaaz Mirza, among the fifteen thousand Muslims arrested from Punjab and the NWFP, a large number consisted of Ahrar volunteers. Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 106.

<sup>74</sup>*SPPAI*, 25 February 1930, vol. 3, no. 4, p. 76.

<sup>75</sup>Habib-ur-Rahman was arrested on 23 April 1930. He did not defend himself in the court as instructed by the INC, and remained aloof from all the proceedings. Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 134.

<sup>76</sup>He was arrested in July 1931 as cited in Satyapal and Prabodh Chandra, *Sixty Years of Congress*, p. 301.

<sup>77</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 2, p. 115, also see Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 84.

<sup>78</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 95.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 304. After the first Round Table Conference, the British Government decided to negotiate with the INC for the constitution making of India. First, they released the Congress leaders who had been imprisoned as a result of their civil disobedience movement, followed by a process of consultations between Gandhi and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. The result was the Gandhi-Irwin-Pact of 5 March 1931. The Government decided to release all the Congress prisoners, and the Congress agreed to suspend civil disobedience. Under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Congress also decided to accept Dominion Status as its objective, and agreed to participate in the Second Round Table Conference.

<sup>80</sup>*Inqilab*, 5 April 1931.

<sup>81</sup>Muslim nationalists like Maulana Azad and Zafar Ali Khan were criticized for having pro-INC leanings. *Inqilab*, 5 April 1931.

<sup>82</sup>*Inqilab*, 8 April 1931.

<sup>83</sup>Shorish Kashmiri, *Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari: Sawaneh-o-Afkar* (Lahore: Chattan, 1973), p. 254.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup>"India Demands Independence" in Zaidi, *The Encyclopedia of the Indian National Congress*, vol. 9, 1925-1928 (Delhi: Chand & Co, 1980), p. 562.

<sup>86</sup>Afzal Haq explained the reasons for his resignation from the Punjab Congress during the first Ahrar Conference, in July 1931. In his detailed press statement, he criticized the INC policies responsible for the breach among nationalists. Issues of minorities and the Nehru Report, were reportedly the main causes of dissension in the Congress. *Inqilab*, 14 July 1931. Also see Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 88.

<sup>87</sup>K. K. Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India*, p. 133.

<sup>88</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 115.

<sup>89</sup>The British Intelligence Department reported the formation of the MAI's city branches in Lahore, Sialkot and Amritsar, and that it seemed to be growing in popularity. A meeting in Lahore was reported to have attracted a gathering of 7000. *SPPAI*, 27 June 1931, vol. 3, no. 25, p. 399.

<sup>90</sup>K. K. Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India*, p. 133.

<sup>91</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol.1, p. 123.

<sup>92</sup>*Inqilab*, 6 July 1931.

<sup>93</sup>*SPPAI*, 27 June, vol. 3, no. 25, p. 433.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.* A press report of this warm welcome recorded by the intelligence officials showed that 'nationalism' was strongly overlaid with 'communalism' in Punjab. Habib-ur-Rahman was received by "second rank Muslims" such as Muhammad Daud Ghaznavi and Muhammad Hayat. An earlier statement of Ataullah Shah left the impression that he had broken with the Congress completely.

<sup>95</sup>*Inqilab*, 4 June 1931.

<sup>96</sup>*Inqilab*, 6 July 1931.

<sup>97</sup>*Inqilab*, 15 July 1931.

<sup>98</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, pp. 156-158.

<sup>99</sup>Shorish Kashmiri, *Khutbat-i-Ahrar*, pp. 103-117.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup>*Inqilab*, 14, July 1931

<sup>102</sup>*Inqilab*, 15 July 1931.

<sup>103</sup>*SPPAI*, 11 July 1931, vol. L-3, no. 29, p. 455.

<sup>104</sup>*Inqilab*, 15 July 1931.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>107</sup>Letter from the Secretary MAI, Faisalabad (Lyallpur) to *Inqilab*, 5 August 1931.

<sup>108</sup>*Inqilab*, 7 August 1931.

<sup>109</sup>Secret Report, *The Ahrar Movement in the Punjab 1931-1938* (Lahore: Punjab Government Secretariat, 1939), no. 4, ac no. 358 (Islamabad: National Documentation Center, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>110</sup>*Inqilab*, Lahore 2 June 1931.

<sup>111</sup>Secret Report, *The Ahrar Movement in the Punjab 1931-1938*, p. 148.

<sup>112</sup>Muhammad Rafique Afzal (ed.), *Guftar-i-Iqbal* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1969), p. 122.

<sup>113</sup>In a public meeting arranged by Ahrar, Allama Iqbal seconded the resolution against the principal of Maclagan College. Following were the demands from the people of Lahore to the government of Punjab: (1) appointment of an enquiry commission; (2) nomination of a Muslim member in the suggested commission; (3) postponement of entrance examination to college. Muhammad Rafique Afzal, *Guftar-i-Iqbal*, p. 123.

<sup>114</sup>*Inqilab*, 2 June 1931.

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<sup>115</sup>*Inqilab* published a news item on the MAI's decision to start a movement against the principal, and in its editorial, praised the Ahrar for taking up the issue. *Inqilab*, 5 June 1931.

<sup>116</sup>During the meeting, Allama Iqbal explained the agenda to the newly appointed commission. He invited them to look into the allegations of the use of derogatory language, and the expulsion of fifty-nine students. For details, see Muhammad Rafique Afzal, *Guftar-i-Iqbal*, p. 124.

<sup>117</sup> Secret Report, *The Ahrar Movement in the Punjab 1931-1938*, p. 7.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>119</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, p. 163.

<sup>120</sup>Shorish Kashmiri, *Pas-i-Dewar-i-Zindan* (Urdu) (Lahore: Chattan, 1971).

<sup>121</sup>Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

<sup>122</sup>For detail, see *Report of the Court of Inquiry constituted under Punjab Act of 1954 to inquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953* (Lahore: NAP, 1954).