

## THE ROLE OF HAZARAS IN THE CREATION OF PAKISTAN: THE POST-INDEPENDENCE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

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### ABSTRACT

*The people of the Hazara region played a key but unrecognized role in translating the idea of a separate Muslim state into a tangible reality called Pakistan today. Demographically, the diverse community of Hazara remains concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Since the inception of Pakistan, they have been in quest of carving out a distinct cultural, political and territorial space in the country. The ceaseless search and struggle have a long history as it traces its roots back to 1900. This scholarly study surveys the historical role of the Hazarawal (various ethnolinguistic groups inhabited in the Hazara region) people in the making of the country. Further, it also seeks to dissect the trajectory, rationale, challenges and prospects concerning their sub-national movement being pursued in the pursuit of long-standing territorial and political demands. This paper draws upon primary sources including a government official, census reports and open-handed interviews for in-depth knowledge as well as secondary sources.*

**Keywords:** Hazara, Pakistan, Movement, Ethnicity, Identity, Creation.

### INTRODUCTION

British created North-West Frontier Province, NWFP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) in 1900. Since its inception, it has gone through a continuous struggle against British Raj until 1947. (Safi Ullah, 2016, 1) From the British annexation of Punjab in 1849 until 1901, the five districts of Hazara, Kohat, Peshawar, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan continued within the Punjab Province with control over the adjoining border tracts (Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, 2007, 10).

The first growing tenants' rivalries and discontent within pro-British and Anti-British Khan classes provided the base and solid against the British indirect rule. Secondly, Khilafat in 1918 and Hijrat in 1920 was started on religious grounds by the Indian Muslims (Safi Ullah, 2016, 2).

Initially, the freedom fighters of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were most of the Ulema (clergyman) who were anti-British and declared Jihad first against Sikh and then against British. The people of the Hazara region were their strong supporters. Mastana Maula, Pawanda Maula, Sandkai Maula, Adda Maula and Syed Abubakar Maula were some renowned religious Ulema who mobilized religious-political movement against the British. At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, religious-political leadership gave way to socio-political leadership and introduced party politics in KP. The first nationalist newspaper titled "The Frontier Advocate" of the province was launched in the Urdu language by Amir Chand Bambwal who was a Hindu. Ram Chandra Bhagavaj who was also a Hindu educated nationalist from Peshawar, founded the provincial branch of the Indian National Congress in 1907. In 1912, such branch of the All-India Muslim League was founded and Mian Abdul Aziz advocate Ali Abbas Bukhari became its president and General Secretary. Hence, all these social and political organizations had a

direct and indirect impact on the provincial politics of the Hazara region (Safi ullah Khan Marwat, 2016, 2).

A resolution was moved by Mian Jaffar Shah in the 1930s regarding the making of Pashtu as the medium of instruction in the primary schools of the province. That resolution was opposed by Hindus and other members from Hazara on the excuse that Pashtu was not the language of the majority of people of the province. There was a sparkling debate on the issue on both sides (Dr. Fakhul-Islam, 2014,105).

During the rule of the British government in India, the Hazara region was a part of Punjab province, until 1901 when the western part of that province was separated from Punjab and created as a separate province named North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The areas including Abbottabad and Mansehra became the Hazara district of Peshawar Division. Moreover, areas to the north of this became the Hazara Tribal Agency. Amb and Phulra princely states were Sandwiched between Hazara district and Hazara Tribal Agency. Until 1950, “this system of administration continued and the two small princely states were merged into the Hazara district. NWFP province became part of West Pakistan from 1955 to 1970 under the One-Unit policy. In 1970, when the one-unit scheme was dissolved in July, the Hazara district was formed as part of the Peshawar Division of West Pakistan. Later on, two tribal agencies and Hazara District were amalgamated to form the new Hazara Division with its capital as Abbottabad. The Hazara division was initially comprised of two districts (Abbottabad, and Mansehra) but within a few years, Batagram District was spun off from Mansehra and Haripur district was turned off from Abbottabad District” (Muhammad Aslam Jadoon. 1977, 370).

Hazara remained a district until 1976 and then became a separate division. Moreover, Mansehra was given the state of a full-fledged district in October of the same year. Initially, it consisted of Batagram and Mansehra tehsils. Consequently, in July 1991, Abbottabad Tehsil was separated from Haripur Tehsil and made into a district. The rest of the Abbottabad Tehsil was declared as a separate Abbottabad District.

Similarly, the voice of the Hazara Nationalists has been demanding a separate province for since long. In crux, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial Assembly passed a resolution on 21<sup>st</sup> March demanding the creation of the Hazara as a separate province.

Administrative divisions were eliminated in 2000 and the four-tier districts were raised to become the new third tier of government in Pakistan. Currently, the Hazara Division comprises the following districts:

- Abbottabad District
- Haripur District
- Batagram District
- Upper Kohistan District
- Mansehra District
- Kolai-Palas District
- Lower Kohistan District
- Torghar District

Eventually, with all the administrative divisions being restored in 2008, Hazara Division has returned (Saman Zulfiqar, 2012, 3).

### **Research Objectives**

To explore the historical contribution of the Hazara diaspora in the Pakistan Movement.

To assert the role of political parties of the Hazara region in the freedom movement.

To find out the leadership of the Hazara region and its role in the making of Pakistan.

### **Research Questions**

What was the historical contribution of the Hazara region to the Pakistan Movement?

What was the role of the political parties of the Hazara District in the freedom movement?

How did the leadership of the Hazara region play its role in the making of Pakistan?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The current research is exploratory, normative, descriptive and qualitative. Both primary and secondary sources have been consulted. Primary sources included government officials, census reports and interviews. The required data for this research has been collected from Books, Research Articles, Journals, Newspapers and various websites.

### **Hazara at a Glance**

The NWFP of India was located in the northwest of India with Afghanistan in its west, Punjab and Kashmir to its East and Baluchistan to its south. Except for the province District of Hazara and a part of its Kohistan area which were cis-Indus, the rest of the province was Trans-Indus. The new province created in 1901 was one of the smallest ones in British India, which was spread over an area of 38665 sq miles. Politically, the area was divided into two sections. (1) the tribal territory which included the Malakand, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, South Waziristan and North Waziristan. (2) The 5 settled districts are Hazara, Peshawar, DI Khan, Bannu and Kohat. The tribal territory which lies around the Durrand line covers 25140 sq miles while the other districts adjacent to the Indus covers 14119 square miles. (Muhammad Aslam Jadoon, 1977. 373)

Like most districts on the frontier, Hazara in the course of its History has changed hands many times. "During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Turks and following them the Mangools invaded Hazara. The Mughals ruled Hazara and called it Pakhli Sarkar. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Swati, Pathan tribes, themselves ousted by the Yousafzai Pathans, invaded North Hazara and laid claim to its forest and valleys. During the Sikh rule, Hazara like most of the Frontier became part of Punjab" (Moonis Ahmar, 2016, 8).

In 1901, on the formation of NWFP, Hazara was included in the chief commissioner province of the North-West Frontier Province. During Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Regime, Hazara was upgraded to a divisional level comprising two districts Mansehra and Abbottabad. Later on, Haripur was upgraded to the level of District and from Mansehra Battagram and Torghar was also given the status of District (Moonis Ahmar, 2016, 8).

Hazara is the only one that offers an easy transition both culturally and physically, between the frontier and Punjab. In the south, the sub mountains tracts of the Khanpur hills gradually fuse with the Punjab plains, and ethnically little difference can be detected between the Hindko speaking non-Pathan people of Haripur and their Punjabi brethren in the vicinity of Rawalpindi. On the other hand, the wild black mountain area, the northwestern part of the district is habituated by such fierce Pathan tribes. The district is a tangle of Hills that hold three district plains in their midst from North to South. These are the Pakhli or Swati plain, the rash plain and the Haripur plain.

### **A glimpse at the Region through a historical lens**

The ancient history of *Hazara* is not traceable because it is shrouded in the mists of innumerable centuries. The origin of the name *Hazara* is obscure. It is variously been explained by different writers and historians. According to Muhammad Akhtar, the possible derivation of the name of *Hazara* is from Karlaaghs or Karluki ming. Karlaagh was the name of the Turk tribe. It is said that at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, they subjugated a vast area in the subcontinent. Thus, *Hazara* is therefore the territory of a Turk Ming or regiment. Originally *Hazara* was occupied by a mixed people of Indian or Aryan origin. The Tanolis followed suit in the 17<sup>th</sup> then the Jadoons, from the slopes of Mahaban, came and took positions of a strip for themselves. The Karlagh Turk, who came with Taimur annexed a bit of Pakhal plain. The Sayeds under Jalal Baba did the same in Kaghan valley, the trains lowered down and finally, the Yousafzais crossed the Indus and took up the Black Mountains (Muhammad Nawaz Khan 1996 140).

Ethno-lingual, the three divisions of NWFP are no less distinct. There is a mixed population in Hazara. They are mainly of Indian origin, the most abundant tribes being Gujars, Awans, and Tanaolis, while large numbers are contributed by the Dhunds, Kashmiris and Saiads and Pathans. Though found in large numbers, still do not form the most numerous races of the district. Moreover, they are not marked by the characteristics of vindictiveness and violence which distinguish them elsewhere. "It has been noted that the Hazara peasant is somewhat lacking in robust qualities. Organized crime does not exist in the district; murders are rare, and dacoities hardly ever occur, though the people are much addicted to litigation. Hazara does not have, in fact, the characteristics of a frontier district. On the west, it possesses for some portion of its length a natural boundary in the Indus and such does not exist in the southern districts, where the hills if they present an obstacle against the pursuit of offenders into the trans-frontier area behind them, are no bar to the incursion of armed bands into British territory" (C. Latimer, 1912, 24).

Like most divisions of NWFP, *Hazara* in the course of its history has changed hands many times. From the later half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was administrated by the Duranis of Afghanistan. By 1818, Afghan rule had gradually been replaced by the Sikhs. When

Captain James Abbott, who at that time was engaged in settling the boundary between Punjab and Kashmir, received a deputation from the tribes of Haripur plain, invaded the British, the area was brought under British control in 1849.

British made a *Hazara* district, "divided it into three tehsils of Mansehra, Abbottabad and Haripur, and annexed it with Punjab. However, in 1901 on the formation of the new province NWFP, *Hazara* was merged in it. During the British period, *Hazara* remained at the forefront of various religious-political movements in the sub-continent. The people of this area joined the ranks of those Muslim freedom fighters who wanted to get rid of the British imperialism." When the Hijrat movement was started, the people of *Hazara* participated with full zeal and enthusiasm and always stood with the Muslims of other regions (Muslim League Hazara District, 1940,5).

#### **Emergence of Pan Islamism in Hazara**

Pan Islamism was an ideology that was launched by Sayyed Jamaluddin Afghani and practiced by Muslim leaders in various regions at the global level and in British India particularly. The 19<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed the gradual fall of Muslim Political Power with the resultant religious and cultural death blow of Indian Muslims. The center of Muslim power and culture at Delhi and Bengal were the direct prey while in Punjab and the Frontier Area, the Sikhs were destroying all the valuables. A section of Muslim intelligentsia including ulema and Sufis were thinking of waging a holy war against the British and thus initiated a campaign which is known as the Jihad movement. The Jihad movement was organized under the inspiration of Shah Abdul Aziz, the son of Shah Walliullah, he gave Fatwa and declared India as Dar ul Harb, a country where jihad is permissible for Muslims. Syed Ahmad Shaheed was interested in the responsibility of its leadership on the war front. The Sikh rule was extremely oppressive and the Muslims were groaning under an almost unbearable tyranny in Punjab and NWFP (Khan Muhammad Anwar, 2000. P, 11).

They were expanding their dominions in Pashtun areas. The Pashtuns were good fighters and it could reasonably be expected that they would cooperate with the Syeds. Eventually, Syed Ahmad Shaheed selected the NWFP of India as the venue for that effort. Muslims wasted no time in gathering around him from all over India.

Mujahedeen movement termed by the British as the Wahabi movement made its debut on the frontier in 1826 and Nowshera became the headquarter of Mujahideen's. In 1830, Mujahedeen reappeared in the District with new courage and zeal, made themselves master of the Konsh and Bougarmang glens and the valley of Kunhar down the city of Balakot. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, the Sikhs were led to the top of the ridge on the slopes of which Balakot is located. The battle had practically been won by the Sikhs however, the next day the mujahedeen fought a desperate battle. Nearly 600 mujahedeen lost their lives, Shah Ismail and Syed Ahmad Shaheed being included (Khan Muhammad Anwar, 2000. P, 11).

#### **Jihad Movement in Hazara after the 1830s**

The Jihad movement which was started in an early phase of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in NWFP, however, did not end with the death of Syed Ahmad Shaheed and remained operative in the frontier of India, both against Sikhs and British. In 1852, the followers of the Syed Ahmad tribe attacked the Khan of Amb. In 1853, a British expedition was sent against them in the region.

The war of Independence in 1857 had its repercussion in this area. From 1857 to 1858, while the soldiers' mutiny was raging throughout British India, the Syed followers fought against the British at sheikh Jana, Chingtai, Salim Khan, Panjtaar, Mangal thana and finally at Sitana. On 4 May 1858, Sitana was destroyed by the British. "In fact, from 1888 and 1892, the Hazara border was disturbed almost continuously and large expeditions were dispatched against the Isazai clans of the Black Mountains and their neighbors, the Cis-Indus Swatis. The Tehreek-e -Mujahedeen was the first organized movement of Hazara Muslims. Mujahedeen believed that it was their duty to make effort, success was not there to command" (Mehtar, Parshotan, 1979. P, 10).

Moulvi Fazal-e-Rabi of Baffa is the leader of that movement which was launched against the British in the Hazara region on 29 August 1916 on the order of the chief commissioner of Peshawar who further ordered Deputy Commissioner of Hazara Col. James. Moulvi Fazal-e-Rabi has been arrested immediately and all of the property have consisted (Mehtar, Parshotan, 1979, 10).

#### **The Impact of Khilafat and Hijrat Movement on Hazara's Politics**

Indian Muslims were concerned about Turkey during the first world war. The Khilafat episode was an incredible movement. It alienated the Muslim community in India from the British government. The

Khilafat movement was the first mass political movement in which Indian Muslims participated enthusiastically. The Khilafat in Hazara stirred up anti-government sentiments in the rural areas of Mansehra tehsils. In Mansehra, Moulana Irfan and Moulana Ishfaq organized the movement. When the Khilafat movement started in Hazara, the same familiar leaders heralded it to the forefront. On 19 March 1920, Khilafat hartal was observed in Mansehra, the number of people attending Khilafat meetings increased day by day (Mehtar, Parshotan, 1979. P, 10).

Hijrat movement was the offshoot of Khilafat. Many Indian Muslims decided to leave their country as a protest against British policy melted out. India was declared as Dar ul Hurb like other districts of Frontier, the people of Hazara actively participated in the Hijrat movement. They played an active part in the front line of movement. Moulana Maqbool-ur-Rehman and Muhammad Akbar Khan Qureshi led the first caravan from district Haripur and Mansehra. "The Khilafat and Hijrat movement were the very first organized movements of Muslims of Hazara. Though they failed to achieve the goal they gave political sense to the people of Hazara" (Nawaz Suja, 2009, 9).

There were many political parties and political leaders who played a decisive role from the Hazara region in the making of Pakistan. When the Khilafat movement was over, Pan Islamist felt the need for a politico-religious party of Muslims. Hazara, like other parts of NWFP being the land of religious-minded people, lent support to Ahars. Most of the Hijrat and Khilafat movements joined Majlis-e-Ahar-I-Islam. Another political movement equally important sprang up in Northwest India. The organization was extended to Hazara in 1933 and part of the District became the centre of Khaksar activity. According to reports, the leaders of Khaksar in Hazara district were Khushal Khan Judoon, Muhammad Sharif Khan, Abdul Qayyum and many others. In 1931, a Congress committee was established at Abbottabad. Frontier first organized socio-political movement appeared in form of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement under Bacha Khan (Nawaz Suja, 2009, 9).

#### **The Congress Civil Disobedience Movement in Hazara**

There was political turmoil in 1930 in British India. Most of the mainstream political parties participated in the protest against British rule. The All India National Congress had launched its civil disobedience movement against the British Indian government to attain complete Independence. The civil disobedience aroused even less unrest in non Pakhtun district of Hazara than in other districts of the Province. In September 1930, Deputy Commissioner reported that no disturbance worth the name occurred in District at all. Though many of these movements failed in achieving their ultimate goal one can contently assert that they did succeed in developing political consequences among the common people and provided guidelines on which the AIML worked and consequently succeeded in obtaining their objective. Until 1937, the Indian National Congress dominated the politics of Hazara but after the establishment of the first branch of the Muslim League in the district, which is the main theme of the next chapter, the congress influences dwindled substantially. (Khan Muhammad Anwar, 2000. P, 11.)

#### **CONCLUSION**

The historical significance of the Hazara region is obvious since its origin. In the Mujahideen movement under the dynamic leadership of Syed Ahmed Shaheed Barelvi and Shah Ismail, the people of the region fought bravely against the Sikh rule. In the freedom movement of Pakistan, the Hazara region played a very decisive role. The *Hazarawal* (various ethnolinguistic groups inhabited in *the Hazara region*) have remained in far-front in the making of Pakistan. In the British period, this area remained a part of Punjab and after the creation of NWFP in 1901, the Hazara became part of NWFP. The Hazarawal took a keen interest in every event launched by Muslim nationalists against British rule in British India. After 1857, till the creation of Pakistan, they had played extensive work on it.

The people of the *Hazara* region played a vital but unrecognized role in translating the idea of a separate Muslim state into a tangible reality called today -Pakistan. In a nutshell, based on the above-mentioned facts, it can be concluded that the Hazara region played a significant role in the freedom movement of Pakistan. Freedom fighters of this region played their role differently. Earlier, the freedom movement of the Hazara region was religious like the other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was based on the concept of Jihad against Sikhs and later on British. After that, it shaped it into a socio-political movement struggling for social reformation and constitutional rights through party politics. Moreover, the Hazarawal started the search for their own identity in the post-independence era.

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