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Political Scenario of Colonial Punjab 1923-1947: Role of Landed Elite of the Shahpur District

Abstract

The ongoing attempt examines role of landed elite of the Shahpur District in transforming political scenario of the Colonial Punjab (1923-1947). Owing to their huge owned pieces of fertile land, the landed aristocrats of the Shahpur District played a crucial role in politics of the Punjab in an era of rapid socio-political and constitutional changes. The research paper has reflected the formation of the Unionist Party, clash between the Unionist Party and the All India Muslim League, socio-political and constitutional reforms introduced by the Unionist Government and role of the landed elite of the Shahpur District in these reforms. The manifesto of the Unionist Party attracted landed aristocracy of the Shahpur District and renowned landed elite of the District including Umar Hayat Tiwana, Firoz Khan Noon, Khizr Hayat Tiwana, Allah Bakhsh Tiwana, Muhammad Hayat Qureshi and Sultan Ali Nnngiana joined it. The Unionist Party remained in power from 1923 to 1947 and its leadership tried very hard to maintain communal harmony, to control law and order and uplift the rural areas of the Punjab. In addition to this, the power struggle between the All India Muslim League and the Unionist Party has been minutely evaluated, that how both the parties came close to each other by signing Sikandar-Jinnah Pact and what were the reasons of conflict between the Quaid-i-Azam and Khizr Hayat Tiwana. The research paper further encapsulates role of landed aristocrats of the Shahpur District, that how they joined the Unionist Party and how some of them parted their ways and joined the All India Muslim League's struggle for a separate homeland of the South Asian Muslims. The researcher has presented in this paper, role of landed elite of the Shahpur District in political scenario of the Colonial Punjab keeping in mind Gaetano Mosca's Elite Theory that has been employed to validate this work.

Keywords: Colonial Punjab, Unionist Party, All India Muslim League, Gaetano Mosca, Quaid-i-Azam, Firoz Khan Noon, Khizr Hayat Tiwana, Shahpur District

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Introduction

The influential persons of landed aristocracy of the Punjab played an impetus role in politics of United India. Owing to role played by the aristocracy of the Punjab in creation of Pakistan, the Quaid-i-Azam had termed it the corner stone of Pakistan.¹ The landed elite played a crucial and dominating role in politics of the Punjab during medieval age and maintained their influence, power and prestige during the Colonial period also. The landed elite of the Shahpur District contributed their share in political and social developments during the British regime.

Owing to its geographical location the District Shahpur had unique place in the history of the Colonial Punjab. Noon, Tiwana, Qureshi, Piracha and Nangiana were the prominent families of the District Shahpur. Role played by the members of these political families is vital to understand politics in the Colonial era.

Theoretical Perspective

The researcher has employed the concept of Elite Theory in this research paper. Gaetano Mosca, an Italian political philosopher put forward the Elite Theory. According to Elite Theory, a few influential persons hold power in a society. They pose themselves as catalyst of change in every society and change the course of events. In the field of Sociology the term elite means ‘those groups’ that have decisive power and influence in the development of societal strata. Gaetano Mosca had explained that ruling class in every society is in minority yet has great influence, power and material sources to govern the affairs of the society openly and tacitly.²

In Colonial Punjab landed aristocracy had extreme influence in rural areas. Owing to their control over the material resources, landed elite had extraordinary power and prestige in social and political circles. The rural elite were the collaborators of the British Administration and they had supported the British throughout the Colonial period. They had helped and cooperated with the British to strengthen their rule in the Subcontinent.

Colonial rule in the Punjab was established in 1849 after the defeat of Sikh forces at the battle of Sabraon.³ At time of annexation and during the Colonial period also, landed elite remained dominant in politics of the Punjab due to their huge pieces of land. Landed elite reinforced their political relations by matrimonial alliances. In District Shahpur, members of the Tiwana and the Noon families were closely associated due to matrimonial alliances.⁴ Other remarkable families of the District Shahpur during Colonial period were Nangiana, Ranjha and Qureshi. The Colonial government protected the interest of landed aristocracy by promoting the ‘Biraderi System’ in the Punjab.⁵ The members of these political families played a pivotal role in establishing the British rule in India by suppressing the Mutiny of 1857. Tiwanas of Shahpur performed loyal services to the British. Sahib Khan Tiwana, a big land lord of the Shahpur District played a conspicuous role in defeating freedom fighters in Jhelum District during War of Independence.⁶ He was asked by the then Deputy Commissioner of the Shahpur District Mr. Quseley to help the British in order to crush the freedom fighters.⁷ He assisted the British forces with three hundred soldiers, all paid and maintained by him.⁸ The Colonial

Government rewarded him 15,000 acres of estate at Kalra in 1893 which increased to 30,000 acres with the passage of time. The members of the Noon tribe also played a vital role in suppressing the revolt of 1857. The Colonial administration established alliances with landed aristocrats of all the religious communities without any distinction. Owing to common agriculture ideology and motives landed elite came close to one another in the Punjab.⁹ The landed aristocrats of the District Shahpur recruited soldiers in order to help the Colonial Government during World War I and World War II. These soldiers performed matchless services on different war fronts for the Allied Powers, particularly Great Britain.

Landed Elite of the District Shahpur

Landed aristocracy of the Shahpur District played a conspicuous role in politics of the Punjab. Umar Hayat Tiwana was a well-known landed aristocrat of the District Shahpur. He was born at Megha near Jhawrian in District Shahpur in 1874.¹⁰ His father died when he was only five years old. He was educated at Aitcheson College Lahore and proved to be a progressive landed aristocrat due to his loyalty to the Colonial Government. Soon after the foundation of the Anjman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, Umar Hayat Tiwana became its member. He was appointed to lead a deputation organized by the Anjuman in order to present its problems before Sir Lui Dane, Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab.¹¹ In 1906, Liberal Government came into power in Great Britain. It was expected that the new government would introduce new reforms in the Subcontinent. In order to get benefits from these reforms, the South Asian Muslims organized a deputation which would place their demands before the Viceroy Lord Minto. Umar Hayat Tiwana was one of the honorable members of the Simla Deputation.¹² In 1916, Lucknow Pact was signed between two mainstream political parties of the Subcontinent; Indian National Congress and All India Muslim League. Both the parties evolved unanimous proposals for the solution of Hindu-Muslim problems. Owing to principle of weightage, the Muslims had not been allocated seats according to the ratio of their population in the Punjab and Bengal and were made a minority in these majority provinces. Mian Muhammad Shafi was the most prominent leader of the Punjab. He condemned the Lucknow Pact. Umar Hayat Tiwana followed the line given by Mian Muhammad Shafi. He said in the Council of the State that the Lucknow Pact did not give any relief to the Muslims of the Punjab because the Pact had changed their majority into minority in the Punjab and Bengal. He said that the Muslims of the Punjab got no benefit out of this Pact.¹³

Umar Hayat Tiwana was the most prominent collaborator of the Colonial Government. He performed valuable services in military campaigns for the British. His first active service was performed in Somaliland against Sheikh Muhammad Hassan. He helped the government to recruit soldiers for the camel corps and also served as assistant commander.¹⁴ During World War I he performed services in France.¹⁵ Then he joined the Allied Forces in Mesopotamia where he paid the expenses of his fellows which accompanied him in the war.¹⁶ His most valuable service in the Mesopotamia was to pacify the Pan-Islamic sentiments against the British in Indian Muslim troops.¹⁷ He visited the Indian soldiers in their regiments to put their minds at ease. He was assigned the task of solving soldiers' problems. He assured the Muslim soldiers that a proper funeral

service would be arranged for the Muslims in case of their death and solved one major cause of unrest among them.¹⁸

Firoz Khan Noon was a distinguished landed aristocrat of the District Shahpur. He was born in a small village Noor Pur Noon in District Shahpur. He belonged to a landed aristocratic family. Firoz Khan Noon was elected member of the Punjab Legislative Council in 1921. He was nominated as Minister for Education in 1924. The Muslim landed elite of other districts were jealous of the continued influence of the Shahpur District in the Punjab politics. These landed elite including Sikandar Hayat, Zafarullah Khan and Ahmed Yar Daultana opposed Firoz Khan Noon. However, he was again selected as Minister for Education in 1930.¹⁹ Owing to his popularity in government circles, Firoz Khan Noon was appointed High Commissioner for India in London.²⁰

Khizr Hayat Tiwana, a leading landed aristocrat of the District had the honor of being the last premier of the United Punjab. He started his political career as Minister for the Public Works in Sikandar Hayat's Cabinet. After Sikandar Hayat's demise in December, 1942, he was appointed the youngest premier of the Colonial Punjab. It was his strong desire to promote communal harmony among the religious communities living in the Punjab and to work for uplift of rural areas of the Province. In order to achieve his agenda of communal harmony he extended cooperation to Sikandar Hayat's government and took active part in the Unity Conference organized by the Punjab's Premier Sikandar Hayat.²¹

Muhammad Hayat Qureshi was elected member of the Punjab Legislative Council in 1930.²² He played a vibrant role in re-organization of all India Muslim League in District Shahpur. In 1941 he was nominated the President of the District Branch of All India Muslim League. Allah Bakhsh Tiwana was a well-known landlord of the Shahpur District. In 1946 elections, he was elected member of the Punjab Legislature.²³ Another landed aristocrat, Mumtaz Khan Tiwana, was elected member of the Punjab Legislative Council in 1923.²⁴ He contested election against Khizr Hayat Tiwana in 1946 elections from the Thesil Khushab constituency. However, he could not win the election.

Political Scenario of the Punjab (1923-1937)

The Unionist Party remained in power during 1923-1947 and its leaders Fazl-i-Husain, Sikandar Hayat and Khizr Hayat Tiwana were the main actors of political scene of the Colonial Punjab. Fazal-i-Husain founded the Unionist Party in 1923. Its other prominent leaders were Chhotu Ram and Chaudhry Lal Chand.²⁵ The Colonial Government supported Fazl-i-Husain in founding the Unionist Party. Owing to this support he strengthened his position and chalked out the program of the Unionist Party.²⁶ The Unionist Party was founded to protect the rights and interests of landed aristocracy in the Punjab and to work for the welfare of oppressed classes living in the Province. Its manifesto was to protect the interests of the people living in the rural society and its program converted it into the most popular political party of the Punjab.²⁷

The Unionist Party was a party of landed elite who were very influential in rural areas of the Province. They had great power and influence in their constituencies.²⁸ The Unionist Party tried to keep up a non-communal attitude in politics²⁹ and

safeguarded the interests of the rural community of the Punjab without any discrimination.³⁰ The Unionist Party focused on uplift of the rural community. Its agenda was to uplift the deteriorating condition of the rural population through improvement of the backward areas. In order to achieve its goals, the Unionist Government under the leadership of Sikandar Hayat introduced agrarian reforms and facilitated all three major communities; the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs living in the rural areas of the Province.³¹ The Unionist Party desired to achieve communal harmony through its agrarian reforms.

All India Muslim League was another important political party of the Colonial Punjab. It was founded in 1906 at Decca. Mian Muhammad Shafi, a prominent Muslim leader of the Punjab formed its provincial branch. Umar Hayat Tiwana was nominated the Vice President of the Muslim League.³²

Landed Elite of the Shahpur District joined the Unionist Party and supported its non-Communal stance. Firoz Khan Noon was an influential landed aristocrat of the District Shahpur. He initiated his political career as member of the Punjab Legislative Council in 1924 and joined the Unionist Party. In 1930 he was nominated the Minister for Education as well as Minister for Health. He introduced many reforms in education and worked for the welfare of the masses. Education Department ignored the rural and backward areas of the Province and opened a few schools in these areas. Firoz Khan Noon tried his best to open new schools in the neglected and backward areas of the Province.

Colonial Government introduced the system of diarchy in India Act 1919. In this system certain subjects were transferred to Indian ministers. These ministers were answerable to Provincial Legislative Council. The Governor of the Punjab nominated Fazl-i-Husainas minister, under this Act on account of his towering personality as being leader of the High Court Bar, General Secretary of the Punjab Muslim League and Secretary of the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam.³³

Elections for the Punjab Provincial Legislative Council were held in 1921. Firoz Khan Noon was elected member of the Punjab 2Legislative Council.³⁴ He was very influential among the members of the Council who were landed elite. However, he was novice in politics and quite unknown to the legislators.³⁵ The elections for the second Punjab Legislative Council were held in January 1924. Firoz Khan Noon was again elected member of the Legislative Council with a considerable margin. There were two groups among the Muslim members of the Punjab Legislative Council. One group was under the leadership of Chaudhry Shahabuddin and Ahmed Yar Daultana and the second group was Noon-Tiwana group.³⁶ Ultimately, there was reconciliation between two groups and Firoz Khan Noon became Minister for Education with the support of both groups.³⁷

The Unionist Ministry under Sikandar Hayat (1937-1942)

The Unionist Party achieved a magnificent victory in the elections of 1936-37. Attractive and glamorous program of the Unionist Party made its success possible in the elections. The rural members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly assembled to establish a group known as Unionist Group in the Punjab Legislative Assembly.³⁸ The Party also influenced the voters economically, socially and religiously during its election campaign. It increased its popularity due to support

of the influential landed elite and sajjada nishins of the Province.³⁹ After the declaration of the election results independent candidates of the Punjab Legislature also joined the Unionist Party.⁴⁰ The All India Muslim League was able to win only two seats in the elections. Malik Barkat Ali was elected from Lahore and Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan had won the election from Pind Dadan Khan (District Jhelum) constituency.⁴¹ Thus, supremacy of the Unionist Party was established in rural areas of the Province and it won 73 out of 75 rural Muslim seats.⁴² The party also won all except one of the rural Hindu Jat seats in the Ambala Division. All of its candidates were Jat land owners in this Division.⁴³

Sikandar Hayat was asked by the Governor to form new ministry in the Punjab. He formed his ministry and selected Chhotu Ram, Khizr Hayat Tiwana, Sunder Singh Mijithia, Abdul Haye and Manohar Lal as his ministerial colleagues in the Cabinet with the approval of the Governor of the Punjab. The Unionist Party won 98⁴⁴ seats of the Provincial Legislative Assembly in 1937 elections. However, Sikandar Hayat secured the support of 129 members out of 175 members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly.⁴⁵

Sikandar Hayat assumed charge of the office of the Punjab's Premier in April, 1937. He built up a personal circle within landed aristocrat members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly. The Governor of the Punjab Emerson was deeply impressed by him due to his magnificent achievement and hold over the Unionist Party.⁴⁶ He wrote to the Viceroy in April 1938 that the success of the Punjab Government was largely due to the popularity, personal influence and personality of Sikandar Hayat.⁴⁷

Sikandar Hayat declared in his first speech that it would be necessary to explore fresh opportunities in order to provide due relief to the peasantry and remove the problem of unemployment in rural areas.⁴⁸ The Unionist Leader wanted to introduce reforms regarding the development and welfare of the rural areas of the Province.⁴⁹ He decided to introduce the program of Agrarian Reforms and establish a rural Zamindara League Organization in order to widen the circle of the Unionists support.⁵⁰

Sikandar Hayat tried to establish landed aristocratic government in the Punjab. Five out of six ministers were key landed elite of the Province and had vast tracts of land. He also maintained communal balance in his Cabinet by selecting ministers from all religious communities.⁵¹ He tried to take administrative, constructive and practical measures for the welfare of all the communities of the Province. Landed elite of the District Shahpur under the leadership of Khizr Hayat Tiwana supported him in order to achieve this task.

Sikander Hayat and his government organized a conference at Lyallpur (Present Faisalabad). This conference is known as All Punjab Zamindara Conference in history of the Colonial Punjab. Sikandar Hayat and the Unionist Ministers including Khizr Hayat Tiwana arrived at Faisalabad in order to participate in the conference on September 3, 1938.⁵² A meeting of Zamindara League was invited at Mamdot Villa, Lahore. This meeting was being called for, with the signature of Allah Bakhsh Tiwana, who was a renowned landed aristocrat of the District Shahpur.⁵³ The meeting was attended by two hundred prominent landowners. All participants of the meeting agreed to work for the welfare of landowners and

peasants in the Punjab.⁵⁴ The agrarian reforms introduced by the Sikandar Hayat's Ministry and the Unionist Party consolidated the hold of the party over the rural population. These reforms also intensified tensions within the Provincial Congress and removed the impact of its Mass Contact Movement in the countryside.⁵⁵

Khizr Hayat Tiwans who was the Minister for Public Works, extended extraordinary cooperation to Sikandar Hayat in his efforts to promote communal harmony in the Province. He participated in Unity Conference convened by Sikandar Hayat at Simla in July 1937.⁵⁶ Sikandar Hayat tried his best to promote unity and harmony among different religious communities of the Province. He convened a Unity Conference in July 1937, in order to solve the communal issues.⁵⁷ By organizing this conference Sikandar Hayat was able to resolve communal issues in the Punjab.⁵⁸ He also made serious efforts to curb sectarianism in the province.⁵⁹ The Provincial Branch of the All India Muslim League supported him over the issues of Agrarian Reforms and the communalism.⁶⁰

After 1937 elections Indian National Congress started a Mass Contact Campaign in Muslim majority provinces. The Unionist Ministry perceived that it would be very difficult to face Indian National Congress without the support of another National party with wide-ranging influence in the Subcontinent. Therefore, Sikandar Hayat and his Muslim Unionist colleagues decided to seek help of the All India Muslim League. They desired to use All India Muslim League against Indian National Congress in order to check its political activities in the Punjab.⁶¹ All India Muslim League won only two seats of the Provincial Legislative Assembly. Soon after the declaration of the election results, it suffered a setback. One of its winning candidates Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan deserted it and joined the Unionist Party. Unionist Party offered him⁶² Parliamentary Secretary ship in the Punjab Government.⁶³ Therefore, leaders of the All India Muslim League realized the need of concrete steps in order to gain stability in politics of the Punjab and they decided to make a common cause with Sikandar Hayat and the Unionist Party on the communal issues.⁶⁴ Thus, in order to fight Indian National Congress's Mass Contact Movement in the Punjab, to gear up its political activities and to secure political solidarity in the Punjab, the All India Muslim League desired to enter into a political alliance with the Unionist Party.⁶⁵

Muslim Unionists attended All India Muslim League's Lucknow session with zeal and zest. They made speeches against Congress and its leader Jawahr Lal Nehru in the session. Nevertheless, the most important achievement of the Lucknow session was, both the parties signed a pact known as Sikandar-Jinnah Pact in history.⁶⁶ The pact was finally signed in October 1937. According to Sikandar-Jinnah Pact, the All India Muslim League promised to fully support Sikandar Hayat and the Unionist Party in provincial politics. The Unionist Party on the other hand gave a free hand to the All India Muslim League in central matters.⁶⁷

In 1939 the Indian National Congress resigned from the provincial ministries. The political scenario changed at once due to this devastating step taken by the Indian National Congress. The Quaid-i-Azam took the advantage of the situation⁶⁸ and decided to reorganize the Muslim League in different provinces of India, particularly in the Punjab. He demanded the British Government to recognize the Muslim League as a sole representative of the South Asian Muslims, to give it

equal importance in constitutional matters and to give the Muslims equal share in the future government of India. The Viceroy Lord Linlithgo amicably accepted these demands.⁶⁹

The All India Muslim League's leaders and workers from all over the country assembled in Lahore in March 1940, and passed a historic resolution known as Lahore Resolution in history of the Subcontinent. All India Muslim League demanded a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims in it. The landed aristocracy of the Punjab as well as the District Shahpur supported the stance adopted by All India Muslim League. Owing to their sincere efforts, the Pakistan Scheme gained popularity in the Province. Sikandar Hayat who was the representative of the Muslim landed aristocracy in the Colonial Punjab played a pivotal role in organizing the historic Lahore session of the All India Muslim League.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the Sikh and the Hindu leaders opposed the demand of separate homeland by the Muslims. In spite of their opposition, the demand of Pakistan gained momentum with the passage of time.⁷¹

Muhammad Hayat Qureshi accomplished a vital role in re-organization of the Muslim League in the Shahpur District. He was appointed the President of the District Shahpur Branch of the Muslim League in 1941. He tried his best to popularize the demand of a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims in every nook and corner of the District. Khizr Hayat Tiwana prompted Allah Bakhsh Tiwana to establish a parallel Muslim League in the District Shahpur in 1942. Nevertheless, Allah Bakhsh Tiwana was compelled to merge his Muslim League into the Muslim League whose district president was Muhammad Hayat Qureshi.⁷² In 1942, Qamar-ud-Din Sialvi was nominated the President of the District Shahpur Branch of the Muslim League.

Unionist Ministry under Khizr Hayat Tiwana (1943-1946)

British administration in India thought that Sikandar Hayat and his successor Khizr Hayat Tiwana were more responsible and better leaders of the Indian Muslims than the Quaid-i-Azam.⁷³ Sikandar Hayat was the ablest Premier of the Punjab. However, he did not complete his tenure due to his sudden death in December, 1942 and Khizr Hayat Tiwana was appointed new Premier of the Punjab.⁷⁴ He was not well experienced and the Governor of the Punjab appointed him the premier due to his loyalty and family background.⁷⁵ According to Governor Glancy, Khizr was not so well experienced like his predecessor Sikandar Hayat. However, he had attractive personality, firmer character and above all, had no sign of communal bias.⁷⁶ Governor of the Punjab nominated Khizr Hayat Tiwana Punjab's Premier in January 1943 without even taking into confidence the prominent politicians of the Punjab.⁷⁷ Landed elite of the Multan and Attock districts did not like the Khizr's nomination as the Punjab's Premier due to their traditional rivalry with Noon-Tiwana group of the Shahpur District.⁷⁸

Big challenges were waiting for Khizr Hayat Tiwana due to crucial situation of the World War II, disorder in politics of the Punjab and rivalry within the Unionist Party.⁷⁹ He had to renew Sikandar-Jinnah Pact with the Quaid-i-Azam. In his meeting with the Quaid-i-Azam, he promised to obey the decisions of the Muslim League Council.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, he was reluctant to work smoothly with All India Muslim League.⁸¹ According to Ian Talbot, Khizr Hayat Tiwana was sailing into

two boats and due to his dual loyalty, was unable to adjust himself with the political scenario of that time.⁸² Owing to non-reconciliation between the Quaid-i-Azam and the Punjab's Premier, the Muslim Unionist members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly were between the devil and the deep sea and they had to choose either the All India Muslim League or the Unionist Party before the upcoming elections.⁸³

After his expulsion from All India Muslim League, Khizr Hayat Tiwana was a bullheaded rival of the Muslim League in the Punjab politics and the later, launched a venomous and malicious campaign against him. Khizr Hayat Tiwana knew it well that Pakistan was inevitable but he was not prepared to extend cooperation with the Quaid-i-Azam due to the hostile propaganda launched by the All India Muslim League.⁸⁴

Khizr Tiwana's dissociation with the All India Muslim League made him unpopular among the masses and the Unionist Party loosed its support in the Muslim voters.⁸⁵ The landed aristocracy of the Punjab as well as the District Shahpur perceived the changed political situation and they decided to join All India Muslim League. Among these landed aristocrats, the most remarkable were Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Mumtaz Ahmad Daultana, Shaukat Hayat⁸⁶ and the most towering personality of the District Shahpur, Firoz Khan Noon, who had honor of representing the Punjab in the Viceroy's Council at that time.⁸⁷ Khizr Tiwana's close associates in the District Shahpur such as Mumtaz Khan Tiwana and Sardar Khan Noon also deserted him and joined the new camp in the Punjab politics.⁸⁸ The prevailing scenario in politics of the Punjab was very bewildering and disconcerting for the British administrators in India. The Viceroy had commented remarks on the situation that it was very perplexing for him that landed elite of the Punjab had been subdued by a down-country lawyer.⁸⁹

Khizr Hayat Tiwana's traditional opponents in the politics Mumtaz Daultana and Shaukat Hayat played a vital role in promoting propaganda campaign launched by All India Muslim League against him. The Quaid-i-Azam welcomed entry of the landed aristocrats in All India Muslim League. Sajjada nishins and pirs of the well-known shrines⁹⁰ also became the part of All India Muslim League's campaign for Pakistan. The services performed by the Chisti pirs such as Qamar-ud-din Sialvi of the District Shahpur were worth mentioning. With active support of the landed aristocracy and the Sajjada nishins of the Punjab as well as the District Shahpur, the Quaid-i-Azam was able to achieve the goal of Pakistan. Thus, the landed aristocracy changed the course of history which was not an easy task without their assistance. Chhotu Ram's demise on January 9, 1945 was a severe blow to politics of the Unionist Party and its downfall started gradually.⁹¹

The Viceroy, Lord Wavell convened a conference of the distinguished leaders of the Subcontinent in July 1945 at Simla known as Simla Conference. The Punjab's Premier was also invited to participate in the Conference. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah put forward his demand that all the Muslim members of the Viceroy's Cabinet would be nominated by All India Muslim League. However, Khizr Hayat Tiwana insisted that one member should be taken from the Punjab's landed aristocracy. Nonetheless, the Simla Conference ended in fiasco and the British Government decided to hold new elections in the Subcontinent.

The hostile propaganda launched by the Muslim League against the Punjab's Premier and the ruling Unionist Party reached at its climax after failure of the Simla Conference. Owing to this campaign, the process of collapse in the ruling Unionist Party started and the landed aristocrats of the Punjab as well as the District Shahpur left the Unionist Party at large scale.⁹² They joined All India Muslim League and its popularity kept on mounting with every passing day.

The All India Muslim League and the Unionist Party depended heavily on landed aristocracy in order to gain control over politics of the Punjab. However, All India Muslim League attracted the masses in its processions through its popular slogans regarding Pakistan. The stance adopted by All India Muslim League appealed the Muslims living in the Punjab and landed elite did not ignore the popularity of All India Muslim League in the Province. Therefore, they changed their loyalties and became part of All India Muslim League. Moreover, Khizr Hayat Tiwana was not a master of political skills like his predecessor Sikandar Hayat and his weak control over the Unionist Party paved the way for the All India Muslim League to attract landed aristocracy toward itself.⁹³ The popularity of the Unionist Party decreased day by day due to wartime economic condition in the Punjab. The All India Muslim League exploited the situation and convinced the rural population that their miserable condition was due to the World War II and the Unionist Party. Thus, popularity of the Unionist Party decreased in rural areas of the Punjab and landed elite decided to leave the party in changed circumstances. Simla Conference ended in failure due to difference of the opinion between the major political parties of the Subcontinent.⁹⁴ After its failure, the political horizon of the Subcontinent was made murkier by the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League. In such circumstances, there was no space for regional parties such as the Unionist Party. Therefore, the landed aristocrats of the Punjab as well as the Shahpur District perceived that All India Muslim League was now in a better position than the Unionist Party and they joined All India Muslim League.

The British Government decided to hold the Central Assembly elections in December, 1945 and Provincial Assemblies' elections in February, 1946. The political situation in the Punjab changed dramatically as compared to 1937 elections. Before the elections, power of the Unionist Party was diminishing and All India Muslim League was gaining popularity in the Punjab. The later was able to gain the support of the Muslim landed aristocracy of the Punjab. However, the Unionist Party started its election campaign confidently and its leader Khizr Hayat Tiwana addressed large gatherings in different cities of the Province.⁹⁵ He did his best to check the progress of the Muslim League and its Pakistan scheme. Nevertheless, he was not able to convince the voters and faced a tough resistance even in his own district. The members of the landed aristocracy of the Shahpur District divided into two groups. One group under the leadership of the Punjab's Premier worked for the Unionist Party. The other group joined the All India Muslim League and tried its level best to spread the message of the Quaid-i-Azam in every nook and corner of the District. Firoz Khan, a big landlord of the District was member of the Viceroy's Council at that time. He resigned from his post. At the time of his resignation, he communicated to the Viceroy that the final battle would be fought in his own province and it is necessary for him to go back in the Punjab and work for the All India Muslim League.⁹⁶ He argued that a separate

homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent would be necessary in order to save them from the clutches of the extremist Hindus. All India Muslim League assigned him the task to run its election campaign in the East Punjab. He worked day and night in his assigned area and All India Muslim League won all seats of the Provincial Assembly reserved for the Muslims.⁹⁷

The All India Muslim League was in much better position in 1946 elections than its position in the previous elections in the Punjab. The political importance of the Shahpur District increased because of being the home district of Khizr Hayat Tiwana. He contested the election from the constituency of Tehsil Khushab District Sargodha. The All India Muslim League nominated Mumtaz Khan Tiwana its candidate against Khizr Hayat Tiwana. Other candidates for the elections nominated by All India Muslim League were Fazal Haq Piracha, Pir Qalandar Husain Shah and Muhammad Hayat Qureshi in the constituencies of Tehsil Bhalwal, Tehsil Sargodha and Tehsil Shahpur respectively. The Unionist Party nominated Muhammad Bakhsh Ranja, Allah Bakhsh Tiwana and Sultan Ali Nangiana, its candidates for the elections in the constituencies of Tehsil Bhalwal, Tehsil Sargodha and Tehsil Shahpur respectively.⁹⁸

The election authorities announced the election results on 24th February 1946. All India Muslim League emerged as the single largest party by winning 73 out of the 86 Muslim seats in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. The Unionist Party on the other hand was able to win only 19 seats of Provincial Legislative Assembly.⁹⁹ The political situation in the District Shahpur was different and the Unionist Party won three out of four constituencies of the District.¹⁰⁰

Khizr's New Ministry and the Creation of Pakistan

All India Muslim League emerged as the single largest party in 1946 elections and claimed its right to form ministry in the Punjab. In the beginning there was possibility of its alliance with Akali Sikhs who had won 21 seats in the elections. However, this alliance could not materialize due to difference in opinion on the issue of Muslim League's demand for Pakistan.¹⁰¹ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad worked day in and day out to form a coalition between the Indian National Congress, the Unionist Party and Akali Sikhs in the Punjab. He was supported by Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel also.¹⁰² Therefore, a new coalition was formed between, the Indian National Congress, the Unionist Party and the Akali Sikhs on March 6, 1946. Khizr Hayat Tiwana was invited to lead the ministry.¹⁰³

All India Muslim League launched the Civil Disobedience Movement against Khizr's Government in the Punjab. The landed aristocracy of the Shahpur District played vital role in this Movement. Firoz Khan Noon took active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement and was arrested. He was well experienced leader in political arena. He had made a number of suggestions to the Quaid-i-Azam regarding the political situation in the Punjab. Firoz Khan Noon performed striking role as the policy maker of the Muslim League during the post elections period. He had a desire to become the All India Muslim League's parliamentary leader in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. Nevertheless, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah favored Iftikhar Husain Mamdot and he was elected the Muslim League's Parliamentary Party leader in the Punjab Legislative Assembly.¹⁰⁴

The Provincial government arrested all the prominent leaders of the Muslim League and declared Muslim League National Guard as unlawful. The District Shahpur Branch of the Muslim League held processions every day and numerous people participated in these processions. Owing to the extreme public pressure, Khizr Hayat Tiwana resigned from the post of the Punjab's Premier on March 3, 1947. In the meantime, the Colonial Government decided to divide the Subcontinent into two independent countries and Pakistan came into being on August 14, 1947.

Khizr Hayat Tiwana was a devoted supporter of the United Punjab and presented his own vision to keep Punjab intact. However, his dream did not come true and people of the Punjab did not support his vision in 1946 elections. The All India Muslim League's victory in these elections paved the way for partition of India and ultimately, the Punjab was also cut into two pieces.

Khizr Hayat Tiwana tried his best to promote communal harmony among different religious communities during his premiership. He established a Communal Harmony Committee in Lahore and appointed Raja Narredra Nath its president. Maulvi Muhammad Ilyas was nominated its secretary by the government.¹⁰⁵ Khizr Hayat Tiwana presided the meeting of the Provincial Communal Harmony Committee on different occasions. He had declared in this committee that there were Hindu and Sikh Tiwanas who were my relatives and how could I regard them the members of another nation.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

The period from 1923 to 1947 in politics of the Colonial Punjab was overshadowed by politics of the Unionist Party, a cross communal party and landed aristocrats of all three religious communities considered it the most suitable choice for their politics. In order to play a vital role in politics of the Punjab, the landed aristocrats of the Shahpur District including Umar Hayat Tiwana, Firoz Khan Noon and Khizr Hayat Tiwana joined the Unionist Party. Umar Hayat Tiwana represented the District as member of the Council of State and the Imperial Council. Firoz Khan Noon played an important role in the Punjab politics as Provincial Minister for Education and Local Self-government. Khizr Hayat Tiwana served the most distinguished post of the Punjab's Premier.

In the period, the South Asian Muslims started the political struggle for their separate homeland under the charismatic leadership of the Quaid-i-Azam. The landed aristocracy of the Shahpur District divided into two groups taking the issue of Pakistan. Some landed elite of the District changed their political party, joined All India Muslim League, worked for the freedom struggle for the Pakistan and ultimately, achieved their goal in the shape of Pakistan. Firoz Khan Noon was such a landed aristocrat of the District who started his political career from the Unionist Party, joined in the course of time the All India Muslim League, worked for the freedom and at last achieved Pakistan. A number of the landed aristocrats of the district remained firm in their loyalties, did not join All India Muslim League and remained staunch supporter of the Unionist Party. Khizr Hayat Tiwana was such a gigantic landed aristocrat of the District Shahpur who viewed partition

as a splitting force. He continued that it would debase the rosy face of 'Punjabi society'. He tried his level best to diminish All India Muslim League's influence and role of the Quaid-i-Azam in politics of the Punjab but in vain. He put forward his own vision of the United Punjab. The landed aristocracy of the Punjab as well as the Shahpur District did not support his cause and joined the All India Muslim League. Qamar-ud-Din Sialvi, the Sajjada nishin of Sial Sharif was the most influential sajjada nishin of the Shahpur District. He played a vital role in Pakistan Movement. Firoz Khan Noon resigned as the member of the Viceroy's Council in order to work for Pakistan. Thus, in the light of Elite Theory, the landed elite who had enormous power in the rural society played their role in creation of Pakistan. When they were in the camp of the Unionist Party, it remained in power and when they joined the All India Muslim League, it achieved its target. Had the landed aristocrats been in camp of the Unionist Party, perhaps, history of the Subcontinent would have been different.

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