

Politics through the Pulpit: The 'Ulamā' and the Cawnpore, Shahid Ganj and Manzil Gah Mosques Incidents

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ABSTRACT

In South Asia, religion and religious places play a vital role in state affairs and have great significance for all segments of society. Hindus and Muslims were/are two major communities, followed by Sikhs, who were/are in a struggle to preserve their social and religious identities. In this endeavour, the differences of these communities, inter alia, were/are mostly based on the claim of ownership and stewardship of religious places.

Under colonial rule, this conflict was intensified and the South Asian Muslims, like other communities, went through crises regarding the ownership and sanctity of religious sites and awqāf. The Cawnpore Mosque (1913), the Shahid Ganj Mosque, Lahore (1935) and the Manzil Gah Mosque, Sukkur (1939) incidents are most important of them. They are the subject of this piece.

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The Cawnpore Mosque incident occurred due to the 'incompetency' of local authorities, whereas, the Shahid Ganj Mosque affair was a conflict between the Muslims and the Sikhs. The Manzil Gah Mosque issue was politically maneuvered and was aimed at the Sind Government. Later on, due to the involvement of the Hindu community, the issue was transformed into a religious-cum-communal conflict. Ironically, the Christian British were the 'authority' to decide all these issues.

These incidents are described here along with the reasons, why, while they were essentially Hindu / Sikh-Muslim conflicts, they were, to some extent, transformed into anti-government movements. The 'ulamā', played a major role in the conflicts and so, they are the central focus of this paper.

Introduction

Besides other religio-political issues involving, South Asian Muslims during the British Raj (1858-1947), the demolition and sacrilege of mosques and other sacred places by the government authorities or by non-Muslims, either intentionally or unintentionally, were one of the most important issues. The Muslims always took these acts as direct interference in the discharge of their religious duties and their religio-political leadership mostly blamed the government and non-Muslims for creating these crises. They also claimed that these incidents had been against the letter and spirit of Queen Victoria's (1819-1901) Royal Proclamation of November 1858 which, *inter alia*, guaranteed non-interference in the religions of Indian populace. The main aims and objectives of this piece of research are to highlight the religio-political scene of British India (1858-1947) during the twentieth century, especially the state of affairs about Muslim endowments and how the 'ulamā' and *pīrs* came forward to lead and mobilize public opinion on these issues.

Cawnpore Mosque

The first organized and violent public reaction to the desecration of a mosque occurred in Cawnpore (now Kanpur). The Municipal Committee, Cawnpore on July 1, 1913, in the presence of the District Magistrate and Police, demolished the ablution/washing place of the mosque situated on the eastern side of the cramped Machhli Bazar for the expansion of A. B. Road. That expansion was a part of the Improvement Scheme of the city for which the Municipal Committee was allotted Rs. 250,000 by the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces (UP) Sir John Hewett (1854-1941) in December 1908. The Municipal Committee obtained approval for the expansion of the road on April 7, 1909.¹ The Muslims of Cawnpore were greatly perturbed over these developments and sought *fatāwā* from local and other '*ulamā*'; they declared the washing place to be an integral part of the mosque and so it was unlawful to demolish, sell or exchange it for another piece of property. However, Mawlānā Muḥammad Qīyāmuddīn 'Abdul Bārī Farangī Maḥallī (1878-1926) issued a *fatwā* in which he opined that the demolition of the washing place of the mosque had been permissible, as it took place outside the mosque's premises. Mawlānā Shāh Muḥammad Aḥmad Raḍā Khān Barelwī (1856-1921), however, strongly opposed such a stance on the grounds that it would be dangerous for the future of other mosques in British India.²

1 B. K. Das-Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque* (Calcutta: S. C. Chowdhury, 1913), 3-5.

2 For details see, Aḥmad Raḍā Khān, *Aibānatul matuwārī fī muṣāliḥatul 'Abdul Bārī* (Bareilly: Maṭba' Ahl-i-Sunnat wa Jamā'at, 1913/14), and Muḥammad Amjad 'Alī, *Qāmi' al-wāḥiāt min jāmi' al-juzī'āt* (Bareilly: Maṭba' Ahl-i-Sunnat wa Jamā'at, 1913/14). It is important to note that, Mawlānā 'Abdul Bārī Farangī Maḥallī was a delegate of a Muslim deputation, which, on August 16, 1913, met UP Lieutenant-Governor Sir James Meston at Lucknow and *inter alia*, allegedly changed his position and stated that the portion of mosque demolished was sacred and was an integral part of the mosque. Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 92-98. The *Jam'īyyat-i-'Ulamā'-i-Hind* (JUH), referring to the Cawnpore incident through resolutions adopted in its meetings held on August 29, 1924, and on January 11, 1925 at Delhi and Moradabad respectively stressed the need to forge a united front to stop the demolition

Sir James Meston (1865-1943), the Lieutenant-Governor of the UP, during his visit to the city in November 1912 gave a public assurance that 'the temple and mosque will be saved in their entirety'.³ Between May 15 and July 2, 1913, he engaged in a detailed correspondence with (Mawlānā) Muhammad Ali Juhar (1878-1931) about the issue as he was viewed to be a leading representative of the Muslims.⁴ However, the local authorities ignored the *fatāwā* and Muslims' appeals and memorials made to the local, provincial, and central governments⁵ and demolished the mosque washing area. A Hindu temple, commonly known as *Tilī's* temple, situated in the middle of the road, however, remained untouched by the authorities due to strong resistance to its destruction from Hindus. Even after all that, the Muslims tried to resolve the issue peacefully, but all in vain. On the day of the demolition, a large number of Muslims gathered and a huge public meeting was held in the evening followed by another one on July 16 and 23. They demanded restoration of the demolished portion of the mosque. The intensity of the protest and the indignation it aroused in Cawnpore soon found its echo in the major cities of British India.⁶ The press communiqué issued by the UP Government on July 25, 1913, *inter alia*, vowed that the whole occurrence had been greatly exaggerated and misrepresented and local Muslims took no action regarding the mosque, although the necessary

of the mosques in British India. It also reiterated its concerns about the different incidents regarding the demolition of mosques that happened in different areas particularly in Delhi and Bharatpore State. Sayyīd Muḥammad Miyyān, ed., *Jam'īyyat-i-'ulamā' kīā hae?* (Lahore: Muḥammad Rīāḍ Durrānī, 2001), 188-189, 196-197.

- 3 Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics: A Study relating to the Political activities of the Ulema in the South-Asian Subcontinent from 1556 to 1947* (Karachi: Ma'aref, 1974), 238, and Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 8-9.
- 4 For details see, Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 13-27, and Afzal Iqbal, ed., *My Life, A Fragment: An Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1966).
- 5 These memorials were submitted by Barrister Shāhid Ḥusāin and Rājah of Maḥmūdābād on separate occasions and the whole case was argued at considerable length. Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 27.
- 6 Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 29-33, 41-49, 90-92.

notification and plan was issued in November 1909.⁷ Replying the press communiqué, the custodians of the mosque disputed the facts and figures presented by the authorities.⁸

On August 3, *Kānpūrī* Muslims attended a grand protest rally of more than 30,000 held in the local *īdgāh*, and with great passion and heightened emotions, tried to rebuild that portion of the mosque which had been destroyed. The police opened fire on the mob leaving more than two dozen people dead, and more than three dozen injured. Over a hundred people were arrested. This caused great resentment among Indian Muslims⁹ but even then, all requests for permission to rebuild the demolished portion of the mosque were turned down.¹⁰

The Cawnpore incident gradually 'developed into an Imperial rather than a provincial grievance'.¹¹ During this crisis, the '*ulamā*', for the first time in British India stepped into the front line, and, along with some 'Westernized' Muslim leaders, led the anti-government agitation and to some extent emerged triumphant. This debut of the '*ulamā*' on the Indian political scene introduced a new dimension into Muslim politics.

7 Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 34-37. Meston believed that the 'entire forces of the new Mahommedan machinery for agitation were being dishonestly used on a false cry of religious sentiment to show that the demagogues who now aspire to lead the Mussulman community can defeat the government and wring concessions from it by mere shouting.' P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 184.

8 Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 37-41.

9 The AIML, while deploring the action of the government in issuing the press communiqué, vowed that the August 3 incident was a reaction to this communiqué. Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 69.

10 H. B. Khān, *Barr-i-Ṣaghīr Pāk-o-Hind kī Sīyāsāt maīn 'Ulamā' kā Kirdār* (Islamabad: Qūmī Idārah Barāē Tehqīq Tārīkh-o-Thiqāfat, 1985), 95-96. For instance, Mawlānā Shiblī Nu'mānī (1857-1914), Sayyīd Fadlul Ḥassan alias Mawlānā Ḥasrat Mohānī (1878-1951), Khawājah Ḥassan Nizāmī (1878-1955) and Mawlānā Abū'l Kalām Āzād (1888-1958) vehemently wrote both in prose and poetry and spoke against the incident. Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics*, 233, 238-239. For the Muslims' reaction in the British Punjab and role of Mawlānā Ḥasrat 'Alī Khān, see, J. S. Rakkar, *Muslim Politics in The Punjab* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1985), 228-231, and Hardy, *The Muslims Of British India*, 184-185.

11 Hardinge, *My Indian Years, 1910-1916* (London: John Murray, 1948), 87.

Mawlānā ‘Abdul Qādir Azād Subḥānī (1882-1957)¹² and (Mawlānā) Muhammad Ali Juhar¹³ took a leading part in the agitation and were arrested. Mawlānā Nisār Aḥmad Kānpūrī (1880-1931), Mawlānā ‘Abdul Aḥad Pīlībhitī (1880/81-1933) and Mawlānā ‘Abdul Bārī Farangī Maḥallī also played an important role during the agitation and strongly advocated the Muslim cause. The Council of the All-India Muslim League (AIML) (December 1906), in its emergency meeting held on July 21, 1913, adopted a formal resolution asking the Viceroy to intervene in the Cawnpore Mosque Issue, which, according to the resolution, seriously wounded Muslim religious feelings. It earnestly urged the Indian Government to direct the restoration of the demolished portion of the mosque to allay the growing feeling of resentment by Muslims.¹⁴

In September, a two-man deputation, comprising (Mawlānā) Muhammad Ali Juhar and Sir Syed Wazir Hassan (1874-1947), secretary of the AIML, was also sent to England to represent the Muslim cause to government officials and the general public. However, Lord Robert Crewe-Milnes (1858-1945), the Secretary of State for India refused to even see them.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the Viceroy, Baron Hardinge (1858-1944), on October 14, 1913 reached Cawnpore from Shimla to deal with the issue as Sir James Meston was in England. The

12 Nabī Bakhsh Balūch, *Mawlānā Āzād Subḥānī* (Lahore: Idārah-i-Tehqīqāt-i-Pākistān, 1989), 20-27.

13 Zāhīr ‘Alī Ṣiddīqī, *Mawlānā Muḥammad ‘Alī aūr Jang-i-azādī* (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 1998), 79-80.

14 Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement, Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 47. The Anjuman-i-Islāmiyyah Panjāb, Lāhūr (1869) in its meeting held on July 23, 1913, appealed to the government to rebuild the demolished portion of the mosque. Aḥmad Sa‘īd, *Musalmānān-i-Panjāb kī Samāji aūr Falāḥi Anjumāin: Aik Tajziyātī Muṭālī‘ah* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 2004), 9. The other *Anjumans* of the Punjab also protested against the Cawnpore Mosque incident. For details see, Sa‘īd, *Musalmānān-i-Panjāb kī Samāji aūr Falāḥi Anjumāin*, 42-43, 285.

15 Wazir Hassan on his return from London in one of his speeches characterized the refusal to meet and listen to them as the ‘closure of doors of justice’ on Muslims. Muhammad Saleem Ahmad, *The All-India Muslim League: A History of the Growth and Consolidation of Political Organisation* (Bahawalpur: Ilham Publishers, 1988), 155.

Viceroy visited the mosque and after meeting with the local authorities and Muslim community leaders, decided to release 106 prisoners and ordered the cases against them to be withdrawn. The Viceroy also granted permission to the Muslims to rebuild the demolished portion of the mosque. This was very well received by Muslims throughout British India.¹⁶ Later on, the demolished portion of the mosque was restored as suggested by the Viceroy, at the expense of the British Government as the India Office sanctioned an amount of Rs. 4,000 for the purpose.¹⁷ In an extraordinary meeting of the AIML held at Lucknow on November 16, 1917, *inter alia*, the party authorized Sir Muhammad Ali Muhammad Khan Rājah of Maḥmūdābād (1878-1931) to help the victims of the incident by distributing Rs. 25,000 from the Cawnpore Mosque Trust.¹⁸ Thus, the incident which aroused so much religious and anti-British feeling among the Muslims became a matter of history.

Shahid Ganj Mosque

The greatest level of participation by *‘ulamā’* and *mashā’ikh* in a religious issue during the British Raj, however, was

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- 16 Hardinge, *My Indian Years*, 87-88. Sir Ibrahim Rahimtulla (1862-1942) in his presidential address in the Seventh Annual Session of the AIML held at Agra on December 30-31, 1913, appreciated the ‘farsighted statesmanship’ of Lord Hardinge to get the issue resolved. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, ed., *Foundations of Pakistan, All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1947, Vol. I 1906-1924* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2007), 270. Mawlānā Ḥasrat Mohānī and Mawlawī ‘Abdul Wadūd opposed the thanks-giving resolution for Lord Hardinge. The resolution presented by Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, The Agha Khan III (1877-1957), however, was adopted by the Session. Nafīs Aḥmad Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥasrat Mohānī aur Inqilāb-i-āzādī* (Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1998), 131. Also see the address presented to the Viceroy by Sayyīd Faḍlur Raḥmān, Secretary, District Muslim League on behalf of the Muslims. Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 189-191. The extreme section of the Anglo-Indian Press, however, criticized the ‘interference’ of the Viceroy in a local issue. Gupta, *The Cawnpore Mosque*, 195-202.
- 17 M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British India: The Politics of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 41, 356.
- 18 Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, ed., *Foundations of Pakistan, All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1947, Vol. III 1906-1947* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2008), 117.

witnessed during the Shahid Ganj Mosque Agitation. Sir Malcolm Hailey (1872-1969) the Governor of the British Punjab (1924-1928), in December 1927 under Schedule 1 of the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925,¹⁹ declared Shahid Ganj and adjacent land to be part of the Gurdwara. The Shahid Ganj was revered by the Sikhs as a place of martyrdom, including women and children. They had been executed mainly, allegedly by a Mughal governor, Zakariya Khan (d.1745). The site, however, was also sacred to the Muslims as they believed it was also the spot where a mosque was built by ‘Abdullāh Khān in 1645. When the *Bhangī* Sikh *Sardārs* occupied Lahore in 1764, they named the place Shahid Ganj, a heap or storehouse of martyrs.²⁰ The sacredness of Shahid Ganj was duly recognized by Ranjīt Singh (1780-1839) and even by the British.²¹ The Muslims of the British Punjab (1849-1947) were, since April 1850, engaged in litigation to get the mosque back and to restore it to what they regarded as its rightful position as a Muslim building. They adopted every possible method to get the site returned but they failed.²²

It was only after the Punjab Government’s official notifications of April 1926 and December 1927 regarding property that the issue once again became a bone of contention between Sikhs and Muslims. The *Anjuman-i-Khuddāmūl Masājīd*, Amritsar, was probably the first to take notice and appealed to the Governor to exclude Shahid Ganj from Schedule 1 and asked Muslim members of the Punjab Legislative Council to demand its exclusion. It also appealed to the Shiromani Gurdwara

19 Under the influence of the Gurdwara Reform Movement, this Act was passed for the effective management of all Sikh shrines and religious places of worship through the Sikh central board, the SGPC. Ganda Singh, *History of the Gurdwara Shahidganj, Lahore, from its origin to November 1935* (Lahore: S. Ganda Singh, Khalsa College, Amritsar, 1935), 58. Likewise, to regulate the income of the Muslims’ *Awqāf*, the Waqf Act, 1923 was also passed by the Indian Legislative Council which was enforced in the Punjab in September 1924. *Intizām wa Isti’māl-i-Awqāf kē muta’līq ‘Ulamā’-i-kirām kē Fatwē* (Lahore: Hīmāiat-i-Islām Press, 1935), 4.

20 Singh, *History of the Gurdwara Shahidganj*, 3.

21 Singh, *History of the Gurdwara Shahidganj* 41-42.

22 K. L. Gauba, *Famous and Historic Trials* (Lahore: Lion Press, 1946), 79.

Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) to voluntarily hand over the mosque to Muslims.²³ Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan (1892-1942) Premier of the British Punjab, tried to persuade the Sikhs to grant the right of prayers in the mosque for Muslims, but they refused.²⁴ On July 6, 1935 a Muslim delegation met Sir Herbert W. Emerson (1881-1962), Governor of the British Punjab, and suggested him that the government should take over the mosque in the public interest by paying compensation to the Sikhs.²⁵ Before the government could take any official position, the mosque, situated in Noulakha Bazar, Lahore, was demolished, allegedly by Sikhs on July 8, 1935 under the protection of a cordon of British troops, in order to transform it into full-fledged Gurdwara.²⁶ It led to a widespread Muslim protests, Sikh-Muslim riots, and intensification of anti-Punjab Government sentiments, particularly in the British Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), and the tribal areas.²⁷ Few non-Muslims were killed and both their private and their common religious properties in some tribal areas were destroyed.²⁸ Despite the local authorities' warning given to the

23 Sa'īd, *Musalmānān-i-Panjāb kī Samājī aur Falāḥī Anjumanīn*, 42-43.

24 S. Qalb-i-Abid, *Muslim Politics in the Punjab, 1921-47* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Pvt. Ltd., 1992), 201. The AIML fully supported the efforts made by the Premier to resolve the issue. For details see, Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, ed., *Foundations of Pakistan, All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1947, Vol. II 1924-1947* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2007), 264-270.

25 Muhammad Khurshid, *Feudal Ascendancy and the Role of Sir Fazl-i-Husain in The Punjab Politics (1901-1936)* (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 2014), 270.

26 Singh, *History of the Gurdwara Shahidganj*, 66, and Gauba, *Famous and Historic Trials*, 86-87. Planes of the Royal Air Force also flew over the city as a show of force.

27 Protest rallies and meetings were also held in Peshawar, Alwar (August 12, 1935), Badaun (October 19-21, 1935), and Bareilly. *NWFP I.P.A, D.O.A. Peshawar, S. No. 43/7270/1936*, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar; Nasīm Kūthar, "Tehrik-i-Masjid Shahid Ganj, 1935 tā 1939" (Lahore: M. A. thesis, University of the Punjab, 1971), 78-79 and Aṣaīdūl Ḥaqq Muḥammad 'Aṣim Qādirī, ed., *Aḥwāl-o-maqāmāt* (Badaun: Tājūl Faḥūl Akāīdamī, 2009), 65.

28 F. H. Puckle, Chief Secretary to Government, Punjab To All Deputy Commissioners in the Punjab, Punjab Civil Secretariat, No. C.6 (6) 21-S.B;

Muslim press and to local leaders not to instigate Muslim demonstrations against Sikhs, huge Muslim protest meeting and demonstrations were held at Lahore on July 14 and again on July 19. The Punjab Government was unwilling to act against the courts' decisions and considered it to be a legal right of the Sikhs to demolish and renovate their 'own' property. Thus, Muslims held the government, and especially the Governor of the British Punjab, morally responsible for the outrage. In a protest meeting held at *Masjid Wazir Khān* (1634/35), Lahore on July 23, it was decided to launch a civil disobedience movement against the irresponsible attitude of the government.²⁹

The climax of the Shahid Ganj Mosque agitation was the holding of a two-day Muslim Conference at Rawalpindi on August 31 and September 1, 1935. It was called by Mawlānā Muḥammad Ishāq Mānsehrāwī (1856-1962). One unexpected success of the organizers was the presence of Pīr Sayyīd Jamā'at 'Alī Shāh 'Alīpūrī (1841-1951) of Alipur Sayyidan who, on the recommendation of 'Allāmah Muḥammad 'Ināyat Ullāh Khān al-Mashriqī (1888-1963), founder of the *Khāksār Tehrīk* (KT) (April 1931) was made *Amīr-i-Sharī'at* and a 'dictator'.³⁰ The general trend of discussion went to show that there was the will to create wholesale trouble for the government. Resultantly, the Conference, *inter alia*, adopted the following resolutions:

- i. This Conference declares the recovery of the Shahid Ganj Mosque to be incumbent on the Muslims from a religious point of view;

Dated Simla-E, the 11th September, 1935. Acc. No.3078 IORL/P&J/7/931. National Documentation Wing (NDW), Islamabad.

29 It is pertinent to mention that the topmost leaders of the Punjab National Unionist Party (February 1923) was against the call of civil disobedience and agitation, although some of its leaders passively condemned the government favouritism towards the Hindus and Sikhs. Khurshid, *Feudal Ascendancy and the Role of Sir Fazl-i-Husain*, 270-271, 274-275.

30 Sayyīd Akhtar Ḥusāin aūr Muḥammad Ṭāhir Fārūqī, eds., *Sīrat-i-Amīr-i-Millat* (Alipur Sayyidan: Ṣāhibzādah al-Ḥājj Pīr Sayyīd Akhtar Ḥusāin Shāh, 1990), 455-475, and Sanā'Ullāh Akhtar, *Khāksār Tehrīk kī Inqalābī Jidd-o-juhad* (Rawalpindi: Sanā'Ullāh Akhtar, 2003), 131.

- ii. The Conference decides that a Shahid Ganj Day be observed on September 20, 1935, and;
- iii. The Conference declares that to regain the mosque, civil disobedience shall have to be resorted to, for which the actual date shall be announced after September 20, by the *Amīr* and all other directions for all matters will be issued by the *Majlis-i-Shūrā*.³¹

To centralize all works and other arrangements regarding the Shahid Ganj Mosque affairs, by the end of 1935, Pīr Jamā'at 'Alī Shāh formed the *Majlis-i-Ittiḥād-i-Millat* (MIM) at Lahore and successfully organized branches in many parts of the British India, especially the British Punjab. Special instructions, including the formation of a volunteers' body, the *Khuddām-i-Millat-i-Islāmīyyah*, were announced by the *Amīr* in connection with the celebrations of September 20. The *Amīr* also requested Muslims to refuse to say funeral prayers and to give burial space in their graveyards to those who were unwilling to participate in this bout of agitation.³²

The Punjab Government in a meeting held on September 7, decided to ban the observance of the Shahid Ganj Mosque Day scheduled for September 20. However, Muslims observed 'Shahid Ganj Day' with partial strikes and the holding of public meetings mostly in the British Punjab.³³ A big public meeting, held under the chairmanship of Pīr Jamā'at 'Alī Shāh voted to start a mass contact campaign.³⁴

31 F. H. Puckle, Chief Secretary to Government, Punjab To All Deputy Commissioners in the Punjab, Punjab Civil Secretariat, No. C.6 (6) 21-S.B; Dated Simla-E, the 11th September, 1935. Acc. No.3078 IORL/P&J/7/931. NDW, Islamabad. However, the MAI opposed these resolutions. Jānbāz Mirzā, *Kārawān-i-Aḥrār (jild duvvum)* (Lahore: Maktabah Tabṣirah, 1977), 263-263.

32 Husaīn, *Sīrat-i-Amīr-i-Millat*, 459-460.

33 Muḥammad Khurshīd, "Tanāza'ah Masjid Shahīd Ganj: Tajzīyātī Muṭālī'ah", *Mujallah Tārkh-o-Thiqāfat-i-Pākistān*, Vol. 5 (October 1994): 15; monthly *Talū'-i-Islām* (Delhi) (October 1935): 42 and 'Abdul Ghanī, *Amīr-i-Ḥizbullāh* (Jalalpur Sharif: Idārah-i-Ḥizbullāh, 1965), 352.

34 David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (London: I. B. Tauris Co Ltd., 1988), 104. However, Pīr Jamā'at 'Alī Shāh, coming from Multan, was prevented from entering Bahawalpur on October 2, 1935, where he wanted to deliver speeches giving harrowing accounts of the

Almost immediately after Pīr Jamā‘at ‘Alī Shāh’s appointment as a ‘dictator’, other *Panjābī pīrs*, *sajjādah-nashīns* and organizations came out in support of the protest movement. Pīr Sayyīd Ghulām Muḥḥyuddīn of Golra (1891-1974), the *Anjuman Fidā‘īyān-i-Islām* (1930) of Makhdūm Sayyīd Zaīnūl ‘Ābidīn Shāh Gīlanī of Multan (1885-1960) and the *Markazī Anjuman-i-Hizbul Aḥnāf Hind, Lāhūr* (1924) pledged to carry out Pīr Jamā‘at ‘Alī Shāh’s orders by following the *Shar‘at* on this issue.³⁵ While addressing the grand protest rally at Jalalpur, Pīr Sayyīd Muḥammad Faḍl Shāh (1894-1966) strongly condemned the government policy and urged the *ṣūfīa*’ and *mashā‘ikh* to unite in support of the Shahid Ganj movement. He also offered to provide 5,000 volunteers for the movement.³⁶

After the celebration of Shahid Ganj Mosque Day, (Mawlānā) Shaukat Ali (1873-1938) addressed a letter to Master Tārā Singh (1885-1967) in which he offered him for negotiations on the issue. Although a meeting was held on October 3 at Amritsar among the leaders of the Sikhs and the Muslims, nothing of a positive nature came out of the talks as both sides adhered to their strongly-held beliefs about the correctness of their position.³⁷ Amid this tense religio-political atmosphere, tension between the Sikhs and Muslims worsened and on October 23, the Sikhs and the Hindus were attacked by Muslims in Lahore. It was also claimed that the Sikhs were being supported and instigated to attack Muslims by the Hindus.³⁸ Pīr Jamā‘at ‘Alī Shāh gave a call to Muslim youth to perform their Friday prayer at historic *Bādshāhī Masjid* (1671) in Lahore, on November 8, 1935. Eventually, more than 100,000 people gathered there. After Friday prayer, Pīr

Shahid Ganj occurrences. D. O. No.-1860-C, dated 6.10.35. IOR R/1/1/2741. NDW, Islamabad.

35 Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, 103-104, 138.

36 Ghanī, *Amīr-i-Hizbullāh*, 345, 350-352.

37 Singh, *History of the Gurdwara Shahidganj*, 93-96.

38 ‘Letters of Chhuto Ram to Mian Sahib, dated 20 and 21 July 1935, from Lahore’, In *Letters of Mian Fazl-i-Husain*, ed., Waheed Ahmad (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1976), 411-416.

Jamā'at 'Alī Shāh led an impressive protest rally, with naked swords, sticks, spears, and axes being waved by some congregants and widespread chanting of anti-Sikh and anti-government slogans. After marching on the city, the procession ended in a *bāgh* outside Delhi Gate and the march turned into a public meeting.³⁹ The procession and rally were attended and addressed by 'ulamā', *mashā'ikh* and other Muslim leaders. Prominent among them were Mawlānā Shāh Muḥammad Ḥāmid Raḍā Khāṇ Barelwī (1875-1943), Mawlānā Sayyīd Ghulām Bhīk Naīrang Ambālī (1875/76-1952), Pīr Makhdūm Sayyīd Ṣadrūddīn Shāh Gīlānī (d.1946), Ṣāhibzādah Sayyīd Muḥammad Ḥusāin Shāh 'Alipūrī (1878-1961), Ṣāhibzādah Sayyīd Nūr Ḥusāin Shāh 'Alipūrī (1899-1978) and Pīr Sayyīd Walā'tat 'Alī Shāh Gujrātī (1888-1970). The leaders and workers of the *Markazī Anjuman-i-Khuddāmul Ṣūfi'-i-Hind* (1901) were also present. (Mawlānā) Shaukat Ali in his address stressed that Muslims should ignore their petty differences and start a united struggle for the restoration of the mosque.⁴⁰ Pīr Jamā'at 'Alī Shāh in his presidential address expressed his deep concern over government's refusal to accept Muslim demands, *i.e.*, the restoration of the mosque, the release of all Muslim prisoners, and the refund of security deposits of the Muslim Press, forfeited to the government.⁴¹ He also directed Muslims to continue their struggle for the restoration of the Shahid Ganj Mosque.⁴² The meeting demanded that all prisoners and detainees be released and it condemned the attitude of the Hindu Press towards the Muslim demands.⁴³ Surprisingly, no resolution was adopted in connection with the Muslims' demand for the restoration of the mosque.

39 Ḥusāin, *Sīrat-i-Amīr-i-Millat*, 460-461. Pīr Jamā'at 'Alī Shāh also staged demonstrations in various parts of the British Punjab.

40 Ḥusāin, *Sīrat-i-Amīr-i-Millat*, 464-465.

41 The securities of dailies *Iḥsān* (Lahore), *Zamīndār* (Lahore) and *Sīyāsat* (Lahore) were forfeited.

42 Ḥusāin, *Sīrat-i-Amīr-i-Millat*, 465-467.

43 Ḥusāin, *Sīrat-i-Amīr-i-Millat*, 467-468.

The next day, November 9, Pīr Jamā‘at ‘Alī Shāh presided over the meeting of the *Majlis-i-Shūrā* of the MIM at Barkat Ali Muhammadan Hall (1905) outside Mochi Gate, Lahore. It was also attended by other Muslim religio-political leaders. After six-hour-long deliberations, the *Shūrā* agreed to issue a press statement condemning the Punjab Government’s attitude towards the Muslims’ demands. The *Shūrā*, on the plea that as most of its delegates could not manage to attend the meeting, an All-Parties Muslim Conference would be called for January 9-11, 1936 at Lahore. The *Shūrā* also resolved to enrol one million volunteers for the cause of the Shahid Ganj Mosque campaign, by the end of December 1935.⁴⁴

Both the Central and the Punjab Governments were very much disturbed by the issue and faced difficulties in solving it. Sir Herbert Emerson invited Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), later would be known as *Qā‘id-i-Ā‘zam* (great leader) to help them out. By late February 1936, Jinnah reached Lahore and set-up an arbitration board composed of representatives of both communities. By March 7, he had still not succeeded in bringing about a rapprochement between the Muslims and the Sikhs.⁴⁵

The AIML in October 1937 through one of its resolutions passed in the Twenty-Fifth Session held at Lucknow, condemned the ‘wanton demolition’ of the mosque under the protection of ‘British troops and guns’ and declared it ‘a most intolerable interference with the Law of Islam’. The AIML

44 Singh, *History of the Gurdwara Shahidganj*, 98-101. However, this announcement was criticized by the press.

45 Iftikhar H. Malik, “The Ahrar-Unionist Conflict and The Punjab Politics During The Thirties,” *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, V, no. 1 (Jan-June 1984): 50. However, the AIML in its 24th Session held in Bombay (now Mumbai) in April 1936, through a resolution, offered its gratitude to Jinnah for his ‘valuable services rendered in connection with the Shahid Ganj Mosque question’ as he ‘made the Government of the Punjab accept the demands of the Musalmans’. Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 233. The Muslim Leaguers of the Punjab, in their joint statement issued in May 1936, including Dr Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), Malik Barkat Ali and Rajah Ghazanfar Ali Khan (1895-1963) expressed their appreciation of his efforts and services rendered to the Muslims of the Punjab. Muḥammad Rafiq Afḍal, ed., *Guftār-i-Iqbāl* (Lahore: Idārah-i-Tehqīqāt-i-Pākistān, 1977), 202-206.

urged the British Government to restore the mosque to its original condition.⁴⁶ The *Jam'īyyat-i-'Ulamā'-i-Hind* (JUH), (November 1919) also condemned the destruction of the mosque and the police firing on Muslim protesters. It also expressed its concern that the government had not played its due role in safeguarding Muslim places of worship.⁴⁷

In July 1935, in reply to a question on the subject, Mawlānā Shāh Muḥammad Muṣṭafah Raḍā Khān Barelwī (1892-1981) issued a *fatwā* in which he declared that any place that had once been a mosque would remain a mosque forever, regardless of whether it had been demolished or was no longer in function. Referring to the importance of the Shahid Ganj Mosque, he stated that it had been the symbol and represented identity of the Muslims and Islam. He declared those who had been killed by the police firing during the agitation in July 1935 at Lahore to be martyrs.⁴⁸

In a grand public meeting held on October 25, 1935, at Bareilly under the auspices of *Jamā'at Raḍā-i-Muṣṭafah*, Bareilly (JRM) (December 1920) and chaired by Mawlānā Ḥamid Raḍā Khān, speeches were made condemning the government's policies in support of the Sikhs during the Shahid Ganj incident and it resolved that Muslims would never be satisfied until and unless the mosque were handed over to them.⁴⁹ *Markazīyyah Majlis Hizbul Anṣār*, Bhera (November 1929) in its eighth annual meeting held in March 1938 at Bhera, *inter alia*, adopted a resolution through which it urged

46 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 251-252.

47 Mirzā, *Kārawān-i-Aḥrār*, 248-249.

48 Muḥammad Muṣṭafah Raḍā Qādirī, *al-Makramat al-Nabīwwyat fī al-fatāwā al-Muṣṭafaiyyah* (Karachi: Barkātī Publishers, 2000), 244-251. Mawlānā Muḥammad 'Abdul Qadīr Badāyūnī (1894-1960) and Khawājah Muḥammad Qamaruddīn (1906-81) Pīr of Sīāl also held this legal and *shar'ī* position of a mosque. Khawājah Qamaruddīn also criticized the Court's ruling in which it declared Shahid Ganj part of a Gurdwara. *Khuṭbah-i-ṣadārat* (Badaun: al-Huda Press, n. d.), 13-15, and Muḥammad Murīd Aḥmad Chishtī, *Fuzūl maqāl fī Khulāfā' Pīr Sīāl, (jild chahārum)* (Karachi: Anjuman Qamarul Islām Sulṭimāniyyah, 2007), 144-146.

49 Weekly *al-Faqīh* (Amritsar), November 14, 1935, 8.

the ‘*ulamā*’ and *ṣūfīā*’ to take collective efforts for the restoration of the mosque.⁵⁰

On October 30, 1935, seventeen Muslims including a number of women filed a writ before the District Sessions Judge, Lahore for the restoration of the mosque. The main pleader was Mawlānā Abū’l Ḥasanāt Sayyīd Muḥammad Aḥmad Qādirī (1896-1961), *khaṭīb* of *Masjid Wazīr Khān*. The Sikhs as defendants denied there had ever been a mosque on the site and claimed to have had possession of the site and its environs for 170 years. Eventually, on March 4, 1937, the suit was dismissed.⁵¹ On November 29, 1937, Muslims filed an appeal in the Lahore High Court (1919),⁵² which was also dismissed by the majority⁵³ of the judges of the full bench on January 26, 1938. After that, Malik Barkat Ali (1886-1946) a veteran Muslim Leaguer, and K. L. Gauba (1899-1981), tried to raise the Shahid Ganj Issue in the Punjab Legislative Assembly and in the Central Legislature respectively, but their efforts failed.⁵⁴

The Council of the AIML, in its meeting held on January 30-31, 1938 at Delhi, expressed its great concerns about the Court’s decision, and resolved that February 18, 1938, would

50 Sāhibzādah Anwār Aḥmad Bugwī, *Tadhkār-i-Bugwīyyah*, Vol. I (Bhera: Markazīyyah Majlis Hizbul Anṣār Pākistān, 2007), 511-522. The *Majlis Hizbul Anṣār* supported the stance taken by the MAI on the Shahid Ganj Incident. Bugwī, *Tadhkār-i-Bugwīyyah*, 691-695.

51 Gauba, *Famous and Historic Trials*, 95-97.

52 Dr Iqbal persuaded Muslims to file an appeal. Malik, “The Ahrar-Unionist Conflict”, 53.

53 Justice Din Muhammad wrote a note of dissent. Gauba, *Famous and Historic Trials*, 104-105.

54 Hilal Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India: Monuments, Memory, Contestation* (London: Routledge, 2014), 95; *Shahīd Ganj kē muta’līq Wazīr-i-ā’zam Panjāb kā Bīān* (Lahore: Mufīd-i-ām Press, 1938); Khurshid, *Feudal Ascendancy and the Role of Sir Fazl-i-Husain*, 271-272, and Gauba, *Famous and Historic Trials*, 92-93, 106-111. Malik Barkat ‘Alī presented ‘Punjab Muslim Mosques Protection Bill of 1938’ which was also opposed by the government. Mawlānā Maḥzar ‘Alī Aḥzar (1895-1974), in November 1937 gave notice for a resolution to be discussed in the Punjab Assembly regarding the Shahid Ganj Mosque. Khān Kābilī al-Afghānī, ed., *Tahrīk-i-masjid Shahīd Ganj 37 wa 38 maīn* (Agra: Rifāh-i-ām Press, n. d.), 7-9.

be observed as Shahid Ganj Day.⁵⁵ The Day was indeed observed in many parts of the country.⁵⁶ As a final appeal Muslims filed an appeal to the Privy Council in London,⁵⁷ the highest court of appeal in the British Empire, but in 1940 the decision went against them.⁵⁸ Although, many Muslim organizations, such as the KT⁵⁹ and the *Majlis-i-Aḥrār-i-Islām*⁶⁰ (MAI) (December 1929) as well as various individuals, were involved in this agitation in one way or the other. Within a few months, however, the campaign ended in complete failure. The site remained in Sikh hands.

The Muslim public opinion was by no means unanimous about the campaign. Pīr Jamā‘at ‘Alī Shāh, the venerated figure of the movement, was reluctant to be a participant, however, he did advocate the economic boycott of the Sikhs and the

55 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. III, 238.

56 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 263.

57 *al-Faqīh*, August 7, 1939, 8.

58 The JUH condemned the decision of the Privy Council and concluded that it was part of the ongoing onslaught on Muslim religious matters. Miṣyān, *Jam‘iyyat-i-‘ulamā’ kī hae?* 309.

59 Akhtar, *Khāksār Tehrīk kī Inqalābī Jidd-o-juhad*, 126-132. Four Khāksārs were killed on July 20, 1935, in police firing. Akhtar, *Khāksār Tehrīk kī Inqalābī Jidd-o-juhad*, 128.

60 Initially the *Majlis* enthusiastically involved itself in the Shahid Ganj issue; however, it was reluctant to start an agitation for the mosque. The MAI perceived that the issue was a conspiracy against it, and planned by the Government and Sir Miān Faḍl-i-Ḥusāin (1877-1936). Mirzā, *Kārawān-i-Aḥrār*, 222. According to its leadership, the *Majlis* policy was directed and endorsed by Mawlānā Shāh ‘Abdul Qādir Rāipūrī (1878-1962), and Mawlānā Abus Sa‘ad Aḥmad Khān (1879/80-1941), founder of Khānqāh Sarājīyyah, Kundian. Maḥbūb Allāhī, *Tuḥfah-i-Sa‘adiyyah* (Kundian: Khānqāh Sarājīyyah, 1979), 118. For details see, M. Rafiq Akhtar, *The Great Orator* (Multan: Tahreek Tahaffuz Khatam-e-Nubuwwat, 1988), 81, and *Majmu‘ah Chuhdarī Afḍal Haqq (Jild Duwwum)* (Lahore: al-Faisal, 2016), 889-897. However, Sayyid ‘Aṭā’ Ullāh Shāh Bukhārī (1892-1961), a famous *Aḥrārī* orator, appealed to observe April 14, 1936 as a *yūm-i-du‘ā’* for the case of the mosque. *Majlis* also launched a civil disobedience movement in December 1937 and some of its workers demonstrated in Lahore in February 1938. al-Afghānī, *Tehrīk-i-masjid Shahīd Ganj*, 24-29. This relative silence on the issue by *Aḥrārīs* was, most probably due to forthcoming elections. It badly damaged their religio-political reputation among *Panjābī* Muslims in the coming years.

Hindus.⁶¹ In fact, he was trying to halt the movement as he was subject to intense pressure from moderate Muslims and the government, which completely undermined his freedom of action.⁶² Some elements in the *Majlis*, however, wanted to translate their Rawalpindi Conference words into action by rousing the religious feelings of the masses as well as that of religious leaders. Thus, a new organization, the Blue Shirts emerged to continue the struggle for the mosque, which, for the time being, touched the heart and warmed the soul of Muslims. On July 20 and 21, events turned violent once again when police opened fire on a procession in Lahore killing several Muslims.⁶³ This heightened the passions the issue aroused and the divisions it caused.

The leading Barelwi '*ulamā*' and *mashā'ikh* were, for example, also divided on this issue. Pīr Faḍl Shāh was by no means ready to withdraw the Muslim claim for the mosque. Until 1938, he continued to demand its restoration.⁶⁴ Pīr Mihr 'Alī Shāh of Golra (1859-1937), on the other hand, right from the onset of the issue, was against launching such a movement.⁶⁵

Pīr Jamā'at 'Alī Shāh, being aware of this polarization and the attendant bouts of character assassination this caused,⁶⁶ struggled to prevent Muslims from launching any civil disobedience movement without his approval. He advised them to follow the policy of wait and see, as the case was

61 For details see, F. H. Puckle, Chief Secretary to Government, Punjab To All Deputy Commissioners in the Punjab, Punjab Civil Secretariat, No. C.6 (6) 21-S.B; Dated Simla-E, the 11th September, 1935. Acc. No.3078 IORL/P&J/7/931. NDW, Islamabad; Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, 103-105, 138 and Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of The Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1998), 214.

62 Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, 105.

63 Gauba, *Famous and Historic Trials*, 90-92.

64 Ghanī, *Amir Hizbullāh*, 353.

65 Faḍl Aḥmad, *Mihr-i-Munīr* (Lahore: Pakistan International Printers, n. d.), 144-145.

66 *al-Faqīh*, November 14, 1935, 8. In one of the resolutions, passed by a meeting, held on October 25, 1935, at Bareilly, the JRM strongly condemned the statements critical of Pīr Jamā'at 'Alī Shāh.

pending with the Lahore High Court. In the meantime, he embarked for the Ḥajj, to be held in the first week of February 1936 so his voice was lost in the debate.⁶⁷

The Shahid Ganj Mosque incident was a public display of the fact that the Muslim religio-political leadership, particularly in the British Punjab failed to get the issue settled in their favour even though a violent protest movement was launched for this purpose. Although important and influential religio-political personalities such as Pīr Jamā‘at ‘Alī Shāh, Mawlānā Ṣafar ‘Alī Khān (1873-1956),⁶⁸ Sayyīd Muḥammad Ḥabīb Shāh (1891-1951), and Ṣāhibzādah Faīḍul Ḥassan of Alu Mahar (1911-84)⁶⁹ were active all through the campaign, in the end it was all for naught and did not serve the community well except that it aroused Muslim passions and helped the AIML to national prominence as it claimed to be the defender and the spokesman for Muslim interests in the British India. The clash of personalities and interest clashes among the leadership and the rivalry between the MAI and the MIM badly affected the movement. The limitation of Muslim leadership, political authority, and to some extent their inconsistencies led to the collapse of the Shahid Ganj Mosque Movement within a few months.⁷⁰

Manzil Gah Mosque

Mīr Sayyīd Nizāmuddīn Muḥammad Ma‘ṣūm Shāh (d. 1634/35), one of the most celebrated nobles and warriors of Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar’s (1542-1605) court, built a

67 Khurshid, *Feudal Ascendancy and the Role of Sir Fazl-i-Husain*, 273-274.

68 Mawlānā Ṣafar ‘Alī Khān passionately wrote both in prose and poetry on the campaign. For details see, Zāhid ‘Alī Khān, ed., *Chamnīstān* (Lahore: al-Faisal, 2007); and Zāhid ‘Alī Khān, ed., *Nigāristān* (Lahore: al-Faisal, 2007). The different *Anjumans* of the British Punjab also protested against the Shahid Ganj incident. For details see, Sa‘īd, *Musalmānān-i-Panjāb kī Samājī aūr Falāḥī Anjumān*, 9, 42-43, 285.

69 Muḥammad Bashārat ‘Alī aūr Muḥammad Navīd Iqbāl, eds., *Tadhkirah Mashā‘ikh-i-Ālū Mahār Sharīf* (Gujranwala: Tanzīm al-Islām Publications, 2009), 553-554.

70 David Gilmartin, “Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab” In *India’s Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*, ed., Mushirul Hasan (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 217-218.

mosque and an inn near the bank of the Indus River at Sukkur in 1598. The mosque was built allegedly on the ruins of a Hindu temple. After the conquest of Sindh by the British in March 1843, they took possession of this mosque and its peripheral buildings and used them as offices. Although, the Sindhī Muslims demanded its restoration, it was not until April 1936, when Sindh was separated from the Bombay Presidency, and after the first elections of January 1937, that the demand gained a new impetus and strength. The Sind Muslim League (SML) (November 1917), failed to pressure the coalition government (March 1937-March 1938) of Sir Ghulam Husain Hidayat Ullah (1879-1948) and the first coalition ministry (March 1938-March 1940) of Khan Bahadur Allah Bux Soomro (1900-43), to return the mosque, but took up the matter as a major campaign platform with the full support of the AIML central leadership.⁷¹ The incumbent governments, however, were not willing to give any opening to the SML to defeat them on a religious issue. Initially it was a politically motivated issue, with time; however, it turned into a religious issue and incited mass violence in the province.

In October 1938, in a conference held at Karachi, attended by the leaders of both the AIML and the SML, the delegates, *inter alia*, passed a resolution demanding the early restoration of the mosque to the Muslims.⁷² In March 1939, a delegation from a local Muslim organization, the *Jam'īyyat-i-'ulamā'-i-Sindh* called on Allah Bux Soomro and asked for the restoration of the mosque.⁷³

The SML, in a public meeting held on May 19, 1939, announced its support of the demands⁷⁴ and in this

71 Suhail Zaheer Lari, *A History of Sindh* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 184-185.

72 D. A. Pirzada, *Growth of Muslim Nationalism in Sindh: Parting of Ways to Pakistan* (Karachi: Mehran Publishers, 1995), 107-108.

73 *Dawn* (Islamabad), June 13, 2021.

74 G. M. Syed, then a prominent member of the SML opposed the League in its aim of taking up religious matters. Khadim Hussain Soomro, *Allah Bux Soomro (Apostle of Secular harmony)* (Sehwan Sharif: Sain Publishers, 2001), 60-61.

connection, appointed a six-member committee to deal with the matter. It was called, the 'Manzil Gah Restoration Committee' (MRC), and chaired by the renowned local politician Sir Abdullah Haroon (1872-1942). To give religious sanction to the Committee, the influential *Sindhī pīrs*, Pīr 'Abdul Raḥmān of Bhurchundī (1892/93-1960) and Pīr Ghulām Mujaddid Sirhindī (1883-1958) were also appointed members.⁷⁵ The MRC in its meetings held on July 22 and 23, 1939 at Sukkur, and chaired by one of the leading personalities of the province, Muhammad Ayub Khuhro (1901-80), expressed its sadness and disappointment that the mosque had not been handed over to the Muslims. It called upon the Muslim members of the Sind Legislative Assembly (SLA) (April 1937), to advise the government to decide the issue in favour of Muslims and to withdraw their support if it refused to do so. They should then, form an alternative government, which would hand over the mosque to Muslims. The meeting also resolved to enlist 5000 volunteers to campaign for the restoration of the mosque.⁷⁶ A meeting in Matiari, Hyderabad held on August 3, 1939 passed a resolution that called for the government to accede to Muslim claims for the Manzil Gah Mosque.⁷⁷

The MRC in its Sukkur meeting fixed August 18, 1939 to be observed as 'Manzil Gah Masjid Day' by arranging protest meetings in every town and village in Sindh. The Day was observed by holding protest rallies all over the province creating communal tension between the Hindus and the Muslims. Although, the Sind Governor, Sir Lancelot Graham (1880-1958), on October 14, 1938 promulgated an Ordinance to give special powers to the authorities to quell civil unrest, the Sind Government advised Hindus living in small villages

75 The other members were Ayub Khuhro, Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi, Agha Nazarali Pathan, Dr Muhammad Yamin, and Sheikh Wajidali. *Report of the Court of Inquiry Appointed under Section 3 of the Sind Public Inquiries Act to Enquire into the Riots which Occurred at Sukkur in 1939* (Karachi: The Government Press, 1940), 27.

76 *Report of the Court of Inquiry Appointed under Section 3*, 27.

77 Sarah F. D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 118.

to move to bigger villages or towns for better security.⁷⁸ The tension between the two communities was intensified when Pīr ‘Abdul Raḥīm (1912-71), one of the sons of Pīr of Bhurchundī, was assaulted in October 1939 at Sukkur, allegedly by Hindus⁷⁹ and a popular Hindu singer, Bhagat Kanwar Rām (1885-1939), was killed on November 12, 1939. The SLA member Hasārām Sunderdās Pamnānī openly accused the Pīr of Bhurchundī of ordering the killing. For his criticism, Pamnānī was killed on July 17, 1940 at Rohri, ‘purportedly at the direction of the Pīr of Bharchundi’.⁸⁰

On September 16, 1939, the MRC in another meeting, appointed a ‘War Council’ to replace the MRC⁸¹ and announced that it would launch a civil disobedience movement, *Satyagraha*, on October 1.⁸² The call for the campaign was fully supported by the executive committee of the Jam’īyyat-i-Mujaddidīyyah of Sindh, which believed that the government’s stand on the Manzil Gah Masjid was ‘arbitrary’ and ‘tyrannical’.⁸³ Allah Bux Soomro, the premier, wanted to resolve the issue amicably and peacefully, however, for this, he went to Sukkur to talk with the MRC, but nothing came out of the discussions. At the same time, he appealed to the members of the SLA to come up with a solution.⁸⁴ None was forthcoming.

For the Civil Disobedience Movement, Qazi Fazalullah was put in charge of Larkana, G.M. Syed (1904-95) for Dadu, and Muhammad Hashim Gazdar (1893-1968) for Karachi, while Hyderabad was allocated to Pīr Ghulām Mujaddid Sirhindī; Sukkur and Jacobabad were given to Pīr ‘Abdul Raḥmān of

78 Pirzada, *Growth of Muslim Nationalism in Sindh*, 79,108.

79 Sayyīd Muḥammad Fārūqul Qādirī, *Pīr ‘Abdul Raḥīm Shahīd* (Dharki: Ḥāfiẓul Millat Akāḍimī, 1999), 198-200.

80 Michel Boivin, Matthew A. Cook, and Julien Levesque, “Introduction”, *Discovering Sindh’s Past* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2017), 7, and Lari, *A History of Sindh*, 186.

81 *Report of the Court of Inquiry*, 28.

82 Qādirī, *Pīr ‘Abdul Raḥīm Shahīd*, 178.

83 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 118.

84 Soomro, *Allah Bux Soomro*, 59-60, 68-69.

Bhurchundī, to whom Hindus 'regarded as a major threat to their security in the Sukkur region'.⁸⁵ On October 1, the first contingent of protesters comprising 313 volunteers, was dispatched to recapture the mosque, but all were arrested on their journey. The law enforcement authorities who were authorized to arrest anybody without a warrant through the October 1938 Ordinance, arrested almost 2,000 people within the first few days of the campaign. They were, mostly *murīds* of the *Sindhī pīrs*.⁸⁶ Pīr Ghulām Mujaddid Sirhindī and Pīr 'Abdul Raḥmān were also detained for more than six months at Central Jail, Karachi (1906).⁸⁷ In another tactic, the MRC followers began to picket ministers' houses in Karachi to pressure them to decide the matter in their favour.⁸⁸ The Sind Government feeling the intensity of popular voice and its potential for creating civil unrest and serious conflict with leading Muslim politicians released all the prisoners and the mosque was handed over to the Muslims. This appeased the Muslims but created great resentment in the Hindu community, whose house of worship, *Sadh Bella* temple built in 1823, was opposite the mosque. The Hindus were in majority in Sukkur yet they feared that the restoration of the mosque would encumber their free and safe access to the temple. Although some Hindu leaders such as Jethmal Parsrām (1886-1947), urged local Hindus to settle the issue with the Muslims and hand-over the mosque to them without further ado, however, on November 12-14, 1939 in a grand meeting held at Sukkur under the presidency of Hindu Mahasabahi leader Dr. B. S. Moonji (1872-1948), famous for

85 Allen Keith Jones, *Politics in Sindh: 1907-1940, Muslim Identity and the Demand for Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 156.

86 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 119. Most of them were *murīds* of the Pīr of Bhurchundī.

87 Sayyīd Maghfūrul Qādirī, 'Abādurrahmān: Tadhkirah Mashā'ikh Bhurchundī Sharīf (Lahore: Sayyīd Muḥammad Fārūqul Qādirī, 1991), 183-184.

88 Lari, *A History of Sindh*, 186.

his extremist views, it was demanded that the mosque be handed back to the government.⁸⁹

On November 19, police raided the mosque after more than fifty *murīds* of the Pīr of Bhurchundī occupied the mosque as a precautionary tactic to prevent it being returned to the government and held it for almost fifty days. In the meantime, Muslim-Hindu riots erupted in Sukkur and some adjacent areas during which there were the usual episodes of the plundering and looting of property that occur in times of the breakdown of law and order. Hundreds of people of both communities were killed, but the majority of the dead were Hindus.⁹⁰ Eventually, the Allah Bux Ministry lost the support of its Hindu members in the House due to, among other things, that 'it had bungled the Manzilgah issue'. As a result, Allah Bux Soomro resigned from office in March 1940.⁹¹

The newly formed Ministry of Mir Bandeh Ali Khan Talpur (1900-75) appointed Sir Eric Weston, Judge of the Sind High Court to conduct an inquiry into the riots. His report was submitted to the government on August 9, 1940. It observed that the objective of the SML in taking up the Manzil Gah Mosque Issue was purely a political one designed to drive the Allah Bux Ministry out of office.⁹² Due to this 'victory' it planned future political strategy along the same lines.

Ayub Khuhro, once a staunch supporter of the Manzil Gah Mosque campaign, when sworn in as a minister in the Talpur Ministry along with G. M. Syed and Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi (1889-1978), agreed to appoint a committee to determine if Manzil Gah was a mosque or not?⁹³ Thus, in May 1940, the

89 Soomro, *Allah Bux Soomro*, 67, 79, and Qādirī, *Pīr 'Abdul Raḥīm Shahīd*, 180-183. The Conference was also attended by some sitting Hindu ministers of the Sind Government.

90 Sayyīd Sibghatullāh Shāh-II alias Pīr Pagāro-VI (1918-43), held SML responsible for the riots and directed his *murīds* to protect the Hindus. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 137-138.

91 Pirzada, *Growth of Muslim Nationalism in Sindh*, 80-81.

92 Muhammad Qasim Soomro, *Muslim Politics in Sindh (1938-1947)* (Jamshoro: Pakistan Study Centre, 1989), 56.

93 Lari, *A History of Sindh*, 187.

government once again appointed Sir Eric Weston to head an inquiry into the issue and report 'whether either of the domed buildings in the Manzilgah at Sukkur was constructed for use as a mosque or has ever been used as such'.⁹⁴ The inquiry began its work and after examining nine Muslim witnesses and eight Hindus, submitted its report to the Government. In its report, announced on January 11, 1941, Sir Weston opined that 'the shape of the disputed buildings, its three domes, its orientation, and the mehrab [niche in the wall facing *Ka'bah* in Makkah] are the strongest possible evidence that the building was constructed as a mosque'. He did not, however, find any evidence that the building had been used as a mosque prior to 1882.⁹⁵

In February 1947, the Home Department of the Sind Government constituted a seven-member Management Board to look after the mosque. It was taken over by the West Pakistan Awqaf Department in 1962. Since May 1981, the matters related to the mosque have been dealt with by the Municipal Corporation, Sukkur.⁹⁶

Conclusion

The '*ulamā*' tried to mould Muslim public opinion in such a way that they would believe the sphere of Islamic public life had been marginalized by the British Raj. Muslims were told that under the British their religion and their religious places, and rituals were under threat and they could not even get justice from the other communities of British India. The mosques are seen as a reflection of Muslims' social and spiritual concerns. The government in the name of the extension or, renovation of buildings, and to resolve sectarian disputes, directly or indirectly tried to demolish or seal mosques and other sacred places. The occasional and clandestine support of the government, and local authorities also encouraged non-Muslim communities to

94 *Report of the Court of Inquiry appointed under Section 3 of the Sind Public Inquiries Act to Enquire into the Nature of the Manzilgah Buildings at Sukkur* (Karachi: The Government Press, 1941), 1-3.

95 *Report of the Court of Inquiry appointed under Section 3*, 26, 36.

96 Muhammad Siddique G Memon, *Sukkur Then and Now* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 193.

complicate and heightened the communal tension that was never far below the surface. Most of the Muslim leaders and the Muslim press tried to transform these issues into a confrontation between Islam and the Christian Government, Sikhs, and Hindus. The magnitude of these religiously motivated unrests and agitations was greatest as compared to other agitations held after these incidents. Unlike other Muslim religio-political parties and organizations, the AIML received a great deal of support in the rural areas through issues like these, particularly in Sind during and after the Manzil Gah Incident. Unlike the Cawnpore, and Manzil Gah Mosques, the colonial authorities tried in the Shahid Ganj case to act only as a neutral observer. In Lahore, Sikh claims were supported by the colonial courts based on the secular law of limitation, which was given priority over Muslim Waqf laws.⁹⁷ During these campaigns, the '*ulamā*' were on the frontlines, but they failed to present themselves as the solitary spokesmen of the Muslims as during these issues, they were equally supported and backed by the 'Western' Muslim leadership. The failure of the '*ulamā*' to resolve even a purely religious matter without the helping hands of 'others', put a big question mark on their ability and competency to lead and guide South Asian Muslims on purely political and constitutional matters.

97 Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, 95-96. Finally, in March 1935, all the property attached to the Shahid Ganj temple passed into the possession of the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Lahore.