



Evolution of Sindhi Ethnic Identity in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is an attempt to delineate the evolution of Sindhi Ethnic Identity in Pakistan. Regardless of the hard facts of religious demarcations, the people of Pakistan feel a great deal of proximity to one another on the basis of common ethnic identities like language, culture or region. For instance, Sindhi Muslims evince more sense of sharing with the Sindhi Hindus across the borders than with Mohajirs, or the migrant Urdu-speaking Muslims, though the latter belong to the same religious persuasion. Likewise, the Sindhi Hindus in India, despite their being materially well off, feel culturally uprooted and tend to have a strong affinity with the Muslim brethren of Sindh. It is an interesting fact of history that language has gradually over the years taken the rightful precedence over religion. The land of Sindh is characterized by the doctrines propounding the unity of being and therefore the present work will try to explain the uniqueness of Sindhi culture by looking into its distinct identities and values, which is away from the religious background of the country.

Keywords: Ethnic Identity, Culture, Language, Ethnonationalism, Values, Nation-State.

INTRODUCTION

The expression of national and ethnic identity began to dominate the political process in Pakistan today in a form unknown to the country in the past. Since independence, the economic and political structure in Pakistan has been dominated by the ruling sections at first, the Muhajirs and the Punjabis, and more recently by the Punjabis alone, who have come to dominate comprehensively. This domination in the last seventy years has given rise to movements of separation or national expression, the most successful of which culminated in the birth of Bangladesh. A major reason for the existing polarization within Pakistan has been the lack of representative institutions and the persistence of military rule determining economic and political development.

As the military is overwhelmingly Punjabi, with its rule comprising more than half of Pakistani's years, regional and ethnic imbalances have worsened. With the center highly centralized and with no channel for redress for the concerns of those who do not share in the power, the result has been an expression of the rights of those ethnic groups which have felt excluded. Sindhis are one such group (Zaidi 1991, p.1295).

There are different ethnic groups in Pakistan, each having well-developed culture and language. The only one factor of religion is not able to bind these diverse groups, as they are strongly attached to their own region, culture and language. An ethnic group feels a sense of ease and comfort in using its own language and celebrating its own culture. People are more united with each other through common cultural symbols rather than religion in Pakistan. National movements developed as a response of comprehensive control of one or two ruling elite sections over the marginalized groups.

ETHNIC IDENTITY OF SINDHIS

'Ethnie' is a French term, which gives emphasis on cultural differences, and having a sense of a historical community. The making of ethnic identity constitutes several dimensions. A group is ethnically made when the members identify themselves with certain features. Anthony D. Smith has given six features, according to which a definite ethnic group is made. A definite Collective name is one of the peculiar features of an ethnic group. The distinctive name of a separate population is more acknowledged than their cultures and social structures. To themselves and define their characteristics to themselves because a specific name guarantees their existence and survival. A belief in common descent is one of the key elements of an ethnic group, which include their sense of common myths of origins. This belief in the commonality of descent attempts to answer the questions of similarity and belonging. The common myth of descent made the group believe that they came from a similar place, at a definite period of time and are descended from the self-same ancestor. Therefore, they belong to each other and experience the same feelings and choices. A sense of having a common history unifies the coming generations, each with its set of experiences that are added to the common stock, and it also defines a population in terms of experienced temporal sequences, which convey to later generations the historicity of their own experiences. In other words, historical sequences provide 'forms' for later experiences, channels and molds for their interpretation. The elements of culture help to bind members together, separating them from outsiders. Members of an ethnic group are similar in those cultural traits, in which they are different from non-members. The most common shared and distinctive cultural traits are language and religion but sometimes, the customs, folklore, dress, food, music and arts may take their place. Ethnic groups always possess ties to a particular territory, which they call their own place. They may reside in that territory or may be associated with it in their past. Members remain the part of an ethnic group even if they are dispersed and have lost their homeland. Ethnicity is more than that of material possessions or political power. It is a matter of myths, memories, values and symbols. Ethnic group is not just a category of people with a common name, descent, history, culture and territory. It is also a group with a definite sense of identity and solidarity. This solidarity can

override class, factional or regional divisions within the community, in times of stress and danger (Smith 1986, pp.24-30)

Sindhi culture was historically pluralistic, tolerant and deeply rooted in the traditions of Sufism. Sindhis were of land and society that was largely shaped by the deeds of hundreds of Sufi saints, especially Shah Abdul Latif, who preached tolerance and co-existence. Sindhis celebrate Sindh Cultural day worldwide every year on the first Sunday of December, by wearing Ajrak and Sindhi Topi. The word Ajrak is derived from the Arabic word 'azrak' which means 'blue'. It is a cloth of 2.5-3 meters in length, decorated mostly with rich crimson and a deep indigo colour but a little bit of white and black. It is the traditional dress of Sindhis, as men use it as a turban and curled it around the shoulders while women use it as a shawl and sometimes as a makeshift swing for children. On that occasion, the musical programmes and rallies are held in many cities to mark the day with zeal. Major hallmarks of cities and towns are decorated with Sindhi Ajrak to highlight the cultural values of Sindh. The people across Sindh exchange gifts of Ajrak and Topi at various ceremonies. Even, the children and women are dressed up in Ajrak, assembling at the grand gathering, where famous Sindhi singers sing Sindhi songs, which depict love and progress of Sindh.

G.M Syed called the Sindhi people "a separate nation" and identified five basic principles of Sindhi Nationalism: Belief in Sindh as a separate country, belief in Pakistan not as one country but as a group of four countries, belief in the Sindhi people as a separate nation on basis of homeland, language, cultures, historical traditions and identity of political and economic interests, belief in the right of the Sindhi nation to decide their future as a people, belief in the fact that ideology of Pakistan and concepts of Islamic Raj, strong center and national interests of Pakistan are the greatest obstacles in the way of the realization of Sindhi Nationalism (Behuria 2015, p.84).

The bulk of Sindhi Literature, oral or written, owes its origins to Religion and popular belief vs. Secular tradition. The religion of Sindh is a curious blend of both Hinduism and Islam. The result is best seen in Sufism, which though primarily Islamic in its inspiration, also reveals certain aspects close to the mysticism of the Hindu Vedanta Philosophy. Quite a few religious shrines have among their believers both Hindus and Muslims. Sindhi folklore is thus enriched by a double religious tradition, and a number of folk legends and fairytales one finds a subtle and appealing admixture of both Hindu and Islamic motifs. Thus in the same fairytale one comes across the Pari (reminiscent of the Arabian Nights Entertainment) and a typical Indian folktale: the Udan Khatola or the flying-cot. The secular tradition of Sindhi folklore is much more closely to Hindu secular tradition, and like the folklore of Rajasthan has two main motifs: love and strife, the latter often emerge from the former (Doctor 1985, pp. 223-233).

The Sindhi language is the product of the Indo-Aryan language, in which many words and phrases are adopted from Dravidian, Persian, Arabic and Mongol languages. Aryans came and settled on the banks of the Indus River. These Aryans with Indus valley's original language went East of India to Magadha and Bihar,

where they developed the Sanskrit language. From Sanskrit, various other languages were developed. This proves that the Sindhi language is the oldest language of the Indus valley civilization. On account of its connection with other International languages, Sindhi contains words of special and typical meaning which are not to be found in other Indo-Aryan languages. Such is its richness that it has names and nomenclature for each thing, big or small, significant or tribes. There are many examples when so many names have been assigned to animate and inanimate objects according to their age, shape etc. For instance, camel and horse are given different names, according to their age, color and species. From smaller to bigger grass, herbs and tea leaves, everything has been assigned a different name in the Sindhi language. Such kind of detailed naming is not found in any other language. Modern Indo-Aryan languages are dependent upon other languages even for the different names. The Sindhi language has a large capacity to invent new names for education, fine arts and other fields. This language has got a wealth of its own words and the perfection of its grammar can hardly be found in any other language. Even the western specialists and researchers of linguistic studies accepts the richness of Sindhi language among the Indo-Aryan languages (Syed 1991, p.164).

After thousand of year of varied experience, Sindhis have acquired typical traditional national characteristics. Self-realization and identity: Historically, Sindh has suffered from foreign invasions and conquests for quite a long period. The outsiders during their occupation tried to impose their language, culture, religious beliefs and political rule in Sindh. But despite of this long subjection, Sindhis have always tried to retain their language, culture and sophisticated religion. Although most of the Sindhis are Muslims, they refused to follow the authoritative announcements of the fake agents of God. Sindhis are unwilling to accept the religion, which is based on strategies for political and economic gains. Sindhis continued to follow the teachings of Shah Latif, Sachal Sarmast and Sami, who practice, preach and teach the eternal principles of Humanity, love, non-violence and freedom. An overwhelming majority of them are hardly influenced by imported ideas and ideologies and do not try to graft or transplant them into the sacred soil of Sindh. Patriotism: Sindhis have a great deal of respect for their nation. Sindhis going and staying in any Arab country used to suffix the word Sindhi proudly with their names. They never forgot the spiritual teachings of Shah Latif, Sachal and Sami. Earlier, Sindhis used to earn money from foreign countries and brought it to Sindh, but the rulers of Pakistan put a ban on their returning by systematically driving them out of Sindh. Sindhis have a lot of patriotic songs, hymns and rhymes. They use the word 'Maru' meaning co-patriots and Desh, which means Sindh in their songs. Toleration: The principle of toleration is inherent in Sindhi society. According to this principle, one does not keep hatred against others and treat each other like brothers. Aryans, after coming to India, divided people into four groups Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The last class was treated discriminatory and the people of this class were not allowed to eat or drink with people of the upper classes and draw water from wells. Even things touched by Shudras were considered polluted. Therefore their presence was prohibited from some reserved roads and routes. Sindhis were free from such influences as they followed the principles of toleration, brotherhood and equality. Co-existence: Persons having prejudiced behavior do not tolerate others. When there

was the rule of Raja Dahir in Sindh, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Buddhists and Jains had their separate places of worship and the government used to give grants to various religious institutions for the religious purposes. Nobody was denied visiting each other's religious places. But after the conquest of Arabs, the conditions changed and all the non-believers were either killed or had to pay religious taxes. When the Arab rule came to an end, Sindhi rulers came into power and the Sindhi ascetics restarted old religious practices and people used to take the education of different religions and training, giving birth to Sufism (Mysticism). Sufism taught the principle of unity behind the diversity of religions. Sindhi people believed in co-existence and unity. Their main Saints and poets tried to change the atmosphere of hatred and taught that God is one and is present everywhere. National Character: Every nation acquires some national character which becomes its national heritage, after many years of experience. Sindhis also have acquired their national character after the experience and difficulties of hundreds of years. Sindhi people are always prepared to preserve and protect their nationality, for which they can sacrifice everything. Among the national characteristics of the Sindhis are standing up for a right and just cause, enhancing the dignity of man, dedicating one's life to the motherland, protecting its frontiers and the flag, protecting the weak, respect for women and giving security to strangers (Syed 1991, pp.167-172).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SINDHIS

In the Indian sub-continent, there is a vast area with highly fertile and cultivable land, which is popularly known as Sindh. There the mighty river Indus flows with a long seashore. This fertile land enabled the natives to develop a rich and refined culture and civilization. Since its beginning, the inhabitants of this valley lived in peace and tranquility advancing their culture, trade and commerce solely because of their rich natural resources. Yet, their impetus of theirs remained hampered due to various reasons. The valley being in the seismic zone suffered many onslaughts of earthquakes, which caused major damage and destruction to life and property. Hence the changing geographical conditions readily brought in the environmental changes. This affected the monsoons, inundated in Indus basin and turned over the course of the river. Moreover, repeated attacks of the powerful belligerent alien invaders and their subjugation with the dictates of their imperialist design hindered not only the polity and economy of Sindhudesh but also handicapped the natural growth of their wisdom and intellect. Whenever an assessment is made of the evolutionary process of the Indus valley, it appears as a battlefield of many wars, which were fought in the past by the sons of the soil, just to resist the hegemony and domination of the foreign rulers. The history of this region reveals that the valley remained under the domination of the foreigners for quite a long period

Five hundred years before Christ, it remained under the yoke of the Iranian Empire. They exploited its natural resources to become even richer. Significant traces of the Persian rules and domination are visible in their architectural style of construction and town planning. These may still be seen in Birhamanabad, Bhambhore and Ranikot. Thereafter, Alexander the Great dominated Iran. The Indus valley, being a part of the

Iranian Empire, also came into his hands. Its lakes, "rivers, 'forests, pastures, fertile lands and ocean etched Sindh. So, with a royal decree, the ancient Sindhudesh became a center of power for his dynasty. He ruled over the valley, though for a short time. After his demise one of his Generals, Demitress arrived in Sindh. He occupied Patiala i.e. the modern Hyderabad Sindh. He also ruled and exploited the dwellers for some time. During the Greek imperialist rule, the Sindhis revolted many times and finally, they succeeded in ousting the alien ruler. Yet the effects of their valiant attempt did not last long as they were soon subdued and had to surrender again to the Sassanian rulers of Iran.

In the 7th century, the Arabs too entered SindhuDesh, as conquerors. But later on when their grip slackened, the Pathans, the people from North-Western part of undivided India often plundered and looted the local people. After that, the local tribesmen, the descendants of Soomras and Samas, gained power. They ruled Sindh for a span stretching over three to four hundred years. The reign of Samas and Soomras also came to an end. They too submitted before the Arghoons and Turkhans (Syed 2002, pp.2-4). The social and political landscape of Sindh traditionally has been characterized by isolation from the power centers, repressive feudalism, the stranglehold of the pirs and exploitation by settlers. Because of its geographical location, Sindh was a peripheral region throughout Mughal rule in India. Sindhi clans resisted the central state's attempts and rebelled against its heavy revenue demands; therefore the Mughal system could not be applied in its entirety. Hence, the political and socio-economic structure of Sindh was different from the northern regions of Punjab and the northwest Frontier Province (Khan 2002, p.214).

SINDHIS UNDER THE BRITISH RULE

The British took over Sindh in 1843 and after four years made it part of the Bombay Presidency. Sindh lost its autonomy for the first time in history when the British made it a part of the Bombay presidency in 1847. Sir Charles Napier defeated the Talpur Mirs of Sind in 1843 at Miani and Dubba and remained Governor of Sind from 1843 to 1847 (pirzada and Anderson 1918, p.27-31). The British government however wanted to administer the region in its colonial style. For this purpose, Sindh came under the rule of a commissioner-in-Sindh within the Bombay presidency. This appropriation was a fake because there were fundamental differences in geography, climate, language, economy, culture, race and heritage between Bombay and Sindh, and these differences stalled the material and political growth of Sindh. The result was the growing dissatisfaction of Sindhis against the Bombay administration. As a result, the arrangement of the commission of Sindh was uniquely placed with special powers to deal with the regional problems, necessitated by the fact that the presidency capital Bombay was thousands of miles away and it was difficult for the governor to control Sindh from Bombay.

For this purpose, the Sindh act was passed in 1869 by which Commissioner-in-Sindh was invested with the powers of the Governor in council. Thus, the former became virtually an independent ruler without the check of an executive council and adopted an autocratic system of administration. Soon after the departure of

Napier from Sindh, the question of the future status of the Sindh arose. A study of the events shows that the main cause for the annexation of Sindh with Bombay was merely an outcome of the quarrel between Lord Ellenbrough, the then Governor-General and the Government of Bombay Presidency. In order to avoid any further aggravation of differences as a virtue of the so-called necessity, Sindh was linked up with the Bombay Presidency (Khuhro 1933, p.1). Therefore Sindh was annexed to the Bombay presidency, which had nothing in common with Sindh.

During the early period, the local people of Sindh expressed their dissatisfaction over this arrangement in the press. Because of that, the government bureaucrats restarted considering the necessity and advisability of amalgamating Sindh with Punjab. When the government floated this idea, the local people opposed the amalgamation of Sindh with Punjab. The reason for opposing the inclusion of Sindh in the province of Punjab was neither administrative nor constitutional but it was the fear in the minds of Sindhis that Punjab could starve out Sindh's Irrigation scheme by withdrawing to its own use, all the available water of river Indus (Zardari 1984, p.128). The study of the subsequent events shows that it was the business community of Karachi, whose business had suffered because of the attachment of Sindh with the Bombay Presidency, which in 1866 for the first time came up with the idea of separation of Sindh (Feldman 1960, p.14).

Because of the continuous dissatisfaction expressed by the local Sindhis over the government policies and administrative setup, the British officials from time to time reorganized the administration of Sindh. For example in 1883 Sir John Prescott Hewlett, undersecretary of the Home Department, Government of India recommended that Sindh should be placed under the administrative control of Punjab to have a strong frontier administration. After the formation of the northwest Frontier Province, this arrangement was not considered desirable. Moreover, he thought that such an arrangement would annoy the Bombay officials, as it would curtail their powers. Therefore, he abandons this idea. Again, in 1903, Sir Denzil Charles Ibbetson who expected to become Lieutenant Governor of Punjab strongly supported the administrative Union of Sindh with Punjab and in lieu of that, Berar was to be given to Bombay (Khuhro 1982, p.20) Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy and Governor-General of India rejected this arrangement and argued that Punjab needed money for its own development and could not spare funds for Sindh. This lack of adequate finance of Punjab could retard the development of Karachi.

Attempts were also made by the Punjab administration to get Sindh attached to Punjab, especially after the creation of northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) that was carved out of Punjab. The Punjab government wanted to compensate the loss of its areas by acquiring the control of Sindh. Nevertheless, Lord Curzon, the then Governor-General rejected the proposal of Punjab. The issue lay dormant for the time being. However, the administrative methods, adopted by the British administration and the insulting behavior of British bureaucrats towards local residents, made the local problems more complex and complicated. Thus, Sindh groaned heavily with an outburst of problems. Lord Harding had admitted this situation in these words, "an equally yoked

people do not pull on well together and that the weaker party suffers on account of the contract”. (Khuhro 1933, p.7). The grant of unchecked and despotic powers to the commissioner in Sindh added fuel to the fire and fanned the flame of fury against the British Government and sowed the seed of the demand for the separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency.

MOVEMENT FOR PAKISTAN AND THE SINDHIS

The question of the curtailment of the extra powers vested in the commissioner-in-Sind was first publicly taken up in 1901 at the Bombay provincial conference. Later it was continuously criticized in different sessions of the Sind Provincial Conference. It is clear from the study of the events from 1901-to 1920 that the questions of the curtailment of the powers of the commissioner-in-Sind and the provincial autonomy were first raised by the leading members of the Sind Hindu community. It was not until 1913 that the idea of separation of Sind from Bombay was first rose in a major political forum (Herbert Feldman 1960, p.14). The demand for separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency was initiated by a Karachi-based Hindu trader-politician, Harchandra Vishindas in 1913. His call was expressed in the usual nationalistic jargon of “Sind’s distinctive cultural and geographical character,” but in actual terms, it was the voice of a comparatively fragile commercial class of Sindh that felt threatened by the more prosperous Bombay traders (Ansari 1998, p.186). Vishindas was soon joined by a Sindhi Muslim politician, Ghulam Mohammad Bhurgri, who, though originally a wadero (landlord) was a successful London-educated lawyer representing the Muslim urban interests.

In 1909, the colonial administration, faced with the growing radicalization of the nationalist forces, had adopted a strategy to encourage provincial ambitions, and particularly Muslim provincial ambitions, to offset challenges to its authority at the center. The Morley-Minto Reforms introduced an elected element to the provincial councils and for the first time, it allowed provincial grievances could be voiced and provincial governments to be confronted with them. With the official blessings, Sindhi waderos and pirs, too, became active participants in provincial politics. In 1936, Sindh was separated from the Bombay Presidency and accorded the status of a province. The campaign for the separation of Sindh was based on the belief that Sindh had lost its distinct identity under the Presidency, but the underlying reason was the step-motherly treatment that Sindh was subjected to by the Presidency’s administration. That Hindus had a majority in the Presidency and Sindhi Hindus grew more prosperous during that period helped to create a communal wedge between Hindus and Muslims. After the separation, while the communal feeling did not disappear, it undoubtedly lost intensity. Muslims now enjoyed a solid majority in the province and therefore they had little reason to worry about the dominance of a Hindu minority, however prosperous and influential it might be. This Muslim majority status would also later shape the Sind Muslim community’s attitude toward Muslim League (ML) politics (Khan 2002, p.215).

Sindhi politics during the decade prior to Partition were marred by inter-personal and factional squabbling between waderos. But these issues would take a backseat to a more overarching one: whether Sind

should become part of Pakistan or not. Within a few months after the separation of Sindh, a non-communal party, Sind Ittehad Party (SIP), was formed on the pattern of Punjab's Unionist party. Its sole objective was to protect the interests of the Sindhi rural elite, both Muslim and Hindu. During the 1937 elections, the SIP won the largest number of seats in the provincial assembly. At that time, the ML was virtually non-existent in Sind and could not even win a single seat there. The decade before the partition saw Sindh as a politically unstable province where the making and breaking of governments and ministries had become routine. The task of exploring Sindhis' aspirations became even more difficult because Sindhi Muslims consisted of mainly two classes, the waderos and the haris (landless tenants). The middle classes were insignificant in number. Yet another source of repression was the pirs, who not only were some of the largest landlords in the province but also held sway over the spiritual life of Sindhis, as religious guides and messiahs. Such almost total control over the temporal and spiritual beings of the majority of Sindhi Muslims, coupled with the lack of communication and education facilities, made it difficult to know their real desires and preferences (Khan 2002, p.215).

The most interesting social development in Sind during the years, 1940–1947, was the growth of communal feelings which pitted the Hindus against the Muslims. These communal feelings had a definite bearing on the rise of the All-India Muslim League in Sindh which played upon such feelings in order to increase its political strength in the province. Communal tensions in pre-partition Sindh were intimately connected with a peculiar socio-economic order in which Hindus dominated while the Muslims were marginalized and the All India Muslim League in Sindh played upon such feelings in order to increase its political strength in the province. Communal tensions in pre-partition Sindh were intimately connected with a peculiar socio-economic order in which Hindus dominated while the Muslims were marginalized (Siddiqi 2012, p.76). Though Muslims made up 70 percent of the total population of Sindh, they had a bare majority (thirty-four of sixty) in the Assembly (Talbot 1988 p.35) The Hindu community with its high socio-economic status and wealth as well as favorable weighting in terms of seats in the Sindh Assembly dominated the socio-economic life of Sindh. The increased wealth gave them considerable leverage in terms of politics and they were able to assure at least one seat in every cabinet. The Sindhi Hindus had come to occupy important positions in Sindh especially after the British conquered the province in 1843. When the British took over, the Hindus did not hold any land but in a century of their rule, the Hindus came to acquire about 40 percent of the land, while another 20 percent was believed to have been mortgaged to them. One of the factors for increased Hindu landownership, which Malkani posits, was the fact that Hindus were more industrious and entrepreneurial in spirit while the Muslims were backward in the field of business (Malkani 1984, p.154).

The socio-political mobilization of the Muslims of Sindh came about as a result of the Khilafat Movement and on the issue of Sindh's separation from Bombay. The Khilafat campaign aroused local sentiments in Sindh mainly due to the support of Pirs and a branch of the All-India Khilafat Conference was established in Sindh in October 1919. The Khilafat Movement also provided future leaders for the Sindh Muslim League such as Abdullah Haroon. The issue of Sindh's separation from Bombay had similar effects on the Muslim community

in Sindh with the rise of new leaders who were to play a determinative role in the struggle for Pakistan. Mohammad Ayub Khuhro and G. M. Syed both emerged as important political figures during the key years of the separation demand (Talbot 1926, p.37–38). It is interesting to note that it was a prominent Sindhi Hindu, Harchandrai Vishindas Bharwani, who initially made the demand for Sindh's separation from Bombay at the Congress's annual session in Karachi in 1913. The demand-based its claim on the grounds of Sindh's distinctive cultural and geographical character as well as a need to disentangle the Sindh province from the powerful financial interests in Bombay.

However, in the 1920s, the demand for Sindh's separation from Bombay was now revived again by the Muslim elite. Their concerns were based on the fact that Hindus exercised influence and control in the administrative affairs of the province as well as the countryside. Thus, as a result, an informal organization, the Sindh Azad Conference, was formed to bring together the landed aristocracy and the emergent Muslim middle classes, the two groups who felt their positions to be most fragile. The advocates of Sindh's separation 'continued the old arguments of Sindh's cultural discreteness and the unjust Bombay connection, but they also evolved new arguments to counter the thrusts of the Hindus. They were ultimately successful and Sindh's separation from Bombay took place in April 1936. During the agitation both for the Khilafat and Sindh's separation from Bombay, the religious component of Sindhi identity acquired prominence in which Muslims were seen as distinct from Hindus. The prevalence of such an identity among the rising class of Sindhi Muslim politicians was to prove consequential in the success of the Muslim League in Sindh starting in the late 1930s.

The Muslim League in this novel social milieu of rising Sindhi Muslim political activism remained a shadowy organization marked by its very minor involvement in the otherwise intensified politics of Sindh's separation from Bombay. Ian Talbot reasons that the Muslim League's attitude had to do with the fact that the All-India Muslim League's Central Council was dominated by minority area members. In the 1937 elections, Muslim League in Sindh could only secure 4.6 percent of the vote; one or, at the most, two Muslim League candidates who were elected soon deserted the Muslim League. The 1937 elections were won by the Sindh United Party, which was a non-communal, agrarian-oriented party. The party comprised a pro-British Sindhi elite which was led by Sir Abdullah Haroon with Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto, Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah and Miran Shah as his deputies. Moreover, the 1937 election results revealed the dominance of the rural elite of large landholders, clan leaders and religious saints. They had secured twenty-seven of the thirty-four Muslim seats (Siddique 2012, p.77) Jinnah realizing the gravity of the Muslim League's position in a Muslim majority province began a process of reorganizing the party by eliciting the support of influential Muslim leaders. As a result, the first Sindh Provincial Muslim League Conference was held at Karachi in October 1938 and at this meeting, the League for the first time expressed the need for a separate homeland for the Muslims.

In the 1940s, there were only two political forces that had a presence throughout India: the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Despite the growth of regional political forces, Sindhis had to

choose between the two main national political parties. The pitfalls of an alliance with the Congress were many: the Congress's radical anti-imperialism and confrontational politics did not suit the interests of the Sindhi elite, while the dominance of the Hindu minority over the economic and administrative sectors of Sindh remained an unhappy feature that from the Sindhi Muslims' point of view could become even worse under Hindu-dominated Congress rule. Furthermore, at least two of Congress's professed objectives appeared ominously threatening to the interests of the Sindhi elite. First, there was the Congress's promise of land reforms, which the Sindhi elite, whose numbers included some of India's largest landowners, did not even like to be mentioned, let alone implemented. Second, there was Congress's plan for a strong central government, which allowed little autonomy to the provinces. Furthermore, Congress's politics of mass mobilization were not attractive to the Sindhi elite. Sindhi waderos abhorred the idea of any contact with the haris for that might have led to an awakening of the latter's political consciousness and the weakening of wadero control.

On the other hand, the League's elitist and communalist politics were more palatable to the taste of the Sindhi elite and more suitable to their interests. As recipients of official honors and titles, the Sindhi Muslim elite felt more comfortable with the ML's so-called constitutional rather than confrontational politics. Also appealing was the League's demand for autonomous Muslim states within the Indian union. Therefore, in 1943, ML members in the Sindh Assembly passed a resolution demanding independent national states, on the basis that no constitution shall be acceptable, that will place Muslims under a Central Government dominated by another nation (Jalal 1992, p.110). However, this did not mean that Sindhi politicians were in favor of the ML's demand for Pakistan. Ayesha Jalal has argued that one of the most influential ML politicians, Ghulam Hussain, was an outspoken enemy of the Lahore resolution, later called the Pakistan Resolution. According to Jalal, Ghulam Hussain believed that even Mohammad Ali Jinnah himself (Pakistan's founder) did not have his heart in the proposal at all. For the Sindhi elite, the situation was a careful balancing act; they feared Hindu domination under India's rule and Punjabi domination in case of the formation of Pakistan (Khan 2002, p.216-217).

CONCLUSION

An ethnic group is made of some special characters. Any group of people cannot be termed as an ethnic group. It takes a longer period of time, to evolve as an ethnic group. The different dimensions of the ethnic group have been discussed in the paper which are a definite name, a common descent, shared culture, a definite territory to which they belong, a shared history and a sense of solidarity. Sindhis have evolved on the basis of all these dimensions. They have a definite name as Sindhi people through which they are recognized. They have their specific culture and traditions. They belong to a definite territory, which they called the Sindhudesh. They share a common history and they have a strong sense of solidarity. Sindhis have a long and historical past. Over hundreds of years, they have developed their distinct culture and language. Many foreigners came to the land of Sindh, but Sindhis resisted their hegemony again and again. At last, the Britishers came to Sindh and they made

Sindh the part of Bombay's presidency. Sindhis again fought for the separation of their province and ultimately in 1936, Sindh was separated from the Bombay presidency and accorded the status of a separate province. But it was during 1940-47, that the communal feelings started to grow in Sindh. These feelings pitted the Hindus against the Muslims. The result was the Sindh's alignment with the Muslim League, to support the formation of the two-nation theory, according to which Pakistan was to be carved out of India, purely on the basis of the Islamic religion.

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