

## **NATIONAL MOVEMENT & THE LUCKNOW SCENARIO**

**(1885-1947)**

- *Dr. Shobha Misra*

The eyes of the Indian Nationalists were on the light on the horizon the new dawn, the birth of a tree India. Very poetically Nehru said. "Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge. At the stroke of the mid-night hour when the world sleeps India will awake to light and freedom".

The dawn of 15th August 1947 marked the end of a glorious struggle, hard fought and hard one in which many fell martyrs and countless others made sacrifices dreaming of the day India would be free. That day had come as Nehru said "A moment comes which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new when an age ends and when the soul of a nation longs for fresh fine utterances".\*

For the people of Lucknow, the history of the entire freedom struggle was the history of gradually stepping out from the old to the new. Awadh at the time of the inception of the Congress was the latest acquisition of the British Crown and in a little more than forty years (1856-1899) it was prepared to greet an assembly of men of light and leading. In fact, this was the first important event depicting an active role played by the Lucknowites in the history of the national movement

Lucknow held the 15th session of the Congress in the year 1899 The people of Lucknow were gradually becoming conscious of the need of the hour and were drifting with the rising tide of nationalism in fact Lucknow was already sending delegates to the Congress sessions. In the 14th Congress session at Madras it had sent Babu Ganga Prasad Verma (proprietor of Advocate & Hindustani) and Shiam Narayan Masaldan (a pleader). Both the delegates had been elected by the people of Lucknow This goes on to prove that the iterate class in the city was politically conscious and the Congress was politically conscious and the Congress was gaining foothold

The Congress at this time was faced with two difficulties, death of finance and anti-congress agitation The reason behind the former was the fact that the landed aristocracy the rich class did not support it and that behind the latter was the fact that the Lucknow

Muslims wanted to appease the Government by criticizing the Congress so that they could secure some favors from the Government. It is however different that the Congress movement had acquired such a force and momentum that even the conduct of those who preached against it, did not materially affect its course, and soon it became clear that the hour for the anti-Congress movement was not yet ripe.

The politics of Lucknow underwent a remarkable change after the inception of the Muslim League in 1906. The league's leadership right from its inception remained in the hands of the landed aristocracy and found a fertile field for its growth in UP specially Avadh, where the traditional land holders were by far the most powerful.

The period 1901-20 was the period during which Lucknow politics was passing through its formative phase and the trends then started continued to dominate the province till 1947. Eventually the two communities started to part as far, their political ideology was concerned. The League had the feeling that if a session of the Congress was held in a city. Then the people would get a one-sided Impression of the political situation. Hence, it was important for the League to hold its session in the same city. All this time, the Government was supporting the League.

It is interesting to note that some years after its inception; the League witnessed a marked change in its politics. There emerged a group which was in favor of Co-operation with the Congress it may be called the "NATIONALIST GROUP" in the sense that it was strongly anti-British. This new element for several years served as a link between the leadership and the masses and now for the first time in so many years, their common political aims brought the Hindu and the Muslim Nationalists together.

It was in this atmosphere of congenial feelings that at the Hindu Muslim Conference held at the government house, on 3rd April 1914, the two communities decided that separate representation was bad and only deteriorates a particular community.

Moreover, for some years after 1914 the two organizations held their sessions together strikingly in contrast to just a couple of years back in March 1913 when the League along had met at Lucknow and had resolved that the attainment of a system of Self-Government, suitable for India. under the British government was its aim. Both now talked of unity. The most glaring example of which is the LUCKNOW PACT of 1916. Not only this, they even joined hands in support of the Home Rule Movement. The League headquarter was transferred from Aligarh to Lucknow.

This spirit of co-operation with the Congress and the nationalist attitude of the League would have continued but for the controversy over the caliphate question. For a large section of the Muslims, it became difficult to co-operate with the Congress which was with the British in the War.

It is interesting to note a parallel trend in the politics of Lucknow. When a large section of the Muslims was supporting the Khilafat cause and another was co-operating with the Congress, there was yet another section which remained loyal to the British Government. They were the members of the "ANJUMAN-I-ARKANUL consisting of the members of the ex-royal family and that of the Wazi's family, who just could not sever their connections with the British, despite their sympathies with the Khilafat Question.

The year 1931-32 witnessed a typical trend in Lucknow politics. There was evident a widening of gap between the main body of Muslims and the Nationalist Muslims who sympathized with the Congress. A meeting was even held in Lucknow to establish an independent but pro-congress Muslim party but no sufficient support could be mustered. The nationalist organized section of the Muslims even original a series of unity conferences, but failed, as a large body of the Muslims remained aloof.

The Muslims Press acknowledged Civil Disobedience as the only road to success and accused its leaders for not joining it. With passing years Lucknow became the center of ideological rivalry between Hindus and Muslims.

The nationalist politics of Lucknow was an eyewitness of Home Rule League activities as well. It was in the Lucknow session of 1916 that Tilak and his men were taken back into the folds of the congress and when Mrs. Besant was interned by the Madras Government. A number of Lucknowites enlisted as members of the Home Rule League to record their solidarity with the internees.

An important trend visible in the politics of the city is the EKKA MOVEMENT started by the peasants at a time when the non-co-operation and Khilafat were going on. Several Ekka Associations were setup which at times passed resolutions political in nature.

The credit of successfully carrying out the Gandhian movements in Lucknow goes to the student community whose participation alarmed the

Government to such an extent that it had to take action against them and against several educational institutions

Not only this, Lucknow was also a centre of revolutionary activities. The plan and strategy of the Kakori Train Dacoity case was finalized here and even the most common and least suspected Lucknowites helped to carry out the plan. Several students willingly acted as post-boxes for the revolutionaries. The purchase of cartridges and pistols clearly indicates that Lucknow was perhaps a market of arms and ammunition. The revolutionaries, it appears always took charge of the Nationalist movement in Lucknow. After the Quit India arrests in 1942, they came back to Lucknow, started a paper 'AZADI' and committed acts of sabotage in Lucknow and Barabanki.

The greatest contribution of the people of Lucknow in the struggle for India's independence was their boycott of the Simon Commission. Even the landed aristocracy which previously showed indifference towards the nationalist movement and hesitated in joining it now broke all shackles and took up the fight against the British.

On 15th August 1947 India faced the dual reality of Freedom and partition. What followed were communal riots throughout the country. But Lucknow remained cool characteristically reflecting the spirit of Nehru's historic words.".... In this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity. Where future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we might fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the India of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity.

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