

Hindu Maha Sabha in Punjab Politics: Assertion of Hindutava Identity 1945-47

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Abstract:

The *Hindu Maha Sabha* was not an All India Organization before 1922. In the beginning, relations of *Hindu Maha Sabha* with the Congress were quite cordial. Establishment of All India *Hindu Maha Sabha* was an inevitable result of the Hindu community's growing awareness of community. It happened in India during the 19th and 20th centuries. The *Hindu Maha Sabha*, led by Lala Lajpat Rai and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, advocated for religious harmony between Hindus and Muslims. In the beginning, the British did not give much attention to the demands of the Hindu communalists because it believed that Congress Party represented the Hindus.

V. D. Savarkar was chosen to lead the *Hindu Maha Sabha* as its president. His election was a turning moment in the development of the *Hindu Maha Sabha*. The *Hindu Maha Sabha* adopted a Hindu sectarian approach and propagated *Hindu Rashtravad* in the leadership of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. British Government supported the Muslim Communalism but the British had no special interest in the Muslims. At a later stage when the *Hindu Maha Sabha* started raising voice against the Congress, the British Government gave its tacit support to this organization. The *Hindu Maha Sabha* was willing to utilise the Colonial authorities' protection as a means to increase its political stance.

Index Terms: Relations, Consciousness, Approach, Communalism, Politics.

Introduction

In the Punjab, the *Hindu Maha Sabha* was a Provincial level organization linking Hindu Movements. The Province's annual Congress was conducted in conjunction with its conferences and it received platform assistance from other Provinces.¹ When the Unionist Party decided to face the elections of 1946, they lacked the spirit which characterized their election campaign of 1937. Now the wind was blowing against the Unionists. Several notable Muslim Unionists had defected from the Unionist Party and joined the Muslim League. There was little hope for the Unionist Party to win the elections after the Muslim League significantly weakened their support base.² The *Akalis* and the Congress Party had co-operated in the 1937 elections. But now they stood poles apart. The Congress's outreach to the public was a direct response to the Muslim League's mass contact initiative. Complete independence for India without partition, the release of prisoners from the *Azad Hind Fauj* (Indian National Army) and harsh condemnation of British authority were central to the Congress Party's election campaign in the Punjab.³

Hindu Maha Sabha Organization in the Punjab

The Punjab *Hindu Sabha* was established on December 16, 1906. In December of 1913, the All India *Hindu Maha Sabha* emerged from its ashes. As a result of the growth of Hindu consciousness, numerous Hindu organisations were established in Northern India in the nineteenth century. According to Indra Prakash, the *Hindu Maha Sabha*'s official historian, "the first *Hindu Sabha* was created in the Punjab, laying the foundation for the later creation of the All India *Hindu Maha Sabha*".⁴ The middle class included Punjabi merchants, professionals, and service providers who belonged to the Arya Samaj, was influential in the *Hindu Maha Sabha*.⁵ The *Hindu Sabha* was founded and Hindu consciousness flourished in the nineteenth century as a result of social and economic circumstances in the Punjab. *Hindu Sabha*, the first Hindu organization was formed in the Punjab on December 16, 1906. It included many prominent Hindu leaders such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Hari Krishan Lal, Ruchi Ram Sahni.⁶ According to N.G. Barrier, "during 1908-1909, there was a *Hindu Sabha* associated with the Punjab *Hindu Sabha* in every district."⁷

Now the middle class Hindus thought that the British Government was hostile towards them. The Hindus had a feeling that the British Government was favouring the Muslims. The Hindu leaders intended to serve the interests of their community in the province by getting the support of Hindu unity which they wanted to maintain at the All India level. The Hindu leaders were convinced that they could not hope to act as a pressure group in Politics of the Punjab without broadening the area of their activity and mobilizing the entire Hindu Community of the Country.⁸ The *Hindu Maha Sabha* sprang out of the revivalist movements that emerged in North India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The *Hindu Maha Sabha* was founded on the ideology of a freshly formed Hindu identity. The conditions created under the colonial rule contributed in the emergence of the Hindu Communal Consciousness. The *Hindu Maha Sabha* organization was formed in the Punjab by the upper and middle class Hindus. The foundation was laid by this Provincial level Punjabi organisation for the eventual establishment of the All India Hindu organisation.⁹

The All India Hindu Maha Sabha

The All India *Hindu Sabha* was formed in April, 1915 at Hardwar with Headquarters at Dehradun. It was the residence of the Secretary, Pandit Dev Rattan Sharma. Its first session was presided over by Maharaj Mahindra Chandra Nandi of Cossimbazar in Bengal.¹⁰ On December 13, 1917, in Lucknow, the All India *Hindu Sabha* was officially established as a society under the Societies Registration Act.¹¹ In April of 1921, the organization's name was changed from All India *Hindu Sabha* to All India *Hindu Maha*

Sabha. Provincial Hindu *Sabhas* were subsequently established in Uttar Pradesh in December of 1915 with headquarters in Allahabad, Bombay, and Bihar.¹² The Hindu *Maha Sabha* convened Annual Sessions in a different city every year. Their gatherings were presided over by well-known figures in the Hindu religion.¹³

In the beginning, the membership of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* was mainly confined to urban *Arya Samajists* of Punjab and *Sanatan Dharmis* of Uttar Pradesh which gave the *Maha Sabha* a distinctly a North Indian character.¹⁴ "The Hindu means any person professing to be a Hindu or following any religion of Indian origin," the Hindu *Maha Sabha* defined the word Hindu to imply.¹⁵ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* declared their goals to be: In order to bring the Hindu community together and encourage greater unity and solidarity among all of its segments, The Hindu *Maha Sabha* made it clear that "it would not side or identify itself or interfere with or oppose in particular sect of the Hindu Community," despite its stated goals of promoting good feelings between Hindus and other communities in India, "alleviating and improving the conditions of all classes of the Hindu Community, protecting and promoting Hindu interests," and "take steps to promote the religious, moral, educational, social, economic, and political interests of the entire community."¹⁶ Hindu individuals above the age of 18 were eligible to join the Hindu *Maha Sabha* and might pay five *annas* a year to join the Hindu *Maha Sabha*. Its executive body consisted of all classes and castes.¹⁷

Hindutva Consolidation and Assertiveness

During the twenty years leading up to India's independence, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* was a major political force. The Socio-religious Reform Movements and revivalist trends made a substantial contribution to the growth of the Hindu identity. The *Arya Samaj* in Punjab contributed to defining Hinduism's distinctiveness and bolstering Hindu pride.¹⁸

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* after its establishment did not function as a well-knit organization. In the beginning it was merely a broad Hindu Socio-religious organization which had set up a full organizational structure. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* in 1922 laid down its programmes and framed a constitution and it was revived in 1937. Start the beginning, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* was very much famous in specially in Hindi speaking areas of North India, in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Its branches were opened in the other places also. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* continued its efforts to bring Hindu masses in its fold. It adopted the programme of *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* to strengthen and consolidate the Hindu community. To make and maintain Unity among the Hindus, he issues like Cow Protection, Hindi Movement and Hindu festivals were taken up on top priority. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* aligned itself with the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (R.S.S.) and other Hindu volunteer organizations to broaden its social base.¹⁹

Trends in Hindutva: Success and Failures

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* sent a directive to the Provincial Hindu *Sabhas*, instructing them to oppose the Scheme and mark the first week of August 1944 as an *Akhand Hindustan* in an effort to mobilize public opinion against C.R. Formula.²⁰ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* alleged that the Formula was the result of the helplessness and pessimism arising out of the failure of Gandhi's Movement and that it was a shameful act to purchase independence in Jinnah's Black Market.²¹ The Meeting held in support of Rajaji's Proposal at many places were disturbed. There was reportedly considerable disruption at these events because V. D. Savarkar had instructed Hindu *Maha Sabha* members to disrupt pro-Pakistani gatherings hosted by the Congress and other parties.²²

In spite of all this opposition, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* failed to get much response from the masses. In Gujrat, the agitation of Hindu *Maha Sabha* against the C.R.'s Formula.²³ Savarkar, in order to counter the Gandhi - Rajaji Formula, intended to organise an *Akhand Hindustan* leaders Conference on the October 7 and 8, 1944.²⁴ He invited all those leaders who took up a stand against partition which was held on October 7&8, 1944 at New Delhi. About 500 representatives from throughout the country, including those from the Hindu *Maha Sabha*, *Arya Samaj*, Democratic Swaraj Party, Congress Nationalist Party, Sanatanists, Sikhs, the depressed classes, and Christians, attended.²⁵ Dr. S.P. Mukherjee, President of the All India Hindu *Maha Sabha*, did not join this conference. Dr. R.K. Mukherjee, a renowned historian, served as moderator this conference. He said, "A Crisis of the first magnitude has been created in our history by some great leaders who have convinced themselves that it is not possible for the country to attain her Independence and the status which is her birth right except on the basis of Hindu-Muslim unity."²⁶ The major resolution approved during the Conference emphasised the need of maintaining the country's integrity and said that the very concept of partition was unacceptable to all parties.²⁷ This Conference opined, "Freedom contemplated on the basis of division in any form destroys the very object of the Freedom Movement of India and also has in its germ the perpetuation of the British imperialism in this Country".²⁸

All political parties in India save the Congress and the Muslim League sent delegates to the *Akhand Hindustan* Conference. But in the absence of the two main political parties, *Akhand Hindustan* Conference²⁹ could not presuppose the Partition process even with a little success. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* had a limited political mass base among the Hindus. A letter from the Sindh *Hindu Sabha* Hyderabad to the General Secretary of Hindu *Maha Sabha*, New Delhi, mentions, "In spite of the Hindu *Sabha* being in existence here for the last so many years, the representative strength of the *Hindu Sabha* up to last year was nearly nil, the total membership in the whole province hardly beyond 2000 out of a total population of some one million".³⁰

When Lord Wavell called for a Conference to consider the creation of the Interim Government, he invited delegates from the Congress Party and the Muslim League, but not the Hindu *Maha Sabha* Party. Until a new and permanent constitution could be formed, the planned Interim Government would wage war against Japan and deal with the challenge of post-war events.³¹ There will be equal numbers of caste Hindus and caste Muslims in the Interim Government. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* leaders were not invited by the British Government to the Simla Conference. Members of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* Party were got irritated. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* leaders expressed their displeasure and called it a "Lord Wavell's Bomb Cell" which would adversely hit the Hindu *Maha Sabha* as an organization. They also realized that it was due to their organizational weakness.³² The Hindu *Maha Sabha* leaders observed protest week³³ against the Wavell Plan. In his speech at Bombay, Dr. S. P. Mukherjee said, "the Simla Conference³⁴ as a combination of conspirators comprising British Imperialists, Muslim Leagues, and the Congress leaders". Meetings were held in Lahore, Amritsar, Delhi, Ajmer, Calcutta, Bombay, Poona, Nagpur, Mysore, Madras, Karachi, Patna and other cities, towns and villages. V.D. Savarkar remarked of the protest week. The local Government had outlawed gatherings at many places.³⁵

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* reported that in hundreds of cities and towns, Hindu Sangathanists flew black flags from their homes and sang "Down with the Wavell Scheme," "Down with the Congress, and 'Hindu Rashtra Ki Jai' in protest."³⁶ An official report from Punjab stated, "Punjab's response to all India Hindu *Maha Sabha's* resolution of the June 24, for its protest week was extremely poor and its district branches were torn by internal strife".³⁷ Bengal's Hindu *Maha Sabha* chief Devendra Nath Mukherjee said, "his visit to the Uttar Pradesh and Lahore demonstrated that they did not have adequate backing." Getting the populace organised and in contact massive numbers was an immediate priority.³⁸ In response to the Government's hostility against Hindus' legal rights, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* determined its members would renounce their titles. A resolution was issued by the Hindu *Maha Sabha's* working committee urging all Government title holders to give up their positions, "The Working Committee of the All India Hindu *Maha Sabha* calls upon all Government title holders to renounce their titles. "Government title holders shall not be eligible for any office in the Hindu *Maha Sabha*".³⁹

This mild protest as put in the resolution was not taken up seriously. It made a situation of revolt among a section of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* members. An official report stated, "Raja Maheshwar Dayal Seth, President of the Uttar Pradesh *Maha Sabha* renounced his title but Lucknow members of the Uttar Pradesh resigned from the party instead of renouncing their titles".⁴⁰ The President of the Bihar *Hindu Sabha*, Rai Sahib Sri Narain Arora said, "He will resign his position as President of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* rather than renouncing his title of Rai Sahib".⁴¹ Rai Bahadur Dalip Narayan Singh from Monghyr refused to renounce his title and said that "he would consider it if the Hindu *Maha Sabha* becomes as strong as the Congress".⁴² The Hindu *Maha Sabhs* failed to implement its own resolution of renouncing the titles as a protest against the Wavell Plan because the leadership was not unanimous in taking any strong step against the Government. He disagreed with Hindu *Maha Sabha* President S. P. Mukherjee. V.D. Savarkar's pledge to use direct action at the right moment was never fulfilled and his movement never gained support beyond the elite and middle and upper classes.⁴³

Emergence of Communal and Identify Politics in the Punjab

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* arranged nearly twenty public meetings and in these meetings, they explained the reasons which influenced it to oppose the Congress. But these meetings were poorly attended.⁴⁴ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* was not a well organised body at the time of the elections of 1946. It lacked resources and its influence was waning. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* particularly in the provinces suffered from dissensions and its leaders at the local level failed to give a coherent ideological programme which could attract the masses. The vast masses of the Hindu opinion was with the Congress. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* also tried to exploit the Indian National Army trials for the election purpose. V.D. Savarkar pleaded with Prime Minister Attlee to gracefully release the men of the Indian National Army.⁴⁵ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* observed an Indian National Army day but these moves did not pay any dividend to Hindu *Maha Sabha* in the 1946 elections. The Indian National Army prisoners refused that they should not be represented by the Hindu *Maha Sabha*. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* had put up eighteen candidates in the central assembly but all these were defeated by their rivals and most of them lost their deposits.⁴⁶ Most Hindu *Maha Sabha* candidates decided not to run in the elections rather than risk being defeated. Every single Muslim vote went to the Muslim League. Many deposits made by Nationalist Muslim groups were lost. Voters gave fifty seven seats to the Congress Party, thirty to the Muslim League, five to the Independents, two to the *Akali* Sikhs, eight to the Europeans, and zero to the *Maha Sabha*.⁴⁷ L.B. Bopatkar, the President of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* was defeated by Gadgil, a Congress nominee in Maharashtra. Bopatkar made a complaint against the Congress workers that, "they not only through away to the four wings, all the ordinary decency and humanity but also made the lives of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* candidates miserable".⁴⁸ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* won only two seats in Bombay and Bengal. S.P. Mukherjee secured his victory as there was a division in the opposition.

Table-1

Table-1, is showing, the Congress, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* and the Muslim League in the Provincial Legislatures after the elections of 1946

S.No.	Province	Hindu Maha Sabha	Congress	Muslim League	Total No. of Seats
1.	N.W.F.P.	Nil	30	17	50
2.	Punjab	--	51	73	175
3.	Sind	--	18	27	60
4.	U.P.	--	153	54	228
5.	Bihar	--	98	34	152
6.	Orissa	--	47	4	60
7.	Bengal	1	86	113	250
8.	Madras	Nil	165	29	215
9.	C.P. & Berar	--	92	13	112
10.	Bombay	1	125	30	175
11.	Assam	Nil	58	31	108
Total		2	923	425	1585

Source: Mishra, B.B., Indian Political Parties: A Historical Analysis of Political Behaviour up to 1947, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 557.⁴⁹

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* vice president N.C. Chatterjee said, "My nerve system has been damaged for the previous two years and it has disintegrated now" after the party's resounding defeat.⁵⁰ The Cabinet Mission came to India on March 23, 1946. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* tried desperate efforts to establish that it was the representative body of the Hindus. The Cabinet Mission met with the heads of the various political parties and urged the Congress and Muslim League to select delegates for a Tripartite Conference to be held in Simla on May 5, 1946; the Hindu *Maha Sabha* was not invited to attend. The Shimla Conference ended with no concrete

conclusions. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* celebrated their defeat. The Cabinet Mission's suggestions were shot down by the Hindu *Maha Sabha* which "Claimed that the Cabinet Mission's declaration from May 16, 1946, effectively accepted Pakistan's programme." The public statement against the plan was made by Dr. Moonje. The Hindu *Maha Sabha*'s Working Committee argued that "a strong central government was necessary" and that it was "wrong to introduce the notion of regionalism based on communalism or to transfer residuary powers to the provisions."⁵¹ The *Hindu Maha Sabha* instructed its provincial branches to mobilize the public opinion against the Cabinet Mission Proposals. But the provincial *Sabhas* did not take up seriously the work of mobilizing the public opinion against Cabinet Mission Plan.⁵² On August 16, 1946, the Muslim League commemorated the first "Direct Action Day." It caused a catastrophe in Calcutta, Noakhali and Bihar that had never been seen before. The looting, abduction, forced mass conversions, forced marriages, burning, and mass killings of Hindus in the cities and villages of Eastern Bengal Districts followed after this the inferno in Calcutta. Muslims were among the 20,000 slain in Calcutta. Rioters were shouting "Allah-o-Akbar" and "Hindur Rakto Chai" (We want the blood of Hindus) assassinated Rajendra Rai Chaudhary, president of the Noakhali District Hindu Sabha.⁵³

There was acute frustration among the Hindu and Muslim camps. The Growing violence polarised the Communal situation in the country. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (R.S.S.) projected themselves as the Saviours of Hindu masses in the Communal Riots. In the 1946 national elections, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* was soundly beaten by the Congress. Following the annihilation of Bihar, Noakhali, and Calcutta, it started to acquire popularity.⁵⁴ On August 24, 1946, it was revealed who will serve in the Interim Government. Jinnah initially denied to participate in the Interim Government but on October 30, 1946, he changed his mind and selected five people to serve in the government.⁵⁵ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* did not support the creation of the Interim Government because Hindus were not adequately, represented according to them.⁵⁶ Entry of the Muslim League into the Interim Government did not bring any relief in communal violence. The killings the of Hindus of Calcutta and Noakhali were condemned by the Hindu *Maha Sabha*, B.S. Moonje convened the meeting of Hindus in New Delhi on August 25, 1946 to take stock of the situation arising out of the Communal riots in Calcutta.⁵⁷ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* decided to send a Medical Mission to Noakhali for undertaking some relief work.⁵⁸ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* launched its own counter propaganda and it added fuel to the fire. In Hindu Majority Provinces, there was emerging a strong feeling of revenge. The Hindu *Sabha* leaders visited different parts of the country and appealed to the Hindu masses to protect themselves against the Muslim Rioters. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya issued a statement, "If the Hindus do not protect themselves, they will perish in no time. If they linger behind, they will be trampled by inactivity and death".⁵⁹ Anti-Muslim sentiments was stoked in large part by the Hindu press. In addition to its coverage of the Communal Riots in East Bengal, Searchlight issued a special editorial on the Noakhali Massacre, stating, "The Muslim League was striving to impose Islam by the Sword." "The days of Hindu weakness in the face of waves of invaders are over."⁶⁰

Lord Pethic Lawrence wrote to Lord Wavell on November 1, 1946, "It seems that Hindus and Hindu *Maha Sabha* have spared no efforts to exaggerate to work up the Eastern Bengal disturbances as a means of inflaming anti-Muslim feelings".⁶¹ The *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) which was founded by Dr. Hedgewar in 1925 and the Hindu *Maha Sabha* were associated with each other at that time in view of the Communal holocaust. It was very near to the Hindu *Maha Sabha* ideologically. The *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) worked as a counter force to the Muslim National Guards.⁶² In 1932, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* gave its blessing to the RSS and actively pushed the organisation to establish centres throughout India. There were around 400 RSS Centres with a membership of 40000 young Hindus by 1938. Hindu *Maha Sabha* was led by Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, After the death of Hedgewar in 1940. "Those who declared No Swaraj without Hindu Muslim Unity have perpetrated the greatest treason on our society," M.S. Golwalkar said. They have sinned by snuffing out big and ancient civilizations' last glimmer of existence.⁶³ Members of the *Sangh* received physical training in the usage of Lathis, daggers, and spears; a separate band section was formed; and a medical unit was included in the ambulance unit. An official report from the province of Punjab states that on October 29, 1946, students from DAV and SD College Lahore held a march in honour of Noakhali Day. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* got a chance of recovering ground with the Hindu asses and dealing a blow to Muslim interests at the same time.⁶⁴ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* and the Arya *Samaj* were aiding and encouraging Hindu milkmen to desert their Muslim Masters who owned many of the cattle with a view to weakening their economic base.⁶⁵ "The Ministry were adamant during the early days of rioting that the Military should fire to kill big number of crowds, which typically dispersed, vast their number, as soon as shooting was resorted to," Dow reported to Lord Wavell from British officials.⁶⁶ The President of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* called upon the Hindus to follow the following *mantra* that, "while it is only human to forget and forgive, it is divine to resist and to repay".⁶⁷ L. B. Bopatkar said, "the Hindus should resist the aggressive policy of the Muslims otherwise they would be ruined".⁶⁸

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* decided to form a Hindu National Guard in its annual session held at Gorakhpur to deal with the Noakhali disturbances. It instructed that woman should carry a dagger with them, learn self defence art. A resolution was passed in this session that *Hindu Rashtra Sena* should be formed.⁶⁹ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* sanctioned the establishment of the Ram Sena and provincial Hindu *Sabhas* were told to recruit citizens to serve as a first line of defence against communal riots, dacoities, and thefts.⁷⁰ The *Hindu Rashtra Dal* was formed by V.D. Savarkar and it was very popular organization during the Communal riots. Its Headquarter was at Poona. Purpose of its formation was "to oppose the formation of Pakistan, to protect the Hindu religion, to provide support to Hindu *Maha Sabha* and to help in enrolling members."⁷¹ In the Punjab, private armies of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* and that of the Sikhs worked together. Information sent to the British High Commissioner in India in June 1947 shows the following about the size of these private armies: (see Table-2 and Table-3).

Table-2
Table-2, is showing the organizations affiliated with the Hindu Maha Sabha.

S.No.	Name of Organisation	Strength
1.	R.S.S.	188561 ⁷²
2.	<i>Akal Sena</i>	8600
3.	<i>Mahavir Dal</i>	19209
4.	Hindu Maha Sabha volunteers	5353 ⁷³

Source: Wadhwa, Ram Lal, Hindu Maha Sabha: 1928-47, Delhi, 1999, p. 210.⁷⁴

Table-3
Table-3, is showing the Strength of the Muslim volunteer organizations.

S.No.	Name of Muslim Organisation	Strength
1.	Muslim National Guard	139075
2.	<i>Khaksars</i>	9112 ⁷⁵

Source: Wadhwa, Ram Lal, Hindu Maha Sabha: 1928-47, Delhi, 1999, p. 210.

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* made an effort to rally the people against the Muslim League's Demand for Pakistan. An *Akhand Hindustan* Conference was convened by the Hindu *Maha Sabha* at New Delhi in January, 1947. Hindu *Maha Sabha* President⁷⁶ called the Pakistan plan "economically unsound and culturally affluent but politically mischievous." The Muslim League in the meeting of its working committee at Karachi on January 20, 1947, resolved to "remain outside the constituent assembly and refused to reconsider the direct action resolution".⁷⁷ The Hindu *Maha Sabha* warned the Hindus of the *Akhand Hindustan*, "the Direct action Movement of the Muslim League with its inevitable consequences of violence and Civil War in the country is imminent".⁷⁸ The working committee of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* has called on Hindus to get together and use their collective power to keep the peace throughout the nation.⁷⁹

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* constituted a committee to frame the Constitution of *Akhand Hindustan* on the Principles of Equity, Democracy and Justice for interests of all Communities. The Committee was asked to submit the constitution on or before April 30, 1947.⁸⁰ On February 20, 1947, British Prime Minister made a declaration, "the power of authority would be transferred by June 30, 1948". The Muslim League made efforts to secure the Muslim majority Provinces through Direct Action. Due to this the communal riots took place all over the Punjab and the Governor of the Punjab had to take over the administration of the Punjab in his hands.⁸¹ The stabbings and murders started on the streets of Lahore City and quickly extended to nearby cities including Multan, Rawalpindi, and Amritsar. North-West Frontier Province was similarly affected by the Communal Riots.⁸² The Hindu *Maha Sabha* leaders visited the riot affected areas in the Punjab with a view to get the sympathy of the Hindu masses but the Governor of Punjab put a ban on their entry to the Punjab.⁸³ The Hindu students federation attached to the Hindu *Maha Sabha* made a protest against this ban.⁸⁴ To protest against the ban, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* Working Committee decided to observe March 30, 1947 as a Punjab Day throughout India and highlighted the agonies of the Hindus in the Punjab. The Hindu *Sabhās*, throughout India, were requested to observe the day by holding meetings, taking processions. They were instructed to collect funds from the public.⁸⁵ V. D. Savarkar appealed for the Hindu Sikh unity during this phase of crisis. He appreciated the efforts of Master Tara Singh⁸⁶ to maintain integrity. On July 3, 1947, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* decided to observe as a Black Day throughout India doing *Hartals* in a peaceful manner.⁸⁷ To accomplish this conclusion, the Hindus would "Hinduise all Politics" and "Militarize Hinduism," as V.D. Savarkar put it in his speech: "We Hindus will continue to oppose the rebelling Pakistani territories until they are compelled to become re-annexed to our Central and Sovereign *Akhand Hindustani State*."⁸⁸ In the changed political scenario, when formation of Pakistan had become a truth, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* raised the issue of Hindu *Rashtravad* in a militant manner to strengthen the Hindus against the Muslims.⁸⁹

Conclusion

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai called on all Hindus to become members so that they could further unite with Muslims. The Hindu *Maha Sabha*, later on, mobilizing Hindu masses adopted a policy of Hindu Chauvinism and anti-Muslim propaganda. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* had a wider acceptability and a broad base during the earlier phase when its objective was to reform and Consolidate the Hindu Community within the Nationalist framework. But the sectarian and communalist approach of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* in the later phase failed to get much favourable response from the Hindu masses. During this period, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* was a well knit organisation but it did not have a large social base. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* was able to get only two seats in the elections of 1946 in the Punjab. During the riots of 1946-47, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* got popularity in certain Muslim majority areas because the Hindu *Maha Sabha* leaders projected themselves as the Saviours of the Hindu community in the phase of this crisis. But the success of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* and the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (R.S.S.) only lasted for a short time.

The Hindu *Maha Sabha* primarily remained an organization comprising a section of Hindu middle and upper classes predominantly in urban in character. It could not get much support from the Hindu agriculturists in the countryside. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* had no concrete programme for their Socio-Economic upliftment. In many parts of the country, the Hindu middle and lower peasantry preferred to join the Congress instead of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* owing to its anti-imperialist character. The Hindu *Maha Sabha* spoke for the higher caste Hindus in the South and Bengal who were unwilling to grant the lower caste Hindus equal status. In the guise of religion, a broad Hindu unity led by the Hindu *Maha Sabha* seemed unthinkable. The Worldview of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* changed significantly and did not stay the same. The British administrators exaggerated the potential of Hindu organisations to stir up trouble but the reality of the matter is that their calculations on whether or not to hang on to the empire were profoundly

impacted by their comprehension of the power of the Raj. There was a widespread agreement amongst officials - both British and Indian - about its weakness, as well as the might of its Nationalist foes by 1947. Activities of the Hindu *Maha Sabha* and the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (R.S.S.) figured prominently in their pessimistic analysis of their crumbling authority.

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14. Richard Gordon, *The Hindu Maha Sabha and the Indian National Congress (MAS)*, p.151.
15. *The Tribune*, August 3, 1923.
16. Jayakar, M. R., *The Story of My Life*, Vol. 2, Asia Publishing House, 1959, pp. 713-14.
17. *The Tribune*, August 3, 1923 and October 10, 1923.
18. The Arya Samaj Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in Bombay on April 10, 1875.
19. *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* was founded by K.B. Hedgewar on September, 1925 at Nagpur. He was political protégé of B.S. Moonje.
20. Hindu Maha Sabha Papers, File No. p. 28.
21. Home Political, FR (Bombay), File No. 18/9/44.
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23. Dr. Moonje Papers, August 13, 1944; Letters from C. P. and Berar Hindu Maha Sabha.
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31. *The Statesman*, June 15, 1945.
32. Wadhwa, Ram Lal, *Hindu Maha Sabha: 1928-47*, Delhi, 1999, p. 184.
33. A Protest week was observed by the leaders of the Hindu Maha Sabha from July 1-7, 1945 to oppose the Wavell Plan.
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48. Prakash, Indra, Dharamvir Bhopatkar, *Hindu Mission Pustak Bhandar*, 1949, p. 79.
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59. Hindu Maha Sabha Papers, File No. C-137, NMML.
60. Singh, Anita Inder, The Origins of the Partition of India 1936-47, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 198.
61. TOP, Vol. 10, Pethic Lawrence to Wavell, November 1, 1946, pp. 858-59.
62. Home Political File No. 18/12/46.
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64. Clow to Wavell, October 3, 1946, T.O.P., vol. 8, pp. 648-49.
65. Clow to Wavell, October 3, 1946, T.O.P., vol. 8, pp. 648-49.
66. Dow to Wavell, 22/23 November, 1946, T.O.P., vol. 9, p. 149.
67. L.B. Bhopatkar's Presidential address, Gorakhpur Session, December, 1946.
68. L.B. Bhopatkar's Presidential address, Gorakhpur Session, December, 1946.
69. Hindu Maha Sabha had formed Hindu Suraksha Dal in 1942.
70. Hindu Maha Sabha Papers, File No. C-162.
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72. The Strong holds of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (R.S.S.) were Bombay, Utter Pradesh, Punjab, Central Provinces and Bihar.
73. Hindu Maha Sabha Papers, File No. C-143; T.O.P., vol. 10, p. 277.
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76. L. B. Bhopatkar was elected as the President of the Hindu Maha Sabha in its Gorakhpur session in December 1946.
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80. IAR, 1947, vol. 1, p. 182.
81. At that time Khizr Hayat Khan was heading a Coalition Ministry. He resigned on March 2, 1947.
82. Home, Political, File No. 18/3/1974.
83. Hindu Maha Sabha papers, File No. C-154, 1947.
84. Hindu Maha Sabha Paper, File No. 147, 1947.
85. Hindu Maha Sabha Papers, File No. 150, 1947.
86. Master Tara Singh was a great Sikh political leader in the Punjab. He organised the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. He played very important role as a Sikh leader of the Akali Dal political party of the Punjab during the partition of India.
87. Hindu Maha Sabha Papers, File No. C-162.
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