

Constitutional Matters 1951–58 – Contribution of Malik Ghulam Muhammad

Background of Malik Ghulam Muhammad

Malik Ghulam Muhammad was Pakistan's third Governor-General, serving from 1951 to 1955. Before this, he worked as a finance expert and was known for his administrative skills. He played a major role in managing Pakistan's budget and economic affairs after independence. When Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated in 1951, Ghulam Muhammad became Governor-General and gained a lot of power in political matters.

Constitutional Role and Powers

As Governor-General, Ghulam Muhammad had wide powers under the Government of India Act 1935, which Pakistan was still using as its constitution. He used these powers to influence the Prime Minister, Cabinet, and Assembly. Instead of supporting parliamentary democracy, he often took decisions on his own. This made his role very strong in shaping Pakistan's constitutional development between 1951 and 1958.

Dissolution of the First Constituent Assembly (1954)

One of the most important actions of Ghulam Muhammad was the dissolution of Pakistan's first Constituent Assembly in 1954. The Assembly was about to pass a constitution, but Ghulam Muhammad dismissed it using his special powers. This step created a major constitutional crisis. The matter went to the courts, where the famous Maulvi Tamizuddin Case gave legal support to his decision. This weakened democracy in Pakistan.

Appointment of Prime Ministers

Ghulam Muhammad removed and appointed several Prime Ministers during his time. In 1953, he dismissed Khawaja Nazimuddin even though Nazimuddin had support in the Assembly. He then appointed Muhammad Ali Bogra as Prime Minister, who was more favorable to him. This interference showed that the Governor-General had more power than the elected representatives, which was against democratic principles.

Impact on Pakistan's Politics and Constitution

The actions of Ghulam Muhammad set a dangerous tradition in Pakistan's politics. His use of powers weakened parliamentary democracy and increased the role of unelected authorities. By dismissing the Assembly and Prime Ministers, he created instability in the government. This slowed down the process of making a permanent constitution. His decisions gave more space for future military and bureaucratic control in politics.

Later Years and Removal

Ghulam Muhammad's health started to decline after 1955, but he still tried to control politics. Finally, in 1955, he was forced to resign by President Iskander Mirza due to illness. However, by that time, he had already left a deep mark on Pakistan's constitutional and political system.

Legacy and Historical Significance

Malik Ghulam Muhammad is remembered as a powerful but controversial figure in Pakistan's early years. His contributions delayed democratic development and constitutional progress. While he helped manage finances and administration, his political interference damaged parliamentary traditions. His dismissal of the Assembly in 1954 is seen as one of the main reasons why democracy struggled in Pakistan for many years.