

## **Indian National Congress: The First Twenty Years**

### **Indian Association**

Surendranath Banerji found the Indian Association at Calcutta in 1876. It was the forerunner of the INC. It was formed because the idea of bringing all of India on to a single, untied political platform had taken hold of the Indian leaders in Bengal. The association protested against the reduction in age for appearing in the competitive examinations, against the Vernacular Press Act and also took an active part against the reactions of the British community in India regarding the Ilbert Bill.

In December 1883 a large number of Indian leaders were present in Calcutta and the association took full advantage to attain an all India status and held the First National Conference. The second conference was held in December 1885, again in Calcutta. While the second conference was being held by the Indian Association, the inaugural session of INC was being held in Bombay and the INC was thus formed on 28 December 1885. Before long, the Congress came to the forefront and the Indian National Conference faded away.

### **Formation of INC**

The Scotsman Allan Octavian Hume (1829 - 1912), an intelligent observer, was genuinely convinced that a storm similar to the rebellion of 1857 was brewing in India. Hume had a genuine interest in the welfare of India but he nevertheless loved his own country and also wanted to strengthen the English hold on India. Hume among others felt the need of a political organization which could help the British monitor Indians through the eyes of Western educated Indians. It was probably because of these motives that Hume first founded an organization by the name of Indian National Union with a preliminary meeting in March 1885. It was then decided that a meeting would be held at the end of the year at Poona. The venue had to be changed to Bombay due to the outbreak of cholera at Poona. Hume was not only the father of Congress but also its guardian angel, serving as its General Secretary for 21 years and frequently travelling to England to further its cause there.

The first meeting of the Congress (its inaugural session) set the stage for its subsequent meetings and thus needs to be discussed in some detail. The opening words were spoken by Hume who proposed W. C. Bonnerjee as President. Several points of importance were discussed and resolutions passed. The more important ones were as follows:

1. Appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the workings of the Indian Administration (because ever since coming under the crown, Indian people had been subjected to a less sympathetic despotism and India had suffered in all spheres).
2. Abolition of the Council of Secretary of State for India as constituted at the time.
3. Reform and expansion of the legislative councils with adequate representation and empowerment of the Indian people so that they could actively participate in matters pertaining to India.
4. Competitive Examinations held in England should be simultaneously held in India and that the age for appearing in them should not be less than 23 years.
5. The proposed increase in the military expenditure was deemed unnecessary (from £ 11.5 million in 1857 to £ 17 million in 1884, approximately). It was also urged that the government accept Indians willing to enlist in the army – something the British had been reluctant to do since 1857.
6. Any increase in military expenditure should be met by an increase in the import duties on goods from Lancashire.

### **Early Years of the Congress**

During its early years, political issues dominated the meetings and sessions of the INC and it had been decided not to interfere in the social system of India (till the advent of Gandhi under whom INC called for the eradication of the evil of untouchability). Other than the demands already discussed above, the Congress also demanded that the judiciary and executive be kept separate (both posts not to be held by the same person), and later it also suggested that representatives from all provinces must also be present in the British House of Commons. It

was mainly because of INC's efforts that in 1893 the House of Commons passed the resolution to hold competitive examinations in England and India simultaneously but it was not till 1920 that this was practically realized.

1893 onwards, Congress also began to draw attention to poverty in India and began to ask for adequate representation in government policy making to eradicate the nuisance of poverty. This was because in every decade, India was struck by a famine (followed by pestilence) in different parts which coupled with mismanagement by the government and excesses of the British soldiers on famine duties, led to the death of millions of Indians.

Since 1894, a new topic found its place in Congress' deliberations – the plight of Indians in Africa. The British had provided Indians with an opportunity to go to Africa as tea and coffee planters. Many Indians chose to stay there even after expiration of their contract. However, the conditions in which they were serving there were deplorable and Congress rose its voice to protest against those conditions. Gandhi who had not yet joined INC had already started a peaceful, non violent agitation in Africa to help those Indians.

### **Congress-British Relations**

Immediately after Congress' first session, The Times (mouthpiece of the British administration) sounded an alarm saying that the political awakening in India meant that the days of the English in India were numbered. In the open however, the British administration and the crown admired the Congress at first. The reason was very well explained by Dufferin who hoped that the Congress would help the British to face the much difficult social questions in India which they had been careful to avoid so far.

But in their second session, Congress decided to not interfere socially and focus on political matters. Their discussions of awkward political questions and putting forward of unpalatable political demands soon made Congress unfavorable in British circles for the time being. However, the Congress never wavered in its loyalty to the British crown and celebrated anniversaries of Queen's reign and birthdays with jubilation.

With the coming of Curzon, everything changed. His Viceroyalty has often been called the turning point in Indian politics. He was a great administrator and even won the gratitude of Indian people especially the Congress. His benevolence in dealing with the famine in 1900 was applauded by the natives. But things started to go awry from 1903 when Curzon held the Delhi Durbar for celebrating the coronation of Edward VII. He was seen by the people as wasting useful resources during a time of famine and pestilence. In 1905, Curzon's partitioning of Bengal further exacerbated the situation. It was only then that Congress' policy began to change rather quickly as its members joined the movement against the partition of Bengal.

### **Congress Propaganda in England**

Since its formation Congress had placed more hope for the success of its demands on the British people rather than the British government and realized that it was necessary to carry out their propaganda in England. For this purpose Dadabhai Naoroji (a Parsee who resided in England but frequently visited India) proved to be a pillar of strength for Congress' work in England. Several agencies and committees were also set up in England though these were presided and managed by Englishmen. To counteract unfavorable articles on India written in the British Press, a newspaper by the name of 'India' was also established. While some English people were sympathetic to their cause, majority of the business and ruling class who dictated government policy remained unmoved. Obviously they were more interested in their own and their country's interests.

### **Limitations of Congress**

Congress' first twenty years or so were marked by their 'Constitutional Method' according to which they were to avoid all sorts of rebellions. They even discarded organized peaceful agitation as an option. During these years Congress was dominated by these moderates who naively believed that 'fool proof logical arguments' would convince the British who were a fair and just people and valued democracy. For all practical purposes Congress

was more of a university debating club than a political party which could create awareness among the people, give them something to fight for, develop an ideology, and mobilize people throughout India if need be.

We can sum up Congress' political policy during this time as that of promoting loyalty to the British and secular nationalism without any doctrinaire liberty or doctrinaire equality. The ineffectiveness of such a policy was realized only gradually after the partition of Bengal in 1905. However, it was not until after the first world war that Congress became a significant political party.

## **Partition of Bengal**

### **Background and Reasons**

Lord Curzon was a great administrator but not a great statesman. His coming to India had been accompanied by a number of administrative reforms. Furthermore, Bengal was not the only one which was partitioned by Curzon. In 1901 he had taken five districts of Punjab and merged them with the tribal areas to form the North West Frontier Province. This had brought the turbulent frontier territory directly under the control of the Central Government. This division of Punjab to form a new province was disliked by the Lieutenant Governor of the province but there was no public hue and cry against it.

There is no denying the fact that Bengal was an unwieldy province. Its boundaries had already reached the Sutlej in 1803. The North West provinces had been detached from it in 1835 and Assam in 1874. Yet it consisted of Bengal proper, Bihar and Orissa and covered an area of nearly 189000 square miles and had a large population of approximately 80 million. Its forests and streams made communication and travel to different parts difficult. These features also helped dacoits to hide. The eastern part of Bengal was backwards and far from Calcutta. It was primarily due to difficulties arising from these features of the province that the government had not been able to take appropriate measures during famines. In short, efficient administration had become difficult.

Besides the administrative reasons, there was also the need to develop trade and commerce in East Bengal and promote the Port of Chittagong. To do this, it was necessary to separate Bengal into an East and West province. Furthermore, language and culture of the people in the East and West were different due to which the West Bengalis considered themselves superior to the ones in East and displayed this superiority complex in their behavior with them as well.

The plan to partition Bengal had been presented before but it was Curzon who had the courage to grasp the nettle and actually see the partition through. When he became the Viceroy, he took a tour of India and identified places which needed reform and reorganization. Bengal was among one of them. He sent the proposal to England in February 1905 and it was approved by the Secretary of State and sanctioned in June 1905. Ever since the partition had been announced, Bengalis had been protesting against it and the press had also become active. But the partition took effect on the appointed day – 16 October 1905.

### **The Partition**

Eastern Bengal and Assam were merged with Dhaka as capital and subsidiary headquarters at Chittagong. Its population was 31 million out of which 18 million were Muslims and the rest were Hindus. Its administration consisted of a separate Legislative Council, a Board of Revenue consisting of two members, and the jurisdiction of Calcutta high court was left undisturbed. The most striking feature of the new province was that it concentrated within its own bounds the hitherto ignored and neglected typical homogenous Muslim population of Bengal. Besides, the whole of the tea industry (except Darjeeling), and the greater portion of the jute growing area was brought under a single administration. This was the new province.

The old province consisted of Western Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The Bengali Hindus received a blow though of a lesser degree in this province as well. They were outnumbered here as well by the Hindus of Bihar and Orissa.

However, the net Hindu population in this province outnumbered the Muslims as they constituted 42 million out of the total population of 54 million.

### India's Political Scene: Extremists vs. Moderates

In India, political awakening had been on the rise since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of the political movements had begun in Bengal. While the Hindus had joined Indian politics, the Muslims had kept themselves aloof from the predominantly Hindu political parties on the advice of Sir Syed. However, there was a divide in the Hindu politics as well. On one hand were the Extremists led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak (titled 'Lokmanya') in Bengal and Lajpat Rai in Punjab and on the other hand were the Moderates who had joined the Congress and were led at the time by G. K. Gokhale. The two groups interpreted the partition in the same manner but they differed widely in their reactions. Congress passed resolutions against the partition but did not join in the Swadeshi movement until its Nagpur session in 1906. From then on till 1908, Congress' policy was dictated by the Extremists who gave speeches from its platform. In 1908 however, the Moderates called a convention which decided that the Congress members must abide by a creed which was unacceptable to the Extremists. The Extremists as a result left the Congress until 1916 when Tilak returned to its ranks.

### Hindu Reaction

The Hindu landowners knew they would no longer be able to oppress the Muslims while the Hindu traders (who had dominated the Bengal trade scene since the 18<sup>th</sup> century) were afraid that the Muslims would now have an equal opportunity to enjoy trade and commerce especially with the British trying to develop the port of Chittagong. The Hindu layers also became a part of the agitation because they thought that the new province would have its separate courts which would affect their practice adversely. Dhaka had been a centre of academics and journalism and the Hindus now feared that it would be the Muslims' voice which would dominate the press. Thus Hindus from all spheres, from traders to layers to students and journalists took part in the agitations started and led by the Extremists.

An open rebellion like that in 1857 was impossible due to which the Extremists decided to hurt the British economically by the complementary movements of boycott of foreign goods and the promotion of locally manufactured goods. This boycott-swadeshi movement spread from Bengal to various parts of India. Bonfires were made of foreign clothes and shops selling foreign produce were picketed. Hindus paraded the streets chanting the Bande Matram as their anthem and employed other religious factors to make the agitation a mass movement. Hindus such as Arabindo and Lajpat Rai equated religion with nationalism (surprising that later they rejected it when it was done by the Muslims). Arabindo who suddenly appeared on the political scene, spelled out a program which anticipated the one employed by Gandhi a few years later. He included in his agenda, boycott of public schools being run by the British, boycott of courts as they could not be just and fair for the Indians, general civil disobedience and refusal to pay taxes and rents.

With passions running high, a law and order crisis was inevitable. Apart from angry articles in the press and fiery speeches from the platform, there were underground revolutionary activities. Many Hindus formed underground movements and terrorism which had first manifested during the plague became widespread. These Hindus took even more extreme measures than boycott and civil disobedience. They made several attempts on the lives of European administrators. Unsuccessful attempts were made on the lives of Lieutenant Governors of East Bengal (whose train was derailed) and Bengal, while some Europeans were killed in bombings. An unsuccessful attempt was also made on the life of Lord Minto, the Viceroy. The British tried to suppress the unrest by deporting leaders of the movement such as Lajpat Rai and imprisoning others. However, the Extremists did not stop till the British ceded to their demands such as representation in councils in the Act of 1909 and reversal of the partition of Bengal in 1911.

It was easy for the Extremists to move the masses for their purpose because of the internal and external factors. The famines and plagues in the recent years had been managed by the government in a poor manner and

articles had already been written against the government. Furthermore, the defeat of the Europeans in several wars in the preceding years had revealed that they were not invincible.

However, it is interesting to note that no such reaction was seen when the British had divided Punjab in 1901. That division had not been seen as an attempt to split Punjabi nationalism or anything of the sort. This fact alone shows that the Hindus were afraid not of a split nationalism but of being a minority as they had become in the case of Eastern Bengal.

### **Muslim Reaction**

In the Muslim community, the partition was welcomed as it was thought that it would bring about the emancipation of the Muslims socially and economically. They knew that in the Muslim majority province of East Bengal, they would be free of Hindu dominance and would therefore enjoy better economic and agrarian opportunities. Furthermore, it could also result in the political uplift of Muslims because now that they were in the majority, they could present their demands to the democratically inclined British. Apart from political and economic benefits, the partition could help the Muslims in their social, intellectual and cultural advancement as it relieved them from competing with the Hindus who were advanced in every field due to their embracing the British Raj more easily and early. Nawab Sir Salimullah Khan of Dhaka established the Mohammedan Provincial Union which became an important political platform for the Muslims of Bengal.

But Muslims received a major shock when the Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal, known for his pro Muslim bias resigned under pressure. But the British assured them that the partition of Bengal was a settled matter and this pacified them. The Muslims then pledged their loyalty and support to the British and believed that their interests were safe in British hands. However, a final shock regarding the issue came in the form of a betrayal in 1911 when the partition was finally annulled.

### **Annulment of the Partition**

Lord Hardinge had been specifically chosen for Viceroyalty of India because of his experience in diplomacy as the situation called for a more tactful and imaginative person than Minto had been. Hardinge realized that Bengal would have to be reunited in order to avoid any further and worse trouble in Bengal than in the past. Hindus again became active and sent a representation to him for the annulment of partition of Bengal. He recommended the same to the British Prime Minister for Indian Affairs. When His Majesty George V visited India in 1911, he made two important announcements at the Delhi Durbar on 12 December 1911: annulment of the partition of Bengal and the transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi.

Hardinge had proposed the change of capital because the Legislative Assembly was in Calcutta which meant that its Bengali members had an undue and inevitable influence on other members of the assembly. This was detrimental to the impartiality required from the members. The idea had been proposed before but it was surfaced by Hardinge once again because he thought that if coupled with the annulment of the partition (an issue which in the minds of the Bengalis overshadowed all other issues), the change would be swallowed peacefully – and he was correct.

The united Bengal was placed under a Governor and Assam was placed under a Chief Commissioner. This decision was a shattering blow to Muslims. It left them sullen and disillusioned. Their anger and indignation had widespread repercussions. The Muslims leaders and intelligentsia condemned the decision as betrayal of worst kind.

### **Conclusion**

The Muslims of India had appreciated the step and started turning in the favor of the British but the British soon gave in against the mounting pressure of Hindus which helped the Muslims to realize the importance of standing on their feet and to organize themselves politically. It also affirmed the apprehension of Sir Syed that the Muslims might submerge in the majority of Hindus and lose their separate entity. The partition of Bengal had taught two important lessons to the Muslims: the Hindus would never care about the Muslim interests and



would happily sacrifice as many Muslim interests as they would have to in order to maintain their own dominance, and that the Muslims could not rely on promises made to them by the British. In the 1913 session of Muslim League, the aims and purposes of the League were redefined and the League entered into its second phase.

Later however, Muslims came to terms with Congress primarily because it was free of the Extremists who had played the more subversive role in the annulment of partition of Bengal. Congress however came to be dominated by Extremist ideology after 1916 when Bal Gangadhar Tilak took charge of it.

## **Simla Deputation**

### **Background**

The Indians had been agitating the British since the Act of 1892. The Extremists had been trying for self government while the Moderates in Congress had been pushing for further reforms, greater representation of Indians in Councils, and the introduction/extension of electoral system. However, the British had been under increased pressure ever since the partition of Bengal. Lord Minto had tried to suppress the Hindu movements by imprisoning the Extremist leaders and by deporting them. However, they knew that a stick would be more effective with a carrot. So on 20 July 1906 John Morley the Secretary of State for Indian affairs, speaking on the Indian budget in the British parliament, announced that the Government wanted to increase the number of seats for the legislative councils and also their powers.

### **Muslim Reaction**

John Morley's announcement created an anxiety among the Muslims of the sub-continent. The proposed reforms, if implemented, as was demanded by the Congress ('pure and simple' Western system of elections as warned by Sir Syed), would have suppressed the Muslims more under the Hindu majority especially as the movements of Tilak and Swami were gaining more and more popularity in the Hindu circles all over India.

The weekly Muslim Patriot penned down this important issue to clarify the assumption that India was inhabited by one class. It stated that India consists of a heterogeneous mass of different races whose interests were often different. The weekly supported the extended representation in the legislature, but also wished that the extension be based on class recognition and each distinct community should have representatives of its own in proportion to its population.

### **Formation of the Deputation**

Now, many Mohammedans drew the attention of Mohsin-ul-Mulk, the secretary of the MAO College, Aligarh, to John Morley's speech. So, Nawab Mohin-ul-Mulk wrote a letter in August 1906, to Archbold, Principal of the college, in which he expressed his apprehensions about the forthcoming constitutional changes. He asked Archbold to ask for the Viceroy to accept a deputation to discuss the issue of forthcoming constitutional amendments. Archbold contacted the Viceroy's secretary and on 10th August, informed Mohsin-ul-Mulk that the Viceroy was ready to meet the deputation.

Thereafter, Nawab Sahib started to put together a deputation for this purpose. A meeting was held in Lucknow on 16th September 1906, in which an address, prepared by Sayyid Husain Bilgarami, was finalized by learned Muslim leaders. Finally, a delegation consisting of 35 leaders of Muslim community meet to the viceroy, under the leadership of Sir Aga Khan, in Simla on 1st October 1906. The deputation included members from all over India and representatives of various Muslim organizations in India.

### **Proposals of the Deputation**

The memorandum of demands prepared by Nawab Mohsin ul Mulk was presented before the Viceroy. Regarding the issue of elections and representations of Muslims, there were three main demands:

1. Reserved seats: a definite number of seats be allotted to the Muslims in the Municipal and District Boards and in the Provincial Councils and the Imperial Legislature.
2. Weightage: the number of seats allotted to the Muslims should be based on more than mere population proportions and the service of Muslims to the Empire and their political ability must also be considered.
3. Separate electorates: only Muslims should be allowed to vote for candidates for Muslim seats.

Demands on matters other than representation and elections were also made. A quota for the Muslims in the civil services was demanded. Muslim representation in university senates and syndicates was also demanded. Finally, the Viceroy was asked for aid for the development of a Muslim university.

### Viceroy's Reaction

It is important to note here that the British had always been aware of the fact that India was not a single nation. Also, the British statesmen had never made any secret of the fact that India was comprised of diverse people to which an unadulterated British system of government was inapplicable. Thus it is not surprising that Lord Minto approved of the demands of the Muslim deputation and assured that as long as he was the Viceroy, the interests of Muslims would be safe guarded. Moreover, the British had time and again pleased the Hindus of India ever since their political awakening and it was understood that they would have to appease the Muslims as well – something which speaks for the fact that Muslims were not a minority and were in fact a separate nation.

### Congress' Conspiracy Theory

Indian historians have often alleged that the Simla deputation was a brain child of the British. These allegations were actually spread by the newspaper Amrita Bazar Patrika which had close links with the Congress. However, in order to prove this conspiracy, there have been used mainly two arguments: Maulana Mohammad Ali's speech at the 38<sup>th</sup> session of Congress and an entry in the diary of Lady Minto, dated 1 October 1906. In the case of the former, the speech contains only allegations and speculations without any hard facts and proofs (people see what they want to see) and in the case of the latter, the entry in the diary refers to the deputation as something of historic importance and a sigh of relief that the Muslims have been prevented from joining the ranks of a seditious opposition. This in no way means that the British were behind the deputation.

Furthermore, Nawab Mohsin ul Mulk had to borrow an amount of Rs.4000 at a high interest rate from King and King Company to bear the expenses of the deputation. Had the Muslims been in alliance with the British, there would have been no need for this loan and someone like Allan Octavian Hume would have had shared the economic burden of the deputation and he League for several years along with other Britons.

Furthermore, Congress had itself accepted the fact that India was not a single nation, first during the issue of partition of Bengal when it had used the term 'Bengali nation' again and again and second when in the Lucknow Pact, it accepted Muslims' demand of separate electorates. It was only after the relationship b/w Congress and League became bitter that these allegations were made formally by the Congress.

### Significance of the Deputation

The Simla deputation proved a landmark in the history of modern India, because for the very first time the Hindu-Muslim conflict, which started with the Hindi-Urdu controversy, was lifted to the constitutional plane. The Simla deputation was unique, because for the first time Muslims were anxious to take their share in the political activities as a separate identity. Another purpose of the delegation was to get a silent permission from the government to make a political platform for the representation of Muslims. The demand of separate electorates was the foundation of all future constitutional amendments for India. The Muslims made it clear that they had no confidence in the Hindu majority and that they were not prepared to put their future in the hands of an assembly elected on the assumed basis of a homogenous Indian nation. It is in this sense that the beginning of

separate electorates may be seen as the beginning of the realization of the Two-Nation Theory, its final and inevitable consequence being the partition of British India in 1947.

## **All India Muslim League: Early Years**

### **Background**

From the very start of its existence the Congress had shown clear its interest to safeguard the rights of Hindus, alone. Some of the Congress leaders adopted a revolutionary policy to establish Hindu Raj in the sub-continent under the guise of a national movement.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan had believed that the Muslims must eschew agitational politics and that they must rely on the British government to save them from the rising tide of Hindu Nationalism. He further believed that if the Muslims concentrated on their education, they would eventually be able to compete with the Hindus for political and administrative spoils. After Sir Syed's death Muslims felt a need for a political organization that could offset the Congress.

A leader who made an effort to set up such an organization was Nawab Mohsin ul Mulk. He had refrained from public affairs since 1892 but had become active in 1900 when the government of UP decided to elevate Hindi to the status enjoyed previously by Urdu. For the purpose he wrote an article in the Aligarh Institute Gazette. In October 1901, in a meeting at Lucknow, he put forward a plan to establish a political organization for the Muslims. But his initial efforts bore no fruit.

### **Reasons for Formation of the League**

The Muslims had never felt that they and the Hindus formed a single, united nation. They had different histories, languages, cultures and religions. The forces that bound the Muslims together into a brotherhood and the forces that kept the Hindus into a single society with multiple castes were worlds apart. This had been acknowledged - though only equivocally - by the Hindus themselves who had always seen Muslims as foreigners and usurpers. But this silent acknowledgment had manifested itself in the demands of the Hindus at the time of Hindi-Urdu controversy and again after the partition of Bengal. It was only natural then that the two nations be represented separately when it came to politics. The incidents following the Hindi-Urdu controversy and the partition of Bengal strengthened this desire of the Muslims to organize themselves politically.

When John Morley hinted constitutional reforms in his budget speech of 1906, the Muslims realized that they needed to present their demands to the British and for this purpose the Simla deputation was formed. The deputation met with the Viceroy but the Muslim leaders realized that they should have a properly acknowledged political party so that demands in the future could be made via the proper channels. The success at Simla acted as a catalyst for the Muslim leaders who began correspondence to discuss the matter only three days after the deputation. The Muslim League which went on to achieve freedom for the Muslims of India was therefore a child of the Simla Deputation.

### **Formation of the League**

Muslim leaders from all over India were to gather at Dhaka for the 20<sup>th</sup> session of the All India Mohammedan Educational Conference. After the conference, Nawab Sir Salimullah Khan called a meeting on 30 December 1906 at his own residence. This meeting was presided by Nawab Viqar ul Mulk and discussed the scheme for 'The Mohammedan All India Confederacy' which had been framed and circulated some time previously by Nawab Salimullah.

Finally it was resolved that the political association of the Muslims be styled as All India Muslim League with the following main objectives:



1. To promote among the Musalmans of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government, and to remove any misconception that may arise as to the intention of the Government with regard to any of its measures.
2. To protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Musalmans of India, and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government.
3. To prevent the rise, among the Musalmans of India, of any feeling of hostility towards other communities, without prejudice to the other aforementioned objects of the League.

Nawab Viqar ul Mulk and Nawab Mohsin ul Mulk were elected provisionally as the Joint Secretaries of the League and a 60 member committee was formed with Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar as its head to draft the constitution of the League. The inaugural session also welcomed the partition of Bengal.

### First Session of the League

The first session of the League was held in two parts at Karachi on 29-30 December 1907 and at Aligarh on 18 March 1908. Sir Adamjee Pirbhai presided the session at Karachi and the committee responsible for drafting the constitution presented their draft. After some scrutiny, the constitution was adopted and was called 'The Green Book'. When the session resumed at Aligarh, elections were held and the Agha Khan was elected as the 'permanent' President (a position he held till his resignation in 1913) and Major Hassan Bilgrami was elected as the first Secretary. The demands made by the Simla deputation were reiterated and a new demand was agreed upon that a Muslim judge should be appointed to every high court and other chief courts of the country.

On 6 May 1908, the inaugural session of the London chapter of League was held at London Caxton Hall, organized by Syed Ameer Ali. In it participated many Muslims and British who favored their view.

### Early Achievements of the League

Muslim League did exactly what it was designed to do. It got the government's attention to the issues of Muslims and by its persistence, secured for the Muslims, separate electorates and an adequate representation in the Councils and Legislatures. Furthermore, Muslim judges were also appointed in courts throughout the country with the important ones being Sharaf ud Din in Calcutta High Court, Karamat Hussain in Allahabad High Court and Shah Din in Punjab High Court. The Wakf Bill which was passed into law largely due to Jinnah's efforts (not yet in the League) was also supported by the League. The necessity to pass this bill had arisen due to the Privy Council's ruling which had invalidated the right of Muslims to create tax free wakfs in favor of their families under the Muslim Law.

In its second session at Amritsar in December 1908, Syed Ali Imam also made a speech condemning the actions of the Hindus who had gone to extreme measures to reverse the partition of Bengal. He also said that the Hindu cries of Bande Matram as national cries and the sectarian rakhi bandhan as a national observance filled his heart with despair and disappointment and turned his suspicion of preaching of Hindu nationalism under the cloak of nationalism, into a conviction. In the third session in January 1910, at Delhi, the League expressed its gratitude for the acceptance of Muslim demands especially that of the separate electorates in the 1909 reforms.

### Change in League's Attitude

Leaders of the League started to incline more towards the Congress which had separated itself from the Extremist Hindus in 1908. Since the approval of separate electorates, Agha Khan had hoped that Hindus and Muslims would be able to work in harmony as the competition b/w them would be minimum. The Congress reciprocated and there was a harmony b/w the two political entities. Members from the 'opposing' political organization were invited to attend sessions.

Furthermore, events like the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911, the Kanpur mosque tragedy in 1913 and the European nations' wars against the Muslim countries worldwide betrayed the League's trust in the British Government. This pushed them closer to the Congress and forced the League to change its goals. The League too now decided to strive for self government. Since the League and Congress were now on the same

page, Jinnah decided to hold dual offices. It was actually this new breed of leadership like Jinnah which became instrumental in the metamorphosis of the League and enabled it to steer the ship of Muslim destiny through the political chaos and turmoil to the safe harbor of Pakistan.

## **Indian Councils Act 1909**

### **Background**

By 1909, political consciousness amongst the Indians had risen to new levels and political parties like the INC and AIML had emerged. The British had been affected quite a lot by these parties. As previous reforms and acts did not meet the political aspirations of all the Indians, the British realized that in order to introduce new reforms to impoverish the grievances of the Indians they needed to cater to these two political parties. Furthermore, they had adopted harsh measures to stop the agitation of Extremist Hindus and in order for those measures to not backfire, the British resorted to their carrot and stick policy.

### **The Act**

John Morley had hinted about the reforms in 1906, the same year that the Liberal Party had come to power in England. This party did not wish to pursue the autocratic tactics used by the Conservative Party. Demands of Hindus had already been known and the Muslims presented their demands at Simla. The Viceroy Lord Minto and the Secretary of State John Morley collaborated and drafted a bill which was presented in the Parliament. It received Royal assent and was passed into law and enforced in 1909. Its main features were:

1. Number of members for central legislature was increased from 16 to 60 out of which 27 were to be elected.
2. Provincial legislatures were also expanded to 50 members in Madras, Bombay and Bengal and to 30 members in other provinces.
3. Method of elections introduced was indirect – the people elected the local bodies who elected the electoral college who elected the provincial legislature who finally elected the central legislature.
4. Muslims were granted separate electorates.
5. The Secretary of State was given the power to increase the number of executive councils of Madras and Bombay from 2 to 4.
6. Governor General had the power to nominate one Indian member to his executive council.

### **Reactions to the Act**

The reforms drew an overall gloomy picture. There were no provisions of responsibility which meant that the British intended to stay in India for quite some time. However, the reforms did appease the moderates in Hindu circles (INC) as well as the AIML but the extremists rejected the reforms. The League was happy to secure separate electorates in central and provincial governments and to get 5 reserved seats for the Muslims in the central legislature. However, the League had demanded that there should be two Indian members in the Governor General's executive council so that one could be Hindu and the other Muslim. Initially, S. P. Sinha had been appointed as the single Indian member which led the League to raise an issue with the British. They were promised that the next member would be a Muslim. On Sinha's resignation, Syed Ali Imam was appointed as the Indian member. However, Congress criticized the separate electorates as it meant that the Muslims were being treated as separate from the rest of India.

### **Significance of the Reforms**

In spite of all its demerits and flaws, the reforms offered space for political development. The inclusion of the Indians in Councils was a great experience for the Indians. They became part of Legislative Councils. They could move resolutions, discuss Bills elaborately, and approve Bills. Separate electorates were a tremendous

achievement for the Muslims as they laid the basis for all future negotiations and the demand that Muslims were in fact a separate nation. Furthermore, Jinnah was elected to the Governor General's Legislative Council in 1909 from a Muslim constituency. He took his seat in 1910 and his first speech was in support of the resolution demanding an end to the export of indentured labor from India to South Africa, a cause that Gandhi was championing at the same time in South Africa. However, Jinnah's major contribution was his tireless work for the approval of Wakf Bill with respect to which, credit goes to Lord Hardinge as well who extended Jinnah's term in the Legislature so that he could pilot the bill till it was passed into law.

## **Kanpur Mosque Tragedy**

### **Background**

The U.P Government granted a total of two and half lack rupees to widen the roads of Kanpur and to fulfill other welfare works. The scheme also included AB road, the widening of which became a serious issue. The real problem was that if it were widened straight, there lay in its way, a Hindu temple just opposite to the Mosque in the Machli Bazar. When Hindus heard of this scheme, they forced the Government to halt its progress. Then the only way left to save the temple was, to turn the road in some other direction. But there was not much space between the mosque and temple, to widen and thus, there was a threat for the Muslims that the eastern part of the mosque might have to be demolished which was used for the purpose of ablution and for baths.

The Muslims protested in all possible ways to convince the government that no part of the mosque should be demolished. But the Lieutenant Governor of UP, Sir James Meston was indifferent to the feelings of Muslims and said that the eastern part of the mosque was not part of the sacred building where prayers were offered and that the authorities of the mosque should choose some other site where the municipal board will build for them another place for ablution and baths.

### **The Demolition and Massacre**

On 20 July 1913, Meston visited the site of the mosque himself and in utter disregard of Muslims' feelings, ordered the demolition of the eastern part of the mosque. Taylor, a Magistrate of Kanpur was ordered by Meston to take any measures to ensure peace in connection to the orders pertaining to the mosque. The Muslim population and press protested against Meston's orders and his actions were condemned throughout India.

The Muslims then gathered at Idgah on 3rd August. When the meeting was over an angry procession which was carrying black flags appeared before the mosque and began to place the loose bricks over the dismantled structure as a symbol of reconstruction. Then to disperse the mob, the police force opened fire under Taylor's orders. The firing continued for 15 minutes and almost 600 cartridges were used. Many Muslim lives were lost.

### **Reactions and Results**

Muslim Anjumans from all over India sprung in action and protests, condemning the tragedy at Kanpur. The press media also played its part and strongly condemned the actions of the government at Kanpur. The Zamindar specifically said that the Kanpur incident had shaken the faith of Musalmans of India in the British policy of non interference in religious matters of Indian people.

AIML did not stay quite on the matter as well. On 31 August and on 19 September 1913, Council of the AIML passed two notable resolutions. One for the appointment of a committee comprising both officials and civilians to conduct an impartial inquiry, and the other on the importance of showing gratitude to Syed Wazir Hassan and M. Ali for going to England to present the Muslim case.

It is needless to say that Meston's attitude filled the hearts of Muslims with painful feelings, when after this tragedy he distributed the merit certificates to those who had taken part in the firing. It showed his hatred for the Muslims.

## Lord Hardinge's Intervention

Hardinge showed blatant anger at this policy and strategy, and called this act a 'stupid blunder'. He said that it was an example of shortsightedness of Taylor and Meston. Lord Hardinge felt the pain of the Muslims and visited Kanpur along with Syed Ali Imam on 13 to 14 October 1913. He compromised with the Muslims, allowing them to build a new building over the public road. He also visited the mosque and ordered to release the prisoners and withdraw the cases.

## League and Congress in Harmony

### Background

The third session held in January 1910 at Delhi was an important one regarding the harmony b/w the two sister parties. Agha Khan expressed his hope during this session that the attainment of separate electorates would allow the Hindus and Muslims to cooperate with each other so that they could be a combined force in matters of common interest. In the fourth session, held in December 1910 at Nagpur, Syed Nabiullah, in his Presidential address, endorsed this statement of the Agha Khan. This gives two important facts: it was the League which took the first step towards cooperation and not the Congress, and it was the Agha Khan who originated the idea though later it was Jinnah who came into a unique position by holding a dual office, to embark on his role as the Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity.

However, it was only after the Muslims were disappointed by the British that they moved closer to the Hindus. This disappointment had several roots: annulment of the partition of Bengal, waging of wars on Muslim nations globally by the British and recognizing their triumph as the triumph of cross over the crescent, and the Kanpur mosque tragedy.

### Jinnah Joins the League

It is of great significance that Jinnah was invited to attend a League Council meeting in Bankipore on 31 December 1912, presided by Sir Agha Khan. The meeting was a turning point for League as it was decided that its purpose should be from then on the attainment of self rule suitable to India, under the aegis of the British. Two amendments were proposed to this resolution but it was passed unamended as they were rejected by Jinnah during discussions. These facts suffice to show the esteem in which Jinnah was held in the educated Muslim circles from an early time.

The first objection by Mazhar ul Haq was that the words 'self rule suitable to India' should be replaced by 'self rule on colonial lines'. Had the amendment been made, League's position would have been exactly that of the Congress. Jinnah rejected the objection on the grounds that the words as put in the resolution presented the right ideal for League. Perhaps he was aware back then that Indian Muslims would not accept self government without the proper safeguards they had been demanding since Sir Syed's time.

The second objection was put forward by Viqar ul Mulk who said that the time was not right for self government. Jinnah rejected the objection on the grounds that no specification had been made regarding the time frame within which the goal was to be realized. He went as far as to say that it may be a century till it was actually realized but nevertheless, the League had to work with that goal in mind. In this too, we see his farsightedness in that he knew that freedom was inevitable but was also aware that it would take time to achieve it.

The sixth session of the League held in March 1913 at Lucknow. It was attended by Jinnah as a guest and also by the Hindu poetess Sarojini Naidu who was applauded by the League at the end of her speech. The resolution of the Council made in the Bankipore meeting (also attended by Jinnah) was adopted formally by the League. It was in 1913 that Jinnah decided to join the League as its aims were aligned with that of the Congress. It was

because of his position in both parties that he came into a unique position to work tirelessly for Hindu-Muslim unity which culminated in 1916 in the shape of Lucknow Pact.

### **Congress Reaction**

Congress reacted in a cordial manner and welcomed the change in League's stance towards the Hindus. This was made official in the 28<sup>th</sup> session of Congress held at Karachi in December 1913.

### **Muslims and the British**

Though relations with the British had plummeted since 1911, Muslims of India found in Lord Hardinge a tactful Governor General who was sympathetic to their demands and understood their plight. He did his utmost to assuage the feelings of the Muslims. He announced that a teaching and residential university would be founded at Dhaka (Muslims of East Bengal were joyous), settled the Kanpur mosque dispute to the satisfaction of the Muslims though many lives had been lost till then, extended Jinnah's Legislative term to ensure that Wakf Bill was passed into law, did his utmost for the plight of Indians in South Africa and ensured the passage of Indian Relief Act in 1914 (after which Gandhi felt it was fine to return to India), and to some extent even neutralized the Muslim anxiety with regard to Turkish policy of the British.

Because of his service for the Indians, Congress and League requested for an extension of his term. The request was granted and Hardinge got an extension of five months. He was succeeded by Lord Chelmsford.

## **World War I and India**

### **Background**

Although a resurgence of imperialism was the underlying cause of the Great War, it was the assassination of the archduke of Austria on 28 June 1914 that triggered a diplomatic crisis and international alliances that had been forged over the past decade or so were invoked. The Allies (Britain, France and Russia) were joined by Japan while the Central Powers (Germany and Austria) were joined by Turkey. Italy and Bulgaria also joined in with the Allies and the Central Powers respectively in 1915. Allied victory was ensured when USA declared war on Germany in 1917 and the war was officially over on 11 November 1918.

The end result of the war was that German, Russian, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires came to an end. The German colonies and the territories of Ottoman Empire were transferred to the victorious powers. Middle East and Europe saw the formation of new countries and League of Nations was formed in order to ensure peace – a mission in which the League failed miserably.

### **India's Contributions**

Thanks to Lord Hardinge, India had been in a loyal mood when the war broke out and thus responded generously to the British call for help. India contributed generously in men and money to the British cause. Hardinge himself acknowledges that the arrival of Indian forces in France in September 1914 filled in a gap in the British line that could not have otherwise been filled. Indians fought valiantly despite the terrible losses they suffered and very few survivors made it back home.

However, to say that Indians helped the British will be not just an understatement but also an over simplification of the true nature of Indian reaction to the war. Broadly, India could be divided into four sections: the Indian ruling princes, the Western educated classes who at the time being disregarded communal differences and voiced similar views, the villagers who constituted the bulk of Indian people and the revolutionaries who sought Indian freedom. To have a deeper understanding, we need to study each of these sections.

The Indian princes knew that their own future was tied to the future of British rule in India. They were therefore fighting as much for the British as they were for themselves during the war. Moreover, their princely tradition had also infused them with a sense of chivalry and honor.



The Western educated classes formed a very small section of the Indian population. Among this class, most people who held a political interest were either a part of Congress or League, none of which had acquired at that time a popular following. Although this class did not flock to the recruiting centers, their voice was the loudest in India. They declared unwavering loyalty to the British and promises of whole hearted support in the war. But it must be remembered that these voices were not the outpourings of the unalloyed patriotism of a free people fighting for the defence of their motherland but were the response of a subject people who were thankful for some aspects of the British rule and resentful for other aspects. The latter included measures such as the Arms Act (denying the freedom to carry arms), and that the enlistment in army was by selective recruitment and not open to all volunteers, and that Indians recruited in the army had no chance to obtain a commission in the army. Hindus and Muslims were also resentful of the fact that Indians exercised almost no control over the administration of their own country. It was however hoped and expressed that the winds of change released by WW1 and the gratitude accruing from their own share in the allied victory would bring them closer to the cherished goal of self government. But at the same time, it was also understood that Indian nationalism was still a tender plant that needed the protection of the orderly British administration until it could stand independently.

The villagers formed nearly 75% of the Indian population yet they were the least vocal of their countrymen. They were not conversant with the principles of economics and were not conscious that their land was being impoverished by foreigners. They were not excited by the (growing) feeling that the whole of India could become a single nation. Their view of the British rule was utterly different than that of the Western educated class. For them, the British were incorruptible rulers, not swayed by considerations of caste and creed and were neutral and fair when resolving matters. For these men, fighting as soldiers for the rulers was a matter of pride and honor. Being a soldier in uniform enhanced the social status in the village and if the soldier became a casualty, it would bring pension.

To the revolutionaries, desirous of immediate independence by overthrowing the British government, the war presented a unique opportunity. They hoped that the Germans would provide them with weapons so that they could destabilize British rule in India from within and that the Muslims would rise against the British to protect the Caliphate. Despite their many efforts, they failed in their task of inciting a full fledged rebellion within India. Efforts were also made by tribesmen from the north west frontier (these were independent efforts as the Amir of Afghanistan remained friendly with the British) but the British retaliated in time and calm was restored to the area.

### **Indian Politics During the War**

Congress and League had already been getting close to each other and their relationship reached new heights during the war especially when it became clear that the British had no intentions of not disintegrating the Ottoman Empire and that self government was still a distant goal. The details of Congress-League relationship will be discussed in detail under the Lucknow Pact.

But other interesting developments took place as well. Mrs. Besant was a spirited Irish lady who had been interested in social and welfare works. During the 1890s, her interest in Indian affairs began to grow and she came to India in 1893 and concerned herself only with educational, religious and social work in the beginning. She entered the political arena in 1914 by joining the Congress party. On 25 September 1915, she announced the establishment of Home Rule League whose sole purpose was to strive for self rule in India. In demanding Home Rule immediately, she outpaced Tilak as well as the Congress and consequently her wish to affiliate her Home Rule League with the Congress was not realized. However, she continued her work all over India and established branches of Home Rule League. Her movement gained momentum and she enjoyed the support of many worthies such as Jinnah, Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal Nehru. But when she took a position in favor of Rowlatt Bills and tried to justify the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, her popularity plummeted along with that of Home Rule League.

Another interesting development was related to Tilak who decided to start Indian Home Rule League with a view similar to that of Besant's Home Rule League. He worked quite hard and spread his movement to Maharashtra and Central Provinces, while the rest of India was covered by Besant. For a short time, the activities of these two and their propaganda in the press almost eclipsed the regular debating sessions of Congress and League although the fruition of cooperation b/w Congress and League was the most remarkable development during these years.

It was probably because of this changing political climate that the Congress also increased its demands and included in its resolution of the December 1915 session, the goal of provincial autonomy including financial independence.

## **Lucknow Pact**

### **Background**

The League had taken the first step towards a rapprochement with the Congress because Muslim leaders felt that the interests of their community had been safeguarded by securing separate representation, weightage and separate electorates in the 1909 reforms. Since then, League regularly demanded that such communal representation as had been guaranteed in the Legislative Councils be extended to all local bodies while Congress had regularly rejected this demand. Although this had kept the two parties apart, they had held debating sessions and had invited the members of the opposite party to attend their meetings and sessions as guests with the primary figure in this rapprochement being Jinnah whose importance had been recognized by the League (his role in the League Council meeting of 1912 and the session in 1913).

### **Jinnah's Efforts**

It was due to Jinnah's tireless efforts that the two parties held their 1915 sessions at Bombay. A Reforms Committee was formed in order to find a solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem: League's demand for the same communal representation extended to local bodies while Congress' opposition to it.

However, by 1916 Jinnah himself was convinced that the Muslims would never let go off the issue regarding communal representation and would never accept a self rule without the safe guards they had been demanding since the time of Sir Syed. Once convinced, it was easy for his logical mind to convince the Congress to accept the Muslim demands. It then became possible for the Reforms Committee to finally come up with proposals acceptable to both sides.

### **The Pact**

On 29-30 December 1916, the two parties held a joint session at Lucknow. The session was presided by Jinnah and the proposals of the committee were put before the session. The proposals were accepted in order to pressure the British into adopting a more liberal attitude towards India besides safeguarding the Muslim interests. This came to be known as the Lucknow Pact and its major proposals were as follows:

1. India shall have self government.
2. Members of the Councils shall be elected by the people directly on as broad a franchise as possible.
3. The strength of the Imperial Legislative Council shall be 150 and 4/5 of the members shall be elected and the rest shall be nominated. The Imperial Legislature shall have a 5 year term.
4. Provincial Legislatures shall be expanded to 125 members in large provinces and 50 to 75 members in minor provinces. 4/5 of the members shall be elected and the rest shall be nominated.
5. The Governor General shall have an Executive Council, whose at least one half members shall be Indians who shall be elected by the elected members of the Imperial Legislative Council.
6. The Provincial Executive Councils shall also have at least one half of their members as Indians who shall be elected by the elected members of the Provincial Legislative Council.

7. The Government of India shall not ordinarily interfere with the internal affairs of any province and powers not specifically given to a Provincial Government shall be deemed to be vested in the former. The authority of the Government shall be restricted to general supervision over the Provincial Governments.
8. The Council of the Secretary of State shall be abolished and replaced by two Under Secretaries, one of whom shall always be an Indian.
9. Weightage system shall be implemented not only in provinces where Muslims are a minority but also in areas where the Hindus are a minority (Bengal and Punjab).
10. Minorities shall have the right of separate electorate in Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils unless they want joint electorate.
11. Muslims shall get 1/3 representation in the Imperial Legislature.
12. No bill in any of the Councils affecting one or the other community shall be passed if opposed by 3/4 of the members of that community.

### Analysis of the Pact

The demands embodied in this pact were the first ever put forward jointly by the two major political organizations of India. They were also the last. However, the Muslims felt delighted that their interests had been accepted by the Congress. Sarojini Naidu gave Jinnah the title 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity'. Although Jinnah had been temporarily successful in his role as the ambassador of this unity, the immense effort he had to put in had made him realize an important point. The Muslim community had been demanding communal representation to secure their rights but the Congress had been adamant that there was no such need – how could one party decide that what a certain community (and a different community) was demanding was not needed. The fact that Jinnah was edging away from his original stance that Congress represented the whole of India became evident in his presidential address of the 1916 session. In this address he explicitly stated that the League was a representative of the 70 million Musalmans of India and that he himself was their advocate even if he personally held a different opinion. Nothing would have pleased Jinnah more than the avoidance of communal representation but he was a realist and a practical person and did not live in an imaginary world of wishful thinking – he knew that communal representation was a necessity for Muslims even though he did not prefer it.

However, on the other hand it was the powerful support of Tilak that facilitated the acceptance by Congress of the Lucknow Pact. There is no doubt that Tilak was an extremist whose nationalism was inspired by his cultural, historical and religious sentiments pertaining to Hinduism. But he was a realist and had no problem in accepting that the same was the case for Muslims and that their religion, culture and history was different than that of the Hindus.

Lucknow Pact was definitely the culminating point in Hindu-Muslim unity which had started since 1910 and received a major blow upon the failure of Khilafat movement. The unity was short lived but held in itself for the Muslims important lessons. They had turned to the Hindus after being disappointed by the British. The Hindus too failed them and it seemed that the Muslims had been left alone b/w the massive Hindu population and the powerful British. But it was on their own that they were able to achieve a homeland for themselves.

### The Hindu-Muslim Question: Different Nations or Not?

Several Muslim leaders claimed that the Muslims were a nation on their own, separate from the Hindus. But it is interesting to note that the Hindus and the British too had acknowledged this fact. The British had never made any secret of the fact that the Muslims were a community completely different from the Hindus. Whenever the matter of settling the constitutional question of India had arisen, the British had always been dumbfounded and had claimed that a simple constitutional system like that in England would not work in India because India was a region characterized by its religious, racial, cultural and lingual diversity.

The Hindus too were well aware of this fact. The Hindu press had claimed time and again that Hindus formed a nation by themselves. Lala Lajpat Rai who was an orthodox Hindu much like Tilak, proposed in 1924 a division of

India on religious lines into a Muslim India (comprising of the Pathan province or the NWFP, Western Punjab, Sindh and Eastern Bengal) and a non Muslim India. Several other Hindus too had similar views, let alone the Muslims. It is thus unfortunate that Hindu-Muslim antagonism were a blind spot for both Gandhi and Nehru. Gandhi believed that the antagonism was a result of British rule and would disappear when the British left while Nehru the agnostic said that religion held no place in politics. The fact is that if a problem is not diagnosed properly, appropriate measures for its eradication can't be devised. Gandhi and Nehru, chose to be adamant about their own view of the world and ignored the differences that actually existed, thereby making an amicable settlement of the issue impossible.

## **Montagu Chelmsford Reforms**

### **Background: British Reaction to India's Demands**

India had been extremely supportive towards the British cause during the first two years of WW1. But then Lord Hardinge's term expired and he was succeeded by Lord Chelmsford as the Viceroy of India in 1916. Chelmsford was neither as diplomatic as his predecessor nor did he have the imagination and forcefulness to take initiatives and provide strong leadership. So when Home Rule agitation flared up in India in 1916 along with the demands put forward by League and Congress, Chelmsford found himself under extreme pressure. He proposed some recommendations which he sent back home to the Secretary of State, Austen Chamberlain who found the ideas quite inadequate and suggested that the British needed to make it clear that self government was the final but distant goal to be achieved in stages which shall be determined by the British government. Before his recommendations could come into effect, he resigned and was succeeded by Edwin Montagu.

### **Montagu's Visit to India**

Montagu's ideas were quite similar to those of Chamberlain and he personally visited India to consult the Viceroy and gauge the public opinion as well as to sell what he had in mind. He was welcomed in India by various Indian leaders but his diary shows that he was deeply impressed by Jinnah. While arguing with Jinnah over several matters, he often found himself tied up into knots. He also said that it was frustrating to see that such a man should not have a chance to run the affairs of his own country.

However, he stayed in India from November 1917 to April 1918 and discussed the future of constitutional reforms in India with the Chelmsford. After some deliberations, the two presented a report appropriately called the Montagu Chelmsford Report, signed on 22 April 1918 and published on 8 July 1918, after Montagu's return. To mollify public opinion some concessions were announced while the reforms were under consideration. These concessions included putting an end to the recruitment of Indian indentured labor for work in the sugar colonies, lifting of the ban on Indians receiving the King's Commission in the army and an increase in the import duties on cotton goods without any increase on export duties on Indian goods.

### **Government of India Act 1919**

A Bill based on the Montagu Chelmsford Report (embodied in the Government of India Act 1919) got Royal assent on 23 December 1919. Elections for the new Legislatures were held in November 1920 and the Act came into force on the first day of 1921. The main features of the Act of 1919 were as follows:

1. Central legislature was a bicameral legislature with an upper house (Council of State) and a lower house (Central Legislative Assembly).
2. The upper house had 60 members with 33 elected and 27 nominated members.
3. The lower house had 144 members with 103 elected and 41 nominated members.
4. The upper house had a 5 year term and the lower house had a 3 year term.
5. Provincial legislatures were unicameral and 70% of the members were to be elected and 30% were to be nominated.

6. System of diarchy was introduced in the provinces with subjects including law and order and revenue, reserved with the Governor in Council responsible to the crown while other 'nation building' subjects were transferred to the Governors acting on the advice of the ministers.
7. Right of separate electorates was maintained for the minorities which included the Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Europeans and Christians.
8. Council of the Secretary of State was to comprise of 8 to 12 member with at least 3 of them being Indians and all of them having served at least 10 years in India.
9. Gov Gen could nominate as many members to his executive council as necessary.
10. A review of the working of the reforms shall be made after 10 years and these reforms shall thereafter be modified accordingly.

## Analysis

Because of the generous contributions made by India in the WW1, Indians had accepted greater concessions than were offered by the Act of 1919 and the British had assured them of those concessions though in vague terms. While in theory, the ministers enjoyed their position only during the Governor's pleasure, in practice they could continue only while they enjoyed the confidence of the House. This was probably the only concession made to the concept of 'responsible government'. The system of diarchy introduced at the provincial level came to be hated by the Indians.

The two major parties had great expectations especially due to the spirit with which the Lucknow Pact had been passed. The Pact had demanded a great deal and the Indians had expected their demands to be met. But the reforms showed that self rule was still a distant goal. AIML was not too optimistic about the reforms but still accepted them while the Congress split into two factions, one under Tilak and Besant, which accepted the reforms and the other under the moderates, which rejected them.

It is interesting to note here that the moderates had been the one to accept the 1909 reforms and the extremists who had rejected them. Furthermore, it is ironic that AIML had drawn closer to the Congress when it was dominated by the moderates but had been supported throughout the Hindu-Muslim unity more when the extremists had dominated the Congress. The final blow to this unity (Nehru Report) also came from the moderates.

## Rowlatt Bills

### Background

After a heroic start, the ugly side of war had begun to manifest itself. The Indians abroad suffered heavy losses while those at home had to deal with shortages of food and clothing along with rising prices. The fate of Turkey deeply stirred the Muslim masses specifically and drove them further away from the British towards the Hindus. A devastating epidemic of influenza in the winter of 1918-19 coincident with poor harvest left millions dead. The moment demanded imagination and generosity, not bureaucratic stolidity. Unfortunately, British chose the latter and anti British sentiments reached their zenith towards the end of the war. Customary efforts made by the British were inadequate to suppress the 'revolutionary crimes'.

### The Bills

On 10 December 1917, the Government of India appointed the Sedition Committee (aka the Rowlatt Committee) under Justice Sidney Rowlatt to report on the nature and extent of conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movements in India and to recommend legislation to deal with them. The committee found evidence indicating rebellious efforts in India and submitted its report to the government on 15 April 1918. Two bills based on this report were introduced in the Imperial Legislature on 6 February 1919 and without much



deliberations, were rushed through the Legislature. One of these was dropped while the other was passed on 18 March 1919. Its main clauses were as follows:

1. The Government could discard any bail or bond of anybody.
2. The Provincial Government was given the power of internment.
3. The Provincial Government was allowed to interfere in matters such as publications and distribution of newspapers.
4. The Provincial Government was also given extraordinary powers of arrest and search without a warrant.
5. Judiciary was allowed to try political cases without a jury in certain cases.
6. The Government could prevent any Indian travelling from abroad from entering India.
7. Anyone found in possession of forbidden literature even without the intent to publish or distribute could be arrested.

## The Agitation

The popular view of the act can be summed up in the slogan that thereafter became popular 'na appeal, na dalil, na vakeel' (no appeal, no argument, no advocate). When the recommendations of the committee came to be known, there burst a storm of protests all over the country. The non official Indian members in the Imperial Legislative Council unanimously opposed the bill and three of them including Jinnah resigned. Jinnah also warned that if the bills came to be passed, the British would witness a discontent and agitation in India, they had never witnessed before.

The wide spread agitation called for a leader and in the absence of Tilak, it was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who stepped forward and assumed leadership. He first tried to persuade the Viceroy by writing to him on 20 February 1919 but to no effect. Thus he decided to launch a countrywide public protest and drew up a satyagraha pledge which was published in the Press on 2 March. He pleaded for the last time by sending a telegram to the Private Secretary of the Viceroy on 11 March but it was all in vain. He had been visiting different places in India to muster support and had issued a message from Madras on 24 March calling for a hartal on 30 March (later changed to 6 April). The change of date was not known in Punjab and Delhi and some places observed it on the former date.

## Consequences of the Agitation

Nevertheless, it was inevitable that such a large scale protest could go peacefully without an incident. The earliest disturbance took place in Delhi where the police opened fire in self defence killing a few protestors during the hartal on 30 March. In Lahore, Gujranwala District and numerous areas of Bombay Presidency, the hartal was observed on 6 April and ended peacefully. By 9 April, shops and businesses were already opening and returning to their routine activities but then Gandhi was arrested from a station in Punjab and escorted to Bombay where he was released according to the orders to confine him to Bombay.

This set off a new chain of reactions. When the news of Gandhi's arrest and the happenings at Amritsar (discussed under the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre) reached Lahore, the situation became acute. Police fired upon a mob trying to force its way in the Government House. The situation escalated and some bloodshed later, the mob took control of the city and maintained this control for two days. But even then the situation worsened as the railway station at Wagah was burnt, railway tracks were damaged and telegraph wires were cut. Finally martial law was imposed in Lahore on 15 April and extraordinary measures were taken.

On 10 April, Delhi got news of Gandhi's arrest and the police firing upon the mob at Lahore and the happenings at Amritsar. Delhi again observed a hartal. Only one incident took place in Delhi on 17 April when a police picket fired when under attack. Two people were killed.

In Bombay Presidency, disorder broke out on 10 April when the news of Gandhi's arrest reached them. Europeans were killed and government buildings were burnt. Two days later when British troops began to arrive, and opened fire on troops killing and wounding many of them. Gandhi however appeared on the scene after his

release and addressed the people in different areas of Bombay thus putting an end to the situation in Bombay on 13 April.

A few other places where riots broke out included Kasur (due to Gandhi's arrest), Gujranwala (due to the hanging of a dead calf on a bridge which the people suspected had been the work of police to create bad blood b/w Hindus and Muslims), Gujrat and Lyallpur.

### **Jallianwala Bagh Massacre**

At that time Sir Michael O' Dwyer, was the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab and harbored a strong hatred for the Indians with the determination to exert British dominance by all means. He was of the view that the British, which had seized the government by force, could preserve it only with force. For that matter he banned all public meetings, processions and protests in the province.

Two well-known leaders of Amritsar, Dr Kitchlew and Dr Satyapal had been making speeches to move the masses. To curb this political unrest, they were arrested and deported from Amritsar. The news of their arrest spread like wild fire and left the whole city in panic. On 9 April, a large crowd gathered in a park demanding the release of their leaders but the police opened fire to disperse the crowd. On 10 April, General Dyer received orders to leave Jalundhar for Amritsar. He reached Amritsar with a large number of soldiers and two armored vehicles.

On the morning of 13 April, he toured around the city and made announcements at various places that all the public meetings and processions had been banned and in case these orders are defied, use of force would not be ruled out. But at the same time, a boy beating a tin can was making a counter proclamation that there was to be a gathering at Jallianwala Bagh at 4 pm. A large number of people gathered at the said destination primarily to attend the Beskahi – marking of the new Hindu year. People from nearby villages (who were unaware of Dyer's warning) had also come to attend it.

When Dyer got to know about the gathering, he ordered extreme measures to be taken. The 100 soldiers he took with him surrounded the people gathered and opened fire on them. Dyer made sure that the troops fired at the most dense parts of the crowd and even made them change their direction of fire for the same purpose. 1650 rounds were fired and the firing was stopped when the ammunition was nearly exhausted (some was saved only for the purpose of safe retreat). 379 people were killed and more than 1200 were wounded. It is not surprising that Michael O' Dwyer was assassinated on 13 March 1940 by Udham Singh, an Indian independent activist.

### **Hunter Committee**

It was not until October 1919 that the Government of India under immense public pressure appointed under Lord Hunter, the Hunter Committee to investigate the disturbances in Punjab, Delhi and Bombay Presidency. The committee was comprised of 4 British and 3 Indian members who presented the Majority and Minority Reports respectively.

Regarding the situation in Delhi, the Majority Report did not see any anti European or anti Government actions. In the case of Lahore, the Report proclaimed that the martial law was the most intense of all with some punishments and measures too extreme in nature. Dyer admitted to the committee that he could have dispersed the crowd without firing upon them but that would have not had a long term effect as they would have gathered again in a few hours. He further claimed that the matter was not of dispersing the crowd but of producing a sufficient moral effect. The Majority report concluded that Dyer had a misconception regarding his duties. O' Dwyer defended the actions of Dyer and said that had he not done what had been done, the situation would have escalated into a rebellion similar to that of 1857. The report dismissed this suggestion on the grounds of absence of proof that there was a conspiracy to over throw the British government in India. The Majority and Minority reports differed in that the former supported the continuance of martial law so that the situation could not turn into a rebellion while the latter dismissed the possibility of a rebellion and thus deemed martial law as unnecessary for long.

## **Khilafat Movement**

### **Background**

Turkey's siding with Germany during the WW1 had posed a dilemma for the Indian Muslims but on the whole they decided to support the Allies with the hope that in case of Turkey's defeat they would be able to plead with the British government for lenient terms for the Ottoman Empire. The British government was aware of this and the Prime Minister Lloyd George had placated Muslim fears by a statement in 1918.

It is however ironic that the first blow to the institution of Khilafat had already been struck in 1916 by the Arabs who led by Hussain (the Sharif of Makkah), and stimulated by the war time ideals of self determination had been assisted by the British and had raised the banner of revolt against their Imperial master. While the British recognized Hussain as King of the Hijaz, Indian Muslims saw him as a stooge of the British who had handed over the holy sites of Islam to the Christian British.

### **Khilafat Conference: Initial Measures**

While the question of settlement of Turkey had been in the air, reports in various journals in Europe as to what the punishment for Turkey should be had fed the anxiety of the Muslim Indians. Thus an organization by the name of Khilafat Conference was formed at Bombay in July 1919. A public session was held at Delhi on 23-24 November 1919 and Hindu leaders including Gandhi also attended this session. A resolution was passed declaring boycott of British goods, a refusal to celebrate in victory celebrations and another refusal to cooperate with the government until three wishes of the Muslims were granted:

1. Office of the Caliphate must be kept intact.
2. Territorial solidarity of the Khilafat must be preserved.
3. Religious places of the Muslims must not go into non Muslim hands.

The question of Khilafat also presented the Muslim ulema to gain their place in Indian politics, a place they had lost since 1857. Thus they formed Jamiat e Ulema e Hind and in December 1919, no less than four parties held their session simultaneously at Amritsar to demonstrate Hindu Muslim solidarity. These included Congress, League, Khilafat Conference and Jamiat. Apart from a discussion on the Khilafat question, the military excesses all over India (that occurred earlier in the year) especially in Punjab, were condemned and punishment of the main culprits was demanded. The Ali brothers joined in the League session on the second day when they were released (they had been interned since May 1915).

Two delegations were formed to negotiate with the British government. The first was led by M. A. Ansari and on 19 January 1920, this delegation waited on the Viceroy. The second delegation was sent to England and was led by M. Ali Johar. They discussed the issue with the Prime Minister Lloyd George. Both delegations were unsuccessful in their objectives. While in England, M. Ali Johar delivered fiery speeches in order to move the masses and gather public support in England and France. The Ali brothers also produced the Khilafat manifesto in 1920 to urge the Indian Muslims and the British alike for their cause. It was during their stay in England that the terms of the Treaty of Sevres were finalized and M. Ali Johar sent a letter to the Caliph to not accept the humiliating terms.

### **Non Cooperation Movement**

The Hunter Committee's reports were published on 28 May 1920 and the Majority report caused further agitation among the Indians. An All Parties Conference was convened at Allahabad and because of the failure of the two delegations, it was decided on 2 June that a non cooperation movement shall be launched. A memorial signed by a number of ulemas and leaders was sent to the Viceroy threatening the launch of non cooperation movement on 1 August if their demands were not fulfilled. Gandhi also wrote a letter to the Viceroy stating that the matter of Khilafat was primary and the matter of Punjab atrocities subsidiary, and that Gandhi had not yet

lost faith in the British and thought that their fair demands would be given due attention by the fair minded British. However, the attitude of the British towards the question of Punjab atrocities, General Dyer, and their acceptance of the Majority report changed Gandhi's attitude within two months and in his mind the Punjab atrocities became more important than the Khilafat question which affected only the Muslims.

But Muslims and Hindus stuck with each other and the Khilafat and non cooperation movements under the leadership of M. Ali Johar and Gandhi gained momentum. As promised, the non cooperation movement was launched officially on 1 August but Gandhi had yet to gain the support of the predominantly Hindu Congress which he did in the special Calcutta session held from 4 to 8 September 1920. The resolution passed in this session explained the non cooperation programme:

1. Surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies.
2. Refusal to attend any government functions.
3. Gradual withdrawal of students from educational institutions controlled by the government and establishment of National schools and colleges in various provinces.
4. Gradual boycott of British courts and establishment of private arbitration courts.
5. Refusal on the part of military, clerical and labor classes to offer their services in Mesopotamia.
6. Boycott of candidates from taking part in elections for the new reformed councils and refusal of voters to cast their votes for candidates who take part in the elections despite Congress' disapproval.
7. Boycott of foreign goods.

For added pressure, people were also told to refuse to pay taxes and take part in general civil disobedience. The annual session at Nagpur in December 1920 saw some important developments. It was resolved that swaraj shall be achieved within one year and Congress broke its tradition of professing loyalty to the British.

### **Hijrat Movement: A Tragedy**

In the summer of 1920, the Central Khilafat organization suggested that the Muslims should migrate somewhere their religion was not in jeopardy. But the movement gained popularity when Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Abdul Bari issued a fatwa, declaring India a Dar ul Harb and had declared that it was necessary for the Indian Muslims to either wage Jihad against the foreign rulers or to migrate to some other place, a Dar ul Islam. A large number of Muslims from NWFP and Sindh decided to migrate to Afghanistan. They were welcomed there first but as the numbers of immigrants spun out of control, they were refused entry into the country. This created a problem for the large masses who returned to India because they had sold their house, property and business for the purpose of migration and settling down in Afghanistan. Thus when they returned, they were worse off than before – they were empty handed and they had been unsuccessful in their purpose. Even those who managed to enter Afghanistan soon came across so many hardships and miserable conditions in the country that they were forced to take a journey back home. The retreat resulted in a heavy loss of life due to the bad weather and disease.

### **Moplah Uprising**

Moplahs were a Muslim community on the Malabar coast. They were the descendants of Arab settlers and were mostly fishermen and peasants. They had a history of conflict with their Hindu landlords and money lenders. Inspired by the Khilafat movement, they rose in rebellion against their Hindu landlords claiming that while Jews and Christians (people of the book) were still acceptable to the Muslims, they could not live in harmony with the idol worshipping Hindus. In 1921, they rose and killed some Europeans but their real victims were the Hindus. It was only after some violent military action that the uprising could be suppressed. Unaware of the real situation, Gandhi still tried to keep up the Hindu-Muslim unity for show but all was in vain. The Moplahs had dealt a severe blow to the cause of unity.

### **Violence at Bombay**

The same time as Moplahs were rising up in rebellion, the situation turned violent in Bombay as well when the Prince of Wales landed there. A peaceful hartal was being observed due to Congress; decision to boycott the visit but the mob turned violent when the authorities tried to interfere. The violence continued for 4 to 5 days while Gandhi, the apostle of non violence was present at Bombay. To repent for the sins and excesses of the people and to restore order, Gandhi fasted for 5 days.

Lord Reading had replaced Lord Chelmsford as Viceroy and had been cautious in the beginning but after the Bombay episode, decided to take action and arrested Indian leaders including Jawaharlal and Motilal Nehru, and Lajpat Rai.

### **Incident at Chauri Chaura**

On 1 February 1922, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy that unless his demands were accepted, he would embark on a mass civil disobedience movement from Bardoli, a tehsil in the Surat District. The demands put forward included non interference of the government in any non violent movements whether they be related to the Punjab atrocities or swaraj, freeing of Press from all administrative control and release of 'non cooperating' prisoners. The demands were rejected.

But before Gandhi could give practical shape to his threat, 22 policemen were killed by a mob on 5 February 1922 at Chauri Chaura. People had been protesting in the form of a procession and police had tried to scatter them but instead, ended up provoking them. The police station was set on fire, burning 21 policemen and the inspector alive. Gandhi panicked at this turn of events and called off his non cooperation movement. This definitely ended the Hindu-Muslim unity for the Muslims had never subscribed to Gandhi's view of non violence and had thought of it as a mere tactic.

The cautious Lord Reading had so far left Gandhi untouched but after his calling off the movement, he was arrested and tried. He was sentenced to a 6 year term.

### **Abolition of the Khilafat**

The Muslims saw Gandhi's calling off of the movement as a set back and still hoped against hope that the question of Khilafat might be settled in their favor. But the final blow to their efforts and hopes came from no one else but the Turks themselves. The Turkish nationalists had never accepted the Treaty of Sevres and had built up an army under the leadership of Mustafa Kamal Ataturk. They attacked the Greeks and took Smyrna (taken away under Sevres), and Ataturk appointed Abdul Majid as the Caliph. He was able to obtain a treaty with better terms due to his successes. Turkey became a republic with Kamal Ataturk as its President on 29 October 1923 and on 3 March 1924, he abolished the institution of Khilafat.

The Khilafat movement failed and the Muslims were left in the lurch. Once again the Muslims were at the brink of disaster facing Hindu contempt and criticism. In this gloomy state of affairs, it was the Muslim League under the fearless and reliable leadership of Jinnah that came forward to pull the Muslims out of their nightmare.

### **Why the Hindus and Muslims had United?**

The Hindu-Muslim relations had been cordial since 1910 and had culminated in the Lucknow Pact of 1916. It was however Gandhi who had convinced the Hindus to support the Muslims on the question of Khilafat. His reasons were a mixture of religion and politics. He said that for the Hindus, saving the Khilafat was a matter of saving their own religion. Because by helping the Muslims save Khilafat, the Hindus were in fact ensuring the safety of the cow, that is their religion from the Musalman knife. Furthermore, he said that simply proclaiming Hindu-Muslim unity would be an empty phrase without actually supporting the Muslims in time of their need. He also said that both communities held swaraj dear because it was through swaraj that they could save their faiths. But it was clear that for Gandhi and the Hindus, the main question was that of swaraj and not of Khilafat, and by trying to build Hindu-Muslim unity by championing the cause of Khilafat, Gandhi had committed a political blunder of significant magnitude. His aim was not to find a common ground b/w the two communities nor was his aim to reach concord by political give and take like the authors of Lucknow Pact. Quite frankly, it was



to preserve the differences b/w the two communities. Whatever reasons the Mahatma gave, to the common people, the marriage was of convenience.

The Muslims knew that by enlisting the support of Congress and the Hindus, they were ensuring the support of the majority of Indian population. This could give them the force necessary to accomplish their mission. The Muslim ulema knew that themselves the Muslims could not wage a physical jihad against the British who were far more powerful. Thus the only real option left with the Muslims was to gather as much support for their movement as possible.

### **Jinnah's Break From Congress**

The first open clash b/w Jinnah and Gandhi took place when the Home Rule League met at Bombay in October 1920. Besant had resigned as the President and was succeeded by Gandhi who wanted to bring its creed in line with that of Congress and change its name to Swaraj Sabha. Jinnah opposed him and in protest resigned along with some other members.

Jinnah's criticisms of Gandhi's non cooperation scheme became stronger with time and he correctly predicted why the scheme was flawed and what would happen as a result. Imported cloth was burnt and impressive bonfires were made out of them even though it could have been used to clothe those who involuntarily went half naked due to poverty. Councils were boycotted with the result that the seats were captured by non Congress members who responded to government's wishes. The few lawyers who boycotted the courts drifted back without disrupting the functioning of the official courts and the attempt at private arbitration courts was a failure. The boycott of educational institutions without the existence of new ones turned out to be a Himalayan mistake.

But it was Jinnah's walk out from the Nagpur session of Congress in December 1920 which had far reaching consequences. Jinnah's main difference from Gandhi's views was the timing of the non cooperation movement. While both stood for self rule and both were angry over the matter of Punjab atrocities and Khilafat (Jinnah more so than Gandhi in the case of Khilafat), Jinnah was of the view that before taking any practical steps, careful preparations were necessary. The crowd at this session persistently interrupted Jinnah and undermined what he had to say. After saying what he had to say, Jinnah left the session in protest. Disappointed, Jinnah left Nagpur without attending the League session in which League changed its creed to resonate with the creed of Congress.

Among the Congress' Nagpur session crowd, there was a delegate of the British Labor Party, Colonel Wedgwood. He was quite impressed by Jinnah and praised him by saying that India was on its road to freedom as she was capable of at least one man who had enough strength of character to stand by his conviction in the face of huge opposition and no support whatsoever.

India was at that time engulfed in an emotional atmosphere. The Muslims due to the Khilafat and the Punjab atrocities and the Hindus due to the latter. But in this emotional storm, there was only one man who was able to keep his calm and think clearly even though he felt the same pain as the rest. He was to be the founder of our country. But at the time, it did not matter because it was not Jinnah's logical mind that prevailed but the emotional appeal of Gandhi and his disciples who had in the heat of day, made empty promises without a proper plan in mind. Unfortunately, it pushed League into the background for the next few years.

### **Muslim Politics in the Doldrums**

Finally when Muslims came out of the shadow of Gandhi, they were bewildered. Their obsession with the Sultan of Turkey had left a void in their political lives. They found hard to stand on their own feet without the support of the Congress and over the next few years, there was a confusion regarding Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1924, Jinnah renewed his plea for this unity and said that the League must strive for swaraj along with Congress but as a political entity with its own identity – to emphasize which, the practice of holding annual sessions at the same time and place as Congress was given up. But the Muslim community had not yet found a sense of direction nor a leader of all-India authority. The League divided into several sections and limped along as a

lightweight party of upper class Muslims until it decided to become a mass party in April 1936. But b/w 1923 and then, power passed into the hands of local political barons, as the result of 1937 elections in Muslim majority provinces were to show.

## **Communal Antagonism**

Khilafat movement had seen the Hindus and Muslims cooperate with each other. But as it neared its end, Hindu-Muslim tension had been on the rise. The Moplah rebellion was just an official announcement and in 1922 and 1923, Hindu-Muslim riots broke out during the Muslim observance of Muharram. We can safely say that since then till 1940, there is a record of twenty years of civil war b/w the Hindus and the Muslims interrupted by brief intervals of armed peace.

However, in the 1920s, two Hindu movements became quite popular. The sangathan (binding together) promoted physical culture so that the community could react effectively during communal trouble and the shuddi (purification) aimed to convert back to Hinduism those who had been converted to Islam. Muslims launched their counter movements by the names of tanzim (militant or jihadi organization) and tabligh (missionary effort) respectively.

Gandhi was released just after serving two out of his six year sentence on account of health conditions. But his improvement did not bring about any change in the situation. The Muslims in Upper India were incensed at the publication of a blasphemous pamphlet about the Holy Prophet (SAW) by a Hindu named Rajpal. He was murdered by a Muslim. Similarly, in Kohat (in NWFP), the immediate cause of the outbreak was an anti Islamic poem which resulted in an eruption of Hindu-Muslim riot. Similar occurrences occurred all over India.

There is one interesting thing to note about Gandhi's schemes. Whenever he announced a non cooperation movement, it turned violent, and given that he kept on with his non cooperation schemes till independence, it meant that every year, several parts of India observed hartals, protested and adopted non cooperation for the purpose of swaraj, and every time, these protests and hartals turned violent. Buildings were burnt, people were killed, shops were looted and hospitals were filled with the wounded. Every time, some Congress leaders were arrested and imprisoned for some time and Gandhi fasted for a few days to repent for the excesses of the people during the protests.

The Indians and Pakistanis are very quick to judge the British for their tardiness in transferring power but we often under emphasize the continuous Hindu-Muslim disagreement over the shape of constitutional progress and the continuous Hindu-Muslim rioting that stifled the growth of healthy political institutions and practices. The best example of this rioting and the trouble it created can be found during Lord Irwin's tenure as Viceroy from 1926 onwards. He did his best to further the cause of constitutional advance in India but was frustrated by the die-hards in Britain and the bureaucracy but nothing hampered the progress like communal tension in India. Irwin frequently appealed to the two communities to compose their differences for the good of their country, but to no avail.

## **Working of the 1919 Reforms**

### **Central Government**

When elections to the new reformed legislatures were held, the non cooperation movement was already under full swing and there was an unbridgeable gulf b/w the government and the mainstream political India. Congress and League had also felt that the 1919 reforms had given too little and substantial immediate advance was necessary. Furthermore, Congress and the Khilafat Conference had boycotted the elections and the councils. Congress tried to wreck the 1919 reforms by sometimes shunning the legislatures and at other times, by entering them but the reforms went on to work till 1937 when the Act of 1935 came into force.

This gave the Moderates, now under the new label of Liberals, a chance to secure significant positions in the Legislative Councils. While they desired freedom for India as much as the other parties, they differed in their tactics – they wished to achieve their objectives by cooperating with the government. They introduced resolutions in the assembly but most of them were opposed by the government. This went on till the second elections under the 1919 reforms.

During this time, there had been a split in Congress. Some of its members wanted to be a part of the legislatures while others who were strict followers of Gandhi stayed true to their spiritual leader. The former included C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru while the former were led by Rajcopalacharia. The pro changers formed their separate party by the name of Swarajya Party and as they gained popularity, they came to a compromise with Congress. The Swarajists were to carry out the political works while the mainstream Congress was to carry out the constructive programme (spinning, weaving, eradication of untouchability and Hindu-Muslim unity).

However, in the 1923 elections, the Swarajists were able to secure a large number of seats but had to join hands with the independents under Jinnah so as to work effectively. But this alliance became weak and differences and Hindu-Muslim antagonism drew them apart gradually.

The sudden death of Das left his Swaraj Party disoriented and in the third elections in 1926, they were able to secure only 1/3 of the seats. However, the attention of all parties was diverted from the legislatures when the formation of the Statutory Commission (Simon Commission) was announced.

### **Provincial Governments and the Unionist Party**

It was at the provincial level that some form of responsible government was introduced as ministers had been made in charge of the transferred subjects under the clause of diarchy. This type of government works best in politics based on party system. This requirement was achieved only in Punjab and Madras and the system worked best in these two provinces. In Madras, the non Brahmin majority banded together the Justice Party to challenge the entrenched position of the Brahmin minority.

Sir Fazl e Hussain and Chhotu Ram laid the foundation of the non communal, open to all, Unionist Party in 1923. It was originated by a group of rural members of the Punjab Legislative Council. These members were elected on personal prestigious position and were the big landlords and influential politicians of the Punjab. The fundamental theme of their politics was to defend the provincial interest as well as the interest of the British Raj. Fazl e Hussain served the Muslims well first as an Education Minister when he did much for promoting education, and later as a Revenue Member (serving a reserved department) where he passed measures to safeguard the interests of rural debtors (mainly Muslim peasants) from the landlords and money lenders (mainly Hindus).

Congress boycotted the first elections but the Swarajists did well in Bengal and CP during the second round. At times they were even able to obstruct the constitution in these two provinces by making it impossible for the ministers to function. In other areas, the system just limped along as legislatures were unable to make stable and coherent parties.

### **The Hindu Mahasabha**

The Hindu Mahasabha's roots go back to 1910 when Hindu leaders of India met at Allahabad and decided to form the All India Hindu Mahasabha. But it was because of the communal tension during the 1920s that the avowedly Hindu organization became popular and began to grow. Within no time, it had branches all over the country and their activities contributed to the communal tension.

### **The Akali Movement**

Punjab was disturbed b/w 1920 and 1925 by this movement started by the Akalis, a reforming sect of the Sikhs. They demanded that the Sikh gurdwaras should be managed by committees elected under the aegis of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Mahants, the traditional administrators of the gurdwaras opposed this and as a result of the measures taken by them, a number of Akalis were slaughtered. However, the demands

of the Akali Sikhs were conceded by the government in 1925. The movement had excited Sikh nationalism which had important consequences for the future.

### **The Communist Party**

After the success of their revolution, the Bolsheviks turned their attention towards other countries including India. Roy, who had appeared in Russia in 1920 became the spokesman for their efforts in India but soon they lost faith in Roy's capabilities and a series of British communists were dispatched to India. The Communist Party of India formally came into existence in 1925. They were given financial assistance by Moscow and their policy was also dictated by Moscow.

The communist effort in India was directed towards gaining control of the working classes by organizing them in unions and inciting them to strikes culminating in a general strike followed by a revolution, and towards organizing the peasants in a similar fashion to effect an agrarian revolution.

But their work in India was disrupted when the most important communists of India were arrested in 1929. Their hearings lingered on till 1933 when they were sentenced. They were released in 1935.

## **Khudai Khidmatgar Movement**

### **Background**

The Pashtun have been known throughout history to follow their own code of life called Pushtunwali in their own tribal set up. This code consist of Jirga (council), Melmastia (hospitality), Badal (revenge) and Nanawaty (to give security to someone). Due to their unchanging attitudes and rules, the Pashtun society was entangled in endless tribal feuds. They wished to be ruled by nobody wanted to be left alone to practice their own form of traditional tribal democracy. The British too had left them on their own and had not introduced any reforms like they had done in other areas of India. This brought social, political and economic backwardness in the Pushtun society.

### **The Movement**

Participation in the Khilafat Movement by Indian Muslims and their migration towards Afghanistan brought N.W.F.P and its people in close collaboration with their brethren from rest of India. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan realized that migration was not the solution of the multifarious problems faced by his society. Thereafter he embarked on a mission to eradicate from his society, the socioeconomic evils that held it back from progress in various spheres of life.

This movement attracted the people from all the walks of life as every section of the society interpreted their program in their own way. For Pushtun intelligentsia it was based upon promotion of the Pushtun culture and elimination of the influences of big landlords; for ulema its anti-British stand became a cause of attraction and for the poor peasants, it meant to check economic oppression of the big landlords. So, every section of the Pushtun society saw a ray of hope in the manifesto of Khudai Khidmatgar movement.

The volunteers had to wear proper uniform of dark red color and join the routine parade. This particular dress gave them distinction and they came to be called Red Shirts (surkh-poshan) and their movement as the Red Shirts Movement.

### **Educational, Economic and Religious Efforts**

Government made no efforts at all for promoting education and if any schools were opened in the villages, the mullahs prohibited people from attending them. To compete with the British, Ghaffar Khan deemed it necessary to educate the people and thus he opened the Azad Islamia Madrassa with help from his associates and later the madrassa was affiliated with Jamia Millia Islamia Delhi.

For the economic uplift of people, he tried to convince them they should not spend so lavishly on social events and for entertaining their guests. He told them the same money could be spent for better causes. He also stressed that charity was good only if given in the name of Allah and not as a custom and he also stressed that the recipients of charity must refuse if they did not need it. The importance of manual labor was shown as well and people (especially the illiterate) were encouraged to earn through manual labor rather than charity. Sectarianism and tribalism were rampant in NWFP. Ghaffar Khan asked the people how they could claim to be the followers of the same God, prophet and religion and be divided due to small differences. He tried to unite them into a single, strong community.

### **Political Efforts**

Although the movement had started as early as 1920, it did not enter the political sphere until 1929 when it began to support Congress openly and widely in NWFP, mainly because without the backing of a mainstream political party, the British would have crushed them easily. They were the ones who undertook civil disobedience movement of Gandhi in NWFP and turned it into a massive movement there during the 1930s. However, being Pashtuns in, they did not wish to be dominated by anyone whether it be the British or the Congress which is why they began to drift away from the Congress when it became clear that the British would soon leave India.

## **Delhi Muslim Proposals**

### **Background**

Jinnah had predicted in the Nagpur session of Congress in December 1920 and at times before then, that non cooperation movement to pressure the British for the purpose of saving Khilafat and securing swaraj would fail if under taken without proper preparations. But his advice had fallen on deaf ears and he had kept himself aloof from non cooperation movement. To say that Jinnah had been right would be an understatement. The movement did not just fail. The events that led to its failure nullified all the hard work that had been done in the previous decade to bring the Hindus and Muslims together.

Moplah rebellion had started a chain of communal antagonism which spread throughout the country with Hindus forming the shuddi and sangathan movements and Muslims launching their tabligh and tanzim movements in response. These tensions had prevented the Swarajists (a Congress offshoot still under the Congress for all practical purposes) and the independents under Jinnah to work amiably in the legislatures after the 1923 elections held under the 1919 reforms.

The main problem in the political circles had been the question of separate electorates which the Muslims were not ready to let go and the Congress was not willing to accept any longer (Gandhi was aiming for Indian nationalism and Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to keep religion separate from politics). Jinnah himself wanted the Hindus and Muslims to struggle together for independence (for the time being) and thus was ready to give up separate electorates if Congress was willing to accept some legitimate demands of the Muslim community. These demands have come to be known as the Delhi proposals.

### **The Proposals and Their Consequences**

In order to break the ice and to bridge the gulf between the League and Congress so that they could present common demands before the British for the legislation of the new Act, a group of prominent Muslims met at Delhi on 20 March 1927. Jinnah presided over the session and convinced them that Hindu-Muslim unity could still be achieved if Muslims were willing to give up their safeguard of separate electorates in return for a number of other legitimate demands, as Nehru had assured him previously. It was resolved that League should accept an agreement with the Congress on the basis of certain proposals which were to be accepted in toto:

1. Sind should be separated from Bombay Presidency and constituted into a separate province.



2. Reforms should be introduced in NWFP and Balochistan on the same footing as in other provinces of India.
3. Muslims shall be willing to abandon their right of separate electorates in favor of joint electorates with reservation of seats fixed in proportion to the population of different communities if the above two proposals were implemented to the full satisfaction of the Muslims and also if the following demands were fulfilled.
4. Muslim representation in the Central Legislature shall not be less than one third.
5. Muslim representation in Punjab and Bengal should be in proportion to their population.
6. No bill concerning a community shall be passed if opposed by 3/4 of the members of that community.
7. If the Hindus were willing to make concessions to the Muslims in provinces where the latter were a minority Muslims shall be willing to make the same concessions to the Hindus where they were a minority.

The relinquishment of the right to separate electorate was an unprecedented concession by the Muslims and it was a major achievement of Jinnah to have convinced his colleagues to concede this. It was the first time that the Muslim League had agreed to joint electorates and would not do so ever again. The Muslim League was, however, divided because of these proposals (and the relinquishment of separate electorate) and prominent Muslim League leaders, mainly from the Punjab, under the leadership of Sir Muhammad Shafi, decided to part away. There were then two groups of the League – the Jinnah Group and the Shafi Group.

### **Congress' Reaction**

At first, Congress reacted positively towards the Delhi proposals and accepted them. But it was unfortunate that the great compromise made by the League went unappreciated by the Congress. Under the pressure of Hindu Mahasabha which had gained popularity during the growth of communal tension in the early 1920s, Congress rejected the Delhi proposals and made a mockery of them and the Lucknow Pact in the Nehru Report.

## **Simon Commission**

### **Background**

British had promised Indians self government but had also said that it was going to be the final goal to be achieved in stages determined by the British government. The Government of India Act 1919 was essentially transitional in nature and one of its clauses had referred to appointment of a statutory commission after ten years to determine the next stage in the realization of self rule in India. The time for such a commission according to the ten years clause was to be December 1929.

### **The Commission and Indian Reaction**

Since the calling off of the non cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, Indian politics had been lacking in a rallying theme. This was unexpectedly provided by the British in November 1927 when the appointment of a commission was announced. The chairman of the commission was to be Sir John Simon and it was to include six other members, including Clement Attlee (who was the Prime Minister when Pakistan and India got independence).

However, a psychological error of the first order had been made by omitting Indians from the commission and the government's assurances that the commission would take into account the Indian point of view before preparing its report and recommendations fell on deaf ears. Just the fact that it was an all-white commission was enough to enrage the Indians and the political parties refused to take part in the workings of the commission.

The League was divided over the question of whether to cooperate or not – the Jinnah group (met in Calcutta) decided to boycott it while the Shafi group (met in Lahore) was in favor of cooperation. Congress (Madras

session) was also in favor of boycotting the commission politically. But Congress went a step further and called upon the people to arrange mass demonstrations when the commission came to India. When the commission members landed at Bombay on 3 February 1928, there was a hartal in all major cities of India and the members were greeted with black flags and choruses of 'Simon go back'. John Simon's announcement at Delhi that the commission shall be taking into account the opinion of a few Indian political leaders did no good either. However, the Lahore protests deserves special mention. When the commission reached Lahore via train on 30 October 1928, there were protests against the commission, led by Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Abdul Qadir Qureshi and Maulana Zaffar Ali. During the protests, there occurred a clash b/w the police and the protestors in which, Lajpat Rai became the victim of brutal lathi charge. This, it is believed precipitated his death on 17 November.

### **The Commission's Report**

Despite severe protests against the commission, it continued its work and completed its tour of India by April 1929. Then it went back to England and presented its report which was published in May 1930, at a time when it had lost its value and was virtually useless. However, its main features were as follows:

1. Diarchy should be scrapped from the provinces and replaced by a responsible government (all the portfolios should be handed over to the provincial ministers).
2. The power of the central government and the provincial governors should be reduced. The Governor General should however retain special powers for protection of the minorities.
3. Federal system of government should be introduced in India though not in the immediate future.
4. There should be an extension of the franchise and expansion of the legislatures.
5. Separate electorate should be retained for the minorities.
6. An expert committee should be constituted regarding the separation of Sindh from Bombay after a detailed enquiry into the financial consequences which would follow such a step.
7. The demand of the NWFP for equal status was neglected.

But given that the Indians had boycotted the commission, there were no real expectations that these recommendations shall be accepted by the Indians. The report was rejected by the Hindus and the Muslims along with other minorities.

### **Nehru Report**

#### **Background**

Tired of the communal antagonism, in July 1925, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead had challenged the Indians to come up with a scheme of constitutional reforms which was acceptable to all the communities of India. On the occasion of appointment of the Simon Commission in November 1927, he reminded the Indians that he had already extended such an offer to them twice. As a result, at its Madras session in December 1927 under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress had invited all major political parties to an All Parties Conference. In its Calcutta session in the same year, the Jinnah group had also appointed a subcommittee to work with the working committee of Congress.

#### **The Committee and its Report**

An All Parties Conference was held at Delhi first in February and then in March 1928, but the communal question remained unresolved both times with the League on one hand and the Hindu Mahasabha and Sikhs on the other hand. Thus it was resolved that a small committee might be able to offer a solution. Motilal Nehru was made the chairman of this committee and it had a total of 8 members out of which 2 were Muslims (Syed Ali Imam and Shoaib Qureshi). The Muslim representation was only in name and the 2 members did not make any significant contributions. Furthermore, the joining of hands with Hindu Mahasabha completely quashed the previous acceptance of Delhi Muslim Proposals by Congress.

The committee recognized that the communal problem of India was primarily the Hindu-Muslim problem and that the differences b/w the two need to be adjusted. But it failed entirely to reconcile the claims of the two communities. It took shelter instead, behind paper promises and unrealistic forecasts. It wrote at one place that if the fullest religious liberty was given to every individual and cultural autonomy was provided for, then the communal problem was in effect solved although people may not realize it. At another, it prophesized that the communal problem would disappear as soon as India gained its freedom from the alien race as people would shift their focus to other issues and parties would form on economic ideologies with Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs all members of all parties.

The committee presented its report in August 1928 and its main features were:

1. India should be given a dominion status with parliamentary form of government.
2. The central government should consist of a Prime Minister along with six other ministers appointed by the Governor General.
3. Residuary powers should be vested in the centre.
4. There should be no separate electorate or weightage for the minorities. It should be replaced by an adult and universal franchise.
5. There should be no reservation of seats for Muslims in Punjab and Bengal, though it shall be possible in provinces where Muslims were at least 10% in population but in such a way that a minority must remain a minority.
6. Muslims should enjoy no more than one fourth representation in the central legislature.
7. Sindh should be separated from Bombay if it was capable of supporting its own expenditures.
8. NWFP should be given the same status as other provinces.
9. Hindi should be made the official language of India.
10. It suggested the formation of a Canarese speaking province.

Reaction of the Congress and their politics have been discussed in detail later.

### Muslim Reaction and Analysis

In the All Parties Convention that opened on 22 December 1928, Jinnah tried to undo the damage that the committee under Motilal Nehru had done. He tried to convince his audience at the convention to incorporate the safeguards being demanded by the Muslims – the same safeguards which had been demanded in the Delhi proposals and prior to that had been accepted at the Lucknow Pact. But his logic and argument had no effect on those who had accepted the communal problem as the primary problem and had given only paper promises and unrealistic forecasts regarding the matter. His main demands were:

1. Muslims should be given one third representation in the central legislature.
2. Residuary powers should be vested in the provinces not in the centre.
3. Muslims should be represented in Punjab and Bengal according to their population.

When put to vote, these demands were rejected and Jinnah knew that it was the parting of ways. In a last moment effort though, Tej Bahadur Sapru, who had been a member of the committee that had drafted the report tried to side with Jinnah and convince the Congressmen to not let the two communities divide over a matter of arithmetic figures. But his appeals had no effect.

In unilaterally repudiating the Lucknow Pact and making a mockery of the Delhi proposals, the authors of the report committed a colossal blunder for which the Muslims never forgave them. All the hard work done so far to unite the two major communities of India had been undone within months. The Muslims had now received a taste of the kind of constitution they would have if they were forced to live under the dominance of a Hindu majority. This attitude of the non Muslims alienated Jinnah and other Muslim leaders, who after this episode began to insist even more vehemently than before upon having constitutional safeguards.

However, it did do the Muslims a good turn. Since the Delhi proposals, the League had been divided into the Jinnah and Shafi groups. The two groups finally found their way back to each other and stood united once again. On 1 January 1929, an All India Muslim Conference was held at Delhi under the presidency of the Agha Khan and a manifesto of Muslim demands was unanimously accepted:

1. Only form of government suitable for India would be a federal government with complete autonomy and residuary powers vested in the provinces.
2. Muslims should continue to have weightage in Hindu majority areas with the same offer extended to the Hindus in Muslim majority areas.
3. Muslims should have their due share in central and provincial cabinets.
4. Muslims should be given one third representation in the central legislature.
5. Right of separate electorate should not be taken away from Muslims without their consent.
6. There must be safeguards for the protection and promotion of Muslim education, learning, language, personal law and Muslim charitable institutions.

## **Jinnah's Fourteen Points**

In a meeting of the council of All India Muslim League on 28 March 1929, members of both factions of the League (Jinnah and Shafi) participated as they had ironically been united by the Nehru Report. Jinnah termed the Nehru Report as a Hindu document, but considered simply rejecting the report as insufficient. He decided to give an alternative Muslim agenda. It was in this meeting that Jinnah presented his famous Fourteen Points. These points were as follows:

1. The form of the future constitution should be federal with residuary powers vested in the provinces.
2. A uniform measure of autonomy shall be given to all provinces.
3. All legislatures in the country and other elected bodies shall be constituted on the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of minorities of the province without reducing the majority of the province to a minority or even an equality.
4. In the central legislature, the Muslim representation shall be no less than one third.
5. Representation of communal groups shall continue to be by means of separate electorate as at present provided it shall be open to any community to abandon its separate electorate in favor of a joint electorate.
6. Any territorial distribution that might at any time be necessary shall not in any way effect the Muslim majority in Punjab, Bengal and NWFP.
7. Full religious liberty i.e. liberty of belief, worship and observance, association, propaganda and education shall be guaranteed to all communities.
8. No bill or any resolution or any part thereof shall be passed in any legislature or any other elected body if three fourths of any community oppose the bill, resolution or any part thereof on the grounds that it would be injurious to the interests of that community or in the alternative, such other method is devised as may be found feasible and practicable to deal with such cases.
9. Sindh should be separated from Bombay presidency.
10. Reforms should be introduced in NWFP and Balochistan on the same footing as in the other provinces.
11. Provisions should be made in the constitution giving Muslims an adequate share along with the other Indians in all the services of the state and in local self governing bodies having due regard to the requirements of efficiency.
12. The constitution should embody adequate safeguards for the protection of Muslim culture and for the protection and promotion of Muslim education, learning, language, personal laws and Muslim charitable institutions and for their due share in the grants in aid given by the state and by local self governing bodies.
13. No cabinet, either central or provincial should be formed without there being a proportion of at least one third Muslim ministers.
14. No change in the constitution shall be made by the central legislature except with the concurrence of the states constituting the federation of India.

The council of the All India Muslim League accepted these fourteen points. A resolution was passed according to which no scheme for the future constitution of the Government of India would be acceptable to the Muslims unless and until it included the demands of the Muslims presented in Jinnah's fourteen points.

## **Congress' Politics After Nehru Report**

### **The Calcutta Congress**

After the Nehru report, Congress held its session in Calcutta from 29 December 1928 to 1 January 1929. This session saw the return of Gandhi to the center stage. Motilal needed Gandhi's support for Congress to endorse the Nehru constitution because Bose and Jawaharlal had a large following which wanted not the Dominion status as proposed by the report but complete independence with severance of all British connection. Gandhi was able to convince the Congress on the Nehru report and even gave the British an ultimatum for accepting the Nehru constitution within a year by 31 December 1929 with the alternative being a civil disobedience movement.

No one expected the British to let go of their hold within a year and this effectively meant that the stage had been set for the disobedience movement. And who else could lead it more effectively other than Gandhi who had a mass following and grass root popularity especially due to his marches he took alongside the common people and his outlook which resembled that of the common man.

### **The Lahore Congress**

Gandhi ensured that Jawaharlal was elected to be the Congress' president for the Lahore session to be held in December 1929. In doing so, he had brought Jawaharlal and the youngsters who followed him under his influence and had effectively thwarted the growing fears that the younger generation of Congress was leaning towards the left. However, the Lahore Congress saw some important developments.

Congress realized that the Nehru constitution had been a failure in resolving the communal problem and therefore withdrew it as an olive branch to the British (either this or the disobedience movement). Thus Congress conveniently absolved itself from the seemingly difficult task of achieving communal agreement and stuck to the earlier course of arguing that the communal issue was a byproduct of the British rule and would therefore disappear once the Indians were free of foreign domination.

The Lahore session also resulted in a greater following of Congress in NWFP. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the founder of Khudai Khidmatgar Movement (Red Shirt Movement) had attended other sessions of the Congress as well but Lahore's proximity to the frontier enabled a large number of impressionable Pakhtuns to attend the session. From 1930 onwards, Ghaffar Khan's followers became vigorous supporters of the Congress movement until it became clear that the British were about to leave India (Pakhtuns did not want one alien master in place of another).

### **Civil Disobedience Movement**

Since 1928, terrorism had been on the rise all over India and extremist Hindus had started violent attacks on the government personnel and property. Congress however had not been a part of any protests and waited for the ultimatum it had given to the British government expire. After the Lahore Congress, the Congress committee gave Gandhi the authority to launch a civil disobedience movement. Gandhi decided to start the movement by mass production of salt, thus contravening the salt law and by refusing to pay tax on salt. Although Congressmen like Nehru were bewildered, Gandhi had played a master stroke. By linking salt with independence he had made sure that maximum people participated in his movement because salt tax and other salt laws affected the common Hindus and Muslims alike who considered salt to be a bounty from nature and people from all age groups could participate in salt manufacture. Gandhi had ensured a mass movement and at the same time told the British that the movement would stop only on the achievement of swaraj.



Soon, the movement spread across India and the traditional methods of disobedience such as boycott of foreign goods, British cloth, liquor and drugs were included in the movement. The world at that time was in the grip of the Great Depression and the measures taken by Indians resulted in a yet greater inconvenience for the British Empire. As a result the British government in India began to take strict measures to suppress the disobedience movement. Gandhi was arrested in May 1930 causing an eruption of hartals all over India. Interaction b/w the protestors and the police turned violent with the mobs using stones as missiles and the police using the force of their lathis. Abdul Ghaffar Khan who had been leading the movement in NWFP was also arrested after which the situation over there also turned violent.

The disobedience movement continued till the Gandhi Irwin Pact was signed after the first RTC. Even then, the movement was discontinued for some time only and was started again after the second RTC even before Gandhi returned to India.

## **Ahrar Movement**

A number of nationalist Muslims of Punjab, mainly religious leaders, called themselves 'Ahrars' who organized Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam. They were former members of the provincial branch of the All India Khilafat Committee who made the formal announcement after Nehru Report in December 1929. But the Ahrars were not anti-congress. Rather, they were pro-congress as the slogan of 'complete independence' suited the genesis of the Ahrars. The Ahrars were mainly from lower middle class and they supported the Congress sponsored 'Satyagraha' movement through civil disobedience in the Punjab and by courting arrests.

The first Ahrar conference convened on 31 July 1931, declared to achieve independence for the country, make better communal relations among different communities, establish an Islamic system in the country and uplift the Muslim masses to acquire their lost glory of the past. The Ahrars got popularity within short time due to their exploitation of local issues, with which they could easily arouse sentiments of the people. Some issues were, of course, genuine like the issue of J&K for which the people were always ready to join their protest against the oppressive rule of the Hindu Raja in 1931. An issue, which gave them more eminence, was their anti-Ahmadi stand. It gave them an ample opportunity to attract the Muslim population. The Ahrars opened their office at Qadian, the headquarter of Qadianis, in 1933 and succeeded to turn the Punjabi Muslims against the Ahmadi. The Ahrar campaign was also directed against Sir Mohammad Zafarullah Khan president of the All India Muslim League during 1931 and Pakistan's first foreign minister.

The Ahrars, for most of the time, were involved in agitation politics and frequently made speeches to build up their pressure. The leaders were considered to believe in keeping the masses occupied with one issue or another. When the issue of Shaheed Ganj Masjid was exceedingly exploited by the Ahrars to the point of agitation, Jinnah lost no time in proceeding to Lahore to produce an atmosphere of amity and goodwill. After an unsuccessful alliance with the League in 1936 the Ahrars gradually drifted away from the mainstream Muslim politics. Sometimes they sometime rushed to the Congress camp and sometimes liked to follow an independent course. The party claimed to be an all India Muslim organization but its influence was confined to the Punjab and NWFP. The strength of the party did not depend on membership but on gifted orators like Attaullah Shah Bukhari, who spellbound the audience and attracted the masses.

In 1940 Ahrars passed the 'Hukumat-I-Ilahiyya' resolution to regain their lost prestige and popularity but were unsuccessful. They turned against both League and Jinnah and addressed the latter as 'Kafir e Azam' (the Great Infidel). Since the party had no organizational structure, they failed to work at grass-root level and enjoy the people's support like other organizations. This coupled with its anti Jinnah stance made the failure of the movement inevitable. It collapsed and became extinct short time after the formation of Pakistan.

## **Khaksar Movement**

The Khaksar Movement was a paramilitary organization, which was introduced by Allama Inayatullah Mashriqi in the chaotic political atmosphere of India. He served in the education department for 17 years. In 1926 however, he had seen Hitler and his Mein Kampf, both of whom impressed him and lingered on in his mind and in 1931, he proceeded to launch a movement to transform the Muslims into well-organized and disciplined force. The movement was absolutely non-political (initially) though partially based on military basis with aims and objectives undefined for a long time. The word 'Khaksar' means 'humble person' and the Khaksars had to wear 'Khaki' uniform due to its matching with the color of the earth (khak). They had the word 'Akhawat' (brotherhood) on their sleeves and carried in their right hand a shovel to symbolize the leveling of the society for equity and equality and the removal of existing division b/w the rich and the poor. The membership was open to everyone with no membership fee irrespective of any caste, color or creed. The organization needed dedicated and selfless people as the founder rejected all those who wanted to join for their vested interests. The party workers were required to bear their own expenses, and participate daily in military parade and social work without any hesitation.

The organization of the movement was such that Allama Mashriqi was Khaksar e Azam with an advisory council but Allama could overrule any advice. He was entitled to remove any member from the organization. The focal point of the movement was social reforms but it actively participated in politics and the leaders came in working alliance with AIML, as it was the only organization which Khaksars were liable to join. Whenever Allama asked the Khaksars to move from one place to another for public service or called them for a meeting, they followed his orders willingly and most obediently at any time. Their activities for social welfare expanded from Punjab to Sind, Baluchistan and NWFP. The movement had a strong tendency towards the liberation of India from foreign rule but it did not establish strong relations with any political organization of that period. Due to party's rigid manifesto and adherence to its ideology the Khaksar leaders remained in jails for long periods of time.

Drilling and parading in playgrounds, streets and neighborhoods, the Khaksars were seen clad in khaki uniform with spades upon their shoulders. These militant activities brought them in direct conflict with the government of the day. In February 1940, the Punjab premier Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan imposed restrictions on the Khaksar activities and in March 1940, the police opened fire on the Khaksars parading in protest. Many of them were killed or injured while Mashriqi and many others were imprisoned. Mashriqi who was kept in jail without any legal proceedings had fasted to the point of death in order to obtain his release and that of his followers. The Government of India at the time kept Mashriqi's fasting a secret. However, the news was leaked out and Mashriqi along with so many Khaksars had to be released in January 1942 but his movements were kept restricted to Madras. Egged on by some of the Madras Congressmen, Allama Mashriqi issued instructions to the Khaksars to adopt every means to influence Jinnah and make him realize the so-called importance of unity of India. Consequently a Khaksar from the Punjab found an occasion to assault Jinnah with a knife in July 1943.

The final show of Khaksar was against Muslim League council session in June 1947 at Imperial Hotel Delhi to occupy the floor and to use force to reject the partition plan. But it did not succeed. The movement attracted many Indian Muslims before the partition but after the division it lost its sympathizers due to the failure of party program and its ideology. Khaksar movement soon began to shrink and gradually lost its popularity. However after independence, Khaksar movement changed into a civilian political group and comprised PNA (Pakistan National Alliance) in 1977.

## **Round Table Conferences**

### **Background: Irwin's Announcements**

All efforts to come to an understanding for the future constitution of India had failed. Indians were demanding self rule with more vigor than ever before and Congress had threatened the British to launch a civil

disobedience movement. To exacerbate the situation further, terrorism had resurfaced in 1928 with Bhagat Singh leading the attacks on several Europeans.

But the victory of Labor Party in England with Ramsay MacDonald as the new Prime Minister opened up a new prospect as this party was a lot more considerate towards the Indians compared to the Conservatives. Lord Irwin visited England and returned to India with important announcements which were made on 31 October 1929. He acknowledged that the natural issue of India was the attainment of Dominion status and announced that RTCs were to be held in England. He then extended invitation to all Indian leaders to attend the RTCs.

Indian optimism however dampened when the issue of Dominion Status came under fire in the British Parliament from the Conservatives. Gandhi wanted assurances that the RTCs would proceed on the basis of full Dominion Status for India. But Irwin could not give any such assurances and thus Congress decided to boycott the RTCs in favor of their disobedience movement.

### **First RTC (12 Nov 1930 – 19 Jan 1931)**

The first session of the conference opened in London on 12 November 1930. All parties were present except for the Congress, whose leaders were in jail due to the civil disobedience movement. Almost 89 members attended the conference, out of which 58 were chosen from various communities and interests in British India, and the rest from princely states and other political parties. The prominent among the Muslim delegates invited by the British government were Sir Aga Khan, Jinnah, M. Ali Johar, Sir Muhammad Shafi and Maulvi Fazl e Haq. The outstanding Hindu leaders included Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jaikar and Dr. Moonje.

Hindu-Muslim differences overcastted the conference as the Hindus were pushing for a powerful central government while the Muslims stood for a loose federation of completely autonomous provinces. The Muslims demanded maintenance of weightage and separate electorates, the Hindus their abolition. The Muslims claimed statutory majority in Punjab and Bengal, while Hindus resisted their imposition. Discussions regarding Punjab were complicated by inflated Sikh claims.

Eight subcommittees were set up to deal with the details. These committees dealt with the federal structure, provincial constitution, franchise, Sindh, the North West Frontier Province, defense services and minorities. However, when the conference broke up on 19 January 1931, the only achievements were a general agreement to write safeguards for minorities into the constitution and a vague desire to devise a federal system for the country.

### **Gandhi Irwin Pact**

After the conclusion of the first RTC, the British government realized that continuing without the participation of Congress was futile because any proposal without the consent of the largest political party of India would be meaningless. Thus Lord Irwin extended an invitation to Gandhi for talks and they began to negotiate. Finally, an agreement was reached during the wee hours of 5 March 1931, called the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The main features of the pact were:

1. Congress shall discontinue its civil disobedience movement ('discontinue' implied a temporary truce).
2. Congress shall attend the second RTC.
3. Withdrawal of all ordinances placed to curb the activities of the Congress.
4. End of all prosecutions against those accused of non violent offences.
5. Release of all those detained for participation in civil disobedience movement.
6. Abolition of salt tax.

Gandhi's demand for a public enquiry into the conduct of the police in various matters especially revenue collection was not accepted by the Viceroy. However, one important feature of the pact was that Gandhi had agreed to take part in discussions for consideration of the future constitution of India which angered other Congress leaders who were thinking in terms of immediate independence.

But the fact of the matter was that the civil disobedience movement and boycott of the RTCs had done no good at all. The Hindu-Muslim unity of the days of Khilafat movement was lacking and Muslims all over India with the

exception of those in NWFP (under Abdul Ghaffar Khan) had shunned the disobedience movement. Moreover, after Gandhi's arrest, the movement had lost its sense of direction and had ceased to be a threat.

In April 1931, Lord Willingdon became the next Viceroy and this change had accompanied a darkening of the political atmosphere – communal riots broke out in Kanpur and there was a growing tension b/w Congress workers and the forces of law and order with both sides blaming the other for breaching the Gandhi-Irwin pact. Gandhi almost did not go to attend the second RTC due to these conditions but at the end, Willingdon made him more concessions including an agreement to conduct a public enquiry into the excesses of the police force.

### **Second RTC (7 Sep 1931 – 1 Dec 1931)**

Just before the second session, the economic conditions of England had resulted in a change in the government. Though Ramsay MacDonald remained the PM, his government became predominantly Conservative. Thus, it was expected that the second conference would be an anticlimax.

However, the second RTC opened in London on 7 September 1931. The main work of the conference was done through the two committees on federal structure and minorities. Gandhi was a member of both but he adopted a very unreasonable attitude. He claimed that he represented all India and dismissed all other Indian delegates as non-representative because they did not belong to the Congress.

The most difficult issue was beyond a shred of doubt the communal problem. Gandhi tabled the Congress scheme for a settlement, which was a mere rehash of the Nehru Report. The Muslims, depressed classes, Anglo Indians, Europeans and Indian Christians not only rejected Gandhi's proposals but presented their own which were naturally rejected by Gandhi.

Three important committees drafted their reports; the Franchise Committee, the Federal Finance Committee and States Inquiry Committee. On the closing day, the British PM appealed to the Indians to settle the communal issue themselves and warned them that a failure to do so would force the British to take a unilateral decision on the matter.

Mohammad Iqbal and Sarojini Naidu were new comers to the second session among others. However, Jinnah did not attend this session of the RTC as he had decided to keep himself aloof from the Indian politics and practice as a professional lawyer in England. Once the session was over, Gandhi returned to India and once again started his civil disobedience movement.

### **Communal Award**

The Indian leadership failed to settle the communal question and the British PM, Ramsay MacDonald, according to the promise he had made at the conclusion of the second RTC presented his own solution to the matter. On 16 August 1932, he announced the Communal Award.

According to the award, the right of separate electorates was given not only to the Muslims but to all minorities in the country. The untouchables were given the status of a minority and were thus given separate seats. Principle of weightage was applied to Muslim minority provinces with some modification. The same principle was also applied for Europeans in Bengal and Assam, for Sikhs in Punjab and NWFP and for Hindus in Sind and NWFP.

Although the award fell far short of the Muslim demands, League accepted it in its 1933 session. The application of weightage to Punjab for various communities had resulted in Muslims (nearly 56% population) to have less than 50% of the seats thus effectively reducing them to a minority in the matter of representation. The same happened in Bengal. However, it is important to note that although the League accepted the award, it also reserved its right to press further for the acceptance of all their demands.

Congress on the other hand rejected the award due to their adamant attitude towards separate and joint electorates but primarily because of the clauses related to the untouchables. Ever since Gandhi had set foot into the arena of politics, he had been trying to eradicate the Hindu society from the evil of untouchability but had been unable to do so. The effect was clear in the communal award.

## Civil Disobedience Movement and the Poona Pact

The truce b/w the government and the Congress was already under strain when Gandhi left for London in 1931 and by the time he came back in December 1931, the truce had already broken down completely. There were mainly four areas of conflict. Firstly, the Congress had been dissatisfied and disappointed by the enquiry into the excesses of the police (promised by Lord Willingdon). Secondly, terrorism in Bengal had intensified the outrages and several government personnel had been killed. Thirdly, a no tax movement had been launched by the UP peasants with Nehru's support. Lastly, the 'Red Shirts' under Ghaffar Khan had been propagating disaffection and had clashed several times with the police in NWFP.

When Gandhi returned, Nehru and Ghaffar Khan were already in prison and Gandhi's attempts to meet the Viceroy were in vain because Gandhi had threatened to resume the disobedience movement upon refusal. The fight was openly on and Gandhi along with other Congressmen was arrested in the first week of 1932. Government used strict tactics to suppress the disobedience and repression had the desired effect.

Gandhi realized that the disobedience movement was a lost cause and therefore diverted the attention of his followers to the electoral rights of the depressed classes under the Communal Award. Gandhi undertook a fast 'unto death' which ended with the Poona Pact in September 1932. This was an understanding b/w Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar that a reserved number of seats shall be given to the depressed classes within the Hindu seats and that voting on those seats shall be held under joint electorate.

However, Gandhi's undertaking of a fast for the communal matter gave a huge blow to the disobedience movement. In July 1933, Congress called off the mass movement officially but welcomed people to continue individual civil disobedience if they wished to do so. This was more of a face saving tactic than anything else. Finally, the movement was called off completely in May 1934 and it was decided that Congress shall enter the legislatures through the 1934 elections.

## Third RTC (17 Nov 1932 – 25 Dec 1932)

The third session was a mere formality. It was short and unimportant and achieved nothing. The Congress was once again absent and so was Jinnah. Labor opposition in the British Parliament too refrained from this session. Muhammad Iqbal was present but his participation was merely symbolic as he did not take part in any deliberations. Reports of the various committees were scrutinized. However, the main points finalized in the three sessions were:

1. Future form of government shall be federal to be joined by the provinces (British India) and the princely states.
2. Central executive shall be responsible to the federal legislature.
3. Provinces shall be given autonomy in their affairs.
4. Sindh shall be made a separate province with responsible government.

## Allahabad Address

### Background

Muslims of India had been striving for a separate identity ever since they had been subjugated. The two nation theory had helped them realize that their identity was separate from that of the Hindus. Several Muslim leaders and thinkers having insight into the Hindu-Muslim situation proposed the separation of Muslim India. But, Allama Muhammad Iqbal gave the most lucid explanation of the inner feelings of Muslim community in his presidential address to the All India Muslim League at Allahabad in 1930. His stay in Europe (1905-08) had crystallized his thoughts and he had ever since been working for Muslims' uplift. By the time of the address, Iqbal had achieved his position as one of the highest Muslim intellectuals, philosophers and poets.

### The Address



Political events had taken an ominous turn. There was a two-pronged attack on the Muslim interests. On one hand, the Hindus offered a tough opposition by proposing the Nehru Report as the ultimate constitution for India. On the other, the British government in India had totally ignored the Muslim demands in the Simon Commission report. Iqbal understood that the British and the Hindus could never understand the Muslims for they were both obsessed with their territorial nationalism while Muslim nationalism transcends such boundaries. He also knew that the time was ripe for him to help the Muslims realize what they were fighting for at this critical juncture. Therefore, he presided over the 25<sup>th</sup> session of Muslim League held at Allahabad and through his presidential address, he enhanced the two nation theory and gave it a philosophical character. The main points of his address were as follows:

1. Explained the philosophical character of Islam
2. He said that if Muslims could develop in India according to Shariah, they would give their life for India
3. Compared Islamic nationalism to the secular system in Europe
4. Elaborated on India as a country of numerous cultures and religions, comprising of people having great differences going back for centuries
5. Talked about a Muslim India within India and said that formation of Muslim states comprising of North western and Eastern zones of India was inevitable
6. He also talked about territorial redistribution of India according to religion as a need of time
7. Punjab, NWFP, Sind and Balochistan be amalgamated into a state, self government within the British empire or without it. The formation of such a consolidated North Western Muslim state appears to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North West India.
8. Talked about the federal system that had been proposed and how Muslim states were necessary for its proper working
9. He also gave his opinion on the proceedings of the first RTC and told the Muslims to be vary of what was being proposed in them
10. Finally he told the Muslims how Islam had saved Muslims in difficult times and why faith, culture and historical traditions are more important than territorial patriotism

### **Importance**

The greatest historical significance of Iqbal's Allahabad address was that it cleared all political confusion from the minds of the Muslims, thus enabling them to determine their new destination. And the national spirit that Iqbal fused amongst the Muslims of India later on developed into the ideological basis of Pakistan – it gave them a sense of direction and purpose.

## **Government of India Act 1935**

### **Background**

After the failure of the RTCs, a White Paper was published in March 1933, containing the recommendations of the conferences. The Parliament approved the white paper, it set up a Joint Select Committee, and gave it the task to give recommendations on which a Bill could be drafted for the constitution of India. A report was submitted by the committee in November 1934 and a Bill based on it was formulated in December 1934. The Bill got Royal assent on 4 August 1935 but came into effect on 1 April 1937.

### **The Act**

The 1935 Act contained 14 parts and 10 schedules but was divided broadly into a provincial scheme and a federal scheme which was to be enforced only when a number of princely states acceded to the federation such that their population comprised at least half of the population of all the princely states. And since no princely state acceded, this part of the Act was never enforced. The franchise was expanded under the Act to include 35

million people as voters and the principles of weightage and separate electorates were maintained. In fact the communal distribution of seats followed the Communal Award as modified by the Poona Pact.

Main features of the provincial part of the Act were as follows:

1. India was divided into 11 provinces in total with a partial reorganization of the provinces:
  - a. Sind was separated from Bombay and made a separate provinces.
  - b. Bihar and Orissa were separated from each other to form separate provinces.
  - c. Aden and Burma were separated from India.
2. Diarchy (which had failed in most of the provinces) was scrapped from the provinces.
3. The subjects were divided into three parts – federal list, provincial list and concurrent list. Provinces were given complete autonomy and legislative powers over the subjects in the provincial and concurrent lists.
4. Provincial executive was handed over to the representatives of the people who were responsible to the provincial legislature.
5. Responsible parliamentary government was introduced in the provinces and ministers were to be chosen from the representatives of the people.
6. Each province was given a council of ministers whose advice was binding on the Governor but in the discharge of his duties the Governor was under the general control of the Governor General.
7. Governors were given special powers for the protection of minorities.
8. The reforms were introduced in NWFP on the same footing as in the other provinces.

Main features of the federal part of the Act were as follows:

1. There was to be a bicameral legislature at the centre with an upper house (Council of State) and a lower house (Federal Assembly).
2. The upper house was to consist of 260 members with 104 to be nominated by the rulers of the Indian states, 6 to be nominated by the Governor General and 150 to be elected. The tenure of the upper house was 9 years with one third of its members retiring every 3 years.
3. The lower house was to consist of 375 members with 250 members to be British representatives and 125 to be representatives of the Indian states. The lower house was to have a 5 year term unless the Governor General dissolved it earlier.
4. Diarchy was introduced at the centre with some subjects reserved with the Governor General and others transferred to the ministers responsible to the legislature.
5. The Federal Court of India was established in the centre.
6. The Reserve Bank of India was established.
7. The Governor General still held wide undemocratic powers and although the Central Legislature could pass any bill, it could not be passed into law without the consent of the Governor General.

## Indian Reaction

The Act of 1935 was perhaps the most comprehensive and important legislation introduced by the British in India. But Congress and League both opposed it for it did not give a workable Dominion status and neither did it provide any guarantees of individual liberty. Moreover, the Governor General still enjoyed non democratic powers and the system of diarchy which had failed in the provinces had been introduced at the centre.

Congress made it clear that it was not ready to accept anything offered by the British other than independence and that the only constitution it was interested in was the one that that would be produced by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage. But Congress decided to take part in the provincial elections and also declared that the only reason for which it would enter the legislatures under the new Act was to combat the Act and seek an end to it.

League also opposed the Act of 1935 and passed a resolution at Jinnah's motion stating that the Act had been imposed on the people of India against their will. League decided to utilize the provincial scheme for what it was worth but condemned the federal part outright. Though Jinnah had been in favor of a federal system in principle, he had not expected the federal scheme to be such fundamentally injurious and fatal to the vital interests of British India vis-a-vis the Indian states. However, League too decided to take part in the elections.

## **Consequences of the Federal Part Remaining Unimposed**

As the divine scheme of things would have it, the Federal Structure Committee failed to bring about concrete results in 1937. The federal arrangement was therefore deferred and was further kept in abeyance due to the outbreak of WW2. Had the federal arrangement taken place in 1937 or afterwards with a responsible government worked at the center for several years, it would have become immensely difficult for the Muslims of India especially those who belonged to the Muslim majority areas to achieve Pakistan.

## **Shaheed Gunj Mosque Incident**

The Shahid Ganj mosque, located in Landa Bazaar outside Delhi gate at Lahore, was considered as the holy place for both Muslims and Sikhs. It was occupied by Sikhs in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was used as a Sikh Gurdwara for almost 170 years. Although the Muslims were not allowed to offer prayers in the mosque for this period, the building was kept physically intact.

The Muslims kept on protesting against the Sikh occupation of the Mosque for a long time. However, the situation got out of control when, suddenly on 29 June 1935, the Sikh community announced to demolish the Mosque. On the same night, a Muslim crowd of three or four thousand assembled in front of the mosque to protect it. A direct fight between this crowd and the Sikhs inside the Gurdwara was averted by the intervention of government authorities. Later, the British took an undertaking from the Sikhs that they would not further demolish the mosque. But, during the next week, while strenuous efforts were being made to persuade the leaders to reach an amicable settlement, the Sikh leaders, under pressure from the extremist elements, again set out to demolish the mosque.

In the beginning, the Muslim leaders reacted in a mild way. Anjuman e Tahaffuz e Masjid Shahid Ganj was founded by a wide spectrum of Unionist Muslims, lawyers, journalists and biradari leaders to find legal means to protect the mosque and press for peaceful settlement of the issue. However, leaders like Maulana Zafar Ali Khan warned that the issue could lead to a great bloodshed if the matter was not settled immediately for the Muslims would not hesitate to make any sacrifice to preserve the mosque.

Appreciating the importance of the issue, Sir Herbert Emerson, the Governor of the Punjab, encouraged a negotiated settlement. But, on the night of 7 July, the Sikhs demolished the mosque. The news spread like wild fire throughout Lahore, but before any serious reaction a curfew was enforced in the city and the situation was controlled. When the curfew was lifted, the Muslims, under Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, formed the Majlis Ittehad e Millat on 14 July, with an object to fight for the mosque. They recruited volunteers and dressed them in blue shirts for the purpose of carrying on the agitation. The fact of the matter was that behind the Shahid Ganj agitation lay the impulse of Lahore's Muslims to assert the moral sovereignty of the Muslim community of which the mosque itself was a symbol and of which the principle of the supremacy of the Shariat was more than a symbol.

The Muslims held a public meeting on 19 July at the Badshahi mosque, after Friday prayers. The speakers urged the worshippers to march directly on the Shahid Ganj mosque. Inspired with the religious zeal and shouting religious slogans, the Muslims gathered at the entrance to Landa Bazaar in front of the city police station. They did not want to listen to the police. They were ready to die in the way of their mission. When police failed to take control of the situation and disperse the procession peacefully, they opened fire on the crowd on 20 July. The Muslims finally dispersed when more than a dozen of them died due to heavy firing by the police on the evening of 21 July. The situation in Lahore continued to cause anxiety till the close of the year.

## **Provincial Elections and Congress Ministries**

## Background

Ever since the Hindu-Muslim divide had become final, Congress had been claiming to be the only representative party of all of India, especially the Hindus. League on the other hand had been claiming to be the sole representative party of Muslims of India. But up till 1937, these had been mere claims which had been asserted without proof. Both parties (along all other parties of India) got a chance to prove themselves in the winter of 1936-37 when provincial elections were to be held under the Act of 1935, according to the principles of limited franchise and separate electorates.

## The Election Campaign

Election manifesto of the League stated that it stood for the repeal of all repressive laws; for resisting economic exploitation of India; for reducing the heavy cost of administration and diverting the funds for nation building; for the nationalization of the army; and for the social, educational and economic uplift of the rural population. Congress too stood for more or less the same things but the two were divided on matters of communal representation and cultural differences – Congress stood for joint electorates and for Hindi written in Devanagiri script while League stood for separate electorates and Urdu written in Persian script.

Both parties carried out their campaigns all over India and spoke to the public. Nehru claimed that there were only two powers in India, Congress and the Government. Jinnah gave appropriate replies to all that Nehru had said against the League and Jinnah in public and he told the people (and Nehru), that there was another power in India, the Muslim India.

## Election Results

Results were officially announced in February 1937 and Congress had performed better than its own leaders had hoped it to, no doubt because of its efficient organization and Gandhi's grass root popularity. But the results also showed that Congress' claims that it was the representative party of 95% Indians were quite far-fetched. Out of the total 1771 seats in the 11 provinces, Congress was able to secure a little over 750 seats. Out of the 491 seats reserved for the Muslims, Congress was able to capture 26 while League could capture only 106. The only other party to secure a mentionable number of seats was the Unionist Party with 101 seats.

## Formation of Ministries

Congress refused to set up its government until the British agreed to their demand that the Governor would not use his powers in legislative affairs. Many discussions took place between the Congress and the British Government and at last the British Government gave a verbal assurance that although the Governor had the power to interfere did not imply that he would necessarily interfere in the workings of the legislature. Thus, no amendment was made in the Act of 1935. Although Congress had asked for a lot more than a simple verbal assurance, the fact of the matter was that despite putting on a brave face both sides were under pressure to seek a way out of the impasse. Eventually, after a four month delay, Congress formed their ministries in July 1937 after the resignation of interim ministries which had been brought in place after the initial refusal by Congress.

Congress had a clear majority in Madras, UP, CP, Bihar and Orissa. It was also able to form a coalition government in Bombay and NWFP and secure political importance in Sindh and Assam, where it joined the ruling coalition. In NWFP, it was mainly due to the efforts of Dr. Khan Sahib (the brother of Abdul Ghaffar Khan) that a Congress coalition could be formed. Thus directly or indirectly, Congress was in power in 9 out of 11 provinces. The Unionist Party (founded by Sir Fazl e Hussain), now under Sir Sikander Hayat Khan formed ministry in Punjab. In Bengal, the Krishak Proja Samiti of Maulvi Fazl e Haq was able to lead an unstable coalition because of a multiplicity of parties with shifting membership.

Muslim League had tried to form a coalition with Congress in UP thanks to the efforts of Abul Kalam Azad of Congress. But all his efforts were frustrated when Nehru came into the picture. He presented the League

members with difficult conditions to form the coalition and as a result, League failed to form government in any province. The conditions set forward were:

1. Dissolution of the AIML Parliamentary board.
2. AIML members were not to function as a separate group in the UP Assembly.
3. AIML members were to express allegiance to Congress.

### Congress Ministries

In theory, the ministries formed by the political parties were supposed to be responsible to their own legislatures. The Congress high command nullified this arrangement by imposing its own control over the Congress governments. As a result, in the provinces where Congress had made ministries, the actual situation was far from the theory. The Ministers and Legislators in these provinces owed their responsibility in reality not to the electorate but to the Congress. It is ironic that a party so determined to secure democracy in India used all methods of dictatorship while acting under the Congress high command instead of the democratically elected electorates. While Congress remained in government, it proved to be a pure Hindu party and worked only for the betterment of the Hindus in India. 27 months of Congress rule were no less than a nightmare for the Indian Muslims with just one difference – they could not wake up from the nightmare. It looked as if Congress had come into power to avenge the 700 years of Muslim rule in India. By taking such grave measures and by not including the League in the UP coalition, Congress aimed to crush the League for once and all. But by trying to do so the largest party of India had committed a great blunder.

The various methods used by Congress to oppress the Muslims and assert its own power were as follows:

1. Communal Riots: organized attempts were made on the property, honor and life of the Muslims. Hindus got a virtual license to kill, loot and plunder the Muslims and they indulged the Muslims in religious feud. When matters were taken to the courts by Muslims, the verdict was biased in almost every case in the favor of Hindus.
2. Bande Matram: this song had been written by the Bengali novelist Bankim Chatterjee in his book Anandamath. It contained degrading verses about Muslims and Islam. Furthermore, it spread the view that Muslims were foreign invaders and invited the Hindus to purge the Muslims from Hindustan. When Congress formed ministries, it ensured that the song was sung at the opening of the proceedings of the legislatures.
3. Wardha Scheme: this was basically an educational scheme which embodied Gandhi's favorite ideas of village uplift. In schools, Hindi was promoted at the expense of Urdu. Children were taught stories about the Hindu gods and heroes (in order to distance them from Islam). Furthermore, Gandhi's philosophy of non violence was also made a part of school training.
4. Vidya Mander Scheme: under this scheme, Congress tried to convert non Hindus to Hinduism by making compulsory the Mandar education at the elementary level. People were also made to revere Gandhi. His portraits were hung in assemblies and schools and people had to bow to them in respect. The purpose of both these schemes was to obliterate the cultural traditions of the Muslims and to inculcate into the minds of Muslim children the superiority of the Hindu culture.
5. Hoisting of Three Colored Flag: in order to show that there were only two powers in India, Congress hoisted its tricolor alongside the British Union Jack on buildings under the local authority.
6. Ban on Cow Slaughter and Other Religious Offences: beef is among the main foods consumed by the Muslims while cows are holy and sacred for the Hindus. Therefore, Congress placed a ban on slaughtering of cows. But Congress did not stop there. The calling of Azan was banned at various places, noisy processions were carried out outside the mosques while prayers were being offered inside and the Muslims inside the mosques were often attacked. Court intervention/appeals almost always went in the favor of Hindus.
7. Mass Contact Movement: Nehru had devised a plan to crush the League by reducing its vote bank. League was defamed and the masses were told how Congress only could solve their problems.



## Reactions Against the Congress

Muslim League played an important role during these dark months. For the Muslims, it was a beacon of hope as it kept struggling against the Congress' atrocities. And in order to make the Indians realize that League was a rising power in India, it hoisted its own flag above the Congress tricolor until Congress was forced to take its flag down. While Nehru had devised his mass contact campaign, the League had devised its own and it was during these years that it gained popularity among the Muslim masses.

A committee was formulated by the League in order to investigate the grievances of the Muslims. Raja Syed Muhammad Mehdi was made the chairman of the committee and it presented the Pirpur Report on 15 November 1938. Similarly, there was the Sharif Report, presented in March 1939, and it concentrated on facts pertaining to the conditions in Bihar. A.K. Fazl ul Haq's pamphlet titled 'Muslim Suffering under the Rule of Congress', the purpose of which is clear from its name, was published in December 1939.

League was not the only one who raised its voice against the Congress rule. The British too stood against the Congress' singing of Bande Matram for two main reasons: it had been the cry of terrorists in Bengal and it originated as a hymn of hate against the Muslims. Eminent personalities in England also declared Congress rule to be a Hindu rule. Sir William Barton and the Marquis of Lothian termed it as 'rising tide of political Hinduism'.

## Day of Deliverance

When World War 2 broke out, Britain announced that it needed support from Indians for the war effort. Congress made some demands upon which their support would be contingent:

1. The British should explain the purpose of the war.
2. The British should explain India's future regarding constitutional settlement.
3. A constitution making body should be set up immediately according to democratic principles.

In effect, Congress had asked for immediate freedom and a Hindu dominated constitution making body being allowed to operate without any foreign interference. But the British refused to entertain any of their demands. As a result Congress resigned from power on 15 November 1939. Jinnah asked the Muslims to celebrate Friday, 22 December 1939 as the Day of Deliverance. Muslims offered their thanksgivings in token of relief from the tyranny and oppression of the Congress rule. Jinnah had instructed the Muslims 'Let there be no hartals, processions or any such demonstrations, but let a spirit of humility and mood of reflection prevail.' And they complied to his instructions fully.

## World War II and India

### Background

The year 1931 saw Japan leave the League of Nations and invade Manchuria thus starting a prolonged unofficial war with China. Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and in less than a year, annexed it in 1936. Ethiopia, a member of the League of Nations was abandoned by the international community. Same year, a civil war broke out in Spain with F=Italian and German volunteers joining the insurgents and Russia siding with the government. The war ended when Madrid fell in 1939. However, Germany left the League of Nations in 1933 and in 1934 it denounced the clause of Treaty of Versailles pertaining to Germany's disarmament. In 1939, Germany had completed its annexation of Czechoslovakia. On 23 August 1939, German-Russian pact was signed at Moscow. Hitler, upon securing the neutrality of his erstwhile bitter enemy, invaded Poland on 1 September. Britain and France had committed themselves to defend Polish independence and therefore declared war on Germany. In mid-1940 Italy declared war on France and Britain. The hitherto European war was transformed into World War 2 when the Japanese made a surprise attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbor (Hawaii) on 7 December 1941, therefore bringing USA into the war.

### Indian Reaction

Congress, under the guidance of its international affairs mentor, Jawaharlal Nehru had observed the gathering clouds of war with apprehension. Even before the outbreak of war, Congress had warned Indian people of the danger that India might be made a tool in the imperialist war. Congress leaders wanted India to remain as far away from this war as possible. Gandhi wanted the same thing as well but because of his philosophy of non violence and self suffering instead of for any other reason. The question for Nehru was much more complex. He had been to Europe and then to Asian countries including China. He understood that WW2 was not just an imperialist war but a war b/w democracy on one side and Fascism and Nazism on the other. Nehru wanted to side with the former due to his hatred for the latter but he also wanted self rule and democracy for India. Thus Congress put forward its demand for India's right to self rule and self determinism and the right to make its own constitution without foreign intervention after the formation of a Constituent Assembly.

The Viceroy however, declared that India was at war on 3 September 1939. Congress leaders resented that neither they nor the Indian legislature had been consulted before the declaration of war. Let us assume that they had been consulted. Gandhi would have rejected this declaration outright due to his non violence philosophy while Congress under Nehru would have demanded self rule. The only chance of India's help would then have been in the latter case. But then there would have been another problem – to whom should the power be handed over? This would have been a long and useless debate as Congress would have been adamant as always that it was the sole representative and the minorities and other political parties would have never agreed to the terms set by Congress. Thus the Viceroy chose the only practical course that was available – he declared war immediately without wasting time and ensured India's support in whatever numbers and form he could.

It is important to mention here that after meeting Gandhi, the Viceroy set up a meeting with Jinnah in September 1939. Until then, the British had been wary of Jinnah but League had gained much importance and prominence during the past 5 years. Furthermore, after Congress' unrealistic demands Viceroy turned to the next big power in India and in doing so recognized that the League and Jinnah were significant in Indian politics. Jinnah, the representative of the League, unlike the Congress leaders, was a practical man whose decisions were guided by reason. He understood the fact that India was under the British and did not yet have the constitutional status similar to those nations who had achieved a Dominion Status. Thus there was no criticism of the Viceroy's decision and Jinnah or the League never called it an 'imperialist war' for they understood that it was a war that would determine which of the two system came to dominate the world. But Jinnah made it clear to the Viceroy that League's stance was 'not of non cooperation' by telling him that Muslim support could not be 'real and solid' until the Governors were called upon to practice their special powers to protect the minorities in Congress provinces, until the British assured the Muslims that future constitutional reforms in India shall not proceed without the participation and acceptance of the reforms by League and until the British could guarantee that Indian soldiers shall not be used to fight the war against any Muslim country. Jinnah's genius was evident in these demands too. He knew that demanding immediate constitutional settlement during the war was not useful and thus he asked only for guarantees for settlement in the future. The rest of his demands were within the constitutional bounds and thus legitimate.

The Punjab, Bengal and Sind governments gave their unconditional support to the British for the local parties knew that their future was attached to the British domination of India. Same was the case with princely states.

### **Viceroy's Reply to Indian Demands**

Congress' demands had been communicated to the Viceroy after the announcement of the WW2 (discussed under Day of Deliverance). Jinnah had presented demands of the Muslims to the Viceroy during his meeting with the Viceroy. On 18 October 1940, he replied, giving the official stance of the British. He said that the war was being fought for democracy and the Congress demand for a Constitutional Assembly of India was impracticable. He further stated that minorities would be consulted on all major issues in the future. The Act of 1935 was suspended for the time being, to be reconsidered after the conclusion of war.

The Viceroy invited Jinnah, Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad for talks on 1 November and requested them to conclude an agreement for smooth working of the government at the centre. They were unable to agree due to

Congress' stubbornness – Congress leaders were adamant that by raising the minorities issue, British were just delaying freedom.

## **India's Global Involvement**

Nehru's interest in international affairs had enabled him to befriend many foreigners in Europe and China. This had in turn allowed him to become the mentor of Congress in international affairs. He had toured many countries just before the outbreak of war and had voiced his concern for the democracies which were being threatened globally by Fascism and Nazism, both of which he hated deeply. League on the other hand did not have a counterpart of Nehru to expound global issues but it consistently concerned itself with the developments in Muslim countries. At first glance, Congress' wider view of the world appears to be much more impressive than the narrower one of the League. But the fact is that League's commitment was much more intense and genuine.

With the decline and fall of the Ottoman Empire, Indian Muslims had lost an overseas rallying point for global Muslim resurgence and since then, they came to see themselves as the most substantial body of Muslims. Thus they took it upon themselves to champion the cause of Muslims all over the world. In 1933, League had protested against the British policy of making Palestine the national home of the Jews and in 1939, the Palestine Fund was also created. Muslims at one place saw the whole Muslim world as a single brotherhood and were always ready to sacrifice themselves for Muslims in some other part of the world. This was the nature of commitment of the League to the Islamic world. Congress on the other hand had no such commitment because Hindus had no comparable ties to any foreigners – all the Hindus were concentrated in India and Nepal which is a part of the South Asian subcontinent.

## **The Democracy Question**

Congress which claimed to be the sole democratic party consistently asked for immediate freedom and the setting up of a Constituent Assembly elected by Indians in order to formulate the future constitution of India without any foreign interference. Jinnah made it clear that the Constituent Assembly if formed on the lines put forward by Congress would be unacceptable for a Constituent Assembly set up even under separate electorates would be a dominantly Hindu body and thus a 'second and bigger version of Congress'. He further said that if in a hypothetical scenario, such a body was elected and constitution was made, who would be there to ensure that the minorities were protected? He made clear to the Congress that under no circumstances were the Muslims or for that matter any other minority, willing to let Congress determine their future. To debunk Congress' claims of being pro democracy, he asked what they had done so far to label themselves as the sole democratic party (made 60 million of their own people – the untouchables – a minority, installed dummy ministries which were responsible to the Congress high command instead of the electorates). He asserted that under such circumstances a parliamentary system was unsuitable for India. When the Congress Press blamed Jinnah for doing a disservice to Islam which supported democracy, Jinnah replied 'so far as I have understood Islam, it does not advocate a democracy which would allow the majority of non Muslims to decide the fate of Muslims'.

## **Lahore Resolution**

### **Background**

The idea of an India divided into a Muslim India and a non Muslim India was not a new one. It had been proposed even as early as the time of Mohammad of Ghor, when the concept of territorial nations did not exist. On the eve of the second Battle of Tarrain in 1192, Mohammad of Ghor had proposed the division of India with the North Western India becoming a part of the Ghurid Empire while the rest remaining under the Hindu rule of Prithviraj Chauhan (Prithviraj III). The scheme had not been accepted back then just like it had not been accepted by Congress till now. However, a few centuries later, all of India and territories beyond India had come

under Muslim rule. But it was not until Sir Syed's time that the concept of separate nations began taking a political shape though it remained in its primitive stages until Iqbal gave it a philosophical character. But without the extraordinary leadership of Jinnah, it would never have taken the shape of an actual movement and would have never culminated into the realization of the beloved state in which we now live – Pakistan.

### Jinnah's Efforts

It were the years that the Indian Muslims had spent under Congress ministries rule which made them realize that they needed a separate homeland if they were to live as free people. But even then, the Muslims had been divided into several factions for the short term gains they could achieve in their own areas. Examples included the Unionist Party in Punjab and the Krishak Proja Samiti of Bengal. But since his return to India in 1934, Jinnah had ventured to untie the Indian Muslims under the banner of League. He had toured extensively to various parts of India and sent League workers to convince the Muslim masses of the benefits they could reap if they worked together as a united body. This had not only gathered Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, A. K. Fazlul Haq and others under the banner of League but had also assured the ascendancy of Jinnah in politics of Muslim India.

### League's Minto Park Session

On 21 March a committee was appointed to draft the famous Lahore Resolution before AIML held its 27<sup>th</sup> annual session in Lahore at Minto Park from 22 to 24 March 1940. On the first day, Jinnah delivered a historic speech in which he first summarized the events of the past few years and then stated that the Indian issue was not of an inter communal nature but of an international nature. In his own words, "Hindus and the Muslims belong to two different religions, philosophies, social customs and literature. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations that are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their concepts on life and of life are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes and different episodes. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other, and likewise, their victories and defeats overlap. To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state".

However, the Lahore Resolution, was submitted on 22 March and moved on 23 March by A. K. Fazlul Haq. It was seconded by Chaudhry Khaliqzaman and supported by Sir Zafar Ali Khan, Nawab Ismail Khan and others. Main features of the resolution were as follows:

1. Federal system as under the act of 1935 was unacceptable.
2. Revised constitutional plan was unacceptable to the ML if framed without their approval and consent.
3. Geographically contiguous units are demarcated, with any territorial adjustments that may be necessary, so that Muslim majority regions such as the North Western and Eastern zones of India are grouped into independent states where the constituent units are autonomous and sovereign.
4. The constitution must provide adequate and effective safeguards for the protection of educational, economic, cultural, religious and other rights of the minorities.
5. The working committee of AIML was tasked to draw a scheme of constitution according to the principles mentioned in the resolution, summarized above.

### Importance of the Resolution

The resolution was passed on 24 March. It laid down the main principles and goals for the Indian Muslims. The details were left to be worked on by the working committee in the next few months. It was made a part of League's constitution in 1941.

Passing of the resolution marked a turning point for the Indian Muslims. Their ultimate goal had been changed. Instead of seeking an alliance with the Congress, or a constitutional settlement guaranteeing protection of the rights of the minorities, they would hitherto be working for a separate homeland, where they would not be

minorities and would enjoy the liberty to practice their religion and adopt their social and cultural values without any threat. Thus, it was on the basis of this resolution that the Muslims proceeded until they achieved the much cherished and dear goal of independence and freedom from the British and the Hindus. This changed strategy worked wonders by uniting the Indian Muslims for a greater cause – something which they had been lacking ever since political awakening in India.

### **Criticism of the Resolution**

There can be no doubt about the importance of the Lahore Resolution but not mentioning the criticisms faced by the Muslims because of it would be unfair for it would be equivalent to overlooking the obstacles and ridicules that they had to overcome to achieve a free homeland. There was a hue and cry among the Hindus who tried to label it several ways. Gandhi called it a moral wrong and a sin to which he could never be a party and other Hindu leaders condemned the resolution and referred to the partition plan as 'vivisection of mother India'. But they did not stop there and even tried to build up agitation against the proposed partition. Ironically, it was the Hindu Press that came out with the most aggressive propaganda against the resolution, declared it as an attempt to divide the Indian unity and dubbed the resolution as 'Pakistan Resolution'. It was not only the representative Congressmen who subjected the resolution to severe criticism. The British too played their part in doing the same although at a lower scale for the Congress had already done much of the work.

Finally, one might say that Lahore Resolution was inspired by mixed motives in the minds of those who framed it but there can be no reasonable doubt with respect to the fact that it was presented as a practical solution to the communal, or inter-national (rightly stated by Jinnah) problem of India.

## **August Offer**

### **Background**

When the Viceroy Linlithgow had declared war on behalf of India, WW2 had just started. Congress had reacted as expected by pressuring the government for freedom in return for help. However the princely states, Hindu Mahasabha and the governments of Punjab, Bengal and Sind had offered their support. The League too had offered its full support on the condition that British were able to give them assurances on certain issues related to the future of India's constitution, without pressing for an immediate resolution of the constitutional matter. However, the global situation in 1940 changed the situation in India as well. After the collapse of Netherlands, Belgium and France, the German forces occupied the Channel Islands and on 8 August 1940 opened the Battle of Britain by heavy air bombardment (which subsided only when Germany invaded Russia in June 1941, thus breaking the German-Russian Pact of 1939). This German blitzkrieg of spring 1940 had convinced many that Britain might fall thereby bringing Germany to India. While the Indians had their differences with the British, no one wanted the Germans to win.

### **Congress' and League's Conditions**

Congress was divided into two factions. Gandhi remained strongly wedded to non violence while the other group under Abul Kalam Azad and Nehru developed the official stance of Congress – India would join the camp of democracies against Fascism and Nazism only if she was completely independent.

League on the other hand decided that the grave global situation called for finding a basis for cooperation b/w the government and the Muslim League and other parties willing to shoulder the defence of the country. Jinnah was authorized by the League to get in touch with the Viceroy and so he did. He presented to the Viceroy, League terms for cooperation, in writing. Most important ones were as follows:

1. No pronouncement should be made by the government which went against the principle for the division of India as laid down in the Lahore Resolution.



2. Interim or final scheme of constitution should not be adopted without the previous consent of the Muslim India.
3. Muslim India leadership should be trusted as equals and should have an equal share in the authority of governments, provincial and central.
4. Executive Council of the Viceroy should be expanded with as many Muslims as Hindus if the Congress came in and otherwise the Muslims should be in majority.

### The British Response: August Offer

Lord Linlithgow issued a statement on behalf of the British government on 8 August 1940. The statement later came to be known as August Offer. The main features of this offer were:

1. Expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council by inviting representative Indians to join it.
2. A promise for the establishment of War Advisory Council consisting of representatives of Indian States and other interests in the country.
3. Assurance to the minorities that the government could not contemplate the transfer of their current responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life.
4. Stated that a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a battle for its survival is not fit for the decisive resolution of fundamental constitutional issues. But it guaranteed that after the war, a representative body would be set up in order to devise the framework of the new constitution.

It was clear that the British did not wish to make any concessions which could disturb the situation by creating political complications with unpredictable consequences. This was primarily because India's war effort was going quite smoothly with the support of the princes, Muslims, Hindu Mahasabha and the Liberals. This fact can be seen from the number of soldiers in the Indian army which increased from 175000 to 2000000 as the war progressed.

### Indian Reaction

It is clear from the last two points that the August Offer was made to placate both the League and the Congress and in doing so had doomed the offer as they had phrased it in a vague manner. But given the uncompromising stance of the two parties, one could not possibly expect that the offer would be accepted by either one of them without any further explanations and guarantees. Both parties rejected the offer due to the vague nature of the last two clauses.

In reaction to the August Offer, Congress said that the British government had no intention of recognizing India's independence and that they would hold on to India for as long as they possibly could. They saw the question of minorities only as a delaying tactic. The August Offer was rejected and Gandhi was called upon once more to guide the Congress with regards to the action it should take. In October 1940, Gandhi launched a civil disobedience movement in the form of individual satyagrah and a few of Congress leaders got arrested. The movement did not gain any momentum and failed in the Muslim provinces. The break b/w Congress and Khan Sahib of NWFP was also becoming evident as Khan Sahib undertook this movement only reluctantly and discontinued it after his arrest. In 1941, Gandhi opened the campaign to all Congressmen. It continued for only 2 months before its end. It was clear that it was only a gesture of defiance. This further showed the realization that British would use force if the movement escalated and that the British would not leave India during the war. Jinnah further explained Congress' motives at Delhi when he said that the movement was not for India's freedom but only to pressure the British into recognizing Congress as the sole representative of Indians – the reason for which the movement was unpopular among the Muslims and the Untouchables.

However, League too called the offer unsatisfactory because several details were lacking and authorized Jinnah to seek further information and clarification. Throughout the war, Jinnah kept pledging full Muslim support conditional on certain political assurances and concessions. And it was lost on no one that the purpose behind Jinnah's reservations was not to deter his community from assisting the government in the international

struggle but to maintain a strong bargaining position in the continual scramble for political power in India. It was in this way that Jinnah ensured that League won the next elections and in effect Pakistan.

The August Offer had certain implications in the long run. It had conceded that satisfaction of the Muslims would be sought in the future in any constitutional arrangement. This concession made to the Muslims was thereafter not to be taken back by the British.

### **Implementation of the August Offer**

The offer was not withdrawn and was kept on the table, to be implemented when it got maximum support. Expansion of Viceroy's Executive Council and the formation of a War Advisory Council was postponed by Linlithgow because according to him, the major political parties were not ready to take advantage of the opportunity offered to them. However, he proceeded in 1941 without their help. In 1939 the Executive Council had 7 members (4 British and 3 Indian). It was expanded to include 12 members (4 British and 8 Indian), with the non official members being picked by the Viceroy on their personal merits instead of being nominees of political parties. He also set up the National Defence Council with 30 members to be chosen by the Viceroy to represent British India and the princely states.

Out of the 8 Muslims who agreed to serve on the National Defence Council, 5 belonged to the League. These included Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, Fazlul Haq and Saadullah – Premiers of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam respectively – and the Nawab of Chhatari and Begum Shah Nawaz. Since they had accepted Viceroy's invitation without consulting the League, they were ordered by Jinnah to resign. The three Premiers complied while the Nawab of Chhatari had already resigned due to his appointment as the President of the Hyderabad Executive Council. Begum Shah Nawaz refused to resign and was thus expelled from League for 5 years. Sir Sultan Ahmad faced the same punishment for joining the Executive Council. This definitely cleared up any doubts regarding Jinnah's political ascendancy in Muslim India.

### **Liberal Party Proposal**

#### **Policy of the Liberals**

National Liberation Federation was a party of those Liberals that formed a small minority in public life as well as in the legislatures. But it included some men of great experience and capabilities like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Chimanlal H. Setalved and Sir Srinavasa Sastri. In the annual session of December 1940 at Calcutta the Liberals laid down their principle of policy, which they thought could show a way out of the political impasse. The main points were:

1. The war effort should be supported.
2. Britain should immediately declare that India would be a Dominion within two years after the war.
3. The Central Government should be reconstituted.
4. Partition should be ruled out.
5. Communal electorates should be eliminated gradually.
6. Congress civil disobedience movement should be called off as it was not effective.

#### **The Proposals and Their Flaws**

The Liberals called a 'non-party conference' in March 1941. The Conference was dominated by the Hindu Mahasabha. A resolution was moved at this conference based on the principles mentioned above. In June 1941 the Council of the National Liberal Foundation met at Poona and criticized the British Government for not accepting their suggestions and also criticized the Secretary of State for not even considering the proposals on the grounds that they were not backed by the League. They criticized the partition of India and called upon all Indians to resist it.

There were some major flaws in the proposals of the Liberals. Firstly it wasn't a 'non-party conference'. It's true that both the Congress and Muslim League were absent but eight distinct groups including Hindu Mahasabha, Congress Nationalist Party, Hindu League, Liberal Federation, the Sikhs, the Indian Christians, the Parsis and the scheduled castes, attended it. Secondly they criticized the partition of India and rejected it altogether. If the conference was called to sort out a solution of the political problems then condemning the partition of India and not saying a word about the attitude and policies of the Congress showed the biased thinking. Lastly the conference demanded a 'National Government' with the Viceroy as the mere constitutional head, was a ridiculous demand and completely against the Act of 1935. Although the conference was dominated by Hindu Mahasabha, yet the Mahasabhis issued a statement to clarify that they were not committed to the proposals.

### **Reaction to the Proposals**

The Muslim reaction to the Liberal Party's proposals was quite the same as to the Congress demand for immediate independence. Jinnah pointed out that the recommendations of the Liberals met the demand of Congress at Poona for a 'national government' at the center. However, the acceptance of this demand would be complete cancellation of the British Government's declaration of 8 August 1940. On 22 April 1941 the Secretary of State for India stated that the Liberal Party proposals were not meant for a modification of the prevailing form of government but demanded a complete replacement of it by an entirely different type of government. Obviously it was not advisable in the wake of the war. Moreover, it could create internal constitutional problems both in relation to the provinces and the Princely states. He advised Sapru that he should concentrate on bringing about an agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League by using all his political wisdom. At this Gandhi became annoyed and wrote that the Secretary of State had insulted Indian intelligence by saying that the freedom was being delayed due to the disunity in India. He said that once the British would leave India the political problems would be solved easily. In other words he wanted to say that if the British withdrew the Hindus would be sufficiently powerful to bring the minorities especially the Muslims to their senses.

## **Cripps Mission**

### **Background**

After the German set-backs in the Battle of Britain and on the Russian front, the threat to India from the West had receded. But on the East side, rapid Japanese advances in 1941-42 had made the situation more dangerous and unstable than ever. Rangoon fell in March 1942 while Japanese bombs fell on Indian soil in April 1942 which actually happened during Cripps' visit. Madras and Calcutta were also in a state of panic after the capture of Andaman Islands. Apart from the Japanese threat, British were also under pressure due to USA and China's demands to secure Indian help against Japan by breaking the political deadlock.

Lord Linlithgow was not in favor of any political concessions and wanted the British to sit tight on the August Offer and wait. He even wrote to L. S. Amery, the Secretary of State for India to tell him of his opinions. But in Churchill's War Cabinet, the ministers belonging to the Labor Party were of the opinion that to mark time was equivalent to lose India. Among these ministers were Attlee and Cripps and they proposed that Indian good will should be won through generous political concessions.

### **Cripps' Visit to India**

Sir Stafford Cripps arrived at Delhi on 23 March 1942 on a mission on behalf of the British government. He brought along with him constitutional proposals which were announced publicly on 29 March and published the next day. Main features of these proposals were:

1. After the cessation of WW2, India would be given a Dominion Status, comprising as a federation of the British India and the Indian states, under the British Commonwealth as equal to all other Dominions.

2. After the cessation of WW2, immediate steps shall be taken to set up an elected body for the task of framing a new constitution for India. Provisions shall be made for the protection of minorities in the constitution.
3. The constitution making body shall be comprised in the following manner unless the leaders of Indian opinion of the principal communities could agree on some other scheme:
  - a. Provincial elections shall be necessary when the WW2 ends.
  - b. Lower House members of all Provincial Assemblies shall proceed as a single electoral body for the election of a constitution making body according to proportionate representation.
  - c. The constitution making body shall be in numbers about 1/10 of the number of the electoral college.
  - d. Indian states shall be invited to appoint members to this constitution making body in proportion to their population and these members shall have the same powers as the Indian members.
4. Any province not willing to accede to the new constitution shall have the right to retain its present constitutional status with provision for its subsequent accession if it so decides. These non acceding provinces shall have the same status as that of the Indian Union.
5. During the WW2 and until the new constitution can be framed, the defence of India shall remain in the hands of the British government with the cooperation of the Indian people.

It was further elaborated that the proposals were to be accepted or rejected as a whole without any amendments and that they would be implemented only if Congress and League, both accepted them unanimously.

### Indian Reaction

Gandhi rejected the proposals by calling them a 'post dated cheque on a failing bank'. Reaction of the Congress was no surprise for any one. They rejected the proposal on several grounds. Firstly, Congress was unwilling to give offence to the Japanese due to the wide spread perception that Japan would win the war, thereby providing India with a chance to freedom. Secondly, the non accession clause was seen as a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity. Thirdly, Congress interpreted the last clause as an attempt to keep India's defence under British control so that India could supply a large army whenever the need arose. Lastly, Congress reminded the British that they had made similar promises during WW1, and had gone back on them when the war ended. As a result, Congress demanded that a constitution making body be made immediately with powers to frame the constitution without any British intervention and without any room for non accession for any province/community. The Hindu Mahasabha also rejected due to the non accession clause.

Muslims were surprised that the clause for non accession had been included in the proposals. Nevertheless, the proposals did not contain the principle of Pakistan as resolved in the Lahore Resolution. Furthermore, the constitution making assembly if made according to the suggestions mentioned in the proposal would still mean that the body would be predominantly Hindu, even if elections were held under separate electorates. Jinnah had stated this well before Cripps' visit and had further said that such a body would be a second and larger version of Congress and therefore, unacceptable to the Muslims.

The Untouchables too were unwilling to accept the proposals because of the same reason – it would place them under an unmitigated system of Hindu rule. The Sikhs were unwilling to accept any proposal without the boundary lines of the Punjab being redrawn such that the Sikhs could have a decisive voice as a large balancing party b/w the Hindus and the Muslims.

### Importance of Cripps Mission

As it turned out, Congress came out to be the biggest loser by rejecting the proposals. It could have embraced the proposals and offered generous concessions to other communities. The outcome might have been the same and Cripps mission might still have been abortive, but Congress might have won the sympathies of the minorities. What Congress leaders failed to realize was that the British had already recognized India's partition in

principle and it was improbable that they would go back. Had Congress agreed, they might still have wielded the power to decide India's future. But by rejection, the opportunity cost for them was what they been fighting for – Indian unity.

Jinnah had clearly stated that the recognition given to the principle of partition was very much appreciated by the Indian Muslims and he also mentioned that the proposals had been rejected because they did not concede Pakistan unequivocally and only in principle. But the fact was that AIML came out of the exercise well in many ways. Just two years after the passing of Lahore Resolution, it had glimpsed the possibility of attaining its goal. Having to use the Muslims as a counter-piece to the embittered Congress, the British looked upon the Muslims even more benignly than before. And by soon staging a revolt and courting internment, Gandhi and his minions left the field clear for Jinnah to boost the already growing strength of the Pakistan Movement.

The irony is that had the parties, especially Congress embraced the principle of division along with some concessions to the minorities, the realization of division might have been averted. But by rejecting it in principle, they had ensured its realization in practice. And then Congress made one blunder after another by launching its quit India movement.

## **Quit India Movement**

### **Background**

After the failure of Cripps Mission, Gandhi along with the Congress leaders turned back to their usual blackmail. Gandhi openly expressed his opposition to the introduction of foreign soldiers (American or Chinese) in India to defend it against Japan. Gandhi even suggested that the Indians should resist the Japanese through non violent non cooperation. Nehru and the like however were unhappy because they understood that Japanese bombers could not be defeated through such unrealistic methods. But Gandhi was of the opinion that the British presence in India was the only incentive Japanese had for attacking India. In his opinion, India would be better prepared to deal with the Japanese without the British presence. It had to be pointed out for Gandhi (the idiot as always) that not consenting to the presence of Allied troops was equivalent to hand over India and China to Japan and ensure the defeat of the Allied powers. But even then, he was adamant that such consent would be given by Congress only when India was free. Pointing out to him that a mass movement for freedom without a settlement with the Muslims first would be futile and an India that emerged independent under such circumstances would be under constant threat from Japan externally and communal instability internally.

### **The Movement**

Congress stubbornness reached its peak when on 8 August 1942, despite the discontent and apprehensions of all other communities and parties within India and internationally, the Quit India Resolution was passed. The demand was to declare India immediately as an independent country. Then a provisional government would be formed with the cooperation of the major parties whose primary duty would be defence of India and resistance against aggression. The provisional government would also form a constituent assembly for preparing the Constitution for the federation in which the units would enjoy largest measure of autonomy. And as the mastermind of these demands was Gandhi (others merely wrote the demands or authored the resolution), it was impossible for the resolution to be complete without any blackmail, which was again due to Gandhi, a non violent non cooperation movement. Gandhi had even coined a mantra which the people involved in the movement chanted.

On August 9 all Congress leaders were arrested and Congress was declared an unlawful body all over India. As a result violence broke out in all Hindu majority provinces. Railway stations were burnt, telegraph wires were cut, post offices were looted and hundreds of people were killed. Industries also shut down due to the violence and many government officials were killed including magistrates and policemen. However, the government dealt with all violent occurrences swiftly and strictly and by the end of the year, the rebellion was virtually subdued.



When all else failed, Gandhi reverted to fast for 21 days but this ordeal did not impress Linlithgow who called it was it really was – blackmail. But this did not stop Gandhi from acting on his stupid philosophy. But the whole ordeal was a waste of energy as it had no result. Linlithgow had made sure that Gandhi was given enough glucose during the whole episode. Linlithgow was congratulated by the British for his successful deflation of Gandhi.

### **Reasons for its Failure**

The fact was that Gandhi had formulated no plan whatsoever, and although he had told the people to refrain from violence, he had not mentioned even once what instead of violence they were supposed to do when resisted by armed police forces. The imprisonment of Congress leaders at the beginning of the movement due to the prompt action of the government had deprived the movement of any recognizable leadership. Furthermore, no other party responded to Congress' call for rebellion. Lack of organization, leadership and support ensured the movements quick failure.

It is interesting to note that not even all the Hindus were in favor of this movement which is evident from Hindu Mahasabha and the Untouchables boycotting the movement and calling it illegal. We can then safely call this movement an attempt at establishing an autocratic regime in India.

### **Criticism of the Movement**

The Muslims became all the more certain that this movement was directed not only at coercing the British Government to hand over power to the Hindus without considering the demands of the Muslims and other minorities, but also at forcing the Muslims to submit and surrender to Congress terms. AIML advised the Muslims to remain aloof from the movement completely. Jinnah termed the 'Quit India' movement as tantamount to 'forcing their demands at the point of bayonet' and 'internecine civil war'. But the League warned not only the Muslims but also the Congress by saying that if they tried to reach out any Muslim for involvement in the movement, the Muslims would have the right to use any measures necessary to resist them. The warning was heeded and Muslims were not approached by Congress and the whole ordeal was carried out without Hindu-Muslim riots.

In Britain the movement was condemned except for some leftist circles. The European and American press also criticized the 'Quit India' movement and called it an attempt at a seizure of power by an autocratic minority (Congress).

## **Gandhi Jinnah Talks**

### **Background**

Lord Wavell had replaced Linlithgow as the Viceroy of India in 1943. He had been sent to India with a clear goal. He was to try his best to advance the political situation in India but not at the cost of the war effort. In short, he was not to offend any party that could impede the war effort against Japan. Gandhi's failure to convince the British to accept his demands and Rajgopalacharia's efforts gave him reasons to get in touch with the League to discuss seriously the Hindu-Muslim problem, which was now effectively, the Hindustan-Pakistan problem.

### **Gandhi-Wavell Correspondence**

In February 1944 Gandhi got in touch with Wavell from prison. The two indulged in a long debate about the Quit India movement, with Wavell asking for guarantees that Congress would not try to gain political advantage using measures similar to the ones they had used before due to their misplaced belief that Britain would be unable to defend India. Gandhi on the other hand first adopted the usual stubborn attitude, trying to defend the actions taken by Congress and himself. He had to be released due to his worsening health conditions but despite his release, the government did not lift the restrictions placed on Gandhi. After getting better, Gandhi said that the Viceroy should allow him to get in touch with the Congress Working Committee, but Wavell asked Gandhi to reveal his concrete plan first. Gandhi's plan was however rejected by the British cabinet. Gandhi was then left with two options – either wait for the British to come up with a solution or come to an agreement with the League and present combined demands to the British.

### **C. R. Formula**

Although Gandhi and Jinnah did not meet face to face till September 1944, the wheels were set in motion by Chakravarti Rajgopalacharia. He resigned from Congress in July 1942 so that he could freely propagate his view that Congress should seek conciliation with AIML on the basis of Pakistan. In March 1943, Rajaji visited Gandhi in jail and got his approval for his own scheme of partition. He even tried to negotiate with Jinnah on behalf of Gandhi on the basis of his formula. Although Jinnah was himself opposed to the formula, he agreed to present it before the Muslim League Working Committee. The main features of the proposal were:

1. AIML was to cooperate with Congress for independence and for the formation of the provisional interim government for the transition period.
2. A commission will be set up after the war to demarcate the boundaries for Muslim majority areas.
3. Plebiscite of all inhabitants will be held in these areas based on adult suffrage.
4. Indian political parties will have the right to express their opinions on partition before the plebiscite.
5. In the event of separation, mutual agreement will be made to safeguard essential matters such as defence, communications and the like.
6. The transfer of population if any will be on a voluntary basis.
7. The terms will be binding only in the case of complete transfer of power by the British.

A single glance at the CR formula is enough to predict the response of the ML working committee. Jinnah himself called the formula a parody and negation of the Lahore Resolution. Effectively, the scheme was a half promise of a mutilated and non sovereign Pakistan. Muslims knew that British leaving India without partition meant perpetual Hindu domination and exploitation of the Muslims who would have no way to secure a separate homeland for themselves. Further points of objection were discussed in Gandhi-Jinnah talks.

### **Negotiations at Bombay**

During his correspondence with Wavell, Gandhi had written to Jinnah on 17 July, asking him for a meeting, at a place of Jinnah's choice. Jinnah at that time was in Kashmir and responded that he would be willing to meet after his return, at his Bombay residence. The negotiations took place via correspondence and directly from 9 September to 27 September but there could be no agreement.

Jinnah complained that Gandhi's claim that he had come to discuss the Hindu-Muslim question in his individual capacity and not as a representative of any party/community, raised great difficulty. He further said that unless Gandhi himself came to terms with the reality that he was the representative of Hindus, it would be difficult for Jinnah to argue with him on any point.

Gandhi first questioned the right of Muslims of India to call themselves a separate nation, for Gandhi viewed Indian Muslims as a body of converts whose descendants claimed to be a nation apart from the parent stock. Jinnah replied to Gandhi that Indian Muslims shared nothing with the Hindus for they had different traditions, moral codes, history, culture, and philosophies. They had a distinctive outlook on life and of life. He said that they were two nations by any definition or test of a nation.

Then came the differences of the two leaders regarding the boundaries of Pakistan. Gandhi understood Pakistan as comprising of Balochistan, Sind, NWFP and parts of Punjab, Bengal and Assam where Muslims were in majority. Jinnah on the other hand wanted the two zones of Pakistan to comprise of the 6 provinces as a whole and according to him, such a proposal accounted to a maiming and mutilation of the provinces, beyond redemption.

Another point of difference was that in the plebiscite proposed in Muslim majority provinces, Gandhi wanted people of all communities to participate on the basis of adult suffrage, while Jinnah wanted only the Muslims to participate in it because they claimed to be a separate nation, not a separate territorial unit.

But the immediate reasons for the failure of talks were different. Gandhi wanted the British to leave India first while Jinnah saw this move as an effort to deal a death blow to the idea of Pakistan. Furthermore, in case of separation, Gandhi wanted defence, foreign affairs and matters of the like to be of common interest to both nations.

### Results of the Talks

Gandhi had been adamant on C. R. formula which was nothing but a half promise of a mutilated and non sovereign Pakistan. It was evident that Gandhi had no understanding of the two nation theory and thus failed to appreciate the fact that Lahore Resolution and C. R. formula were nothing alike.

But the talks were extremely significant for AIML and Jinnah. Firstly, Gandhi who was effectively the leader of Congress for all practical purposes, had offered to discuss the question of Pakistan seriously – a matter which up till now, Congress had not been ready to even listen to. Secondly, the fact that Gandhi had approached Jinnah for negotiations left no doubt in anyone's mind that he had in his mind accepted the fact that League was the representative body of Muslims and Jinnah was League personified.

Jinnah's own importance in Indian politics went several notches up. And he was able to use it wisely to challenge the leadership of provincial leaders. One such leader was Sir Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana of the Unionist Party of Punjab.

### Jinnah-Khizar Rift

Khizar succeeded Sikandar as the head of the Unionist Ministry of Punjab in 1942. In October 1937, Sikandar had advised his party's Muslim members to become members of Muslim League. But the fact was that the name of the ministry still remained Unionist Ministry and Jinnah knew it very well that unless League did not dominate Punjab politics actually and in name, the alliance would bear no fruits. By 1944, Jinnah's popularity and his political ascendancy allowed him to challenge the Unionist leader, Khizar Hayat Khan.

In April 1944, Jinnah told Khizar clearly that he could no longer allow people to hold dual membership and that the name of the party must be changed from 'Unionist Party' to 'Muslim League Coalition Party'. But Khizar rejected this proposal and said that he was entitled to continue with the dual membership. As a result, he was expelled from the League. In the long run, this rift with Jinnah cost him dearly as his party members began to desert him increasingly due to Jinnah's growing dominance in Muslim politics with episodes such as Gandhi-Jinnah talks and Simla Conference.

## **Sapru Proposals**

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was probably the only non-Muslim leader willing to lend support to the Muslim cause. After the suspension of Gandhi-Jinnah talks, he wrote a letter to Gandhi and suggested to hold another session of the Conference. Later on he withdrew the suggestion and proposed that Gandhi should call a National Convention but he declined the proposal. Finally Sapru decided that the Standing Committee of the Non-Party Conference should appoint a committee that would examine and give a reasonable solution of the political problems of the country. The main idea was to understand the point of view of each party by establishing contacts with the leading leaders, so that the Committee could recommend a solution based on the views of all the parties. Although Gandhi accepted it, he said that the Committee should not comprise any representative of Congress, Muslim league, Hindu Mahasabha or any recognized party of the country.

On 19 November 1944 the Standing Committee met in New Delhi and resolved that the appointed Committee would try to hold talks with the leaders of all the parties and would present a solution within two months to the Standing Committee of the Non-Party Conference. Moreover it would take all necessary steps to get that solution accepted by all the concerned parties. Sapru wanted to select those persons for the Committee who were neither politically bound nor had publicly expressed their views about the communal problem. So he hoped that the Committee should consist of two former judges of the High Court and possibly one or two Englishmen. The Standing Committee met at Allahabad on 3 December and named the members of the 'Conciliation Committee'. Sapru wrote to Jinnah on 10 December explaining the cause of the Conciliation Committee and asked him to meet the Committee. But Jinnah in his reply on 14 December regretted that he could recognize neither the Non-Party Conference and its Standing Committee nor the Conciliation Committee and its purpose to deal with the present political situation.

However, the proposals of the Conciliation Committee were published on 8 April 1945. In its final session at Delhi the Committee unanimously passed fifteen resolutions dealing with future constitution of India. The main proposals were:

1. Division of India would be opposed in any form or shape.
2. The constituent assembly would consist of 160 members for drafting the future Constitution of India.
3. Native states would be allowed to join the proposed Union of India as units.
4. List of fundamental rights will be incorporated in the future Constitution.
5. No province of British India may be allowed not to accede to the Union, nor may any unit whether a province or a state, which has acceded, be entitled to secede from the Union.
6. An independent 'minority commission' would be established to safeguard the rights and interests of the minorities.
7. Separate electorates would be abolished, and the constitution-making body, the central legislature and the central executive will be constituted on the basis of parity between the Hindus (other than scheduled castes) and the Muslims.

The report of the Committee also recommended that if the proposals were unacceptable to the various communities and parties, then the British Government should set up an interim government and proceed to establish Constituent Assembly for drafting the new Constitution on the basis of these proposals. The new constitution will be implemented by the parliament as soon as possible.

The 'Sapru Proposals' reflected the Congress mind and were quite unrealistic. In 1942 the British Government had already accepted the principle underlying the plan of Pakistan. Moreover it had carried a provision according to which provinces were permitted to stay out of the Indian Union. Similarly, the issue of separate electorates had been placed beyond controversy for many years. But the 'Conciliation Committee' had again touched on these issues prone to make the situation more complicated for the Muslim League. In short the 'Sapru Proposals' were intended to substantiate the Congress stand and not to seek a solution of the problems of the Muslim minority.

## **Desai-Liaquat Pact**

In the year 1945, prevailed a rumor that an alliance had taken place between the Congress and the Muslim League. Particularly Bhulabhai Desai, the leader of the Congress parliamentary party and Liaquat Ali Khan, the de facto leader of the Muslim League assembly party were said to be working in close harmony. Desai met Sir Evan Jenkins, private secretary to the Viceroy on 13 January and on 20 January a meeting was held between Desai and Viceroy. The terms of what later came to be known as Desai-Liaquat Pact were conveyed to the Viceroy in this meeting. Desai claimed that Gandhi had supported these terms and Jinnah was also aware of his negotiations with Liaquat Ali Khan and had approved the agreement between them.

Main terms of the pact were:

1. Congress and League had agreed to form an interim government in the Center. The composition of such a government would be on the following lines:
  - a. An equal number of people nominated by the Congress and the League. The nominees need not be the members of the Central Legislature.
  - b. Representatives of the minorities especially the Scheduled Castes and the Sikhs.
  - c. The Commander-in-Chief.
2. The Government would function within the framework of the existing Government of India Act. Moreover, in case such Government is formed, the first step of the Congress and League would be to release the members of the Congress Working Committee.

For the implementation of these recommendations some steps were also suggested:

1. If the Viceroy agrees to the suggestions for an interim government in the Center in accordance with the agreement between the Congress and the League, then he might invite Jinnah and Desai, jointly or separately.
2. After they come to an understanding, they would declare that they were prepared to join the Government.
3. Then there would be withdrawal of section 93 in the provinces and form provisional governments on the lines of a coalition.

The Viceroy forwarded these proposals to the Secretary of State for India with the opinion that now they could move forward in the political and constitutional spheres. But the British Government raised some important questions such as what was the guarantee that the interim government would support the war? Would the Congress support Desai? What about the minorities, the non-Congress Hindus and the non-Muslim Leaguers? Was not the pact aimed at depriving the Governor General of his power to select the members of the Council? Jinnah categorically issued a statement disclaiming any knowledge about the pact before the Viceroy could plan to invite him and Desai for seeking answers to the queries raised by the British Government. On the other hand it was amazing that Desai kept on insisting that the pact was valid and that it held the support of both Jinnah and Gandhi. For that matter the Viceroy asked Sir John Colville, the Governor of Bombay to look into the matter and meet Jinnah on his behalf. When Colville met him, he observed that Jinnah knew nothing of Desai-Liaquat Pact and that the pact was without the authority of Muslim League. This was the finale of the pact and apparently there was nothing to go ahead.

But the so-called Desai-Liaquat Pact was not an utter failure because of the fact that it paved the way for the Simla Conference. Moreover, once again it made clear to the Congress that Muslim League was the only party, which could represent the Muslims of India.

## **Wavell Plan and Simla Conference**



## Background

By the end of 1944, it was evident that the Allies would win the war and Lord Wavell, who understood the Indian situation quite well, felt that the time had come for the British to make serious efforts to resolve the political deadlock in India. The Viceroy sent his proposals to L. S. Amery, the Secretary of State and to Churchill but it was not till January 1945 that Wavell was given the green signal to visit England in March. During his stay there from March to June, he fought tooth and nail to get his proposals approved.

## Wavell Plan

The proposals were publicly disclosed on 14 June 1945 by Wavell via a broadcast at New Delhi and on the same day Amery announced them in the House of Commons. The main features were as follows:

1. Expansion of the Viceroy's executive council by representation of Indian political parties.
2. Caste Hindu and Muslim parity in the council.
3. Representation of other Indian minorities in the council.
4. All members except the Viceroy and the Commander in Chief shall be Indians.
5. Defence of India shall be in British hands until the transfer of power.
6. Formation of the interim government would in no way prejudice the final constitutional settlement.

It was made clear that the proposals were in no way meant for the purpose of a constitutional settlement but for settling other matters of great importance such as the communal matter and the like. The purpose was to make it easier for the parties to agree on a new constitution. An important announcement was made at the end in which he extended an invitation to Indian leaders for a conference at Simla on 25 June. The purpose of the conference was to discuss matters regarding formation of the Executive Council.

## Simla Conference

Congress nominated Abul Kalam Azad as its representative (a Muslim to show that ML was not the sole representative of Muslims). And after his usual protestation that he did not represent any institution or party, Gandhi also agreed to come to Simla. For ML, the question of representation had never been hard in the presence of a leader like Jinnah. On 24 June, the Viceroy met the three of them separately. Azad agreed to the Hindu-Muslim parity in the Executive Council but said that he would not compromise on the method of selection and that Congress must have a say in the appointment of non Hindu members especially the Muslims, at least one of whom must be non Leaguer. Gandhi reiterated that he would not say anything during the course of the conference and gave his blessings. He stayed at Simla for the duration of the conference though. Jinnah told the Viceroy clearly that League was the only representative of Muslims, the proof of which he said were the by elections of the past two years (ML won all of them) and therefore Congress must not be allowed to nominate a Muslim member. In reply to Jinnah's demands, the Viceroy said that he also had in mind a nomination by the Unionist Party of Punjab. Jinnah told him that the Unionist Party had betrayed the Muslim interests.

However, the conference officially began on 25 June after a speech by Wavell. However, the main point of discussion/conflict remained League's demand to nominate all Muslim members on the Executive Council. Congress representatives kept on asking the Viceroy why political progress of all of India was being impeded in order to please a single party. The Viceroy in turn reminded them of the several times the same had happened due to Congress' stubbornness.

By 29 June it was evident that the involved parties would not be able to agree on a single list of nominees to the Executive Council of the Viceroy. Therefore, the conference was adjourned to 14 July so that all the parties could submit their own lists. All parties except the ML drew and submitted their lists. The Viceroy too had come up with his own list according to which there were 16 members in total divided into 5 Muslims (4 nominated by ML and one by Khizar Hayat Khan of Unionist Party), 5 Hindus (2 non Congress), 1 Sikh, 2 Scheduled Castes and 1 Indian Christian (apart from the Viceroy and the Commander in Chief).

Jinnah had previously met the Viceroy on 27 June and had told him that his proposal was that there should be a total of 14 members in the council, divided into 5 Muslims, 5 Hindus, 1 Sikh and 1 Scheduled Caste (apart from the Viceroy and the Commander in Chief), with all the Muslims being nominated by ML. According to Jinnah, this was the only scheme in which the Muslims would not be out voted on every issue (according to 2/3 majority rule). After seeing Jinnah on 11 July, Viceroy concluded that the conference had failed as he could not accede to Jinnah's demands. But the formal announcement was made when the conference met again on 14 July.

## Conclusion

When announcing the failure of the conference, Wavell took all the blame himself because according to him, the success would have also been attributed to him. But generally in India and England, the blame fell largely on Jinnah. People at that time did not understand why Jinnah had not flinched from his position despite being under immense pressure throughout the conference. The reasons given by Jinnah were realized only after the subsequent general and provincial elections.

Jinnah had given several reasons for his demands during the conference. Firstly, ML had won every by election in the preceding two years. Secondly, Congress represented only a handful of Muslims and only those few who were not willing for Pakistan. Thirdly, the acceptance of the proposals at Simla conference would have been equivalent to shelving of the scheme for Pakistan – something for which an overwhelming majority of the Muslims of India had been struggling for ever since Lahore Resolution.

Although the conference failed, it made one thing clear to everyone – without Jinnah's acceptance, any future scheme would be doomed to a similar fate. It showed Jinnah's importance not only in Muslim politics but in overall Indian politics. And to complicate matters further, Tara Singh, the Sikh leader announced upon the failure of the conference that they would accept Pakistan only if Muslims agreed to a separate Sikh state.

## 1945-46 Elections

### Background

In 1945, two developments changed and advanced the political situation in India. Firstly, the 1945 election results in England saw Labor Party come into power. Labor Party was known for its sympathy towards Indians and their cause and thus it was expected that political advancement of India would be quick, which made Congress happy and increased League's worries. Secondly, August 1945 saw the end of WW2 in horror as US dropped two atomic bombs (Little Boy and Fat Man) on Japan, decimating their cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August respectively. Finally Japan surrendered on 15 August.

However, it meant that now the British could concentrate on the Indian problem. For so long, the efforts made by the British to resolve the problems had been hindered by the unproven assertions of different parties – League claimed to be the only party representative of the Indian Muslims (based on by elections and stats pertaining to party memberships) while Congress boasted to be the sole representative of all Indians. The time had now come to establish the truth of their claims. And what could prove the claims of the parties better than votes?

On 21 August Wavell announced that general and provincial elections would be held in the coming winter. He then went to England and on his return, he made a statement on behalf of HMG. Main features were:

1. Holding of elections was confirmed.
2. Setting up of a constitution making body after the elections was proposed.
3. Setting up of an Executive Council representative of main political parties after the elections was proposed.

League and Congress both opposed the statement. League made it clear that any settlement made on any other basis than that of Pakistan would not be accepted. Congress on the other hand said that the statement was vague and did not mention independence at all. But since there was nothing they could do except prove their claims or disprove the other party's claims via elections, they started preparing for them.

### League's Campaign

League's manifesto was very simple and can be summarized in two sentences: the Muslims of India are a nation; Pakistan is the only sensible solution of the Indian problem. In short League was telling the Indian Muslims that if they wanted Pakistan, they should vote for Muslim League. Jinnah himself toured across the length and breadth of India and in a mere 24 weeks, he 'addressed thousands and talked to hundreds'. Despite his hectic campaign, the Great Leader never slackened his pace and never lost his enthusiasm and vigor.

But the League campaign can't be explained completely without mentioning the role of students, the pro-League ulemas, Muslim journalists and businessmen. The students, organized under the All India Muslim Students Federation (AIMSF) had been the most formidable pressure group in league's favor since 1937. Student volunteers from Aligarh, Dhaka and the Islamia Colleges at Calcutta, Allahabad, Lahore and Peshawar played a pivotal role and students from colleges and universities elsewhere also fanned out in thousands, campaigning for the League. Moreover the role of students in convincing Muslims related to agrarian economy of India that League only could deliver them to safety from their landlords was unmatched.

Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Usmani mobilized the ulemas over night and in response to the pro Congress Jamiat Ulema e Hind, the pro League Jamiat Ulema e Islam was formed. Maulan Shabbir, its patron, organized conferences all over India to argue for the case of Pakistan cogently and convincingly. He also crossed swords with the Jamiat and Ahrar stalwarts on their home ground. Furthermore, the ulemas were able to convince the Muslim masses that Pakistan would be their homeland where the Indian Muslims would be able to practice their religion free from the domination of Hindu rule.

Though meager in number, resources and circulation and poorly organized, the Muslim newspapers yet made an extremely significant contribution in countering the malicious Congress propaganda and in preparing Muslim opinion. Equally crucial was the role of the Muslim businessmen and entrepreneur class. They responded heartily to Jinnah's call for financial help and helped the League to fight the elections. What, however, was striking were the thousands of contributions in one, two, and three figures, hundreds of them being less than one rupee, received by Jinnah, underlining the low-income status of the contributors. While the big contributions had indicated that the League had turned, or was at the threshold of being transformed, into a bourgeoisie organization turning its back on its feudal character, the small donations denoted the measure of social depth the League had acquired since Jinnah took upon himself the task of mobilizing the ninety million Muslims under the League's canopy.

### Congress' Campaign

As expected, Congress' campaign was the antithesis to that of League's campaign. Their manifesto too can be given in two lines: Congress represents all of India; Congress stands for a united India. Congress leaders delivered violent speeches and this time even Gandhi's philosophy of non violence was nowhere to be found in their speeches. The extent to which Congress was willing to torpedo the Muslim demand of Pakistan was evident from the fact that the Viceroy had to meet Gandhi and tell him that he must take steps to ensure that the speeches did not incite violence which was exactly what had happened till then.

Congress gave its full support to the Unionist Party, Krishak Paroja Samiti, Jamiat Ulema e Hind, Shia Conference, Khudai Khidmatgars, the Ahrars and virtually everyone else who was against League, though not necessarily against Pakistan (congress knew that without League, there would be no Pakistan). Moreover, while League faced extreme financial problems and its budget fell short of the requirements in almost all areas, Congress' and Unionists' overflowing election chests ensured that they faced no shortage of money to sabotage the League

and spread an anti League sentiment. The futility of their attempts was realized only when the election results were announced.

### General Elections Results

Congress	57
Muslim League	30
Independents	5
Akali Sikhs	2
Europeans	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>

Elections for the Central Assembly were held in December 1945 and the results showed how finely the assembly was divided b/w the two main parties. League won every Muslim seat with 86.6% of the total Muslim votes cast in its favor. On the other hand, Congress secured an almost equally spectacular result in non Muslim constituencies with 91.3% of the total 'general' votes. On 6 January 1946, Congress issued a bulletin in which it claimed to be the biggest, strongest and most representative party of India. The claim, based on Congress being able to secure just a little over half of the seats was obviously farfetched.

### Provincial Elections Results

Provincial elections were held in early 1946 and once again they were swept by the two main parties in their respective constituencies. League secured 428 out of the possible 492 Muslim seats while Congress secured a total of 930 seats, winning an absolute majority in eight provinces.

Congress had clear majorities in Bombay, Madras, UP, CP, Bihar and Orissa and thus formed ministries there. Congress offered to cooperate with the League but on its own terms, and thus the offer was turned down. In Assam, Congress had a clear majority and in the cabinet, included a Nationalist Muslim. ML was offered two seats in the cabinet but refused the offer due to the presence of a Nationalist Muslim (a non Leaguer Muslim) in the ministry. NWFP was a Muslim majority province but Congress got a majority there as well because of Khan Sahib (he and his brother Abdul Ghaffar Khan had worked to develop a large following of Congress in NWFP since 1929). There, the ministry was formed under Khan Sahib.

In Punjab, ML secured 75 out of 86 Muslim seats. 4 out of the initially 20 Unionists turned to ML raising the strength to 79 and 6 left for independent and other benches, reducing the Unionist seats to 10. Due to the Communal Award, ML was unable to form a ministry on its own. Congress and Akali Sikhs joined hands and presented League with unacceptable demands to form a coalition. Next, an attempt at a League-Sikh coalition also failed due to the Sikh demand of a separate Sikh State (since Simla conference). Finally, a Congress-Sikh-Unionists coalition was formed with Khizar Hayat Khan as the Premier. This coalition calls for special comments. It showed the extents to which Congress was willing to compromise with others to create problems for League (and by extension the Muslims). Even though the Unionists were a small lot who were backwards and old fashioned, Congress now found them to be progressive and labeled them so. Congress which was not even faithful to its own creed, could not in any way be expected to be faithful to any other community.

In Sind, League won 27 seats and Congress won 21 seats. After political maneuvering, both formed separate coalitions each with 28 seats. No agreement could be reached and elections were held again in December 1946, in which League won a clear majority.

The Bengal assembly was a house of 250 seats out of which 119 were Muslim seats. ML was able to capture 113 (out of 119) and H.S. Suharwardy led the coalition with independents after a failed attempt to negotiate with the Congress.

### Legislator's Convention

Muslim League celebrations reached their climax from 7 to 9 April 1946, the period during which all people elected on a ML ticket were gathered at the Anglo-Arabic College at Delhi. First, a speech was delivered by Jinnah to remind the Muslims in the midst of their celebrations that although they had won the battle, the war was yet to be fought. He reminded them that their victory in elections had merely provided them the ground from which they could fight for Pakistan. He reminded them why they were fighting for Pakistan and said that

the opposition may obstruct them but could never prevent them from reaching their goal. He further said that they may delay the Muslims for a while but with hope, courage and faith, the Muslims would win victorious. H.S. Suharwardy moved the resolution stating the exact demand for separation and Pakistan and the provinces it would comprise of. Finally, all of those present read and signed the pledge for Pakistan. The crux of the pledge was that they would work hard with all their heart and will for the cause of Pakistan.

### **Analysis and Reasons for League's Victory**

Basically, the elections were a test for League. Because if League could prove its claim of Muslim representation, it would mean that Pakistan was a reality while if it failed, it would mean that the idea of Pakistan would be shelved for good. Thus League's victory was Pakistan's victory. And it is ironic that the main reason for League's victory was its agenda of Pakistan which was able to attract the Muslim masses which had for long kept themselves aloof from the League due to its feudal nature. It was the demand/promise of Pakistan which became synonymous with the League name and Jinnah, and that is why League was able to win such support. Jinnah's political ascendancy had made the League a much more disciplined and organized party than it was during the 1937 elections, the result and consequences of which had played an important role in making the Muslims realize the importance of freedom from both the British and the Hindus. Muslim masses were convinced that League only could deliver the cherished dream of Pakistan which had become the voice of Muslims in the past few years. The role played by different sections of the Muslim community such as the ulemas, students, press and businessmen was also of immense importance as explained previously. A combination of all these factors made League's victory and therefore Pakistan's creation inevitable.

## **Cabinet Mission Plan and the Interim Government**

### **Background**

The political situation in India had become the main interest for everybody since the end of WW2. Congress, specifically Nehru, declared openly that they could make no terms with the League under the League's present leadership and policy. It was lost on nobody that Nehru was openly preaching violence. Gandhi, the non violent man did not even condemn it.

Pethick-Lawrence felt that the members of British Parliament did not understand the Indian situation very well and in December 1945, a 10 member all-party Parliamentary Delegation visited India. Upon their return, most of them stated clearly that liking or disliking the idea of Pakistan was not the issue any more because conceding to Pakistan was a necessity for a peaceful solution to the Indian question.

Wavell himself sent to England, an appreciation of the Indian political situation. In his appreciation, he concluded that the chief problem was to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem and for the purpose he laid down two principles:

1. If Muslims insist on self determination in genuinely Muslim areas, this must be conceded.
2. But there can be no question of compelling large non Muslim population to remain in Pakistan against their will.

In effect Wavell was proposing the division of Punjab and Bengal, leaving Muslims only with 'the husk' (Jinnah's words in Gandhi-Jinnah talks). Wavell thought that when faced with the situation created by his proposals, Jinnah might forgo the idea of Pakistan and set to work to secure the best possible safeguards for Muslims within a Union of India.

However, the British government side stepped Wavell's program of action and announced that a Mission of 3 Ministers shall be sent and they, in association with the Viceroy shall conduct negotiations with the Indian leaders.

### **The Mission's Purpose**



Pethick-Lawrence announced the 3 cabinet ministers chosen for the task on 19 February 1946. They were:

1. Lord Pethick Lawrence (Secretary of State for India).
2. Sir Stafford Cripps (President of the Board of Trade).
3. A.V. Alexander (First Lord of the Admiralty).

The purpose of the Mission was threefold:

1. Discussion to agree upon a method of constitution framing.
2. Setting up a constitution making body.
3. Making an Executive Council which had the support of the Indian parties.

Here, the statement issued by British PM, C.R. Attlee on 15 March deserves special attention. He said that while the British were mindful of the rights of minorities, it could not allow a minority to place their veto on the advance of the majority. Jinnah reiterated that Muslims were not a minority but a separate nation, while Gandhi was very cheerful about it.

### The Mission's Negotiations

The Cabinet Mission reached Karachi on 23 March 1946 and arrived at Delhi the following day. They started by getting familiar with the situation in India and for the purpose conferred with the Viceroy, Governors of the provinces and the Executive Council. On 1 April, they started meeting Indian leaders. Azad, Gandhi, Jinnah and the Sikh leaders all presented their points of view. Gandhi added little of significance but reiterated that 'Pakistan is a sin' and the Sikh leaders demanded a separate Sikh State in case India was partitioned. Azad presented Congress' demands which included:

1. Complete independence of India.
2. A united India.
3. A single Federation composed of fully autonomous units with residuary powers in their hands.
4. Two lists of central subjects, one compulsory and one optional.

Jinnah explained to the Mission why Pakistan was a necessity for the Muslims and said that 'Pakistan without Calcutta would be like asking a man to live without his heart'. The British offered him two choices:

1. A Pakistan with NWFP, Balochistan, Sind, Punjab's Muslim majority areas, East Bengal and the Sylhet district of Assam. They further said that inclusion of Calcutta could not be justified on any principle of self determination, and if Jinnah wanted Calcutta, it would only be through some agreement b/w Pakistan and Hindustan.
2. A Union of India with some agreement b/w League and Congress.

However, by 18 April, the Mission concluded that the Pakistan matter could not be resolved and the British would themselves have to propound a basis for settlement.

### The Tripartite Conference

After an Easter break, the Mission sent letters to Jinnah and Azad, inviting them to nominate 4 negotiators each for further discussions at Simla. Azad, Nehru, Patel and Abdul Ghaffar Khan represented Congress while Jinnah, Nawab Mohammad Ishmail Khan, Liaquat Ali Khan and Abdur Rab Nishtar represented ML. The tripartite conference (aka Second Simla Conference) held 7 sessions b/w 5 and 12 May 1946. Nehru proposed that the matter of Pakistan should be decided via some arbitration but Jinnah argued that the verdict on the matter had already been given in the elections and there was no need for arbitration on a settled matter.

The conference was able to achieve nothing and both parties summarized their differences in their respective communications of 12 May to the Mission. The Mission then issued two communiqués. The first one said that the conference was concluded as there was no point in continuing and the second said that the Mission would issue its own statement regarding the next steps.

### The Plan

The statement issued by the Cabinet Mission on 16 May 1946 started by giving reasons to explain why partition of India was a bad idea. The several 'weighty' arguments against partition of India, found by the mission included the difficulty of division of resources, especially in the cases of telegraph and postal system, defence and finances. Moreover, the mission said that the two parts of Pakistan would be separated by some 700 miles and therefore, communication b/w them would be contingent on the goodwill of India during times of war as well as times of peace. The main proposals of the plan put forward were:

1. Formation of Union of India embracing the British India and the Indian states.
2. The Union should deal with matters such as defence, foreign affairs and communications with the ability to raise the necessary finance'
3. Three groups of provinces shall be formed:
  - a. Group A – Hindu majority provinces (Madras, Bombay, Bihar, Orissa, CP and UP).
  - b. Group B – Muslim majority provinces in the North West (Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan).
  - c. Group C – Muslim majority provinces in the East (Bengal and Assam).
4. Provinces and the states shall be the basic units with the power over all subjects other than the Union subjects and all residuary powers shall vest in the provinces.
5. Constituent Assembly of each province shall have seats in proportion to its population, to decide whether the province should stay in or out of the group.
6. Any province can by a majority vote of its legislative assembly call for a reconsideration of the constitutional terms after an initial period of 10 years and then after 10 year intervals.

### Reaction to the Plan

Gandhi was the first one to comment on the plan. He welcomed it in a strange manner – the plan was praised after all its fundamental provisions had been washed away with fateful reservations. He said that the plan was open to interpretation and change as seen fit by the Constituent Assembly because otherwise, the Assembly would not be a sovereign body. The same opinion was later echoed by Congress leaders especially Nehru, whose 'acceptance' of the plan made nonsense of it. Congress Press issued statements such as 'Pakistan, the Pakistan of Mr. Jinnah's conception, receives a state burial...' and this opinion was widely shared in the Hindu circles.

Jinnah passed a statement on 22 May in which he regretted that the Mission had negated the Muslim demand and he pointed out certain flaws in the plan. But he refrained from accepting or rejecting the plan and said that the matter shall be decided by the League's Working Committee.

There had been a controversy on the interpretation of the grouping clause of the proposals, mainly due to Congress' wrong interpretation of it. As a result, the Cabinet Mission and Viceroy had to explain that grouping was an essential and a vital part of the scheme which could be modified only if the Indian political parties agreed to do so.

However, the League's Council met on 6 June to decide upon a final statement. The League accepted the plan although it was also resolved that the attainment of Pakistan was the final goal of the Muslims and that they would struggle for it. There were mainly two reasons for accepting the plan. Firstly, League wanted a peaceful solution to the problem and secondly, the plan had virtually accepted the creation of Pakistan through the compulsory groupings in Groups B and C. While ML's acceptance of the plan was generally appreciated in India and Britain along with the realization of the sacrifice made by the Muslims, neither Congress nor the Cabinet Mission spoke a word in appreciation or recognition. However, Jinnah's decision to accept the plan was not well received in Muslim circles. But the fact that this wide spread discontent did not erupt into a revolt speaks volumes for Jinnah's influence, trust and respect in Muslim circles.

### Aftermath of the 16 June Statement

Negotiations on the formation of the Executive Council had already begun b/w Indian leaders and the Viceroy and on 8 June, Jinnah reminded the Viceroy of his assurance of a 12 portfolio scheme divided in the following

manner: 5 for ML, 5 for Congress, 1 for the Sikhs and 1 for the Anglo-Indians, with the important portfolios divided equally b/w ML and Congress. He also told the Viceroy that this assurance had weighed with ML's acceptance of the plan. The Viceroy assured him once again.

But then on 12 June, Nehru suggested a different formula with 15 members in total: 5 Congress (all Hindus), 4 ML, 1 non ML Muslim, 1 non Congress Hindu, 1 Scheduled Caste, 1 Indian Christian, 1 Sikh and 1 Congress woman. Wavell rejected such a formula and in return Azad replied that Congress could never accept any formula based on parity. Wavell then suggested a new formula with a total of 13 members: 6 Congress, 5 ML and 2 minorities. This was also turned down by the Congress.

To resolve this deadlock, the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission issued a statement on 16 June which said that in case either or both of the two major parties refused to join in the setting up of a government on the lines mentioned, the Viceroy shall proceed with an Interim Government as representative as possible of those willing to accept the 16 May statement. However, on 25 June, Congress reiterated its previous stance that they would join the Constituent Assembly with the aim of framing a constitution of a free and united India. On the same day, ML accepted the 16 June statement.

It was now expected that the Viceroy should proceed without Congress for the formation of interim government in accordance with the 16 June statement. This was the point of view not only of the ML but also of the British press. But the fact of the matter was that the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission had not expected this outcome. Rather, they thought that ML would reject the plan as Pakistan had not been conceded and that Congress would accept the plan for the same reason. They wanted to appease the Congress because of the personal relationships b/w Congress leadership and Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence and also because a government with ML in the lead and Congress in the opposition was not seen as a solution to any problem. Therefore, when the unexpected happened, the Viceroy chose to go back on his pledged word instead of forming a League government.

The Mission finally left India on 29 June, leaving it to the Viceroy to deal with the controversy. Furthermore, India was now on the brink of a civil war, unparalleled in world history.

### League Rejects the Plan

Since the beginning of July, Nehru the new Congress President began giving statements regarding Congress' aims and its role in the Constituent Assembly. He claimed that they had decided to go into the Constituent Assembly and nothing else, that they were free to do anything in the Assembly, that there would be no grouping of provinces and that the Centre would be much stronger than proposed in the Cabinet Mission plan. All observers of the developments in India were unanimous in the opinion that these statements made nonsense of the Congress acceptance of the plan. Mosley (a historian) is worth quoting on this point: 'Did Nehru realize what he was saying? He was telling the world that once in power, Congress would use its strength at the Centre to alter the Cabinet Mission Plan as it thought fit. But the Muslim League had accepted the plan (as had Congress) as a cut and dried scheme to meet objections from both sides. It was a compromise plan which obviously could not afterwards be altered in favor of one side or another. In the circumstances, Nehru's remarks were a direct act of sabotage.'

But the worst reaction was of the British. The Cabinet Mission or the Viceroy gave no assurances that Congress would not be allowed to alter the plan after it had been agreed upon by both the parties. Under these circumstances, League was forced to revise its stance and on 27 July, passed two resolutions:

1. Withdrawal of the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's proposals due to Congress' conditional acceptance of the plan with an intent to distort it and due to the British not providing any safeguards against any such attempt.
2. The call for the Working Committee to prepare a program of direct action in order to achieve Pakistan, to assert their just rights, to vindicate their honor and to get rid of the present British slavery and the contemplated future.

This cataclysmic transformation of League made even the worst leaders of ML envy the leadership of Jinnah, whose master stroke of diplomacy had outwitted and out maneuvered Congress and the British alike and confounded the common national indictment that the ML was a parasite of British Imperialism.

### Congress Enters Office

Wavell wrote to Congress and ML, proposing a scheme for the Interim Coalition Government. It was to consist of 14 members with 6 Congress, 5 ML and 3 other minorities. He also made it clear that no party could object to the list of names given by other parties if they were accepted by the Viceroy and that the major portfolios would be divided b/w the two main parties equitably. But Jinnah and Nehru both rejected the proposals.

There was then a surprising change in British attitude and Secretary of State asked the Viceroy to convince Nehru to form a government without negotiating with Jinnah. Although the Viceroy tried to change the Secretary of State's mind, he was unsuccessful and thus Nehru was invited to form a government. Nehru insisted on appointing 5 non ML Muslims on the Muslim seats although Wavell was of the opinion that seats for ML must be left vacant for the time being in case ML changed its mind. However, according to the announcement of 24 August, a purely Congress dominated government was installed on 2 September 1946.

### League Joins the Council

Jinnah regretted Viceroy's decision to form a Congress government without even consulting the League and throughout India, Muslims flew black flags on the day Congress took office. In Britain the decision was criticized widely by Winston Churchill who was of the opinion that any attempt to establish a Hindu majority would not be successful without a civil war.

Within a month it was realized that ML's staying out of the government was playing havoc with Muslim interests and that without ML to safeguard the Muslim interests, Indian Muslims would be looking at a sequel of the 1937-39 Congress rule. ML had refused to be a part of the government on principle. And while the principle stood, political necessity required them to enter into negotiations with the Viceroy especially since Hindu extremist elements and mischief mongers were encouraged by the presence of a Hindu government at the Centre. Finally on 25 October 1946, the Executive Council was comprised as follows:

Political Party	Member Name	Portfolio
<b><u>Congress</u></b>	Jawaharlal Nehru	External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations
	Vallabhbhai Patel	Home, Information and Broadcasting
	Rajendra Prasad	Food and Agriculture
	C. Rajgopalacharia	Education and Arts
	Asaf Ali	Transport and Railways
	Jagjivan Ram	Labor
<b><u>Muslim League</u></b>	Liaquat Ali Khan	Finance
	I.I. Chundrigarh	Commerce
	Abdur Rab Nishtar	Communications
	Ghazanfar Ali Khan	Health
	J.N. Mandal	Legislative
<b><u>Minorities</u></b>	John Matthai	Industries and Supplies
	C.H. Bhabha	Works, Mines and Power

But the important points were that Jinnah had entered the Council by accepting the Viceroy's terms and not Nehru's terms although both were similar and that ML had included in its quota a member of the scheduled caste. The former hurt Nehru's pride and the latter dealt another blow to the Congress professions that it alone was the protector of that unfortunate community and that ML was a communal party. However, Nehru and Gandhi lost no time to criticize and oppose the League's nominees but what was done was done.

When League joined the government, a dispute started between Congress and League on the issue of the allotment of portfolios. Muslim League wanted home ministry but Congress and specially Sardar Patel was not ready to forgo that important slot. Congress tried to kill two birds with one stone by offering Muslim League the Finance Ministry. On one hand they wanted to silence League leaders by giving them an important ministry and on the other hand they knew that none of the League leader was expert in the technical field of finance and were sure that they would prove to be a great failure in the field. The policy backfired on Congress, as Liaquat took the challenge and handled the Ministry in a very successful manner. He not only presented the famous poor man's budget but also made Congress Ministers dependent on financial sanctions to run their affairs. Congress Ministers even could not employ a peon without the prior consent of Liaquat. Azad, himself acknowledged that Congress had committed a blunder by giving Finance Ministry to Muslim League. Other portfolios handed over to ML were also run quite smoothly and successfully.

### The Constituent Assembly

By the end of July 1946, British India had elected its Constituent Assembly consisting of 296 members. Congress had won all the general seats except 9 whereas ML had won all the Muslim seats except 5. The first meeting of the Assembly was to be held on 9 December 1946. But Muslim League refused to recognize the Assembly as a valid body until the Congress would accept ML's interpretation of the clause regarding the grouping of the provinces in the 16 May proposals. At first the Viceroy tried to convince the Congress to accept the demand of the Muslim League but Gandhi and Nehru started urging the British Government for the removal of the Viceroy. As a result the Viceroy issued the invitations for the meeting of the Constituent Assembly on 20 November under the Cabinet Mission Plan.

Jinnah was of the opinion that the Viceroy was trying to appease the Congress without realizing the seriousness of the situation. Therefore no ML representative would attend the meeting of the Assembly on 9 December. Trying to find an agreement between the Congress and ML, the British Government invited two Congress leaders, two ML leaders and a Sikh representative for having talks in London.

Meanwhile, Congress was getting more and more aggressive and demanding the removal of ML from the Government if it would not agree to participate in the Assembly. And Nehru went a step further by alleging that ML and British officials had a 'mental alliance' b/w them. These allegations were refuted by Liaquat Ali Khan when he declared that the ML bloc in the Assembly had never invoked Viceroy's special powers or asked for his intervention. The reasons for such allegations were clear:

1. ML had refused to accept Nehru as the leader of the Interim Government and even as a leader of the non ML bloc of the Assembly.
2. Jinnah had pointed out that the Interim Government was nothing more than Viceroy's Executive Council reconstituted on political lines.
3. Jinnah further said that Nehru was only its Vice President who presided in the absence of the Viceroy and held no special powers and had the same status as the rest of the Councilors.
4. Furthermore, it was grossly misleading to call the Interim govt a 'National govt' or to characterize the Council as a 'Cabinet'.

For Nehru, this was highly insulting especially since the Hindu press had begun calling him 'Prime Minister of India.'

On 2 December 1946, Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Nehru and Baldev Singh arrived in London for the talks with the British Government. As usual the talks failed to reach an agreed solution and on 6 December the British



Government issued a statement for resolving the controversy about the grouping clause by giving their own authoritative interpretation, which was the same as ML's interpretation.

On 5 January 1947, Congress rejected the official interpretation, and the ML Working Committee passed a resolution on 31 January that took the notice of the British interpretation (as it was same as ML's interpretation) and also condemned the rejection of the official interpretation by Congress. Now, since Congress, Sikhs and the Scheduled Castes had rejected the official interpretation of the Cabinet Mission's proposals and in effect the proposals themselves, elections to the Assembly, calling of the Assembly, proceeding and decisions of the Assembly were declared invalid and illegal. The Assembly was to be dissolved at once.

## Conclusions

The 6 December statement of the British government contained an important announcement. It said that the only way a Constituent Assembly can work successfully is on the basis of an agreed upon procedure. It also said that if a constitution were to be framed such that it were unrepresentative of a large population of the country, such a constitution could not be forced upon the unwilling parts of the country. This was the first statement after the Cripps proposals of 1942 which hinted at some form of Pakistan. However, one thing was certain – the Cabinet Mission Plan was dead for all practical purposes.

## Transfer of Power

### Attlee's Statement and Mountbatten's Appointment

The aftermath of the Cabinet Mission Plan had convinced the British to formally declare their intent to transfer power to Indians and Wavell and later Mountbatten had even proposed the announcement of an exact date on which the power would be transferred. In the meantime, another interesting development had taken place. Wavell had toured East Bengal along with other parts of India due to the communal riots which had started after the Direct Action Day. When he had tried to convince Congress leaders and Gandhi that they should accept the idea of partition, they had responded by writing to the British government in England demanding the appointment of a new Viceroy. With Gandhi's opposition, it was clear that Wavell's days as the Viceroy were numbered. These suspicions proved to be true when Mountbatten was offered to take over the office of Viceroy even before Wavell was informed about these developments. Moreover, the official procedure required the current Viceroy to be informed about such a change at least 6 months before hand. But all such regulations were violated and Attlee told Wavell that he had been appointed during war time and now the war was over. However, the formal announcement came in Attlee's statement.

On 20 February 1947, Attlee issued a statement which contained two main announcements:

1. The British would definitely transfer power by June 1948 and if a constitution had not been framed by a representative assembly by then, then His Majesty's Government would consider to whom the power had to be transferred – whether as a whole to the Centre, or to the existing Provincial governments or in any other suitable manner.
2. Appointment of Lord Mountbatten as the successor of Wavell as the Viceroy.

### Situation in India and Congress' Acceptance of Partition

Attlee's 20 February statement saved the Interim Government (Congress had been threatening that it would reconsider its own position in the government if ML was not expelled from the Interim government due to its rejection of the Cabinet Mission Plan while ML had been criticizing the Congress for mutilating the plan's official interpretation). Despite the calming effect on the Indian leaders, Attlee's statement could not change the situation that prevailed in the streets.

Here we need to mention a few rarely mentioned but significant events that took place in the previous few months. The first event was Nehru's visit to NWFP in October 1946. Although Khan Sahib and Abdul Ghaffar



Khan (aka 'Frontier Gandhi') had developed a large following of the Congress in NWFP, Nehru was greeted at the airport with black flags and people generally protested against his tour. They disliked the fact that a Hindu had come to talk to them from a position of authority. Moreover, independence from the British was now seen as inevitable and the Pathans were not willing to exchange foreign masters for a Hindu domination. The second event was the intensification of the war of succession especially in the Punjab. The Hindus and Muslims started preparing for an outright war to decide the question of power. Hindu and Muslim 'private armies' were being trained for the purpose in the form of RSSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh) and Muslim League National Guards respectively. The first week of March saw much bloodshed and large scale rioting in major areas of Punjab and by the second week, these happenings had their repercussions in the adjoining NWFP.

On 8 March 1947, Congress Working Committee met in New Delhi and resolved in the light of recent violence, that no agreement based on coercion could last without such consequences. Congress leaders like Nehru and Patel also came to realize that partition was inevitable. In effect Congress had agreed to divide India into Muslim majority and non Muslim majority areas. The only person still not ready to compromise the unity of India was Gandhi even though Nehru, Patel and all others had already given in.

Some critics of Jinnah blame him for accepting a moth eaten Pakistan, but the fact of the matter is that politics is a game in which two extreme sides need to bargain in order to achieve something which might be acceptable to both sides although it may not be what either of them desires. Same was the case of India's division and Jinnah had been aware of this fact. He had always said that once the idea/principle of Pakistan was accepted, the issue of boundaries could be settled through negotiations and debates. There is no doubt that at its heart, Congress desired a united India and ML desired Pakistan comprising of the six whole provinces. But in this non ideal, real world, none of them could get what it desired, unadulterated.

Furthermore, the achievement of Pakistan was itself a Herculean task for which Jinnah had to tread extremely carefully. Only he had the capability to give a practical shape to the idea of a separate homeland. Only he had the caliber to first lay the ground during the Congress rule in 1937 and then build upon it. Only he had the consistency, patience and determination to rise against all odds and play a long game for nearly a decade. Only he had the charisma to motivate and lead a nation which had been depressed and down trodden for nearly a century. Only he had the vision necessary to achieve Pakistan.

### **Mountbatten: The Opening Phase**

Mountbatten had quite friendly relations with Hindu leaders like Gandhi and Nehru and the clarity and impact of Nehru's influence over the new Viceroy grew in time. When he came to India, he was in constant touch with Nehru, Patel and Liaquat as they were members of the Viceroy's Council. He also held special meetings with them in order to get to know their mind set, demands and their expectations better. Then came his meetings with Gandhi. Gandhi suggested that the British should strengthen the Interim Government and make it function for the next 14 months and upon their departure, leave all power in the hands of the Interim Government. This surprised Mountbatten and Ismay (Viceroy's Chief of Staff in India, appointed to help in the transfer of power) alike because Gandhi was in effect asking for power to be handed over to the Congress at the disadvantage of ML. Even the British were not ready to take such extreme steps which would ensure a long and bloody civil war. Mountbatten first met Jinnah on 5 April, 12 days after his first meeting with Nehru and he proved to be the toughest person Mountbatten had ever bargained with. Mountbatten told Jinnah that all the arguments which went in favor of Pakistan could also be applied to division of Punjab and Bengal to which Jinnah replied that the Muslims would then be left with a moth eaten Pakistan. Mountbatten tried his utmost to convince Jinnah to forgo the idea of partition and consider all that a united India could achieve but Jinnah told him clearly that the Hindu attitude over the past decade had proven their inability to work with the Muslims. Negotiations with Jinnah went on for days and his inability to budge the Muslim leader from his point of view bruised the most vulnerable traits of Mountbatten's character – his pride and vanity.

**Plan of 3 June**

Jinnah's stonewalling during meetings with Mountbatten had the desired effect of making the Viceroy realize that Jinnah would never consent to a United India. This ensured the termination of 'Plan Union' for all practical purposes. Mountbatten then instructed Lord Ismay to prepare a new plan. This 'Plan Balkan' meant in broad terms, demission of powers to provinces or any such confederations that provinces may be able to form by grouping themselves together, before the transfer of power. The plan was quickly taken to London for approval by the British Government.

However, before the announcement of the plan, Nehru who was staying with Mountbatten as a guest in his residence at Simla, had a look at the plan and rejected it. Mountbatten then asked V.P. Menon, the only Indian in his personal staff, to present a new plan for the transfer of power. After Menon had formulated a formula, Nehru edited it and Mountbatten himself took it to London, where he got it approved without any alteration. Attlee and his cabinet gave the approval in a meeting that lasted not more than five minutes. In this way, the plan that was to decide the future of the Indo-Pak subcontinent was actually authored by a Congress minded Hindu and was approved by Nehru himself.

Mountbatten came back from London on 31 May, and on 2 June met 7 Indian leaders – Nehru, Patel, Kriplalani, Jinnah, Liaquat, Nishtar and Baldev Singh. After these leaders approved the plan, Mountbatten discussed it with Gandhi and convinced him that it was the best plan under the circumstances. The plan was made public on 3 June, and is thus known as the June 3<sup>rd</sup> Plan. The main features of the plan were:

1. British will not impose any constitution and it will be framed by the Constituent Assembly.
2. Constitution will not be imposed on areas that do not accept it and such areas will have the option of setting up a separate constituent assembly.
3. Punjab and Bengal assemblies will meet in two parts (members from Muslim majority areas and members from other areas) to decide whether the province should be partitioned or not. If partition is decided upon, each group will decide as to which constituent assembly it will join and boundary commissions will be set up for Punjab and Bengal separately, by the Governors of the respective provinces.
4. Sindh assembly will decide which constituent assembly it will join.
5. The fate of NWFP will be decided by a referendum and the electoral college of the referendum will be the same as for the provincial legislative assembly of 1946.
6. Balochistan will adopt a suitable method for making the decision.
7. If Bengal decided for partition then Sylhet will also decide by a referendum whether to join East Bengal or remain in Assam.
8. Princely states will decide for themselves keeping in view their geographical contiguity.

### **The Governor Generalship Controversy**

In the days following the Congress' acceptance of partition in early March, everyone had assumed without reason that both dominions would have a single Governor General and that it would be Mountbatten. Nehru had even extended a formal invitation to Mountbatten to become the first Governor General of India and he had accepted. Furthermore, he also expected Jinnah to extend a similar invitation. In his meetings with Jinnah, Mountbatten himself initiated the discussions on the issue and Jinnah tried to postpone his response for as long as he could. But when the Viceroy began to pressurize Jinnah by telling others like Liaquat to convince him, Jinnah finally announced on 2 July that he himself would be the first Governor General of Pakistan. This definitely came as a big blow to Mountbatten's pride which had been hurt by Jinnah time and again.

The fact of the matter was that Jinnah who had been the sole spokesman of Muslims and had fought hard to safeguard Muslim interests, could not let a person like Mountbatten take charge of the new Muslim state, given the influence Nehru and other Congress leaders had on him. Moreover, Congress had not been shy to express their hopes for the failure of partition when they had expressed their acceptance of it. Under such circumstances, handing over the charge to Mountbatten was to doom the country which was yet to be born.

It was probably due to Jinnah's continuous attacks on Mountbatten's pride that the latter did everything in his power to sabotage the interests of Pakistan. He brought about the dissolution of the Joint Defence Council and

the removal of the Field Marshall Auchinleck who was trying to perform his duty in an honest and an impartial manner. Mountbatten also dissolved the Partition Committee before the assets could be divided fairly b/w the two countries. His acceptance of the Instrument of Accession by the Maharaja of Kashmir was nothing more than an excuse to allow India to send its troops for the occupation of the state. Even if these events could have been avoided by allowing him to take the dual office, he would have been, due to his socio-political inclinations, an Indian Governor General in control of Pakistan – a fact that is clear if one considers that Mountbatten changed the draft of agreement with Hyderabad at Patel's behest.

## Freedom

The next logical step was to give the 3 June plan, a legal shape. So the Indian Independence Bill was drafted and shown to Indian leaders before being passed by the Commons and the Lords in the British Parliament. On 18 July 1947, the Bill got Royal Assent as Indian Independence Act. Main features of the act were:

1. British Raj shall end on the midnight of 15 August 1947.
2. Two independent dominions, Pakistan and India shall be set up.
3. It further explained the territorial distributions for India and Pakistan.
4. The Act clearly mentioned self government for both dominions in all affairs.
5. The role to be played by the boundary commissions was also elaborated upon.
6. The Act enforced the Government of India Act 1935 as the interim constitution for both dominions (with necessary changes due to partition) until they could frame their own constitutions.
7. Powers of the Governor Generals were also explained in detail.
8. Detailed sections on civil servants and armed forces were also included in the act.
9. Both Dominions would have the option to remain a member of the Commonwealth or to leave it.

On 20 July, provisional governments for Pakistan and India were established. According to the procedures laid down in the 3 June Plan, the provinces in question gave their verdict regarding partition and the decision to join the new constituent assembly or to remain in the existing one. Bengal was to be partitioned so that West Bengal could remain in India and East Bengal could join Pakistan. Punjab also decided for a partition so that East Punjab could remain in India and West Punjab could accede to the new constituent assembly. Sind Legislative Assembly also decided to join the new constituent assembly. In Balochistan, the Shahi Jirga and the non official members of the Quetta Municipality unanimously decided to join the new constituent assembly. Sylhet and NWFP also decided via referendum to join the new constituent assembly. In NWFP however, Abdul Ghafar Khan insisted that people should vote for a third option – an independent Pakhtunistan. Gandhi and Congress supported Ghafar Khan but due to Jinnah's opposition the British were unwilling to take such a step. Furthermore, people spoke through the referendum in favor of Pakistan.

On 7 August Jinnah left Delhi and flew to Karachi, the capital to be of Pakistan. The Constituent Assembly of Pakistan met on 11 August and elected Jinnah as its president. Mountbatten came to Karachi on 13 August and addressed the Constituent Assembly the next day. Finally, on 15 August, Jinnah was sworn in as the first Governor General of Pakistan and the new Pakistan Cabinet took office. Liaquat Ali Khan became the first Prime Minister of Pakistan.

In India, Mountbatten himself became the first Governor General and Nehru became the first Prime Minister. In both countries, oath taking ceremonies were held on 15 August 1947.