Chapter Two

FROM SELF-GOVERNMENT TO COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE, 1917-29
As discussed in the previous chapter Indian political leaders had been demanding from the beginning of the 1st World War 'self-government', 'representation' and 'equal partnership with self-governing dominions' in the British Empire, and they had been asking the British Government to accept the principle and make a declaration to this effect. After the Lucknow Pact (1916) the demand had become a common demand of the Indian people. Again, in July 1917, the Congress and the League (1) jointly demanded it. And the Home Rulers under the leadership of Annie Besant and B.G. Tilak had been more actively pressing for it.

As a response to the Indian demands, the Indian representatives were invited and they took part in the Imperial War Conferences and the Imperial War Cabinet of 1917 and 1918. The Imperial War Conference (1917) also decided in favour of (2) Indian representation at future Conferences. Though the Congress accepted the principle of India's representation,

(1) See resolutions of the joint conference of the AICC and the Council of the AICL, Bombay, (28-30) July 1917. The Indian Review (Madras), 18 (August 1917) 557.

(2) See A. Berriedale Keith, ed., Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921 (London, 1922) II, 132.
its demand was that the Indian representatives should be "elected" ones and that they should be "allowed to represent India directly and not merely to assist the Secretary of State for India." Regarding the political goal of India, Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, speaking in the House of Commons on 20 August 1917, declared:

The policy of His Majesty's Government ... is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.

He further said:

... that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. And The British Government and the Government of India ... must be judges of the time and measure of each advance .... (4)

The Congress expressed "its grateful satisfaction over the pronouncement" that the policy of the British Government "is the establishment of responsible government in India." And by responsible government it meant "self-government on colonial lines" within the Empire. But the second part of the


(6) See speeches on the resolution on Self-Government. Ibid., 90-126.
pronouncement that "the time and measure of each advance" would be determined by the Government was opposed and a demand for a "time-limit to be fixed in the statute" for the establishment of fully "responsible government in India" (7) was made by the Congress. While rejecting the second part of the announcement, the Congress leaders left no ambiguity with regard to their attitude on the first part. They were loyal to the British connection and their aspiration was that India should have an honourable place within the Empire. Mrs. Annie Besant, President of the Calcutta Session, stated that India was in favour of "maintaining the British tie as in the Dominions." Surendra Nath Banerjea was quite hopeful that India would secure "her rightful place among the free states of a great federated Empire." Bipin Chandra Pal read Montagu's announcement "as a policy of reconciliation between us, who desire autonomy or Home Rule in India, and those who desire the permanence, the preservation and the integrity of the British Empire." He was prepared "to dedicate ... our all for the preservation of this Empire", because he recognized "the danger to which our national existence will be exposed if we are ... severed from the British connection." Similar sentiments were expressed by other Congress leaders also.

(7) Resolution. Ibid., 90.
(8) Presidential Address. Ibid., 55.
(9) Speech on the resolution on Self-Government. Ibid., 95.
(10) Speech on the resolution. Ibid., 99.
In pursuance of the new policy, when Mr. Montagu visited India to learn the views of the Indian leaders and to discuss the matter with the Government of India, many memoranda and addresses were submitted to him by the Indian leaders in support of the demand of self-government within the Empire and for acceptance of the Congress-League Scheme of 1916 as a first step in that direction. A joint deputation of the Congress and the League met the Viceroy and the Secretary of State in November 1917 and submitted their joint memorandum in which they declared:

We desire to strengthen our tie with the Empire, and not to break it; we desire to co-operate with the British, but only if we can meet on equal terms. ... We are not revolutionaries; we are not disloyal to the Crown, we wish not for separation, but for equality of status with the rest of our British fellow-subjects .... (11)

Adoption of the Congress-League Scheme was urged and Surendra Nath Banerjea, who read the address, explained that one of "the basal principles" of the Scheme was "that the British connection with India should be safeguarded." Regarding India's status in the Empire, he said:

Our claim in one word is that she should be lifted from the position of a dependency to that of equality with the Dominions .... (And)

(11) Memorandum submitted to ... the Viceroy & Governor-General of India and to ... the Secretary of State for India by the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League with regard to the Joint Scheme of constitutional reforms, 1916, 4-5.
In any Council or Parliament of the Empire, which may be constituted at a future date, India should be represented in like manner and in an equal measure with the Dominions. (12)

The All India Hindu Mahasabha clearly stated that one of its objects was "to act in a friendly way, and in loyal co-operation, with the Government," and strongly pleaded for "the early grant of substantial measures of self-government within the Empire." The memorandum of the Home Rule League explained that one of the principal objects of the League was "to strive to maintain the connection of India with Great Britain by becoming a free Nation within the British Empire." (13)

The memorandum further said:

No sane political thinker in India demands the severance of the Indo-British connection. Home Rule implies and involves the protection and guidance of the British Empire, and this is the essence of the demand of the Congress and the Muslim League. (15)

Many other organizations and individuals supported this demand, and none claimed a breakaway from the British Empire.

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(12) Joint Address of the INC and the AIML, 26 November 1917. The Bombay Chronicle, 27 November 1917, 8.

(13) Respectful Representation of the All India Hindu Mahasabha presented to ... the Secretary of State for India and ... the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, 1 and 3 respectively.

(14) Memorandum ... submitted by the Home Rule League to ... the Viceroy ... and the Secretary of State for India, p. 1. It was a joint memorandum of Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League for India and Tilak's Indian Home Rule League.

(15) Ibid., p. vi.
The results of Montagu's enquiry were embodied in the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme published in India on 8 July 1918. The Scheme proved to be an apple of discord between moderates and extremists within the Congress. The former declared definitely for the Scheme, with certain reservations and alterations; the latter totally refused to accept it.

On the day the Montford Scheme was published, Mrs. Besant, President of the Congress, wrote: "The Scheme is unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India." Tilak, on the next day, declared the Scheme as "entirely unacceptable." Some Congress leaders of Madras declared: "The Scheme ... is so radically wrong alike in principles and in detail that ... it is impossible to modify and improve it .... It cannot consequently form the basis of discussion or compromise ...."

The moderates welcomed and generally supported the Scheme as "firmly and wisely conceived." They believed it was "a progressive measure" and it marked "a definite stage towards

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(16) New India (Madras), 8 July (Evening) 1918, 3.
(18) Manifesto signed by some 18 Congress leaders. The Hindu (Madras), 8 July 1918, 5.
(19) V.S. Narasimha Sastri's view. The Indian Review, 19 (July 1918) 488.
(20) Sir Dinshaw Wacha's view. Ibid., 488.
the progressive realization of responsible government." They felt amazed at the views expressed by the extremists and did not attend the Special Session of the Congress held at Bombay from 29 August to 1 September 1918, to consider the Montford Scheme. And when the Congress condemned the Scheme as "disappointing and unsatisfactory", the moderates under the leadership of men like Surendra Nath Banerjea and Sir D.R. Wacha assembled in Bombay in November 1918 in support of it, and they formed a party, the National Liberal Federation, also known as the Liberal Party of India.

Though the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were strongly criticized by the Congress at its Sessions at Bombay, Delhi and Amritsar, and the Government of India Act, 1919, was regarded as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing".

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(21) Surendra Nath Banerjea's view. Ibid., 487.

(22) Resolution. INC, Report of the Special Session, Bombay, 1918, 79.

(23) First, the Party was called the Moderate Party and held 1st All India Conference of Moderate Party at Bombay on 1 and 2 November 1918 under the presidency of Surendra Nath Banerjea. At the 2nd Session at Calcutta in December 1919, the name was changed to the National Liberal Federation of India, also called the Liberal Party of India. For the birth of the Liberal Party, see: B.D. Shukla, A History of the Indian Liberal Party (Allahabad, 1960); V.N. Naik, Indian Liberalism (Bombay, 1945); Chimanlal H. Setalvad, Recollections and Reflections: An Autobiography (Bombay, 1946); and Surendra Nath Banerjea, A Nation in Making: Being the Reminiscences of Fifty Years of Public Life (London, 1925, 2nd impression, 1926).

the principle of progressive realization of 'responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire' was not disputed. Its demand, still, was for "Self-Government within the Empire" and India's "rightful place as a free and self-governing Nation in the British Commonwealth." And although the Congress, having been disappointed with the Montford Scheme, asked for 'self-determination' for India, it did not aspire for India's freedom outside the Empire. Explaining the principle of 'self-determination', Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, President of the Delhi Congress, categorically stated that "we still desire to remain subjects of the British Crown"; and by self-determination they meant, he added, "that being under the British Crown, we should be allowed complete responsible government on the lines of the Dominions, in the administration of all our domestic affairs." Moreover, the Congress declared, the grant of self-government would "strengthen the connection between Great Britain and India."

(25) Resolution on Self-Government adopted by the INC at Bombay (August 1918), Delhi (1918) and Amritsar (1919) Sessions. See Reports of the respective Sessions.

(26) Presidential Address. INC, Report of the 53rd Session, Delhi, 1918, 52.

(27) Resolution. Ibid., Appendix A, p. i. It was adopted also at the Special Session, Bombay, August 1918.
In spite of the tense political atmosphere in the country created by the unsatisfactory Montford Reforms, the repressive policy of the Government, the Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre and the enormities perpetrated in the Punjab under the Martial Law regime, the Congress continued to hold the attitude of loyalty and favoured India's connection with the British Empire. In December 1919 at the Amritsar Session, the Congress agreed to work the Reforms, unsatisfactory though these were, and also resolved to welcome the intended visit of the Prince of Wales. On the eve of the Amritsar Congress, Lokamanya Tilak declared: "We want to be in the Empire on terms of equality. We do not want to separate ourselves." Again, in April 1920, he explained the policy of his party:

This party believes in the integration or federation of India in the British Commonwealth for the advancement of the cause of humanity and the brotherhood of mankind, but demands autonomy for India and equal status as a sister-state with every other partner in the British Commonwealth, including Great Britain. (30)


(30) The election manifesto of his party called the Congress Democratic Party. Tilak organized the party within the Congress to fight the elections for the Reformed Councils. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 21 April 1920, 7.
Mr. V.J. Patel, Secretary of the Congress, clearly stated that India "does not want separation from the British Empire. Her people demand Dominion Home Rule." The attainment of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire by the Indian people was still the accepted creed of the Congress.

The year 1920, however, introduced two new elements in the Indian situation. The Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, as we have shown above, had already created anti-British feeling in the country. The Peace Treaty with Turkey (1920) and the white-washing report of the Hunter Committee on the Punjab massacre, which was condemned even by Liberals, made the position still worse and filled the country with disappointment and disgust. These and the continued unsympathetic policy of the Government made it impossible for Congressmen to have any faith in and co-operate with the British government. Musalmans, in large numbers, joined the Congress which under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi took up

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(31) At a breakfast talk interview with Mr. A.F. Brockway in London in 1919. The Hindu, 8 January 1920, 7.

(32) The Hunter Committee was appointed in October 1919 to enquire into the late disturbances and suggest appropriate action. The European and Indian members of the Committee failed to agree and submitted separate reports. The Indians (only three in number) were in minority. The Report of the Committee, dated 8 March, was published in May 1920.
their 'Khilafat question' as if its own. And at the Special Session in September 1920 at Calcutta, the Congress adopted the Non-Co-operation programme for the redress of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs and for the attainment of Swaraj; it was reaffirmed at Nagpur Congress in December 1920. At the Calcutta Congress, Lala Lajpat Rai warned the British Government that though "we are fully prepared ... to cherish the connection with the British Commonwealth as a desirable privilege," Indian people would no longer tolerate events like those "that happened in the Punjab last year." He further explained:

If partnership in the Commonwealth means full freedom to us in India ... we accept that ideal of partnership but if partnership in the Empire means and includes the permanence of racial or alien domination in any shape, form or degree in the Government of India, then we do not accept that ideal. We are determined at no distant date to be entirely free in our country, in the same sense as South Africans are free in South Africa, Canadians in Canada, Australians in Australia and the British at home. (34)

(33) After the 1st World War Muslims started agitation against the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, because this event was considered to be a blow to the Caliph's suzerainty over the Holy places in Arabia and Mesopotamia. The resentment against the Turkish Peace Treaty (1920) on the part of the Indian Muslims and the resentment of the Congress at the Punjab massacre resulted in a concord between the Congress and the Muslim community. All India Khilafat Organization was formed and Non-Co-operation Movement was started to get the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs redressed. For further information, see M.H. Abbas, All About the Khilafat (Calcutta, 1923).

He was not willing to admit any qualification of that ideal of partnership in the Commonwealth.

The Government paid little attention to this warning and made no response to the demands of the Indian people. The first indication of the change in the attitude of the Congress leaders was given by the All India Home Rule League. In September 1920, it was re-christened as 'Swarajya Sabha' and the maintenance of the British connection was deleted from its objectives. In October, the objective of the Sabha was further changed from Home Rule or Self-Government to "complete Swaraj". Strong objection was taken by M.A. Jinnah, M.R. Jeyakar and others against the new creed and as a result some 20 members seceded. Mahatma Gandhi, President of the Sabha, defended the change by saying that the meaning of Swaraj was confined to the Congress goal and said: "I am not opposed to the British connection by itself, but I do not wish to make a fetish of it." Jinnah replied that he also did not make a fetish of it, but he maintained that "statesmanship, wisdom and common-sense dictate India should attain fullest freedom within the British Commonwealth as an equal, and independent member."

(35) The Bombay Chronicle, 6 September 1920, 8.
(36) Ibid., 5 October 1920, 7.
(38) Ibid., 138.
Subsequently, when the Congress met at Nagpur in December, it resolved to boycott the visit of the Duke of Connaught; the constitution was amended and "the attainment of Swarajya (or Swaraj) by the people of India, now, became the creed of the Congress.

In the new creed, unlike the previous one, nothing was said about the British connection. Swaraj, a Sanskrit word, literally means one's own (swa) rule (raj) or self-rule. It could be easily interpreted as self-government 'within' or 'without' the British Empire. By the end of 1920, moreover, the Dominions had almost achieved 'Independent Status', at least in practice, if not in law. Even His Majesty the King-Emperor, in his message to the Indian people, used the word Swaraj for the Dominion Self-Government. Swaraj was interpreted by Gandhiji, its author, to imply "within the Empire if possible, without if necessary." The acceptance of the "British

(39) Text of the resolution: "The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swarajya by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means." INC, Report of the 55th Session, Nagpur, 1920, 46.

(40) H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, inaugurating the Indian Legislature on 9 February 1921 at Delhi, conveyed His Majesty's message: "For years, it may be for generations, patriotic and loyal Indians have dreamed of Swaraj for their Motherland. Today you have beginnings of Swaraj within my Empire, and widest scope and ample opportunity for progress to the liberty which other Dominions enjoy." Duke of Connaught, His Royal Highness The Duke of Connaught in India, 1921: A collection of the speeches delivered by His Royal Highness (Calcutta, 1921) 62.
connection at any cost," he thought, "is derogatory to national dignity." Because the British Government refused to acknowledge its mistakes and did not redress the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs, the creed was meant as a kind of "notice to the British public and the British Government" that India's connection with the Empire should not be taken for granted. The word Swaraj was susceptible of two meanings or interpretations and thereby gave two alternatives to Congressmen. Indeed, this seems to be one of the reasons why it was left undefined by the authors of the creed. It was deliberately used "to suit every opinion, to suit every conscience and to soften every susceptibility." "There is room in this Resolution," explained Mahatma Gandhi, "for both, those who believe that by retaining British connection we can purify ourselves and purity the British people, and those who have no such belief."

But, in spite of the fact that 'Swaraj' may be construed to have a double meaning, it is certain that the

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(41) Speech in moving the Creed resolution at the Nagpur Congress, 1920. INC, Report, n. 39, 47.

(42) Lajpat Rai's speech in seconding the resolution. Ibid., 50.

(43) Bipin Chandra Pal's speech in supporting the resolution. Ibid., 58.

(44) Speech in moving the resolution. Ibid., 47.
Congress at Nagpur was not against the British connection. "I do not for one moment suggest," declared Gandhiji, "that we want to end British connection at all costs unconditionally." "If the British connection is for the advancement of India," he added, "we do not want to destroy it." "We are not even now averse to remain within the British Commonwealth," said Lajpat Rai, "if we are allowed to remain on our terms, by our free choice and by our free will ...."

Indeed, the attitude of most of the thinking members of the Congress was not anti-British and no single speech showed a desire to bring about a severance of India and Britain. Even Englishmen like Holford Knight and Ben Spoor, who were present at the Nagpur Congress, were convinced that "the claim of 'Swarajya' as embodied in the new Congress constitution, is not a hostile blow at the British connection." "The Congress decision does not for a moment even imply a break in our association with India," said Ben Spoor, M.P. (Labour Party).

The difference between the old and the new creeds of the Congress was this: In the pre-1920 period the British connection was taken for granted irrespective of policy and

(45) Ibid., 47.
(46) Ibid., 51.
(47) The impressions of Holford Knight, a well-known English Barrister and publicist. The Hindu, 5 January 1921, 5.
(48) The Bombay Chronicle, 8 January 1921, 11.
attitude of the British Government because people had faith in the ultimate justice and fairplay of the British people. Now that faith had been lost, the British connection was made conditional upon the willingness and capacity of the British to make Indians equal partners in the Empire. Gandhi clearly explained:

... the Congress creed with the proposed alteration is but an extension of the original [pre-1920]. And so long as no break with the British connection is attempted, it is strictly within even the existing article that defines the Congress creed. The extension lies in the contemplated possibility of a break with the British connection. (49)

INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, 1920-27
MEANING OF SWARAJ

During the years following 1920, the Congress continued to hold almost the same attitude and preferred British connection, if that was consistent with India's freedom and dignity. This can easily be seen from the policy of the Congress as a whole, the attitudes of Mahatma Gandhi, who emerged as the greatest leader and the chief spokesman of the Congress after the Nagpur Session of 1920, and other important leaders who had been guiding the Congress movement throughout this period.

(49) Mahatma Gandhi was one of the authors of the new constitution of the Congress, which was adopted at Nagpur. It was solely his draft. Before the Nagpur Congress, Gandhi explained the proposed alteration in the creed. Young India (Ahmedabad), 2 (3 November 1920) 4.
In December 1921 at the Ahmedabad Congress, an attempt was made by Maulana Hasrat Mohani and others to define Swaraj as "complete independence free from all foreign control." Though Maulana considered that "there is no difference between Colonial form of Government and complete independence so far as India is concerned," he believed "the English will never be prepared to grant the Colonial form of Government to India" and, therefore, they should "insist on complete independence." He was in favour of independence, more, because of the Khilafat question. He frankly stated: "So far as India alone is concerned, the Colonial form of self-government may suffice but so far as the Khilafat is concerned Swaraj can have only one meaning and that is complete independence." His supporters also pleaded for independence outside the British Empire or Commonwealth. The move was opposed by Mahatma Gandhi who described the resolution as full of "levity" and lacking "responsibility." The resolution was rejected by an overwhelming majority. Similar attempts to change the Congress


(51) Speech in moving the resolution. Ibid., 55.

(52) Ibid.

(53) Ibid., 57.

(54) See Ibid., 60.
creed, by defining Swaraj as complete independence, were made at Congress Sessions at Gaya (1922), Delhi (September 1923), Coconada (1923) and Guwahati (1926), but always without any success. Every time the move was defeated by an overwhelming majority. Only a few Provincial Conferences asked the Indian National Congress to change the creed to complete independence; but the Congress, as shown above, every time refused to accept it. From this it may be safely concluded that though there was a school of thought, not yet appreciable in number and influence, which was in favour of absolute independence, the Congress as a whole was in favour of the British connection; at least it is certain that it was not actively opposed to this view.

The argument of the preceding paragraph is confirmed by the examination of the views of the top leaders of the Congress of this period. Mahatma Gandhi through his speeches and writings, generally in his weekly Young India, made it perfectly clear that he wanted India to remain in the British Commonwealth as an equal and free partner. Without freedom

(55) See INC, Reports for the respective sessions.

(56) United Provinces (Banaras) October 1923, Andhra (Ellore) November 1926 and Tamil Nadu (Madras) December 1926 requested the Congress to adopt 'independence' as its goal. See The Hindu, 15 October 1923, 6; and The Indian Annual Register, 1926, II, 596-7 and 411 respectively.
and equality he would not like to have this connection. To the question, "Does ... Swaraj mean sovereign independence, or full responsible Government within the Empire on the Dominion lines," Gandhiji replied: "I should certainly be satisfied with full responsible Government on Dominion lines, if the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs are redressed." In 1924, in reply to a similar query, he said:

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\text{Swaraj} \text{ should be quite consistent with the British connection on absolutely honourable and equal terms .... But I would not for one moment hesitate to countenance or bring about complete severance if it became necessary i.e. if the connection impeded India's full growth.} \]

Mahatma Gandhi was quite hopeful that the British people would at no distant date stop their policy of exploitation and would like India to be an equal friend and partner in the British Commonwealth. "A time is coming," he said, "when England will be glad of India's friendship and India will disdain to reject the proferred hand because it has once despoiled her." It was more for moral considerations and not so much for material gain that Gandhiji pleaded for retaining the British connection. Arguing against the demand for independence, he wrote:

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(57) Young India, 3 (6 April 1921) 105.
(58) Ibid., 7 (29 January 1925) 40.
(59) Ibid., 41.
... assuming that Great Britain alters her attitude, as I know she will when India is strong, it will be religiously unlawful for us to insist on independence. For it will be vindictive and petulant. It would amount to a denial of God, for the refusal will then be based upon the assumption that the British people are not capable of response to the God in man. (60)

Gandhiji's creed was to convert enemy into friend and not to defeat and oust him. He, therefore, believed that India's greatest glory would lie not in expelling Englishmen out of India "but in turning them into friends and partners in a new commonwealth of nations in the place of an Empire based upon exploitation of the weaker ... nations and races (61) of the earth ...." At another place he wrote:

... severance at any cost and in every case with England .... is not indispensable for India's growth and freedom. The burden of severance should lie with the English people. It is more dignified for us to declare our readiness to be partners on equal terms and at will with the English in a Federation of Free States. (62)

In 1924 at the Belgaum Congress, Mahatma Gandhi strongly pleaded for the retention of the British connection on perfectly honourable and absolutely equal terms. He regarded "a federation of friendly inter-dependent States" as far better than

(60) Ibid., 4 (5 January 1922) 4.
(61) Ibid.
(62) In reply to the demand of Sriish Chandra Chatterji and others for defining Swaraj as a Federated Republic of the United States of India. Young India, 6 (17 July 1924) 235.
"Absolutely independent States." He emphatically declared.

I would therefore strive for Swaraj within the Empire but would not hesitate to sever all connection, if severance became a necessity through Britain's own fault. I would thus throw the burden of separation on the British people. I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting the independence. Any scheme that I would frame, while Britain declares her goal about India to be complete equality within the Empire, would be that of alliance and not that of independence without alliance. (65)

Such were the views of the one man who above all others dominated the Congress. The majority of Congressmen followed him blindly. He was a Mahatma to them.

Other top leaders of the Congress also held similar views on this question. Lajpat Rai was "prepared to accept Dominion Home Rule," because he believed it was "more easily obtained." V.J. Patel was of the view that "if we could get full freedom within the Empire, the connection is desirable," but not otherwise. Maulana Mohamed Ali believed "that the truest Swaraj for India is not incompatible with the British connection if the British nation and the British Government


(64) "Mahatma" means a 'Great Soul'.

(66) Presidential Address, the Punjab Home Rule Conference, Amritsar, 2 October 1921. The Hindu, 4 October 1921, 3.

(66) Presidential Address, Gujarat Political Conference, Broach, 31 May 1921. The Bombay Chronicle, 1 June 1921, 8.
only undergo a change of heart and make a paryaschita (repentance) for the past." C.R. Das, like Gandhi, preferred "the Empire idea" and advocated for Dominion Status because he thought it was in no sense a "servitude", but "essentially an alliance, by consent ... for material advantages in the real spirit of co-operation." After explaining advantages of Dominion Status vis-a-vis absolute independence on 2 May 1925 at Faridpur, Mr. Das declared: "I think it is for the good of India, for the good of the Commonwealth, for the good of the world that India should strive for freedom within the Commonwealth and so serve the cause of humanity." He made an offer, known as the Faridpur Officer, to the British Government to bring about a settlement on the basis of Dominion Status.

Mrs. Annie Besant made India's claim for Dominion Status one of the missions of her life. She considered it "essential to the interests of world peace, and the prevention of an

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(67) Presidential Address. ING; Report of the 38th Session, Cosana, 1923, 41.


(69) Ibid., 307. The Conference endorsed Das' views and passed a resolution calling "upon the Indian Nation to realise its Swaraj within the British Commonwealth." The Hindu, 5 May 1925, 7.
Euro-Asian war", because she believed that a Dominion India was "capable of acting as a bridge between Eastern and Western peoples." Similar views were also expressed by many other leaders of the Congress. There were some Congressmen (mostly the young element) like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who were advocates of independence outside the Empire, because most of them believed that the British would never grant Dominion Status to India. But a large majority of Congressmen were influenced and guided by the views of leaders like C.R. Das, Maulana Mohamed Ali, Lala Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru and specially those of Mahatma Gandhi. Leaders opposed to the British connection were only a few and were less influential.

After the abandonment of the Civil Disobedience Movement and the temporary withdrawal of MahatmaJi from active participation in the political field, Messrs C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru and others formed the Swaraj Party on 31 December 1922 with its


(71) Presiding over the U.P. Political Conference in October 1923, Jawaharlal Nehru said that he was in favour of Independence. But he added: "I am not desirous of changing the Congress creed at this stage. This would give rise to unnecessary debate and controversy and might narrow the Congress and exclude some people. Let us keep the Congress open for all."

The Hindu, 15 October 1923, 7.
programme of Council entry. The Swaraj Party was a party within the Congress, and in a short time it came to dominate the whole Congress machinery. The Swarajists, while accepting the Congress creed, adopted the "attainment of full Dominion Status" as "the immediate objective" of their party. They were not opposed to the concept of Swaraj within the Empire, if that was consistent with India's freedom. To the question whether Swaraj will be 'within' or 'without' the Empire, the leader of the party, Mr. C.R. Das, replied: "I want my liberty ... freedom ... and my right to establish our own system of government. If that is consistent with our being within the Empire, I have no objection to being within the Empire." And this was not inconsistent with the concept of Dominion Status prevailing in 1924. Pandit Motilal Nehru also held

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(72) The Congress had two groups known as the 'No-Changers' and the 'Pro-Changers'. The former were not in favour of Council entry and kept themselves engaged in the constructive work which was more or less of a non-political character; the latter were Swarajists. The most prominent Swarajists were C.R. Das, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Motilal Nehru, V.J. Patel, N.C. Kelkar, Dr. B.S. Moonje, A. Rangaswami Iyengar, M.R. Jayakar, S. Satyamurti, M.V. Abhyankar. The Party was named, the Congress-Khilafat-Swarajya Party which came subsequently to be known simply as the Swarajya (or Swaraj) Party. For further information, see The Indian Annual Register, 1923, I, 872 (n).

(73) The Indian Annual Register, 1923, II, 143.

(74) Speech at the All India Swarajya Party Conference, Calcutta, August 1924. Das, n. 68, 275.
the same views. The Swarajists, in co-operation with the Independents, under the leadership of Motilal Nehru, in the Imperial Legislative Assembly in February 1924, demanded a Round Table Conference to recommend a scheme of colonial self-government for India. This demand, generally known as the National Demand, was approved by the Congress in December 1925 (76) at Calcutta and reiterated by the Swarajists and the Independents in the Imperial Legislative Assembly in September (77) 1925 and March 1926.

The unanimity among the Indian political parties on the National Demand clearly proves that the ideal of Dominion Status was acceptable to all. During the whole of the discussion in the Assembly no single speech showed a desire for a breakaway from the Empire. The Indian spokesmen made it perfectly clear that the demand "does not affect the British connection with India," but on the other hand, "it maintains the continuance and the permanence of British rule."

(75) See Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol.IV, Pt.I (1924) 367-400, 518-82 and 709-69. The party formed by Swarajists and Independents in the Assembly was called the Nationalist Party. And among the Independents were Muslim Leaguers including Jinnah.

(76) See The Indian Annual Register, 1925, II, 332.


(78) Speech of Jamnadas M. Mehta (Swarajist) in support of the National Demand, 3 September 1925. Ibid., Vol.VI, Pt. II (1925) 962.
Attempted Drafts of an Indian constitution were also made during this period by some Indian political parties and leaders, including the Congress and Congressmen. The more important of these were Mrs. Annie Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill (1925), the Report of the Swaraj Sub-Committee of the All Parties Conference (1925) and the drafts prepared by Messrs S. Srinivasa Iyengar (1927), A. Rangaswami Iyengar (1927) and C. Vijayaraghavachariar (1927). The salient feature of these drafts is that they were framed on the basis of Dominion Status and not of absolute independence.

(79) The Commonwealth of India Bill is a draft on Indian Constitution prepared by the National Convention in the form of a bill to be introduced in the British Parliament. The Bill was accepted by many organizations and a large number of Indian political leaders. Though the Congress did not accept it and the leading Congress leaders did not sign it, the principle of Dominion Status on which the Bill was based, was accepted by almost all Congress leaders. The reasons for not signing it were different. [See Young India, 7 (23 July 1926) 256].

(80) Spokesmen of the Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Liberal Party were on the Swaraj Committee. Because of differences over the communal problem the All Parties Conference could not meet, and the report of the Swaraj Committee remained in abeyance. For further information and the Report, see The Indian Annual Register, 1925, I, 65-77.

(81) See S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Swaraj Constitution (Madras, 1927). Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar was the Congress President for 1926-27.

(82) For summary of the drafts of Rangaswamy Iyengar, General-Secretary for 1926-27, and Vijayaraghavachariar, ex-President (1920-21), of the Congress, see New India (Weekly) (Madras), 29 December 1927, 14-16.
The evidence summed up in the preceding paras proves conclusively that, almost up to the close of 1927, the majority of the Congress was favourable to India’s continued membership of the British Commonwealth provided that this could be obtained on a basis of freedom and equality.

**INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, 1927-29**
**DOMINION STATUS VS. INDEPENDENCE**

Neither the National Demand nor Mrs. Besant’s Commonwealth of India Bill was accepted by the British Government. Instead it appointed, in November 1927, the Indian Statutory Commission, popularly known as the Simon Commission, to enquire into the working of the Act of 1919 and to make recommendations for future constitutional advance. It was an all-white commission. People of all shades of political opinion in India condemned it in unequivocal language. The Commission was a direct affront to the Indian people. Almost all Indian political parties, including the Liberal Party, decided to boycott the Commission. In such a tense atmosphere the Congress held its session at Madras in December 1927, and the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Mr. C.S. Hathuranga Madalier emphatically declared:

(85) For resolutions of Indian political parties on the Simon Commission, see *The Indian Annual Register, 1927*, II.
... that if Parliament continues in its present insolent mood, we must definitely start an intensive propaganda for the secession of India from the Empire. ... It behoves English statesmanship to take careful note of this fact. Let them not drive us to despair.

Roo atted:

Parliament should recognise, and at once, that in India as well as in Ireland, all authority should be derived from the people and not from Whitehall. And if in the absence of any assurance in this behalf, we must abandon any further thought of framing our constitution as a constituent partner of the British Commonwealth of Nations. (84)

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, not being satisfied with this warning and the boycott of the Commission, asked the Congress to declare "the goal of the Indian people to be complete national independence", and the Congress did it unanimously. Jawaharlal Nehru explained that although the resolution "does not change the present creed of the Congress", it made complete independence "the immediate goal" of the Indian people. This is true that the creed of the Congress was not directly changed, as had been tried in the previous years, and there was still room in the Congress for those who stood for Dominion Status, but it was perhaps changed by interpretation.


(85) Independence resolution. Ibid., 15.

(86) Speech in moving the resolution. Ibid., 16.
A section of young Congressmen was not satisfied with this
even, and under the presidency of young Nehru they
organized a Republican Congress, a one-day side show at the
Madras session. After the Madras Congress controversy
started on the independence resolution, and the Congress was
divided into two groups - those who were willing to accept
Dominion Status and those who were demanding Complete
Independence as the goal of the Congress.

Though the resolution was unanimously passed, it did
not mean that the Congress was opposed to Dominion Status.
The old guard with their large following were still, in
favour of Dominion Status. They voted for the resolution
because they took Dominion Status as almost equal to indepen-
dence. Lala Lajpat Rai explained that the resolution was
passed because "many people believed that Dominion Status also
meant national independence." Mrs. Annie Boust, who was

(87) For further information about the Republican
Congress, see The Indira Annual Register, 1927, II, 345-49.

(88) Cited in Subhas C. Bose, The Indian Struggle, 1920-

After the Imperial Conference (1926) the word
"independence" for Dominion Status was being used by some of
the statesmen of the Commonwealth countries. General Hertzog
used the term in his draft at the Conference. Ewen Ramsey
MacDonald, writing on Indian Swaraj a few days before the
appointment of the Simon Commission, declared that India could
safely be given "independence." Obviously, he used the term
for Dominion Status.
present at the Madras Congress and described the resolution as "a dignified and clear statement of India's goal.", afterwards explained that by adopting the resolution the Congress had not been "wedded to the theory of a complete severance of the British connection with this country." The resolution was intended primarily as a fitting reply to "Lord Birkenhead's insulting and arrogant statement that Great Britain cannot and will not share her responsibility for the future of India with India itself." It reflected the rumblings of discontent among impatient nationalist youths. Mahatma Gandhi was not present at the time and heard of the resolution after it had been passed. Afterwards he remarked that the resolution "was hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed."


(90) New India (Weekly), 19 January 1928, 4. Also see ibid., 12 January 1928, 5.

(91) S. Satyamurti's speech in support of the resolution. INC, Report, n. s. 24, 20.

(92) Young India, 10 (5 January 1928) 4. He wrote also a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru expressing his opposition to Nehru's 'Independence' move. See Jawaharlal Nehru, A Bunch of Old Letters (Bombay, 1958) 55-6.
The appointment of the Simon Commission and the challenge of Lord Birkenhead that Indian critics could not come out with their own suggestions for a constitution brought all Indian political parties together to produce a constitution which might receive the approval of all interests in India. The Congress summoned the All Parties Conference at Delhi in February and March 1928. The Conference appointed a Committee with Pandit Motilal Nehru as Chairman to determine the constitutional goal of the country and to frame the outlines of the future constitution. The Committee prepared its report, popularly known as the Nehru Report, with Dominion (95) Status as the political goal of India.

The Nehru Report was not unanimously acceptable to the Congress. Within the Congress there were two groups - the older group who would be content if they had a Dominion form of Government and who were therefore in favour of accepting the Nehru Report in toto, and the younger group who adhered to the resolution of independence passed at the Madras Congress.

(05) Constitutional Status of India was defined in the 1st Article of the Report:

"India shall have the same constitutional status in the comity of nations known as the British Empire as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, the Union of South Africa and the Irish Free State . . . ."

and wanted to accept the Nehru Report only on the basis of complete national independence. The latter formed 'The Independence for India League', with S. Srinivasa Iyengar as President and Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose as Secretaries, early in November 1928. And "the achievement of complete independence for India and the reconstruction of Indian society on a basis of social and economic equality" was the object of the League.

The AICC at its Delhi meeting in November 1928 discussed the Nehru Report. The Committee not only endorsed the Madras Congress resolution but also made an addendum that "there can be no true freedom till the British connection is severed." This was a snap victory of the younger group of the Congress, but the old guard did not accept the defeat. A great controversy started in the public and the press. Both sections interpreted the resolution and the addendum in their own way. Leaders like Motilal Nehru believed that it was not incompatible with full Dominion Status if it was offered. Motilal Nehru,

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(94) Draft Constitution of the Independence for India League. The Indian Annual Register, 1928, II, 514. For the birth and further information of the League, see ibid., 515-6.

(95) Resolution on Nehru Report. INC. 1928; (R), 1.

(96) For the discussions in the AICC meeting at Delhi and for subsequent controversy and views of both the sides, see: The Hindu, (5-14) November 1928; and New India (Weekly), 8 November 1928, 8-9.
President of the AICC meeting, warned the group who advocated independence: "You must not run away with the idea that the Congress is for Independence. It may be that the majority in the next Congress is for Independence, but the minority has always the right to convince and convert the majority."

Preparations were started by both sides for having the verdict of the Indian National Congress on the issue, Dominion Status vs. Complete Independence, in its favour. The Congress met at Calcutta in December 1928, and Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Chairman of the Nehru Committee and the President-elect of the Calcutta Congress, called Mahatma Gandhi to his aid, and so Gandhiji re-entered Indian politics. A great cleavage was apprehended at the Calcutta Congress on this question. But a compromise was reached between the two groups. Never failing in his resources Mahatmaji succeeded in prevailing upon the Congress to take the decision that unless Government agreed to grant India Dominion Status by the forthcoming 31 December, the Congress would declare for Complete Independence. Full freedom was given to both the groups for propagating their respective points of view. Below is the

(97) Speech at the AICC meeting, Delhi, 3 November 1928. The Hindu, 5 November 1928, 9.

(98) After the emergence of the Swaraj Party in 1923, Mahatma Gandhi did not take active part in political questions in the Congress and kept himself busy in the constructive programme.
extract of the resolution on the Nehru Report:

This Congress ... whilst adhering to the resolution relating to complete independence passed at Madras Congress approves of the Constitution drawn up by the Committee.... Subject to the exigencies of the political situation this Congress will adopt the Constitution in its entirety if it is accepted by the British Parliament on or before December 31st, 1929. ... Consistently with the above nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on, in the name of the Congress, of propaganda for complete independence. (99)

Though the compromise was reached on the resolution in the Subjects Committee, Subhas Chandra Bose asked the Congress to adhere to "the decision of the Madras Congress" and to declare "that there can be no true freedom till the British connection is severed." The attempt was not successful and the motion was lost by 973 to 1350. The result shows that by 1928 the younger group became quite influential in the Congress, but Gandhiji still dominated it.

The main difference between the old guard and the younger group was, it seems, that the former and specially Mahatma Gandhi believed in the possibility of achieving full


(100) S.C. Bose's amendment. Ibid., 110. The amendment was supported among others by Satyamurti, Sarat Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru.

(101) Ibid., 142.
Dominion Status by peaceful means within the Empire; the latter had no such hope and believed that the British would never willingly give up imperialism and treat India as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth. Because they had no hopes for getting full Dominion Status, they pleaded for complete independence. Analyzing their position Mahatma Gandhi wrote:

I am sure that the staunchest votary of independence does not mean that he will not have any British association on any terms whatsoever. Even when he says so, he means, as one of the supporters of the resolution (102) admitted in answer to my question, that the British people will never accept association on equal terms. This is totally different from rejecting British association on any terms. (103)

During 1929, the attitude of the Congress remained almost the same. On 31 October 1929, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, made an announcement to the effect that Dominion Status was the natural goal of India's advance and held out the prospect of a Round Table Conference for coming to an agreement with regard to the Indian constitutional issues. The Congress Working Committee discussed the announcement and subsequently a manifesto accepting the principle of Dominion Status was issued under the signatures of eminent Indian political leaders including the top leaders of the Congress. A section of the

(102) Resolution to interpret 'Swaraj' as Independence at the Gambati Congress in 1926.

(103) Young India, 9 (13 January 1927) 12.
young element of the Congress, opposed to the ideal of Dominion Status, did not subscribe to the leaders' manifesto. But it was approved by the Working Committee. The manifesto demanded that a Round Table Conference be held to frame a constitution on the basis of Dominion Status and not to discuss when Dominion Status should be established. And while other parties were not very serious about the demand, the Congress made it a condition precedent to the Round Table Conference. But the Viceroy could not give any assurance to the Congress leaders to this effect.

Having lost all hopes of getting Dominion Status immediately, the Congress in December 1929 at Lahore declared "Complete Independence" as its goal.

This Congress ... in pursuance of the resolution passed at its session at Calcutta last year, declares that the word 'Swaraj' in Article one of the Congress Constitution shall mean complete independence ... and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of complete independence for India. (104)

Thus just at the dawn of 1929 'Complete Independence' became the objective of the Congress. That the Congressmen meant by 'Complete Independence' will be discussed in the next chapter.

(104) For the texts of Viceroy's announcement, leaders' manifesto, Independent leaders' statement and the Working Committee's resolution, see The Indian Annual Register, 1929, II, 47-52.

(105) Appendix I.
OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

Other important political parties did not share the views of the Congress and continued to adhere to the ideal of Dominion Status. The Lahore independence resolution widened the gulf between them and the Congress. After the Lucknow rapprochement (1916), the Congress and the Muslim League, the two major political organizations in the country, had come closer to each other and the separate life of the League began gradually to melt itself into the greater life of the Congress. For the next six years they held their sessions simultaneously at the same place and their leaders held joint discussions and decisions on political questions. Eminent leaders of the League like Dr. M.A. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mohamed Ali, Shaukat Ali and M.A. Jinnah were influential members of the Congress as well. And Hindu leaders of the Congress used to attend sessions of the League. Naturally both organizations adopted a common political policy and programme, and from 1916 to 1923 the political views of the Congress, which have been fully discussed, may safely be taken as the views of the League.

Like the Congress, the League welcomed Montagu’s announcement and demanded "that a time limit be fixed in the statute itself within which complete Responsible Government (106) should be established ... in India." It regarded the

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Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms as "inadequate and unsatisfactory" (107) but decided to work them whatever worth they were. And in spite of the unhappy developments in the country the League year after year assured the Government of "the steadfast and (108) continued loyalty of the Mussalman community of India."

The Treaty of Sevres and the Khilafat question, however, changed the attitude of the Muslim community. Anti-British feeling ran high amongst the Indian Muslims, and they came still closer to the Congress and the Hindu community. The All India Khilafat Conference, which practically superseded the League, was set up with the full support and co-operation of the Congress, and Hindu leaders participated in it. Mahatma Gandhi became the supreme leader of the Congress, the Khilafat Conference and the League organizations. All the three organizations loyally followed his policy and programme. So much so that many Muslim leaders like Shaukat Ali declared (109) him as "Imam Mehdi". In December 1920, the League changed its creed. The promotion and maintenance of loyalty towards


(108) Loyalty resolution was adopted at Bombay, Delhi and Amritsar Sessions. See Ibid., 2 September 1918, 8; 31 December 1918, 5; and 1 January 1920, 9, respectively.


'Imam Mehdi' means inspired leader.
the British Crown was dropped and "the attainment of Swarajya (110) by the people of India" was adopted as the new objective. The mover of the resolution, Maulana Mohamed Ali, clearly stated that "loyalty to the British Government and Self-Government within the British Empire were out of question as long as the British Government persisted in their anti-Islamic and anti- (111) Indian policy." The word Swarajya (or Swaraj) was left undefined and vague, but the League and the Khilafat Conference refused to interpret it as independence outside the British Empire. Attempts to this effect were made but with no effect.

The League and the Khilafat Conference accepted Gandhiji's


(111) Ibid.

(112) At the 14th League Session, Ahmedabad, 1921, Independence resolution was moved by Maulana Azad Suhhawi and was opposed among others by Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari. The resolution was defeated. See The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1 January 1922, 4.

Maulana Haarat Mohani made an unsuccessful attempt at the All India Khilafat Conference, Ahmedabad, 1921. See Ibid., 29 December 1921, 5. But on 10 July 1921, the Khilafat Conference at Karachi passed a resolution declaring that "if the British Government were to take any military measures against the Angora Government, then the Mussalmans of India will be compelled ... with the concurrence of the Congress to proclaim in the complete independence of India ... and the establishment of a Republic for the Government of India." The Indian Annual Register, 1922, I, 173.
interpretation of Swaraj as 'within the Empire if possible, without if necessary'.

After the rise of Mustapha Kamal Pasha leading to the treaty of Laussano (1923) and the abolition of the office of the Caliph (1924), the Khilafat Movement lost all its vitality. The ties between the Hindus and the Muslims loosened and the monster of communalism raised its head again. The anti-British feeling gradually began to disappear from amongst the Muslim community. The Muslim League which had receded into the background was revived by Jinnah who continued to be one of its dominating personalities. Henceforth League leaders clearly and repeatedly explained that the League stood for "the establishment of Dominion Responsible Government in India." They declared that the talk of the Congress creed (of Swaraj) being interpreted in such a way as to include breaking away from the British Empire, was "no more than a counsel of despair." And although the word 'Swaraj' was not deleted from its constitution, the League preferred to describe its goal as the attainment of responsible self-government within the British Commonwealth.

(113) Jinnah's Presidential Address, 15th League (adjourned) Session, Lahore, May 1924. The Hindu, 26 May 1924, 14. At the Lucknow Session, March 1923, Jinnah moved a resolution pleading for Council-entry and Dominion Status. The Session was adjourned. See The Times of India (Bombay), 4 April 1923, 10.

(114) Syed Raza Ali's Presidential Address, 16th League Session, Bombay, 1924. The Times of India, 31 December 1924, 11.
Mr. Jinnah and other League members of the Central Assembly were a party to the National Demand for a Dominion Constitution put up by Motilal Nehru in the Legislative Assembly in 1924, 1925 and 1926. The League endorsed the demand, and repeatedly and strongly pleaded that India should possess "full autonomy" and should "rank as an equal with the Dominions and with the United Kingdom itself as a member of the British Commonwealth."

During the closing months of 1927, there was disunity in the League. It was split into two parts - one part under Sir Muhammad Shafi, meeting in Lahore, whilst the accredited session which followed Jinnah met at Calcutta. A resolution welcoming the Simon Commission was passed at Lahore, whilst a resolution boycottting the Commission was adopted by the Calcutta Session of the League. Although the Muslim League could not give its clear and general support to the Nehru Report, because of differences over the communal question, there was practically no opposition to the ideal of Dominion Status embodied in the Report. The Shafian group was too loyal to oppose it and the spokesmen of Jinnah's League made it

(115) The main difference between the Congress and the League was that the former demanded a Round Table Conference, whilst the latter was in favour of a Royal Commission.

(116) Resolution adopted at League Sessions at Aligarh (1925) and Delhi (1926). *AIVL, Resolutions, May 1924 - Dec. 1926*, 17 and 30 respectively.
perfectly clear that the League was opposed to independence and favoured British connection with Dominion Status in the Commonwealth. The Maharaja of Mahmudabad, President of the Calcutta Session (1928), said that "the doctrine of independence in the sense of severance of British connection is ... a hopelessly unworkable proposition" and added, that "India's place in the British Commonwealth is a place of undeniable security." He was convinced that there was plenty of room for the growth, development and expression of Indian nationalism within the Commonwealth, and declared that "the cry of independence is a cry in the wilderness." He asked the League to oppose 'independence' and give its "wholehearted support to the Dominion Status insisted upon in the Nehru Report." The Chairman of the Reception Committee also expressed the same views, and stated that "it would ... be unwise to fritter away their limited national energy at the mere name and chimera of Independence."

The All India Muslim Conference, which was convened to bring about unity among political leaders of the Muslim community and to give a united verdict on the Nehru Report,

(118) Ibid.
(119) Ibid., 396.
(120) Maulvi Abdul Karim's Welcome Address. Ibid., 394.
also failed to express any opinion on the constitutional goal of India and the Report. But its accredited leader, His Highness the Agha Khan, opposed 'independence' and unequivocally declared that so long as India depended for her protection against external aggression and internal security upon Great Britain, Great Britain would naturally claim "a predominant share and voice in the governance of India." There was great confusion in the Muslim political circles during 1928 and 1929, but it is true that the majority of Muslim leaders was in favour of Dominion Status. Only a small section - men like Ali Brothers, Haerat Mohani, Azad Subhani and Dr. S. Kitchlew - pleaded for independence.

In June 1929, Mr. Jinnah proposed to the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, that the British Government should "without delay ... make a declaration that Great Britain is unequivocally pledged to the policy of granting to India full responsible government with Dominion Status." He believed that such a declaration "will be a very severe antidote to the movement for independence." And subsequently,


(122) Presidential Address. Ibid., 21.

(123) Jinnah's proposals to Ramsay MacDonald, 19 June 1929. The Hindu, 1 November 1929, 10.
when Lord Irwin made the announcement in October 1929, both Jinnah and Muhammad Shafi, representing the two sections of the League, welcomed it, and so did the All India Muslim Conference. Jinnah strongly denounced the independence resolution of the Lahore Congress as "most misleading, unpractical, unsound and unwise."

The All India Hindu Mahasabha was started to safeguard the interests of the Hindu community, and not as a political organization. However, it was loyal to the British and from the very beginning was in favour of self-government within the Empire. In December 1918, it unanimously demanded "responsible self-Government for India ... and equal status in all respects for its people in the British Empire." And its moderate President, Raja Sir Rampal Singh, pleaded for the acceptance of the Montford Scheme with certain modifications and amendments. For many years the Hindu Mahasabha confined itself only to social, religious and cultural


(126) Resolution, 5th All India Hindu Conference, Delhi, 1918. The Hindu, 51 December 1918, 6.

(127) See Presidential Address. Ibid., 28 December 1918, 6.
activities and took no active part in politics. Tracing the history of the Mahasabha, Lala Lajpat Rai, in 1925, said that until 1921 the Hindu Mahasabha was in the hands of "our loyalist friends." In that year some moderate Hindu leaders of the Congress like Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya took up the leadership of the organization in their hands. But "from 1921 to 1924 there was no need to rouse or whip up the activities of the Hindu Sabha," said Lajpat Rai. Because they were all absorbed in the Congress programme of Non-Co-operation and Khilafat, and most of them were put behind the bars.

Naturally the Mahasabha remained in the background. It was revived in 1924 when the Hindu-Muslim unity had given way to communal riots of a serious character.

Even after 1924, for many years, the Hindu Mahasabha took little interest in political questions and hardly expressed any opinion on them. Leaders of the Mahasabha clearly stated that they wanted to keep it a non-political organization. Its acknowledged leader and chief spokesman, Lajpat Rai, clearly explained that "the Hindu Mahasabha has no special political functions except to define the position of the Hindu community in relation to other communities." Beyond that,

(128) Public speech on 'The Hindu Sabha', Madras, 6 January 1925. Ibid., 7 January 1925, 10.

(129) Ibid.

(130) Presidential Address, 8th Mahasabha Session, Calcutta, 1925. Ibid., 14 April 1925, 4.
Hindu Mahasabha leaders did not want the Mahasabha to go. The rest of the political programme of the country, they believed, must be left to purely political organizations like the Congress and the Liberal Party, and the Hindu Mahasabha should not take them up. Pandit Malaviya, one of the founders, explained that the Mahasabha was organized because the Congress, being a political body, could not deal with social and other non-political problems affecting the Hindu community, and that it was not to oppose but "to supplement (131) and to strengthen the Congress." Lajpat Rai further explained: "We want Swaraj. What kind of Swaraj we want we can discuss it in the Congress. The Hindu Sabha has nothing to do with it." "During this period almost all prominent (132) Hindusabhaitees were members of the Congress as well." And moderate Congressmen formed a vast majority. Men like Lajpat Rai, Malaviya, Dr. B.S. Moonje and N.C. Kelkar were its leaders and guides. These leaders believed in the ideal of Dominion Status.

The All India Hindu Mahasabha resolved to boycott the Simon Commission, whilst the Punjab Hindu Sabha under the

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(131) Presidential Address, Mahasabha Special Session, Belgaum, 1924. The Times of India, 30 December 1924, 10.

(132) Public speech, Madras, 6 January 1925. The Hindu, 7 January 1925, 10.

leadership of Bhai Parmannand decided to co-operate with
the Commission. The Hindu Mahasabha gave its general support
to the Nehru Report and was fully satisfied with the ideal
of Dominion Status. Leaders like Malaviya and Kelkar pleaded
for caution and moderation in the Congress. The Mahasabha
welcomed the Viceroy's announcement (1929) and decided to
participate in the Round Table Conference.

The Liberals regarded themselves as the true followers
of the early Congressmen - Hume, Dadabhai, Narsroji, Pherozeshah
Mehta and others - and continued firmly to adhere to their
creed of self-government and equal partnership within the
Empire. The great Liberal and acknowledged leader of the
Liberal Party, Surendra Nath Banerjea, presiding over the
first Moderates' Conference categorically stated: "We ... are
the friends of evolution and the enemies of revolution ....
Our guiding principle is - 'co-operate when we can;
criticize when we must'. It is not 'criticize when we can;
co-operate when we must'." He further explained that the
mission of the Liberal Party was to strive for steady,
continuous and unbroken progress "until, we have become equal

(134) See ibid., 72-3.

(135) All India Conference of the Moderate Party,
partners in the great Confederacy of free states, rejoicing in their indissoluble union with England and the Empire."

Liberals faithfully followed the policy laid down by S.N. Banerjea, and "the attainment ... of Swaraj (Responsible Self-Government and Dominion Status for India)" continued to be the keynote of the Party. Sir B.C. Mitter believed that "If we secure ... freedom in association with the British Empire it will rest on a rock ofadamant impervious to the ravages of time and vicissitudes of fortune." C.Y. Chintamani stated that "loyal patriotism" was the watchword of the Liberal Party and it did not seek "a destiny for the Motherland outside the British Empire." Sir Moropant Joshi categorically declared that "we have repeatedly stated that our ideal can only be, and is, and has always been, Dominion Status for India."

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(136) Ibid., 55.

(137) First Article defining the object of the Party. Constitution of the National Liberal Federation of India (As determined by Resolutions passed by Federation at its sessions held in the years 1919, 1920, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1927 and 1940). Pamphlet.


Though 'Swaraj' was the creed of the Liberals also, but, unlike the Congress, they did not leave it vague and defined it as responsible government within the Empire. "Our aim is to attain Swaraj by which we mean Dominion form of Self-Government as exists in all Self-Governing colonies of the Empire," said K.K. Mitra. And Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru explained: "What we are aiming at is not ... independence, but responsible self-government within the Empire. On that point let there be no room for doubt." The Liberal Party believed that "the connexion of England with India is a divine dispensation ordained for the holiest and highest of ends." It regarded the British connection useful for not merely the attainment of Swaraj but also for a self-governing India for her security and progress. Dr. R.P. Paranjpye clearly explained:

The association of India with the British will make her progress easier and will not cut us off from intimate contact with the West; and, further, in these days of vast world states and national wars waged with every kind of scientific machinery it is better to be a part of a large organisation than to plough our lonely furrow. (144)


(143) Banerjee, n. 23, 336.

"If the progress we are to make is to be orderly, peaceful, certain and effective, it can be secured only by remaining within the British Empire and not by getting away from it," argued L.A. Govindaraghava Aiyar. Liberals were unanimous on this point.

The National Liberal Federation boycotted the all-White Simon Commission, co-operated with the All Parties Conference and gave its full support to the report of the Nehru Committee. And while Indian nationalists were divided in their allegiance between Dominion Status and independence outside the British Empire, the Liberal Party stood united and firm in its loyalty to the ideal of Dominion Status.

Chintamani categorically stated:

...we exist as a party on the basis of the attainment of Dominion Status by India at the earliest possible date. Deny this, and there is no justification for our party. For those Indians who think that political salvation lies in the severance of the British connection ... the National Liberal Federation is not the place. (146)

They strongly repudiated the idea that Dominion Status was a very low ideal. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru forcefully argued that the idea of Dominion Status was "a dynamic idea" and the Imperial Conference of 1926 gave Dominions "even the liberty

(145) Welcome Address. NLF, Report, n. 139, 5.
to separate themselves, if they like, from England." Sir Chimanlal Sethalvad explained that "Dominion Status meets all national aspirations and carries with it the protection, safety and all other advantages of partnership in the most powerful Empire in the world." Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer argued that in the existing world absolute independence was not possible and groups of people and leagues of nations were coming into existence. He regarded the British Commonwealth as "a miniature league of nations." And, moreover, "we Liberals believe that there is nothing to lose but a great deal to gain by being within the British Commonwealth of Nations," he said. Dominion Status "is equal to independence and is more beneficial than isolated independence," said Chintamani. Naturally, the Liberal Party welcomed the Viceroy's announcement (1929) and resolved to participate in the proposed Round Table Conference. Liberals condemned the Congress demand for independence as "a wild cry and an impracticable proposition."

(147) Speech in moving the resolution on Dominion Status. Ibid., 30.
(149) Speech on the resolution on Dominion Status. Ibid., 34 and 35 respectively.
(150) Welcome Address. Ibid., 6.
The South Indian Liberal Federation, also known as the Justice Party, of the non-Brahmin communities of Southern India, formed in 1916, was "deeply devoted and loyally attached to British rule." In 1917, though the SILF wanted that India must be accorded an equal partnership in the Empire, it was opposed to the demand of Home Rule. It was "not in favour of any measure, which, in operation, is designed or tends completely to undermine the influence and authority of the British rulers." And the attainment of "Swaraj for India as a component part of the British Empire" continued to be the creed of the Party. Like the National Liberal Federation, the SILF believed that "the British connection with India was providential." The Justice Party co-operated with the Simon Commission and reiterated that its goal was full Dominion Status.

(152) For the origin of the SILF, see T. Varadarajulu Naidu, comp., The Justice Movement 1917: A detailed account of the activities of the Justice Movement in the first year of its existence (Madras, 1952).


(154) Address of the SILF to Montagu and Chelmsford. Ibid., 63.


Thus until 1929 Indian political parties were unanimous on Dominion Status as the constitutional goal of India and the opposition was not great and serious. All Indian political parties welcomed Montagu’s announcement (1917), but the Montford Scheme did not satisfy most of the Indian leaders and, as a result, there was again a split in the Congress which led to the formation of the National Liberal Federation of India by the moderate section in 1918. The repressive policy of the Government, specially the Punjab tragedy, and the Turkish Peace Treaty (1920) made the position still worse. The constitutions of the Congress and the League were amended and the attainment of Swaraj became their new creed in December 1920. But the word Swaraj was left undefined.

In the following years, several attempts were made to define Swaraj as complete independence in the Congress constitution but without success. The majority of the Congressmen opposed the move and the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi did not as yet commit itself to complete independence. The leading personalities of the Congress interpreted the term Swaraj as 'Within the Empire if possible, without if necessary'. And despite a Madras Congress resolution favouring independence, Dominion Status was retained as the goal as late as 1928. Congress did not finally define Swaraj as complete independence until its December 1929 meeting at Lahore.
Like the Congress, the Muslim League also refused to define Swaraj as independence. And after 1924 the accredited leaders and spokesmen of the League clearly and repeatedly stated that its object was not independence but Dominion Status within the Empire. The Hindu Mahasabha, under the leadership of the moderate wing of the Congress, was satisfied with Dominion Status as India's political goal. And the National Liberal Federation had been throughout a great champion of the ideal of Dominion Status. So was the case with the Justice Party.