ABSTRACT

The present thesis is an attempt to study the role and attitude of the Muslim League in Indian Politics from 1940 to 1947. Since the inception of the All-India Muslim League in December 1906 at Dacca cordial relations existed between the League and the Congress and it was only in 1929-30 that they parted company because of the non-settlement of the communal problem. At all stages the League endeavoured to make the Congress realise Muslim aspirations and grievances and at every step the Congress failed to see that the League was a representative body of the Muslims and a major factor in Indian politics which could not be ignored. My researches have led me to the conclusion that had the Congress taken the communal problem seriously, Lahore resolution and finally the Partition would not have taken place.

The period between 1922 to 1926 had witnessed the rise of communalism, which uprooted the brotherly relations between the Muslim League and the Congress. The communal relations had reached such an extent that even the Nehru Report rejected the Lucknow Pact, which
had commented the Hindu-Muslim unity, and forced M.A. Jinnah, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Mohammad Ali and many other influential Muslim nationalists to leave the Congress. The settlement of the 'Minority Question' was the corner-stone of Jinnah's and Mohammad Ali's political philosophies which they preached till they lived. The League, thereafter met at Allahabad in 1930 and for the first time high-lighted its policy of securing a 'Muslim India' and declared emphatically that it would not be content with any of the constitution that fails to guarantee full Muslim representation on population basis in the Punjab and Bengal.

Efforts to secure the above goal continued. The Government of India Act 1935 envisaged a Federal structure with Provincial Autonomy. Both the Congress and the League condemned the federal scheme but decided to utilized its provincial part. In 1936 the League for the first time planned to organise itself for the election and projected the idea of Muslims being a 'nation' and not a 'community.' In the election that held in 1937, the League could not secure the expected number of seats but the Congress won the majority of seats.
Though in U.P. Muslim population figured only 14% but because of its influence, the Congress had agreed to give the Muslim League two seats on the U.P. Cabinet. But when the Congress won the majority, it could not stick to its former promise and intended to offer only one seat to the League. Moreover the Congress sent a letter to League stating pre-condition for the inclusion of League in the Cabinet. The letter stated that 'The Muslim League party in the United Provinces Assembly shall become part of the Congress party and will fully share with other members of the party their privileges and obligations as members of the Congress Party. The Muslim League Parliamentary Board in the United Provinces will be dissolved and no candidate will, therefore, be set up by the said Board at any election.'

This was taken by the League an attempt to merge the separate entity of the League into the Congress. It created suspicion among the Muslims that the Congress wanted to integrate the Muslim community with the Hindus. Extreme hostility between the two was the outcome of this letter and the League henceforth
bitterly criticised the Congress ministries. It celebrated the Day of Deliverance and in Lahore in 1940 in its Annual session presented Lahore Resolution on the basis of two-nation theory, demanding a separate homeland for the Muslims. This was not accepted by the other political parties.

Since the Second World War had already started and the Congress refused to support the Allies and its ministries resigned, Jinnah made the most of such an opportunity and prevailed on Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, to accept that the British Government would not frame any constitution without the approval of the League and that in the Executive Council the number of Muslim members would be equal to that of the Hindus. The August Offer was the result of this persuasion.

While War position in 1942 was not satisfactory, America, Australia and China, supported the cause of India's independence. The British Government therefore sent Sir Stafford Cripps to explain to Indian Leaders certain constitutional proposals accepted by the Government of England. The Congress and the League both rejected the Cripps proposals on their respective
grounds. While the Congress rejected it because whatever it had offered was to be implemented after war and Indian aspirations could not be put in check for such a long time, the League criticised the procedure of the Constitution-making body feeling that in spite of the separate electorate, mentioned in the Cripps proposals, it would not be able to get more than 25 per cent of its representatives in the Constituent Assembly. Cripps failure was thus evident.

The attitude of the League towards the Quit India was also not friendly. Its opposition mainly rallied the point that the settlement of the communal problem should get the top priority and the issue of Independence should be given secondary position. The League was afraid that after the withdrawal of the British, the Muslims would not get their due. It was only in the presence of the British Government that they could get their grievances secured. This fear of the League continued and nothing was done by the Congress to allay their fear. To say that the League was opposed to the Independence of India is wrong. It only wanted the safety and security of Muslims in India along with the Independence of India.
The war ended in May 1945 with British victory and the British policy took a new turn to solve the constitutional deadlock. Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, called a Conference of Congress and League representatives at Simla to form the government. But the Conference failed because Jinnah wanted the Muslim members of the Council to be chosen from the League. He further wanted some effective safeguards, other than the Viceroy's veto, to protect Muslim interests from majority decisions. Later, elections for the Central Legislature were fought. The League fought election on the basis of its demand for Pakistan and won almost every Muslim seat. The result of the election had now proved that the Muslim League had full control over the Muslim masses, securing 96.6% of the total votes cast in Mohammadan constituencies and the Congress had secure 91.3% of the votes cast in non-Mohammadan constituencies. It had also proved that there were two major parties - the Congress and the League.

While each party was busy to prove its following, the Government of England sent a delegation of Cabinet ministers to settle the issue of Pakistan and
Indian Independence. The Conference which discussed the above issues could not settle the main differences of the Congress and League. The main point of difference between the two groups was that the Congress wanted a United India with a unitary national government and the League opposed it and wanted the creation of Pakistan on the basis of two nation-theory. Later the Mission created grouping of the Provinces in Section A, B, and C and Jinnah agreed to accept it on the condition that "if the Congress would accept the Groups, the Muslim League would accept the Union." But it was rejected by the Congress.

The League in its ten points memorandum (May 12, 1946) said that the six Muslim provinces (Punjab, NWFP, Baluchistan, Sind, Bengal and Assam) should be grouped together in one and would deal with all the subjects except Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communication and a separate constitution-making body for six provinces would frame the constitution while the Congress stood for one Constitution-making body and after the Constituent Assembly had decided the constitution for the All-India Federal Union, the representatives of the Provinces may form groups to decide the constitution for their group.
Thus both the parties had different approach and did not agree to participate in the formation of the interim Government. Later the League agreed to participate in the interim Government and somehow reluctantly accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan. But Jawaharlal's statement that he had every intention of modifying the plan and the Constituent Assembly was a sovereign body and that in all probability there would be no groups at all, shocked the League. To Jinnah if the Congress could change so many times while the British were still there, what assurance would the minorities have that once the British left, the Congress would not again change. Jinnah was not so keen for Pakistan.

Jinnah himself was not clear about the implications of his demand. He only wanted at least 'Pakistan' in principle to be accepted. He wanted some statutory safeguards for the minorities to be incorporated on the basis of parity in any scheme which was to deliver independence to India. Jinnah said 'Let us.....live as good neighbours, let the Hindus guard the South and West and let the Muslims guard the frontiers we will then stand together and say to the world "Hands off India. India
for the Indians." Sri Prakash, India's first High Commissioner to Pakistan corroborates the above by saying that Jinnah wanted the two states to be known as parts of India.

Attlee the Prime Minister realised that the only solution lay in the partition of India into two separate states - Hindustan and Pakistan and sent Lord Mountbatten to solve this who did his job in August 1947.

Though Jinnah achieved Pakistan in 1947 but the question that comes in the mind of a reader is: Did he actually stand for it or he simply wanted safety and security for Muslims within India. A study of this question reveals that Jinnah took Pakistan as a bargaining counter. He actually wanted that some solution to come out if the dialogue between the League - the Congress and the British continued. Mr. Kuldip Nayar has right written:

"Mr. Jinnah was certain in his mind that if India got full independence and British control was altogether eliminated, the Hindu majority, could not be relied upon for dealing justly with the Muslim population of
India. He, therefore, was clear in his mind that some how or the other, overall British control must be retained over the Indian sub-continent. He never believed that Britain would withdraw leaving India totally independent .... He consequently put-up objections and obstructions .... and expected that the Congress demand for total independence would not be acceded to by the British and the Muslim population would continue to have overall British protection."

This is also clear from the letter of Dr. Chaman-lal which goes to prove of Jinnah’s ideas on the unity of India. Congress attitude towards the League or Jinnah was not respective. When Mountbatten in his first visit with Nehru asked his estimate about Jinnah, Nehru presented him as a "monster of negativism." Later when Mountbatten argued with Jinnah for a United India Jinnah replied that 'even though nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to see such unity, it was the behaviour of the Hindus that had made it impo-
ssible for the Muslims to share it." Congress never treated League as a representative body of Muslims and Jinnah as its sole spokesman while Jinnah wanted both of these to be accepted by the Congress. "That is all that I seek", he told Durga Das. Creation of Pakistan could have been avoided, if the Congress had been in a conciliatory mood. Besides the clashes of personalities the safety of the Muslims was the major issue to Jinnah. Had it been provided, it would have satisfied him. He accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan thinking that it would secure what he wanted. But Jawaharlal statement changed the course of history and his bargaining counter could not get his vision of a United India.