CHAPTER-I

Elections of 1936-37 and Muslim League
ELECTIONS OF 1936-37 AND MUSLIM LEAGUE

The experience of contesting the elections of 1936-37 and forming ministries under conditions of responsible government revealed the inner dynamics of Indian politics. It brought to the surface both majority and minority attitudes in a new and striking way. The most significant of these was the Congress tendency towards a one-party polity in India that assumed the submersion of other Indian parties. Another was the emergent unity of Muslim India. In the experiences of those years Jinnah learnt lessons in practical politics that a theoretical approach could never have taught him. He and the Muslim League went into the elections as idealists; they emerged from the aftermath as political realists. The change could hardly have been more significant for India and the shape of her independent future.

Prior to the elections of 1937, Muslim politics were chaotic, in a state of desperate disorganisation, with interests in conflict in all levels, provincial, local and personal. No Muslim organization appeared capable of overcoming the differences that divided the
Muslim body politic. Such organizations as Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind, All India Muslim Conference and the All India Muslim League had been deliberative bodies. The spheres of activities, in the past, had been limited to annual meetings and discussions. Since the non-cooperation days the Jamiat had been in oblivion and was not sufficiently organized. It continued to plough its lonely furrow until the time when it unconditionally joined the Congress in 1937. The All-India Muslim Conference (originally the All-Parties Muslim Conference organized under the Chairmanship of Aga Khan in 1928), had been inactive. Its executive board under the Chairmanship of Abdoola Haroon, after holding a few meetings in the early months of 1936, decided to withdraw from the election campaign. While abstaining from specifically mentioning any particular parties, the conference, winding up its offices, asked the electors to support those candidates who stood by the communal award and pledged themselves to safeguard the religious and cultural rights of the Muslims and were committed to the working of the provincial constitution. Like other Muslim organizations, the Muslim League, during the last few years had been in a moribund condition. The League had been more or less defunct since 1920. In 1927, its total membership was 1330. Between 1931 and 1933 its membership

1. Star of India, April 6, 1936.
2. Ibid., April 26, and September 29, 1936.
annual expenditure did not exceed Rs.3,000. Decisions of the council of the Muslim League were taken by a very small minority, with only 10 out of its 310 members forming a quorum. Since the central office of the League was situated in Delhi, Leaguers from provinces far away from Delhi hardly ever attended party meetings.3

The League's popular appeal was negligible. Part of the reason for this lay in the social conservatism of its members. Wealth, social position and education determined entry into the League. Between 1924 and 1926, only 7 out of 144 resolutions passed had touched upon social and economic problems. The last time these issues had been debated was in 1928.4 The League had never contested elections on all-India basis,5 and the extent of support for it in the Muslim majority provinces was doubtful. It could only provide a rallying point for Muslims at the all-India level on questions such as representation in the services and in legislatures; and when these had been settled, as, for example, in the Communal Award of 1932, the League appeared to have little

to offer Muslims in the provinces.

The Act of 1919 had introduced partial responsible government in the provinces. This sets the scene for the emergence of parties and politicians whose base and horizons were essentially provincial, and whose political alliances cut across communal divisions. They had, therefore, little interest in Jinnah's all India Muslim politics.

In the Punjab, for example, Fazl-e-Husain, whose Unionist party had governed the province since 1920, believed that Muslims, whose majority in the province was only marginal, could not achieve anything without the cooperation of the Hindu and Sikh minorities. The need for Hindu and Sikh support partly determined the inter-communal character of the Unionist party, which represented agrarian interests in the Punjab.

Jinnah received, then, a crushing rebuff when he asked Fazl-e-Husain to join the Muslim League Parliamentary Board in 1936. Jinnah was told of 'the advisability of keeping his finger out of the Punjab pie.'


8. Ibid. and Azim Husain, Fazl-e-Husain (Bombay 1946).
We cannot possibly allow "provincial autonomy" to be tampered with in any sphere, and by anybody, be he a nominee of the powers who have given this autonomy or a President of the Muslim League or any other association or body.¹⁹

In Bengal, an opportunity for Muslim unity arose when Hindus in Calcutta started an agitation against the Communal Award in August 1936. The Award had given Muslims 48.6 percent of the seats in the legislature, and the British had envisaged that land-levels would support them and raise their majority to 51.4 percent. Hindus alleged that they had not been represented in proportion to their population in the province, while Muslims had been allowed weightage in all Muslim minority provinces. But a cleavage soon arose between the parties which had united against the Hindu. The United Muslim Party had been started by the Nawab of Dacca to contest the provincial elections and it represented big landlords, lawyers and businessmen. It could not make common cause with the Krishak Proja Party of Fuzlul Huq, which had been founded as the Nikil Banga Proja Samity in 1929,¹⁰ and

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9. Sikander Hyat Khan to Fazl-i-Husain, 1 May 1936, Fazl-i-Husain Papers, quoted in Zaidi, Introduction to Jinnah-Ispahani Correspondence, p. 16.

which espoused the interests of poor peasants and small land-owners. As the majority of poor peasants in Bengal were Muslims, Huq could claim that his party represented, the Muslim majority of Bengal. But the inter-communal character of his political alliance can be seen by his maintenance of links with Hindus and Congress leaders even while he was Vice-President of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League.  

Jinnah initially managed to bring together the "United Muslim Party and the Krishak Proja Party. But Huq walked out of the agreement because Leaguers refused to accept his demand that they also join the K.P.P. and incorporate in the League's election manifesto a promise to abolish the Permanent Settlement in Bengal. The big Zamindars of Dacca's United Muslim Party would not agree to this, so Jinnah brushed aside Huq's proposals as not being 'practical politics'. But the final break between Huq and Jinnah seems to have been caused by Huq's opposition to the nomination of 4 non-Bengali businessmen to the Muslim League Parliamentary Board.  

In Bihar, the United Muslim and Ahrar Parties could not sink personal differences and unite with the

League. In the Central Provinces and Madras, disagreements about the nomination of candidates proved the stumbling block in the way of Muslim Unity. In Sind, leaders of the Azad Muslim Party did not want their initiative in provincial matters to be fettered by an all-India Parliamentary Board. So, personal and provincial rivalries prevented the formation of a single Muslim party in most provinces.

It was in the United Provinces, with the Muslim Unity Board, that Jinnah was able, eventually, to make an alliance. The Board had been formed at the time of the Unity Conference of 1933, when representatives of two leading Muslim organizations, the Muslim Conference and the Nationalist Muslims, led by Khaliquzzaman, agreed to form a joint front to promote the political interests of Muslims.13 The Board seems to have had little sympathy with the Muslim League, against whom some of its own candidates successfully contested for Muslim seats in the Central Legislatures in the elections of 1934.14

13. For an account of the circumstances leading to the formation of the Unity Board. See Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, (Lahore, 1961), pp.117-120.
The success achieved by the Unity Board in the elections—-it won a third of the Muslim seats in the legislature—probably explains Jinnah's eagerness to reach a settlement with it. Why the Unity Board responded so enthusiastically to Jinnah's call for Muslim unity is not so easily discernible. Perhaps, as Sir Harry Haig, the Governor, wrote, 'it was because the name of the Muslim League carried considerable influence in the U.P.' Khaliquzzaman, who skillfully balanced himself between three Parties, does not give a very satisfactory account of the events which promoted him and other leaders of the Unity Board to respond to Jinnah's appeal. He simply says that the Board was at first willing to consider a Congress request to put up Muslim candidates to contest the Muslim League and the National Agriculturist Party in the coming elections. Later, however, one of the leaders of the Unity Board, Ahmad Said, seemed to be in agreement with Jinnah on what is vaguely described as 'the future policy of Muslims,' and felt that Jinnah was 'prepared to go very far to satisfy the Board.'

15. Ibid., p.142.
18. Khaliquzzaman, Pathway to Pakistan, pp.140-41.
Jinnah and the leaders of the Unity Board appeared to agree that the Muslim League 'consisted mostly of big landlords, title holders, and selfish people, who looked to their class and personal interests more than to communal and national interests and who had always been ready to sacrifice them to suit British Policy. Jinnah wished to purify and revive the League. In this connection he intended to ask the League to give him a mandate to form a parliamentary board for the purposes of the forthcoming elections. He promised the Unity Board a majority on the parliamentary board, and stressed the need for a United Muslim Front. One difference remained between the Unity Board and the Muslim League. The Unity Board was committed the goal of independence; the Muslim League was not. Jinnah reassured the Unity Board. 'When I give you a majority in the Parliamentary Board you can do everything.'

As its 24th annual session held at Bombay in April 1936, while condemning the federal scheme embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935 as 'most reactionary, retrograde, injurious and fatal' and 'totally unacceptable', the League decided to utilize the provincial part of the Act for 'what it was worth' and authorized Jinnah to form a central parliamentary board. The board was to consist of not less than thirty-five

19. Ibid. p. 141.
members and was empowered to affiliate provincial boards in the various provinces to contest the elections on the ticket of the Muslim League.20

Jinnah received certain assurances of help. Malulana Ahmad Saeed, Secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind wrote: Unless you visit a good number of important towns in different provinces, it is very difficult to form representative local boards on proper lines... I would request you with all the force at my command to start on a tour and visit certain important centres of political activity... We have not yet started work in earnest. The continuous publicity of the aims and objects of the League and its present policy is essential for educating the public and the press alike. An Urdu Daily, at least a Bi-weekly, wholly devoted to the cause of the League is badly needed... I have already written to the members of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind to make effective speeches in support of the Muslim League in public meetings and appeal to the Muslim voters to reserve their votes for the candidates of the League only. Mazhar Ali Khan, general secretary of Majlis-i-Ahrar-Islam Hind, temporarily joined hands with the League. Even secretary of the Unionist party, Ahmad Yar Khan Daultana, who called himself one of the 'ardent Jinhites' tried to bring about a settlement and submitted to Jinnah a list of members to be elected

20. Star of India, April 13, 1936.
on the League Council adding: "All these are your men against the whole world." After the failure of the League-Unionist negotiations, he once again approached Jinnah: 'You have millions of admirers in this world but I can assure you that few will come up to my standard of devoted loyalty and profound admiration'. He assured Jinnah that like himself, Sikandar Hyat Khan was also a great admirer of your leadership, statesmanship and your other unique qualities. I feel it will be very unfortunate if there is any hostility between two parties in which you and Sir Mohammad Iqbal are on one side and Sir Sikandar and myself on the other. I am writing to Sir Sikandar to have a talk with you and to try to come to a working settlement. Let us have minor difference of opinion but it should be far from hostility or ill-will to each other.'

It was on May 21, 1936, that Jinnah announced the personnel of the central parliamentary board consisting of 56 members (Bengal 8, Punjab 11, Sind 4, N.W.F.P.4, Madras 4, United Provinces 9, Bihar 5, Central Provinces 2, Delhi 1, Assam 2, Bombay 6). Jinnah had encountered difficulties in nominating the members of the board. Provincial leaders representing different Muslim parties had already formulated programmes and embarked upon their election campaigns. Jinnah was late in the field and had, perforce, to depend on those leaders who were still

unattached to any provincial parties or those whom he could persuade to merge their organizations with the Muslim League. It is difficult now to be sure whether all the fifty six members nominated on the said board had been previously consulted by Jinnah and had agreed to serve on the board for there were many absentees from the first meeting of the board held at Lahore on June 8, 1936. Some of them, being the organizers and leaders of provincial parties, were torn by their provincial loyalties, their chances of domination in the provincial politics and their reluctance to come under the dictation of central board. Leaders like Fazlul Huq (Krishak Proja Samity, Bengal), Syed Abdul Aziz (United Party, Bihar), Sheikh Addul Majid Sindhi (Azad Party, Sind), Syed Rauf Shah (Muslim Parliamentary Party C.P.). Maulana Zafar Ali Khan (Majlis-i-Ittehad-i-Millat, Panjab), Nawab of Chhattari, Sir Muhammad Yusuf, Liaqat Ali Khan (National Agriculturist Party, United Provinces), though originally nominated on the board had organized their respective parties to fight the elections under the auspices of their own organizations.

24. Ibid, June 9, 1934, Also See Star of India, June 10, 1936.
Though some of these local Muslim parties did not merge themselves with the Muslim League until after the elections, in many respects their programmes and policies were not at variance with those of the League. The unwillingness of some of the leaders of provincial parties to serve on the Muslim League parliamentary board was therefore mainly due to their fear of the domination of rival groups. Apparently these organizations would have been prepared to join the League if they had been given a freer hand in provincial politics. Till such freedom was promised, personal, local and mainly vested interests kept them away.

It was against this division in the Muslim ranks that Jinnah raised his voice and tried to lift Muslim politics from the provincial and local to an all-India level. He believed that as long as the Muslims were divided and disorganized, as long as they continued to follow dispirate paths having provincial groups with no wider unity and cohesion—there could be no chance of a settlement with the Congress. For these splinter organizations had no public sanction behind them. Only a United Muslim party would have the authority and sanction to speak powerfully. If 'the entire Muslims of India were politically organized and if they remain united', said Jinnah, 'then they will be forging sanctions behind them in order to play their part in the decisions of all-India
In organizing the Muslims under the banner of the Muslim League, Jinnah did not believe that he was diminishing the chances of Hindu-Muslim cooperation. He had been a nationalist and had been called the 'ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity', and according to Nehru, had been 'largely responsible in the past for bringing the Muslim League nearer to the Congress.' He still believed that without Hindu-Muslim unity, without united efforts on the part of the two major communities, India's drive towards freedom could not succeed. United action, a common platform and mutual trust and confidence were needed to solve the political tangle and bring India nearer to its cherished goal of freedom. Referring to his part at the Round Table Conference, he said in March 1936, 'I displeased the Muslims, I displeased my Hindu friends because of the 'famous' 14 points. I displeased the Princes because I was deadly against their under-hand activities and I displeased the British Parliament because... I rebelled against it and said that it was all a fraud... But whatever I have done, let me assure you there has been no change in me, not the slightest, since the day when I joined the Indian National Congress. It might be I have been wrong on some occasions. But it has

never been done in a partisan spirit. My sole and only object has been the welfare of my country.' Jinnah was anxious for communal co-operation and understanding, 'I will not and I cannot give it up. It may give me up, but I will not.'

In fact the League as early as January 1935 had expressed its readiness 'to co-operate with any community or party with a view to secure such future constitution for India as would satisfy the people!' Jinnah continued his efforts to bring unity and solidarity among the Muslims. But this was never without advocating co-operation with their sister communities. In fact he gave out that the Muslim League would be prepared to co-operate with all progressive parties in the country especially the Congress. About two weeks after the Muslim League Session held at Bombay, Jinnah in a statement on April 27, 1936 made this clear, 'Hindus cannot take Muslims seriously and that the Congress does not take us seriously because so far we Muslims have not proved ourselves worthy of alliance and that until we are ready to take a proper place in the national life of the country, there can not be a whole-hearted and real settlement.' His advice to Muslims was that 'they should first organize themselves and deserve before they desired.' For he believed that 'if Muslims would speak with one voice, a settlement between Hindus and Muslims

would come quicker.' Justifying the move of organizing the Muslims and putting their affairs in order, he explained that it did not mean that the Muslims 'should not stand as firmly by national interest. In fact, they should prove that their patriotism is unsullied and that their love of India and her progress is no less than that of any other community in the country.'

Jinnah did not, at this stage, regard the separate electorates or the communal award as an ideal arrangement. They were a temporary measure, and could be replaced by something better. But until such an arrangement could be made, they must remain. 'So long as the separate electorates existed,' he said on July 24, 1936, 'the separate organization of Mussalmans was an inevitable corollary. But that did not mean that such a position was an ideal one or that he was satisfied with it.'

Throughout 1936 and the beginning of 1937 Jinnah continued to speak for Hindu-Muslim co-operation. He realized that there had been difference in the past but he believed that those differences were not incapable of solution for he was still looking at the

29. Ibid. April 28, 1936.
30. Star of India, July 29, 1936.
Indian political scene as an idealist. 'If out of 80 million Indian Muslims,' declared Jinnah on October 20, 1936, 'I can produce a patriotic and liberal-minded nationalist block, who will be able to march hand in hand with the progressive elements in other communities, I will have rendered great service to my community.'

Perhaps because of his earnest desire for co-operation with the Congress, Jinnah had got Wazir Hasan, a liberal known for his nationalist views elected as President of Bombay session of the League. This was explained to Wazir Hasan in a letter written to him just after his election: 'Raja Saheb of Salimpur was very anxious for his election as President of the Annual Session of the League and came to Delhi twice during the last two weeks. Mr. Shaukat Ali, in his usual way, has been canvassing for him. But Mr. Jinnah with great tact managed the whole thing in a marvellous way and you were elected without having recourse to voting. Mr. Jinnah came from Lahore only for this meeting yesterday in the morning and returned to Lahore last night.'

When Jinnah embarked on rallying the Muslims on the League platform and asked them to stand by its

31. Civil and Military Gazette, October 20, 1936.
policy, he was far from running the Muslim League as a counter to the Congress. For him the memories of the Lucknow pact were still fresh. He regarded it as a 'landmark in the political history of India.' There were differences between the Muslims and Hindus but if the two communities had been able to compose their differences once, there was no need for despair. It was for this reason that the League was endeavouring by systematic organization to produce the best material among the Muslims. At a public meeting on January 7, 1937, Jinnah was still prepared to say, 'Hindus and Muslims could join hands to form one party' provided they could evolve a common programme of work both inside and outside the legislatures.'

Jinnah wanted to make the Muslim League a popular organization built not on the support of a few at the top but one which had a wider appeal for the masses. He was conscious of the charges often levelled against the League that it had been a party of 'toadies' and rich landlords. He was aware that the organization though open to all, had been able to attract only a majority of the Muslim community. He knew that so far it had failed to evoke any general enthusiasm from the Muslim intelligentsia, and that it

33. Star of India, January 9, 1937.
lacked mass contact. It could not be held, effectively and authoritatively speak for the Muslims of India until it had wider basis of support. This, he believed, was essential in order to lay the real foundation of Hindu-Muslim unity. "The masses should be persuaded and educated in that direction so that lasting unity could be attained." 34

In April 1936 Lord Linlithgow replaced Lord Willingdon as Viceroy, coming out to inaugurate the Constitution he had been most instrumental in helping to complete as chairman of the joint parliamentary committee. In his first broadcast to India, Linlithgow tried to assure his pluralistic audience of his personal impartiality, stating: "God has indeed been good to me for he has given me five children... I love them all most dearly. But among my children I have no favourite." 35 The viceroy's son, who reported that speech, also wrote of Jinnah's "reaction" to it as "ominous", adding in what must have been Linlithgow's perception of the League leader's policy, that he "told his followers that the new Viceroy's pledge of impartiality was a poor reward for Muslim loyalty to

34. Ibid. July 29, 1936.
to the Government."  

Lord Linlithgow had arrived in India with a firm determination to implement the new constitution. But he was also anxious, so far as possible, to make the scheme acceptable to all parties. He urged the Indians to 'give these Reforms a fair and reasonable trial... and work the constitution in a spirit of tolerance and cooperation, for the honour and good of their motherland.'

After years of investigation and deliberation; the British Government had prepared a constitution which the main political parties had either rejected or acquiesced it only reluctantly. Some parties had hoped to destroy the new constitution and replaced it with a new instrument framed by a properly elected constituent assembly; and others, at best, were willing to work the scheme 'for what it is worth.' It was to Linlithgow's credit that he was able not only to persuade the various political parties to participate in the government, but also to demonstrate that the constitution, despite some drawbacks, was capable of being worked.

36. Ibid. p.25:

37. The Viceroy's address to the Indian Legislature, 21 September, 1936, See also V.B. Kulkarni, India and Pakistan, (Bombay, 1973) pp.311-12.
The British Government announced that the Government of India Act of 1935 would come into force on 1 April, 1937. The federal part of the scheme was kept in abeyance as it depended on the fulfilment of the precondition that a sufficient number of Indian States should accede to the proposed federation. Nevertheless it was decided that the implementation of the provincial part of the constitution should go ahead.

The Government of India Act extend electorate to some 36 million, as compared to an electorate of 7 million in 1920, and representing 30 percent of the adult population, would elect 1585 representatives to the provincial legislatures.38 The Act of 1935 was the first constitutional measure introduced by the British in India which envisaged that the parties winning a majority of seats in the legislatures would form ministries which would function on the basis of joint and collective responsibility.39

Provincial autonomy could not, however, begin to function until a general election to fill the seats in the provincial legislatures had been held. Indian politics were in some confusion. Paradoxically most of the important parties had expressed dissatisfaction with

the new constitution, and yet all of them eventually resolved to work it at least to the extent of participating in the elections.

The new constitution had not given the 'complete independence' demanded by the Congress. It was not immediately known whether the Congress would reject the constitution completely and revert to non-cooperation, or whether it would participate in the coming elections and use the new constitution as a means to gain its overall aim: the achievement of a Purna Swaraj or complete independence. The initial impulse was to have nothing to do with it, but on this question the Congress was by no means united among itself. Officially, it had opposed the new constitution from its inception in 1933-34. The British Government's White Paper of 1934 outlining the essentials of the proposed constitution was condemned by the Congress Working Committee (C.W.C.), which declared that the 'only satisfactory alternative to the White Paper is a constitution drawn by a constituent Assembly elected on the basis of an adult franchise.'

Once the Act had been given the royal assent, however, there was little that the Congress could do to

alter its format. The Lucknow session of the Congress held in April 1936 approved the decision to contest the elections, but this did not mean that the Congress had agreed to work the constitution. In an obvious reference to the Viceroy's appeal for co-operation, Jawaharlal Nehru retorted: we go to the legislatures not to co-operate with the apparatus of British imperialism, but to combat the Act and to seek to end it. 41

The attitude of the Congress towards the constitution was one of militant hostility, and it was in this mood that its members entered upon the election campaign. In April 1936, the Congress Working Committee appointed a parliamentary sub-committee, with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as president, to organise the election campaign. But the unity of the party was threatened by internal conflict. There were sharp differences between the socialistic programmes of Nehru and those of the more conservative leaders such as Patel and Rajender Prasad. Gandhi was afraid that Nehru's radical political and social philosophy, unfolded at this juncture, 42 might precipitate a premature cleavage in the nationalistic ranks and thereby jeopardize the Congress's prospects in the forthcoming elections. 43 At the same time Gandhi

realized that Nehru was the only leader who could bridge the growing gap between 'Socialism' and 'Gandhism'. As the accepted leader of the Congress 'left wing' Nehru enjoyed the confidence of the radicals; and as Gandhi's favourite he was also acceptable to the 'moderates' in the Congress. He was thus ideally fitted to the task of reconciling the two groups. But more than anything else Gandhi was aware that, apart from himself, Nehru was the only other leader who had a mass appeal and could gather votes. Thus in an astute move Gandhi secured Nehru's re-election to the Congress Presidency.

As the date of the election drew nearer, the Congress leaders worked in unity. In August 1936 the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) adopted an election manifesto which repeated that the purpose of sending Congressmen to the legislatures would be, as Nehru had said earlier, 'not to cooperate in any way with the Act, but to combat it and seek an end of it.' The decision with regard to accepting office was postponed, but the manifesto went on to state that, whatever the decision might be on this question, the object in view remained the same—getting the Act repealed.

The Congress had a considerable advantage over its opponents. It was the only organised all-India political party, and its parliamentary wing, the Swaraj party, was experienced in electioneering and had built up elaborate electoral machinery throughout the country. The Congress had an army of electioneering agents in the towns and villages. Subhash Chandra Bose has described how the party workers in 1920 were organized:

'Students responded to the appeal in large numbers... It was these student-workers who carried the message of Congress to all the corners of the country, who collected funds, enlisted members, held meetings and demonstrations, preached temperance, established arbitration boards, taught spinning and weaving and encouraged the revival of home industries. Without them all the influence of Mahatma Gandhi would not have carried very far.'

Most of these student-workers were still available seventeen years later, and their numbers had been augmented to many thousands by the recruitment of enthusiastic young people who welcomed the prominence that politics gave them. They cost very little, having few needs and asking for no more than bare subsistence; and

they were new organized and trained by the master hand of Gandhi. It required herculean efforts to organize campaigns, to explain to the newly enfranchised masses, mostly illiterate, the meaning of the ballot boxes, and to select prospective candidates for the Congress election tickets. As proof of their claim to represent a particular constituency, hopeful candidates would refer to their long services in the party as organizers or financiers, but above all to their jail records. To choose one person from several applicants was not as easy task. Luckily for the Congress, Patel as the Chief Organizer achieved the seemingly impossible with amazing ease.47

The Congress placed primary importance on winning the election. The Congress parliamentary board glossed over any ideological controversies and laid down only three conditions to guide the selection of candidates; that they should have signed the Congress pledge, that they could finance their campaign, and that they had a good chance of winning.48 In giving party nominations there was no insistence on habitual wearing of Khaddar, hither to an essential Gandhian pre-requisite.

Nor was the nomination limited to those who had been members of the Congress for a prescribed period indeed many of the Congress nominees had joined the Congress merely in order to get a Congress ticket. In Madras, for example, the Justice Party had suffered from the natural reaction against its long period of the office and also from a lack of able leadership. There is little doubt that a number of political aspirants, realizing the weakness of other parties, had jumped on to the Congress bandwagon in order to get an easy run in the election.\(^49\)

As we have already discussed the only Muslim party with some claims to an all-India organization was the All-India Muslim League. The League, however, could be described as an all-India body only by courtesy: prior to the 1936-37 elections it was in a dormant condition hence no comparison of highly organised and cadre based Congress Party. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, its permanent president, had stayed on in Britain after the second round table conference, and during his absence abroad the party had existed on paper only.\(^50\) During the 1930s the League was neither so communal nor so militant as it was to be in


later days: it was an organization of Muslims to protect what were considered to be their special interests, and was not yet committed to the partition of the country on a communal basis. Economically it had little to offer in the way of constructive ideas and had done little for the improvement of the standards of workers and peasants. It was essentially an upper and middle-class organization, wanting an all-India leadership. Its lack of success in becoming a dynamic organization was largely due to the fact that its leadership had been dominated by 'careerists'—professional politicians who felt no particular dedication to their cause. Convenience, rather than conviction, governed their politics.  

Jinnah, as we have already stated, returning to India from self-imposed exile in Britain in 1935, had immediately set about trying to revitalize the League. At its annual session of April 1936, the Muslim League condemned the federal scheme of the 1935 Act as 'most reactionary, retrograde, injurious and fatal' and totally unacceptable,' but nevertheless decided to utilize the provincial part of the Act 'for what it is worth.' Jinnah was authorised, like the Congress, to form a central election board for organizing the League's election campaign. With few provincial and district branches, and limited financial and publicity

52. Resolution of the AIML, 11-12 April 1936, Gwyer and Appadorai, Speeches and Documents, pp.384-85.
resources, the League gathered itself to go into the elections for the first time on an all-India basis.

The Muslim League election board published an election manifesto which declared that the League stood for 'full responsible government for India'. The main feature of the Muslim League programme was to maintain the solidarity of the Muslims as an all-India community and to save them from breaking up into provincial parties and groups. The election was to be fought and this is an important point not essentially between the Congress and the Muslim League (as some of the member of the Muslim League continued to be the members of the Congress) but between the Muslim League and the local Muslim parties. The issue was whether local interests should be subordinated to the all-India interests of the community or vice-versa.

The manifesto which was adopted on June 9, 1936, while maintaining that the position of Muslims should be protected and safeguarded in any future political constitutional structure, argued that such a demand did not 'Savour of Communalism'. For it was not only 'natural, but essential for securing a stable

54. Star of India (Calcutta) was the solitary English daily of the Muslim League.
55. Civil and Military Gazette, June 11, 1936.
national government by ensuring whole-hearted and willing co-operation of the minorities who must be made to feel that they can rely upon the majority with a complete sense of confidence and security.' The manifesto asked for the replacement of the present provincial constitution and the proposed central constitution by 'democratic full self-government'. In the meantime the representatives of the Muslim League were to 'utilize the legislatures in order to extract maximum benefits out of the constitution for the uplift of the people in various spheres of national life'. The need for the new social order with a view to ameliorating the condition of the poor and backward Muslims was also stressed.

The League adopted the following programme:

1. To protect the religious rights of the Musalmans. In all matters of purely religious character, due weight shall be given to the opinions of Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind and the Mujtahids.

2. To make every effort to secure the repeal of all repressive laws.

3. To resist all measures which are detrimental to the interests of India, which encroach upon the fundamental liberties of the people and lead to economic exploitation of the country.

56. Ibid. June 12, 1936, Also see Star of India, June 12, 1936., Text of the Manifesto in Indian Annual Register, 1936, ii, 299-301, and Khaliquzzaman, Pathway to Pakistan, p. 417.
4. To reduce heavy cost of administrative machinery, central and provincial, and allocate substantial funds for nation-building departments.

5. To nationalize the Indian army and reduce the military expenditure.

6. To encourage development of industries, including cottage industries.

7. To regulate currency, exchange and prices in the interest of economic development of the country.

8. To stand for the social, educational and economic uplift of the rural population.

9. To sponsor measures for the relief of agricultural indebtedness.

10. To make elementary education free and compulsory.

11. To protect and promote Urdu language and script.

12. To devise measures for the amelioration of the general conditions of Muslims.

13. To take steps to reduce the heavy burden of taxation.

14. To create a healthy public opinion and general political consciousness throughout the country.

When we compare the manifesto of Muslim League with that of Congress we notice so many similarities with sharp differences. The social and political objectives
outlined in the manifesto were very similar to those of
the Congress. Most historians, however in trying to point
out the similarities in these manifestoes, have failed
to notice the marked conflict between them. In general,
the election manifestoes of most parties bore a striking
resemblance to that of the Congress, but in detail the
Congress manifesto with its socialistic bias stood apart
from the rest, the most elementary difference being the
League's opposition to any attempt to expropriate private
property: it would not interfere with the landed
interests, while the Congress was committed to sweeping
land reforms. It is essential to bear this in mind,
because it was largely because of this difference of
approach between the Congress and the League that the rift
between the two parties widened. Another striking
difference was the League's pledge to 'protect and
promote the Urdu language and script', the insinuation
being that the Congress was trying to make Hindi, the
national language of India. The merits of the arguments
will be examined later on; here we need only note that
the Hindi-Urdu controversy was one of the main factors
contributing to bad feelings between the two parties.
Similarly the Lucknow pact of 1916 was hailed as 'one of

57. Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, (Delhi
1972) IV, pp 224-5; Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of
Pakistan* (New York, 1967) p.27; Coupland, *Indian Politics, 1936-
the greatest beacon lights in the constitutional history of India' and a 'signal proof of the identity of purpose, eagerness and cooperation between the two sections of the people of India.' Again this could be interpreted as meaning that the League solemnly stood by separate electorates, which was one of the central pillars on which the Lucknow Pact was based.

Further, the manifesto of the League was vaguely worded, and was characterised by an absence of commitment on any issue. The Congress manifesto, drafted by Nehru, rejected the new constitution 'in its entirety', while the Muslim League manifesto made no mention of it. The manifesto of the League also made no reference to the future political development of India. Independence was not demanded, and, it was clear that the Muslim League did not desire the severance of the British connection. It is, in fact, significant that one of the reasons for the failure of negotiations between Jinnah and the Ahrars, who had a radical social programme, was Jinnah's refusal to promise them that demand for independence would be

58. *Indian Annual Register*, p. 291
made in the election manifesto of the Muslim League. 60

The Congress manifesto reflected the growing mass support for the organization, and stressed the crucial role to be played by the masses in the struggle for freedom. 61 The Muslim League manifesto merely asked for the creation of 'a healthy public opinion and general political consciousness throughout the country.

Nevertheless the Muslim League did not openly oppose the Congress. Indeed some of the members of the League continued to be members of the Congress, and Jinnah's election speeches stressed compromise and mutual accommodation between the two parties. 62

As the provincial elections approached, Nehru reiterated in his presidential address to the Faizpur Congress in December 1936 the struggle against imperialism, the issues of social and economic, freedom, the demand for a constituent Assembly, his hostility to the Indian States system, and the need for greater mass participation in the Congress. 63 The address emphasised

60. M.Noman, Muslim India: The Rise and Growth of the All-India Muslim League (Allahabad, 1942) p.329. On the Ahrars, See Also P. Hardy, The Muslim's British India (Cambridge, 1972), p.216
his belief that the contest in India was 'between two forces the Congress as representing the will to freedom of the nation, and the British Government in India and its supporters who oppose this urge and try to suppress it'.

Jinnah did not agree to this. There was a "third party" in India, he sharply informed Nehru, and that was the Muslim's Party, revealing a vital difference in his attitude to political questions from Nehru's. For Nehru, the issue was that of independence. 'He who is for it must be with the Congress and if he talks in terms of communalism he is not keen on independence'. Jinnah's sole aim was to establish the Muslim League as the only representative of Muslim affairs and to maintain it as such in the forefront of Indian politics.

Nehru's reply to Jinnah revealed his disdain for the political and long-term role a communal organization such as the League could play on the Indian political scene. He expressed unhappiness over Jinnah's reference to a 'third party', for, as he was it, between British Imperialism and Indian nationalism Jinnah would have

64. 'Line up with the Congress', 18 September 1936, Ibid, p. 468
Muslims remain as a political group apart, apparently playing off one against the other, and seeking communal advantage even at the cost of the larger public good. 67 This was 'communalism raised to the nth power.' Nehru, explained, with a patient sarcasm, the unacceptability of the 'Logical conclusion' of Jinnah's statement — 'that in no department of public activity must non-Muslims have anything to do with Muslim affairs'. 68 He ridiculed the 'new test of orthodoxy' being enunciated by Jinnah — that Muslims were 'only those who follow Mr. Jinnah and the League.' 69

Nehru decried the communal philosophy of the League, as he pointed out that 'real issue', pertaining to economic and political problems, could not be considered communally. 70 He attached no significance to 'third parties', 'middle and undecided groups', for, in the long run, they had no role to play. The Congress represented Indian nationalism 'and is thus charged with a historic destiny'. 71

Nehru was contemptuous of the indifference of the League to the question of independence, and of its

68. Ibid, pp. 150-1.
70. Ibid p. 158.
71. Ibid, p. 153
distance from the masses. It represents a group of Muslims, no doubt, highly esteemable persons but functioning in the higher regions of the upper middle classes and having no contacts with the Muslim-masses and few even with the lower middle class. He welcomed cooperation with the League, but only on the basis of anti-imperialism and the good of the masses. He ruled out pacts between handfuls of upper class people which ignored the interests of the masses.

Jinnah chafed under Nehru's derisive view of the Muslim League even as he attached what he regarded as Nehru's claim to be the 'sole custodian of the masses'. With a sarcasm that matched that of Nehru, he challenged the Congress claim that it was a national organization and defended the communal character of the League. 'The League does not believe in assuming a non-communal label with a few adventurers or credulous persons belonging to other communities thrown in and who have no backing of their people, and thus pass off as the only party entitled to speak and act on behalf of the whole of India.'

Jinnah's stand on political and economic question was also revealed. He asserted that the Muslim League

72. Ibid., p. 154
73. Ibid., pp. 155-6.
74. Leader, 23 January, 1937.
would maintain a separate identity; and he made a show of the League's importance, gratuitously laying down the terms under which the League would cooperate with any party in struggle for freedom. The Muslm League 'is prepared to join hands with any progressive party in the fight for the country's freedom, but to achieve this the question of minorities must be settled satisfactorily'. Jinnah expressed his disagreement with 'certain methods and means to which the Congress stands pledged'. He informed Nehru that 'Even a large bulk of patriotic and nationalistic Hindus are not members of the Congress. Because they do not believe in the Congress methods'.

This war of election campaign ended with the elections. The elections to the provincial legislatures under the new constitution were held throughout British India in the winter of 1936-37. The electorate had been greatly enlarged to thirty million men and women. Some 15.5 million or over fifty-four percent of the voters went to the polls. Voting was assisted by the use of symbols, and in some places with coloured voting boxes, a system which gave advantage to organized parties as against independent and small groups.

75. Ibid., 23 Jan. 1937.
76. Balashevik and Dyekov, Contemporary History of India, p. 314.
The British had great interest in the electoral fortunes of the Congress, which they regarded as a test of its strength against them. Even as they predicted a Congress victory in most provinces, British officials discussed the possibility of an opposition to it, especially in view of the emphasis on independence and economic reform in its election manifesto. In the N.P., the British were supporting the National Agriculturist Party against the Congress; Linlithgow hoped that Nehru's expounding of his radical economic theories would consolidate the Right throughout India for the purpose of the elections. It is interesting, in view of the fact that both the Congress and the British sought the hand of the Muslim League only three years later, that there are only the most cursory references - or none at all - to the election campaign of the League in official reports, and, at this time, the British do not seem have envisaged its emergence as an opposition of any significance. Perhaps it was because the League was considered similar to the Congress in its socialistic tendencies - and Jinnah the

77. See, for example, Brabourne to Linlithgow, 13 November 1936; Keane to Linlithgow, 28 October 1936; Sifton to Linlithgow, 3 November 1936; Hyde Gowan to Linlithgow, 10 November 1936; Linlithgow Collection, Vol.112.
arch enemy of the Raj'.—and, of course, the League had not been able to consolidate its position, as the leading Muslim organization, especially in the Muslim-majority provinces.

Contrary to the expectations of many, when the results were announced the Congress emerged as the majority party in five provinces out of eleven provinces and near majority in Bombay (86 out of 175) and was the largest single party in two others. It had won 711 out of 1585 provincial assembly seats. Of the 38 seats reserved for 'Labour', the Congress won 18; of the 37 allotted to land owners and 56 to 'commerce', the Congress obtained four and three respectively.

Political and Economic information department of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) also issued an analysis of election results of 1937 elections. According to this analysis the Congress had been able to secure an absolute majority in the legislative Assemblies of 5 provinces, namely Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces and Berar, Bihar, Orissa. The Congress was the biggest single party in 4 provinces namely Bombay,


80. For these figures see Returns Showing the Results of Elections in India, 1937, Command Paper No.5589, Also Indian Annual Register 1937 Vol.I (Calcutta) pp.168 (a) to 168(p).

Bengal, Assam, North West Frontier Province. In the assemblies of Sind and Punjab the Congress was in a comparatively smaller minority. The following table shows the number of seats won by the Congress in different Provincial Assemblies and the percentage of votes secured by the Congress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total seats</th>
<th>Won by Congress</th>
<th>% of total seats won by Congress</th>
<th>Approximate % of total votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The C.P.&amp; Berar</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The U.P.</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.W.F.P.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis says that the total number of Muslim seats in the legislative assemblies of the 11 provinces was 482. Out of this number Congress contested only 58 and won 26, that is 45% of the seats contested. Out of 38 labour seats Congress contested 20 and won 18 that is 90 percent of total seats contested. Congress contested 8 landholders seats out of total of 37 and won 4 that is 50 percent of seat contested. Congress contested
8 out of 56 seats reserved for commerce and Industry and won 3 that is 40 percent of total seats contested.

Political and Economic department of AICC also issued data for legislative councils of six provinces. The following table shows the position of the Congress Party in the Legislative Councils.\(^{83}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total No.of seats in L.C's.</th>
<th>Contested by Congress</th>
<th>Won by Congress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The U.P.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>230</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown above, of a total 230 seats in the Legislative Councils of 6 Provinces, 92 were contested by the Congress and 64 were won, that is, the Congress secured 28 percent of the total seats and 60 percent of the seats contested by it.

\(^{83}\) Ibid., p.168(f).
If we further analyse the results of elections to the provincial legislative assemblies we find some striking information. In Madras, the Congress contested 114 General (Rural & Urban) seats out of 116 and won 111 seats. It contested 26 seats out of 30 Scheduled Caste seats and won 26 that is cent percent of seats contested. Out of 28 Mohammadans (Rural & Urban) seats Congress contested 9 and won only 4 which was a poor achievement. Out of 8 Women's Constituencies Congress contested 7 seats and won all the seats contested. The Congress won only 3 out of 8 Indian Christian seats. Congress did not contest any Anglo-Indian and European seats. Congress secured none of 6 commerce and industry seats and again nil out of 6 landholders seats but congress won all the 6 labour seats and also won both seats reserved for Backward tribe and University seats. This analysis shows that the Congress party was very much popular among all the leading sections of Indian electorates in the Madras Province. Further the Congress secured approximately 65 percent of the total votes castes and 74 percent of the total seats in the Madras Assembly.  

84. Ibid., p.168(f).
The following table shows Party wise position in the Madras Legislative Assembly.85

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice Party</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Party</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim Progressive Party</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commerce</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European General</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras Planters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nattu Kottai Nagarathera Association</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Indian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Indian Chambers of Commerce</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Bihar the Congress secured 75 percent of the total votes casts and 65 percent of the total seats in Bihar Legislative Assembly. Again the Congress was very much popular among General (rural & urban) constituencies of the total of 78 General Seats it secured 73 seats. It also shown its popularity among Schedule castes, labour,

85. Ibid.
university, women constituencies.  

If we see the Party wise position in Bihar Legislative Assembly the Congress won 98 out of 152 seats while Muslim League secured nil. Party wise position in the Bihar Legislative Assembly was as follows: Congress 98, Muslim Indepedents 15, Muslim United 6, European 2, constitutionals 2, Anglo-Indian 1, Indian Christian 1, Loyalists 1, Ahrars 3, and No Party 24.  

In Bombay Legislative Assembly the Congress contested 84 out of 92 General (Urban & Rural) seats and 69 seats. The Congress also won 4 out of 7 Maratha seats, 4 out of 15 Schedule Caste seats, 1 out of 7 commerce and Industry seats, 2 out of 7 labour seats, 5 out of 5 women general seats and 1 university seat reserved for university. But the Congress failed to secure none among Mohammadan, Backward Tribe, Indian Christian, Anglo-Indian, European, Land holders and Women Mohammadan. Over all the Congress secured about 56 percent of the total votes castes, and won 49 percent of the total seats in the Assembly.

The position of the Parties in Bombay Legislative Assembly was as follows: Congress 86, Muslim League-20, Independent Muslims-10, Democratic Swaraj Party-5, European, Anglo Indian, Indian Christian 7, 

86. Ibid., p.168(h)  
87. Ibid.
Independents (including Ambedkar's Party and non-Brahmins) 41, Labour-5, and Nationalist-1. \(^{88}\)

In the United Provinces Legislative Assembly, the Congress secured approximately 65% of the total number of votes casts and won 59 percent of the total seats in the Assembly. Constituency-wise the Congress was popular among General, Schedule Castes and labour. Out of 124 General (Rural & Urban Women Included) seats it contested 123 seats and won 114. Out of 20 Schedule Caste seats it secured 16 and it won all the 3 seats reserved for labour. It also won I University seats. But Congress failed to secure none in Muslim, Landholders, Indian Christian, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, European Commerce, Indian Commerce constituencies.

The position of the various parties in the U.P. Legislative Assembly was as follows: the Congress-134, Muslim League-27, Nationalist Agriculturist Party-16, Independent Muslims-30, Independent Hindus-10, Others-11.

The Congress secured in Bengal Legislative Assembly roughly 25 percent of the total votes casts and 22 percent of the total seats. But in general constituencies it maintained its hold. Out of 48 general

\(^{88}\) For Bombay Legislative Assembly results see *Ibid.* p.168(i), 168(j).

\(^{89}\) For United Provinces Assembly results see *Ibid.* p.168(k).
seats it won 43. It also won 5 out of 8 Labour seats, 6 out of 30 Scheduled Castes seats. In the rest of the constituencies the performance of the Congress was nil.

The Congress secured approximately 61 percent of the total votes cast and 62.5 percent of the total seats in the Central Provinces Legislative Assembly. It won 58 out of 65 General seats, 5 out of 19 Scheduled Castes seats, 2 out of 3 Landholders seats, 1 out of 2 Labour seats, 1 out of 2 Commerce seats, all the 3 Women seats. It secured nil in Muslim, Backward Tribe, European, Anglo-Indian and University Constituencies.

If we see partywise the Congress secured 70, Mohammadan 14, non-Brahmin 3, Ambedkarites 4, Nationalists 2 and others 19 in the Central Provinces Legislative Assembly.

The results of Punjab Legislative Assembly elections revealed that the Congress was in a worst condition in the Punjab. Here the Congress secured only 10 out of 42 General seats, 4 out of 31 Sikh seats, 2 out of 84 Muslim seats and 2 out of 4 Women seats. Overall Congress secured only 13 percent of total votes cast and 10.5 percent of the total seats.

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90. For Bengal Assembly results *Ibid.* 168(1).
91. For Central Provinces Assembly Results *Ibid*. p.168(m).
92. For Punjab Legislative Assembly Results *Ibid*. p.168(m).
In the North West Frontier province (NWFP)\(^{93}\) the Congress contested 29 out of 36 Muslim seats and secured 15 seats. The Congress also won 4 out of 9 general seats. The Congress secured 38 percent of total seats in the N.W.F.P. Legislative Assembly.

The position of the various parties in the N.W.F.P. Legislative Assembly was as follows: Congress-19, Hindu Sikh Nationalist 7, Muslim Independent Party 2, Independent Muslims 21, and Independent Hindus-1. It is interesting that Muslim League secured none in the Assembly despite of it was a Muslim majority province.

The Congress secured 60 percent of the total seats in the Orissa Legislative Assembly.\(^{94}\) It contested 43 out of 60 seats and won 36 seats. In the Assembly the Congress-secured 36, United-Party-5, National Party-4, Independents-11, and Nominated-4.

For the Assam Legislative Assembly\(^{95}\) the Congress contested only 41 seats out of 108 and secured 33 seats. The position of the other parties was as follows.

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93. Results of N.W.F.P. Assembly see Ibid. 168(o).
94. For Results of Orrisa Legislative Assembly see Ibid. 168(o).
95. For Results of Assam Legislative Assembly Election See Ibid., p.168(p).

In the Sind Legislative Assembly the position of various parties was as follows: the Congress-7, United Party-23, Azad Party-3, Muslim Party-3, Hindu Sabha-4, Independents-17, Europeans-3. Here again Muslim League secured none despite of Muslim majority province.

The extent of the success of the Congress confounded most political pundits, and one British official could only remark, somewhat grudgingly, that it remained to be seen whether the Congress would actually fulfil its promises. Officials unanimously attributed the victory of the Congress to the absence of any organized opposition against it, the attraction of the

96. For Sind see ibid. p. 168(p).

97. See, for example, Fortnightly Report (FR). For Assam for first half of January, 1937; F.R. Orissa for second half of January, 1937; Home Political (Internal) Department (HP) File No.18/2/36; and FR for "W.P. for First half of Feb., 1937, H.P.File No.18/2/37; Anderson to Linlithgow, 8 February 1937, Linlithgow Collection, Vol.112.


names of Gandhi and Nehru, and "wild promises" of the reduction of rent. The enormous extent of the new franchise was regarded as a great advantage to the Congress, especially in Bihar and in the U.P., where congress election propaganda had been directed more against landlords than against the British. Here the Congress defeated, often in straight fights, big landlords who were thought to have exercised exceptionally great influence over their tenants, and whom the British had hoped would be able to check any rising tide of Congress fortunes. In the N.W.F.P. also, the congress defeated the Khans the great feudal landowners usually by very big margins.

But these factors alone do not explain the numerous Congress victories. The party's general programme was more positive and constructive than those of its opponents. In agricultural constituencies, where it has
had been specially successful, it had put forward an extensive programme of rural reforms. The Congress had won its victories on issues which appealed to millions of voters and to many more who had no votes. On the other hand, its opponents were divided and failed to put up a united front. The landed proprietors had not yet learnt that they would have to rely for political organization upon their own efforts and not upon official machinery.

Another factor of no less importance in accounting for the Congress success was Nehru's ability to carry the Congress message to the masses. Professor Brecher sums up Nehru's contribution thus: "Like an arrow he shot through the country, carrying the Congress message to remote hamlets in the hills and on the plains. He covered some 50,000 miles, using every conceivable means of transport. All told, about 100,000 persons attended his meetings and millions more lined the route to catch a glimpse of the Congress crown prince."

Nehru's approach to the electors was ideological in the main, with very few references to individual candidates. The Congress election manifesto was explained in simple terms, and a few core themes were stated ad infinitum: 'Fight for India's freedom; built the Congress into a

mighty army of the Indian people; organize to remove poverty, unemployment and social and cultural degradation.' 'Let every voter, man or woman, do his or her duty to the country and vote for the Congress,' was his constant theme. 'Thus we shall write in millions of hands our flaming resolve to be free.' The technique of hammering on a few key objectives was successful in carrying the message effectively to the Indian countryside.

Sir Harry Haig has suggested another explanation for the Congress victory: the sense of change awakened in the villages. The government, which had in the past agitation opposed the Congress with the weight of its authority, now stood inactive. It was too much to expect that the villager would understand the constitutional necessity for this attitude. 'He felt that the British Raj was weakening, that the Congress was coming, and, as so often happens, threw himself definitely on what seemed to be the winning side.'

Handicapped during its election campaign by a shortage of Muslim workers, the Congress achievement

108. G.B.Pant to Rajender Prasad, 21 January 1937, Rajender Prasad Correspondence File II/37, Collection 1. Reel.5.
with Muslim seats was somewhat less remarkable. It contested 56 out of 482 Muslim seats in British India, and was 26. It did not secure a single Muslim seat in Bombay, the United Provinces, Bengal and Central Provinces. Its greatest successes with Muslim seats were achieved in Madras, Bihar and N.W.F.P. where it obtained 4, 5 and 15 seats respectively. The success of the Congress in the N.W.F.P. was only one indication that its overall failure in Muslim constituencies did not necessarily reflect communal trends.

Yet, if the Congress polled poorly in Muslim constituencies, the Muslim League did not fare nearly as well in those constituencies as it had hoped. Out of 482 Muslim seats, the League captured only 105. Only 4.8 percent of the Muslims who went to the polls voted for it. It won a substantial number of seats in the Hindu majority provinces the United Provinces and Bombay, but in the Muslim majority provinces it did not create much of an impression. It failed to secure a single seat in Bihar, Orissa and the N.W.F.P. the latter a predominantly Muslim province. Its performances in the Punjab and Sind, both Muslim majority provinces, were equally dismal, its gain being a single seat in the former and none in the latter. In Bengal the League won only 37 out of 119 Muslim seats. Its performance in Bombay and U.P. where it won 20 out of 39 and 27 out of 64 Muslim seats respectively were
impressive. In the province of Madras, out of 28 Muslim seats, the League secured 11. These are significant figures which show that in 1937 the League was not a vital force in Indian politics. Comparatively speaking, the League won a substantial number of seats in the Hindu majority provinces, but in the Muslim majority provinces it did not create any impression.

The following table shows the position of the Muslim League in the provincial assemblies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total Muslim seats</th>
<th>Seats won by League</th>
<th>Percentage of Muslim seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWFP</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

109. For these figures see Returns Showing the Results Elections in India, 1937, Command paper, No. 5589.
The poor showing by the Muslim League was neither surprising nor unexpected. The League was essentially an urban-based political party and had little or no contact with the masses in 1937. It has been pointed out by Khaliquzzaman that from its birth in 1906, the League's activities were 'always' confined to indoor political show.' He further writes: 'Even its annual sessions were held either in well decorated pandals (stages) or in big halls where a few honourable invitees were allowed by special cards. Mass public meetings were unknown.' In 1937, the year which marked the beginning of the 'parting of ways' between the Congress and the League, it was claimed by some Congressmen that the Congress had more Muslim members on its rolls than its Muslim rival. It is also perhaps true that Gandhi and Nehru were better known to the Muslim masses than was Jinnah.

The fact that an inter-communal party based on the agrarian interests of all communities won a majority in the Punjab showed that communal questions did not play a decisive part in the elections. The same could be said of Bengal, where the success of the Congress and

the K.P.P. pointed to the popularity of radical economic programmes.\textsuperscript{112} Taking into account the rout of the Hindu Mahasabha in the general constituencies at the hands of the Congress, and the lack of success of the League in the Muslim majority provinces, it can be concluded, then, that communal questions did not play a major role in the elections of 1937.

The election results proved that neither the Congress nor the Muslim League could claim to represent Muslims. But the success of the Congress in the general constituencies showed its popularity on the all India level; for the Muslim League, the future did not appear very promising as it had failed to capture a majority of the Muslim votes; and more significantly, it was not in a position to form a government on its own in any province. This realization lay behind the almost conciliatory posture taken up by Jinnah after the elections. He therefore, expressed the League's willingness to cooperate 'with any group or party if the basic principles are determined by common consent.'\textsuperscript{113} In the Presidential address of the AIML (25th session, Lucknow) Jinnah warned and gave a call, 'The paper declarations, slogans and shibboleths are not going to

\footnotesize{112. Fortnightly report for Bengal for first half of February 1937, H.P.File No. 18/1/37.}

\footnotesize{113. Leader, 1 March 1937.}
carry us anywhere. What India requires is a completely
united front and honesty of purpose, and then by whatever
name you may call your government is a matter of no
consequence so long as it is a government of the people,
by the people, for the people.'

Nehru was not inclined to respond
sympathetically to Jinnah's call, and his terms, for
cooperation, especially at a time when felt confident that
the Congress itself could win over the Muslim masses on
the basis of economic issues. Nor was he dismayed that
the Congress had won only a fraction of the Muslim seats
in the elections. During the election campaign the
Congress had found a willing response from the Muslim
masses 'and a desire to line up with our freedom
movement.' Until now the Congress had not made much
effort to work among the Muslim masses, and Jinnah also
complained of it in Presidential address of Muslim League
session, 'The present leadership of the Congress,
especially during the last 10 years, has been responsible
for alienating the Musalmans of India, more and more.,
they have by their words, deeds and programmes shown, more
and more, that the Musalmans cannot expect any justice or
fair play at their hands. Wherever they were in a
majority and wherever it suited them, they refused to

114. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, (ed) Foundations of
Pakistan: All India Muslim League Documents Vol.II
cooperate with the Muslim League parties and demanded unconditional surrender and the signing of their pledges. But now it was essential that the Congress take 'full advantage of this new interest and awakening,' and make 'a special effort' to enrol more Muslim members, 'so that our struggle for freedom may become even more broadbased than it is, and the Muslim masses should take the prominent part in it which is their due.' The Congress was not interested in pacts with a few persons representing communal organizations, 'with no common political background, meeting together and discussing and quarelling.' Clearly, Nehru, whether or not he say the motives behind Jinnah's cautious overtures to the Congress, turned them down without realizing the far-reaching consequences of it.

The inception of the Congress Muslim mass contact programme, and Nehru's declaration that the Congress hoped to rouse the Muslim masses in its favour could hardly have been welcomed by the League. Whatever Nehru may have said to the contrary, this could only mean that the success of the programme would lead to the rout of the Muslim League as a political organization. To

115. Ibid., p.267.
116. Leader, 3 April, 1937.
118. Nehru to Ismail Khan, 5 Feb.1938, Nehru Correspondence, Vol.39.
Jinnah, it must have seemed as insult, added to the injury, that not only was the Congress indifferent to the idea of co-operating with the Muslim League, but also that it was inaugurating a campaign, the very success of which would spell the political extinction of the Muslim League. The very reasons which made Nehru confident of its success roused Jinnah's fears. The implications of the Congress Muslim Mass Contact Programme being quite clear, Jinnah's sharp reaction to its inauguration was not surprising. He regretted that Nehru should have found a solution which would produce more bitterness and frustrate the object that every nationalist had at heart. To Jinnah, the Congress attempt 'under the guise of establishing mass contact with the Mussalmans, is calculated to divide and weaken and break the Mussalmans, and is an effort to detach them from their accredited leaders.'

It would not be the last of Nehru's political errors of judgement in his dealings with Jinnah, but it was one of the most fatal mistakes he ever made in a moment of hubris. More than Iqbal, it was Nehru who charted a new mass strategy for the League, prodding and challenging Jinnah to leave the drawing rooms of politics to reach down to the hundred million Muslims who spent

119. Leader, 22 April, 1937.
120. Pirzada, Documents, p.270.
most of each day labouring in rural fields. There was, of
course, only one possible way for the League to stir that
mass, to awaken it, and to lure it to march behind Muslim
leadership. The cry of Islam in danger of din (religion)
alone could emerge as the unique stand of the Muslim
League. "No common principle or policy binds them," Nehru
had taunted, referring to Jinnah's independent "party" in
the assembly. And for Jinnah this was a as significant a
turning point, traumatically triggered by public
humiliation, as the Congress non-cooperation resolution
rebuke he had sustained at Nagpur in 1920. Only, then his
was the secular rational leadership, seeking in vain to
reduce a 'Mahatma' to mere 'Mr'. Now Nehru had used "Mr."
before Jinnah's name as a sarcastic form of rebuke, for
that title was the badge of British identity Jinnah
appeared to epitomize, despite his claims to Muslim
leadership. 121

Jinnah, however, never lost his temper except
for calculated political advantage. He used anger as a
barrister or as actor would, to sway his jury audience,
ever from an uncontrollable flaring of passion. The
hatred he felt toward Nehru was cold, born of contempt
rather than rage. "What can I say to the busibody
President of the Congress?" Jinnah remarked of Nehru in

121. Stanley Wolpert, Jinnah of Pakistan (Oxford Press,
an interview several months later. "He sees to carry the responsibility of the whole world on his shoulders and must poke his nose into everything except minding his own business." 122

On the basis of the analysis of Elections of 1936-37 to the provincial legislative Assemblies we can conclude that the Muslim League's claim of being the sole-representative of Muslims of India fall flat on the ground. It is interesting that Muslim League was routed in elections in the Muslim majority provinces. On the contrary it achieved some success in Muslim minority provinces like Bombay and U.P. Results of the 1936-37 elections revealed that Muslim League in 1936-37 was all-India Muslim party only in name and almost without any organization like that of its rival Congress. It stands no where in the world of Indian politics. Jinnah, under his "pendulum strategy" of swinging the ballast of Muslim support from Congress to the British and then back again, which thus won the greatest concession for muslims at every stage of the long, tough struggle toward a negotiated transfer of power, turned towards Congress but got rebuke at every stage. In the experiences of those years Jinnah learned lessons in practical politics that

122. Quoted in ibid, p.143.
a theoretical approach never could have taught him. He and the Muslim League went into the elections as idealists; they emerged from the aftermath as political realists. The change could hardly have been more significant for India and the shape of her independent future. This inextricably woven the "side issue" of 1936 with the main issue in 1947.