Chapter VII
Muslim Politics - Partition of India
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The Partition of India
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Strained Hindu-Muslim relations

"The roots of the present lay in the past."\(^1\) The partition of India and creation of an Islamic nation, Pakistan, legitimized the socio-cultural distinction between Hindus and Muslims. Centuries old hatred stirred anew. In a country where citing of hundreds and thousands of year of history is common, this opened up the old wounds.

Islam entered Indian west coast peacefully with Arab traders in early 7th C.E. with motto to do only trade. The inclusive philosophy and entrusting nature of Hindus extended hospitality, and inter-faith marriages occurred between them.\(^2\) Subsequently, Turks, Persians and Mongols came to India but they came with "sword of Islam in their hands." The bitterness resulting from ferocious and barbaric attacks left a permanent mark in Hindu minds and sowed the seeds of hatred for ever. The followers of Islam entered India to do two things: expansion of Islam (conversion by force or death); and loot wealth and increase poverty.

According to Lane Poole, the first military invasion by an Arab, Mohammed Bin Qasim in 712 C.E. was, "an episode in the history of India and Islam, a triumph without any results" (Lane Poole). However this was to be changed soon. The successive raids of Mahmud of Ghazni (1000-1027 C.E.) and Timur (1336-1405) struck terror. The fanaticism of Ghazni in his seventeen raids and Timur in his five raids was brutal and merciless. Both made sure that the khafirs (infidels) either converted to Islam or were
killed. They decimated several Hindu temples and destroyed the idols. Ghazni viewed
them with Islamic iconoclastic fervor as abominations to Allah. 3 Firoz Shah, who ruled
India from 1351 to 1388, wrote, "...temples are not to be tolerated. Under Divine
guidance, I destroyed these edifices, and I killed those leaders of infidelity who seduced
others into error." 4 Ghazni and Timur carried "Jihad" at least as much for plunder as for
the promise of paradise. 5 Dazzled by wealth of Hindu temples and cities, they raided,
looted and ravaged these places. Time and time again, wealth of India was carried off,
Hindus were killed and enslaved, women defiled and artisans dragged to North. In Punjab
over 100,000 Hindu prisoners were massacred by Timur and his forces in one day. He
ransacked Delhi for fifteen continuous days. When he left, it was a city of death and
destruction. When killing became impractical, due to large Hindu population, Jizya (poll
tax) was inflicted upon the people in exchange for their freedom to live. Firoz Shah
wrote, "The Hindus and idol worshippers had agreed to pay the money for toleration (Zar-
i-zimmia) and had consented to the Jizya (poll tax), in return for which they and their
families enjoyed security."

In 1526 C.E., Babar, Timur's great grandson, came to Delhi and laid the
foundation of Mughal dynasty which ruled India for the next two hundred years. "I never
ceased to think of the conquest of Hindustan", wrote Babar in Babar Nama, his memoirs.
He was a descendant of Chenghiz Khan and Halaku and claimed control of India his birth
right. He always wanted to conquer India for her wealth and Jihad. Babar neither liked
India nor Hindus. Like his predecessors, he waged a fierce war against Hindus and their
temples. Thousands of temples were destroyed, and in their place masjid (mosques) were
erected. One such contentious place is in Ayodhya, the sight of recent Hindu Muslim
conflict.
Unlike Babar, his grandson, Akbar (1556-1605) set to mend the fences with Hindus and soon won respect and confidence of the populous. He was the only foreign ruler magnanimous enough to be called "Akbar The Great." His diplomacy and vision led him to make alliances and he appointed Hindus in prominent positions to gain their support and allegiance. During the next century, as the Mughal power declined, the English began to take control of India.

Making the balance sheet of Mughal rule, one must credit the distinct Mughul culture which evolved out of Hindu and Muslim fusion. Reminiscent of the "Hindu Renaissance" of the ancient period, great progress was made in art, architecture, music, literature and language. True to this, it would also be fair to state that the cultural assimilation did not promote or encourage co-mingling. Dictates of faiths kept Hindus and Muslims segregated. Like water and oil, they were and did not mix.

The degree of separation widened further by the meddling of the English in India's internal affairs. "India is still cleaning the mess that the British have left 45 years ago"; that is, the mess of the religious divide and perpetual antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. Before their departure, the genius English solution divided India into two: India and Pakistan. This was hardly a suitable going away gift, considering their 347 years stay in the sub-continent.

The India Muslim League

The Muslim factor, dormant in pre 1857 era, was aroused by Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) after it. Since the British had blamed Muslims for the uprising of 1857, he wanted to appease and win loyalty of the British. While his initial plea to the Muslim
community was pro-Western education, he later incited fear in them of undemocratic Hindu domination over neutral British rule.\textsuperscript{6}

The collapse of the Mughal rule and banishment of the last Mughal, Bahadur Shah Zafar left Muslims leaderless. Consequently under this confused, they clinged to their traditional past and religious status quo. The regarded English language as "the Highway to Infidelity" as marginalized their educational growth and job prospects. The Muslim community disregarded western education without which they could neither compete for the government jobs nor improve their economic conditions. In contrast, many in the Hindu community had already been educated in western traditions and beginning to see the impact its socio-economic impact. The Muslim community found itself in catch 22 situation; frustration and animosity toward the more prosperous class, i.e., the Hindus was set in. Of course, this sentiment was used by the ruling British to it one Indian against the other.

Equally oppressed, Hindus and Muslims developed separate nationalistic agendas. As the fragmentary apartheid practices continued and unfair laws were implemented, the consciousness of Indian intellectual started to formulate options. Ending the servitude became a passion.

From the beginning, Muslims were are suspicious to the British modernization and westernization policies than the Hindus. They were against the western education and stayed close to their parochial education in the mosques and madrasas. Consequently, when the time came for civil service, they were not prepared to compete.

Initially, the British held Muslims responsible for the 1857 War of Independence and had a harsher attitude toward them. However as the Hindu nationalism rose, they
began to inculcate the Muslims as natural enemies against the Hindus. The British gave
t heir full backing to the League and exploited it to weaken the Hindu nationalism. The
League now proposed its own demands: separate or communal electorates, seat in the
legislature, reservation of civil service jobs, etc. The British were too eager to oblige and
thus successfully sowed the seed of future hatred and subsequent partition of the country.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan had served in the Mughal administration and also the British
in a legal capacity. To the Muslim community, Sayyid Ahmed Khan promoted the idea of
western education as way of political and economic empowerment. He realized that the
lack of western education was key to Muslims economic plight. He proposed reforms and
acceptance of the western education by the Muslim community. That English boycott
would leave them far behind, he proposed two pronged methodology of social reform and
religious toleration. In social reform, he advocated education for both men and women,
abolishment of purdah and polygamy. In religious toleration, he promoted unity among
the Hindu and Muslim.

Like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who justified his appeal on Hinduism, Khan justified
his arguments on Islamic doctrines. He urged Muslims to look into the core of the Koran
and ignore current practices which were unsupported by the Holy Koran.\(^7\) India’s Search
for National Identity) To advance his ideas, he founded Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental
(M.A.O.) College in 1875, which became later Muslim University at Aligarh. Although
this university was open to all faiths, under Mr. Beck, as its principal, (1883-1899), the
college altered its focus. Soon it channeled all its attention to Muslim revival and anti-
Hindu activities.

Soon the alumnus began to develop a separate leadership with Muslim base.
Opposition to the Congress demands for constitutional reforms soon followed. Unfounded fear of the Hindu majority in a possible future Hindu democratic government became the justification for rhetorical statements. Khan vehemently opposed the INC and in a revisionist tone, began to articulate an altered version of the Mughal history and past deeds of Mughal rulers, which was marked by terror, torture and tensions. He claimed that in Hindu majority rule, not only Muslims but other minorities would suffer, "they are prone to take the sword in hand when the majority oppresses them." This was an interesting statement to make as Babar, the founder of Mughal Rule, himself entered India with "a Sword of Islam" in 1526. Muslim's blatant opposition to INC's constitutional reforms demand was matched by Hindu nationalism which viewed Muslims rulers as foreigners.

The Muslim leaders, encouraged by the British, incited false fear of Hindu majority rule in Muslim minds, and converted their frustration of lower economic status into communal distrust. In addition there was another controversy between these two groups which centered on language. Hindu was the common language in the north India while Urdu (combination of Persian Grammar and Arabic script) was the language of the Muslims. Urdu was elevated to official usage during the Mughal rule and there was a movement to bring back the Hindu language in the official fulcrum on the basis that Hindu was the language of the majority not Urdu.

It was not a simple argument of semantic. The difference in language was cultural and religious. Hindi was based on Sanskrit and Hindu culture while Urdu on Muslim. In some district, Hindu was made the official language, Bengal and Bihar being few of them. With the official status of Hindi, more jobs went to predominantly Hindi speaking Hindus. Khan sowed the seed of future Jinnah two nation a theory, "It was no longer possible for the two nations to be partners with each other in any common enterprise."
Thus National Muslim League was founded in 1906 in responses to All India National Congress of 1885 under the leadership of Aga Khan and Nawab Salim-ullah of Dacca. One interesting fact remains that the Muslim masses did not support such a League although it was supported by the upper crest of the rich nawabs, zamindars and nobility who were rich, privileged and feared monetary losses. A traditionalist Islamic, Deoband group did not agree with Syyid Ahmad Khan which was founded at Deoband, near Delhi in 1857. It argued that in secular areas, INC should be supported. In fact they issued a fatwa, (Islamic edict) to contradict him. However, this group did not lead the Muslim and the League took the lead for the Muslims.

Even though both Muslims and Hindus had lived together in harmony for centuries, the British for their selfish motives tried to create a rift among them with their policy of "divide and rule." Between the period of 1906-1909, Dunlop Smith and W.A. Archibald, Principal of M.A.O. College exploited the Muslims. When in 1907, a deputation led by Aga Khan to the Viceroy Minto went they used it as an opportunity to grant their request for separate electorate in Morlay Minto Reforms of 1909.

Sayyid Khan changed his original stand on religious tolerance and social reform to sectarian politics and opposed INC's demand for a greater share in the British administration. He began to fuel the fear of dominant Hindu rule and encouraged the Muslims to form a parallel and rival political party which was finally formed in 1906 following his death. His legacy was carried out in and outside the University, many others; Chiragh Ali, Altaf Hussain Hali and Maulana Shibli Naumani.

Not all in the Muslim League were extremists. There was a group of Muslims who wanted to join with the INC to fight the common enemy and not with each other. Some
of those who desired this were, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Dr., M.A. Ansari, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Hasan Imam, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mazhar-ul-Haq. Not able to change the League leaders minds, they left and joined the INC.

During the First World War (1914-1918), for a short period, British strategy failed and brought the Muslim and Hindu political agendas very close. The British were in war with Turkey during this war. The League were supporting Turkish Sultan's Khilafat Movement which the Congress joined as well. Now they both had a common cause which led to their agreement to consolidate their demands with the British also. An agreement pact was signed in 1916, known as Lucknow Pact. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League leader hailed the Lucknow pact as the "charter for India's freedom." C.Y. Chintamani and Madan Mohan Malviya felt that the Congress had relented too much to the League. However, Tilak firmly believed in right of self-government no matter who it was for. He announced in the session, "Brother, delegates, some have complained that Hindus have conceded too much to our Muslim brothers. I feel confident that I represent the feelings of the entire Hindu community, when I say that whatever concession should be given could never be too much, when we have to fight the third party. This is a great event, a most important achievement that we are today standing on the same platform, united as one nation, united though professing different faiths, united though holding different political opinions." To his Home Rule supporters he said, "I would not care if the Muslims or any other community are granted the right of self-government. the fight will then be between them and not as at present a triangular fight."11

The British government conceded in August 20, 1917 to allow more participation by Indian in self-governing institutions and establish self-government in India in stages. This led to Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1919.
The Demands of a Separate Nation

The end of World War II brought internal political changes in Britain. Britain had won the war but lost the battle. The war had undermined much to its economic and human resources and that inspite of grave exploitation of the colonies, especially, India. Inspite of Prime Minister Winston Churchill's popularity as a war hero, the opposite Labour Party returned to power. Clement Atlee became the Prime Minister with Lord Pethick Lawrence as the Secretary of State for India.

Prime Minister Atlee in addressing the Labour Party conference on May 23, 1945 said, "they would strive earnestly to enable India to get full self government." Negotiations for a national government soon were underway. Atlee twice insisted to the House of Lords to send a parliamentary delegation to India so that a constitution making body could be formed. In order "to promote, in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion, the early realization of full self-government in India," British Prime Minister Atlee finally announced the formation of a Cabinet mission to India.\textsuperscript{12} The delegation came to India and after doing its research reported in 1946 to the Parliament that all Indians were unanimously demand the independence.

Now the focus of freedom movement was not against the British government but between the Congress and the Muslim League. The purpose of the mission was to consolidate the Congress and the League and proposed a loose federation. But the Congress and the League differed grossly over the details of the constitution making body.

The Congress wanted a single body to write the constitution along with an interim government of 15 members\textsuperscript{11} to represent provinces and 4 the minorities. Jinnah on
the contrary demanded a separate constituent assembly, a separate Pakistan comprising NWFP, Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan in the west and Assam and Bengal in the East.

Congress disagreed over the division of seats and rejected the League's claim as the sole representative of all Muslims to fill the Muslim seats. Inspite of such obstacle, the Congress kept its focus on the independence of India and decided to participate and frame the constitution.

In order to bring some kind of unity the Mission held a conference at Simla but was unsuccessful to resolve the difference between the Congress and the League. With this development, the Cabinet Mission proceeded to work for a united India with central government empowered in defense, communications and external affairs and gave option to the provinces to choose to join the federation or stay independent.

The provisions of this proposal proposed a three tier governmental system: for the province, for the groups and for the union of India. Its weakest point was the option not to join the Union of India. Thus it gave an expanded opportunity for the states, or the provinces to divest and further erode the making of a strong united India. The proposal required to:

1. Divide the British Indian provinces into three group:
   - Group A  Hindu area
   - Group B  Bengal and Assam
   - Group C  Punjab, NWFP and Sindh

2. Draft the union constitution with 296 representatives for the constituent assembly (CA) elected by the provincial legislatures and 93 from the Indian states.
3. Divide the CA into three sections to represent three above groups. If desired, each of these sections would draft a constitution for a regional union and also for province.

4. Form a central interim government representative of all communities, including Hindus and Muslims.

Nehru, as the Congress President denounced the grouping proposal and agreed to join only the constituent assembly and not the proposal of interim government due to that objection. Jinnah on the other hand had accepted both. Outraged, Jinnah said, "not that the Congress President has declared that the Congress could change the scheme through its majority in the constituent assembly it would mean that the minorities were placed at the mercy of the majority." Nehru finally accepted both part of the proposal to avoid any carnage and protests.

Even though the British had Jinnah that they would go by the Cabinet Mission's recommendations he was not convinced. The League rejected the Cabinet mission plans and he declared August 16, 1946, day of "direct action" to get a separate state of Pakistan. He was responsible for a wave of uncontrollable communal rioting and violence due to this announcement. According to one speaker, "if the British government force on us an Akhand Hindustan, the destruction and havoc which the Muslims will cause will put to shame the deeds of Halaku and Chengis Khan." Indiscriminate killing and carnage ensued for days in Bihar, Bengal and the United Provinces.

When the elections were held in July 1946, this time the Muslim League received 73 seats in contrast to 205 seats by the Congress and the rest by other parties. The
Congress won all the general seats except 9, and the League all Muslim seats except 5. The Muslims took control of Muslim seats while Hindu in the other seats. "The two-nation theory of Jinnah had found political expression."¹⁵

A popular government of 6 Congress members and 5 Muslims was to be formed. Nehru agrees while Jinnah refused. On September 2, Nehru was sworn in as the de facto Prime Minister of the interim government. Inspite of Nehru's offer of 5 seats out of 15 to Jinnah in the interim government, he did not agree. With mounting pressure from within the rank and file civil servants and the government, Nehru was under pressure to appease the Muslims again.

Jinnah participated in the interim government only to sharpen the communalism and intensify the demands of partition and a separate nation for the Muslims. Their obstructionist tactics severely impaired the negotiations. Finally on February 20, 1947, the British Government announced to give India its freedom, to one central government, by June 1948. Lord Mountbatten, the great grandson of Queen Victoria was to be the last Viceroy of India to oversee the transfer of powers to Indians.

The pressure of communal rioting that broke out with this announcement, Nehru along with Nehru and traditionalists Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had come to accept the inevitable partition of India into two.¹⁶ Gandhi remained unconvinced that the partition was the solution and refused to accept it. But then current Congress leadership divested from Gandhi's philosophy and decided to agree with the British plan. There were areas such as Punjab and Bengal where Hindu and Muslim communities were almost equal in number. They were divided by the boundary commission. In the Northwest Frontier Province where pre-Congress Muslim government was a minority, a referendum would be held.
The princely states had freedom to choose to accede to either India or Pakistan or stay independent. There were 562 principalities with princes and nobility varying in size from a few square miles inhabiting few hundred to cities like Hyderabad with 17 million people. The original time frame of independence by June 1948 was speeded up to August 15, 1947 by Mountbatten. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was able to convinced all of the principalities by August 14, 1947 to join India except three; Junagadh, Hyderabad and Jammu and Kashmir.

The Partition of India

The Indian freedom movement was spearheaded by M.K. Gandhi in early 1920. The nucleus of this movement was secularism and non-violence. Inspite of his charismatic personality and genuine efforts to bring all religions in the fold, the political climate of India perpetuated the gulf between Hindus and Muslims. Bapuji demanded full swatantrata (freedom) for India. His proposal to the British to leave India and leave Hindus and Muslims to resolve their own differences was unheeded. "He wanted one indivisible nation" and would not accept anything "less than that". His dream for free India was never fulfilled, for India was divided into two "before India had become a nation." 17

The communal riots, killing of people began with February 20, 1947 British announcement that power would be given to India by June, 1948 but it would be given to one central government. The Muslim League wanted to control the provinces they wanted in new Pakistan. The Muslims of interim government toppled the provincial governments of Punjab(Khizr Ahyat Khan) and Congress controlled NWFP. Hand to hand
street fighting and killing started in Lahore and spread like a wildfire in other towns. "In the NWFP, the Muslim League appealed to the frontier tribes to create outbreaks of violence. There was a mental alliance between the League and senior British officials." (Sanyal 124) Atlee appointed Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy of India who arrived on March 24, 1947 to handle this situation.

Congress was astonished by the human killing, looting and devastation of the riots and was not hard pressed to accept the division of India as the only solution at best. Sensing the acceptance of partition within the Congress, Mountbatten sweetened the deal for the first time, he offered a strong central government which Congress had argued for from the beginning. Federalism was the central point of contention between the Muslim League and Congress. Muslims were the anti-federalists who as minority wanted a weak central government with expanded powers at the provincial levels. As expected, the Congress, reluctantly, but seeing no other alternative accepted the plan.

1. British withdrawal on August 15, 1947 and transfer of power to new government on the basis of Dominion.

2. Partition India into two countries: India and Pakistan
   (a) Divide Punjab and Bengal, if voted by the provincial legislative in two separate communal district, i.e., Hindus and Muslims. If the vote is yes then a Board of Commission would be set up to decide the boundary line between India and Pakistan. The Commission included Sir Cyril Radcliffe and its decision was final and binding.
   (b) Hold plebiscite in NFW, Sylhet District of Assam to ascertain the wishes of the people.
3. Draft a constitution with the help of the existing Constituent Assembly (CA) while a separate would draft a constitution for Pakistan.

4. CA would decide continuation of India as the member of British Commonwealth.

5. The individual Indian states would decide for themselves who to join, India or Pakistan or remain independent.

What should have been the proudest moment of the freedom fighters and Indian masses turned into its greatest historical tragedy. The territorial Balkanization of India not only left a permanent feud between them but destroyed the confidence and trust between Hindu-Muslim community that lived closely. Thousands of families were separated, disunited; property confiscated, lost and left behind and thriving industries captured and controlled by the governments.

Great human loss went was inevitable. The emotional hysteria followed the freedom, fueled further by political rhetoric on both sides. More than 500,000 people were killed. Mass migration between the India and Pakistan borders occurred. Most cases of riots occurred in Punjab which had the most contiguous land and water boundaries.

Bengal's eastern half was divided, given to Pakistan was now called East Pakistan (current free nation of Bangla Desh). They were separated by 1500 miles. In between these two distances, India was in the middle with contiguous boundaries with each. The Eastern part of Bengal was given to Pakistan due to its large Muslim population but they were totally ignored over the years by West Pakistani government. Their frustration would eventually lead to a war of independence and creation of their separate nation,
Bengla Desh in 1971. Over 1 million people alone crossed the border from East Pakistan to India. In Bengal the rioting was limited or almost nil due to Gandhi's strong presence, "a one man boundary force."

Gandhi and Nehru were totally opposed to the partition and Balkanization of India and had been making many attempts to appease both Hindus and Muslims to remain united. The pressure of communal rioting that broke out with the partition announcement, Nehru along with traditionalists, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had come to accept the inevitable partition of India into two.\textsuperscript{18} Gandhi remained unconvinced that the partition was the solution and refused to accept it. But then current Congress leadership divested from Gandhi's philosophy and decided to agree with the British plan. There were areas such as Punjab and Bengal where Hindu and Muslim communities were almost equal in number. They were divided by the boundary commission. In the Northwest Frontier Province where pre-Congress Muslim government was a minority, a referendum would be held.

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Lord Mountbatten, the great grand nephew of Queen Victoria had come to think of Pakistan "inevitable" against the advice of his advisers. They had feared that by creating east and west Pakistan, east would remain rural and neglected. Jinnah wanted all
of Bengal and Punjab but had to come to terms that it would be so. On April 20, Nehru declared that the Muslim League can have Pakistan if Jinnah insisted but only "on . (Wolpert condition that they do not take away other parts of India which do not wish to join Pakistan." On the matter of principle the League could not object to it.19

On July 14, 1947, the House of Commons proclaimed that in one month "two independent Dominion" would be established in India, "to be known respectively as India and Pakistan."20 A boundary commission was appointed under Sir Cyril Radcliffe who was a legal expert and had never been to India ever before and would never return to it ever afterwards. He worked in secrecy and was not allowed to interact or intermingle with the people. There were 8 Indian high court judges to assist him; four from Bengal, four from the Punjab, half chosen by the Congress and half by the League. Often they bickered over the territory but the decisions were all made by Radcliffe. Often the maps were old and he worked in hot, sweaty, dingy places for an unprecedented historic period which would not only divide the nation but destroy the lives of millions of people forever.21

The subsequent partition of India into two nations costed some 500,000 lives and that many refugees on both sides. Unfortunately, here, "the end justifies the means" became the standard mind set. Here as elsewhere around the world, Korean War of 1950-53, Vietnam War of 1961-84 and the Iraq-Iran war of 1980-87, "killing became devastatingly indiscriminate, with civilians perishing in numbers at least as great as the military fatalities. Moreover, even worse from the moral point of view was the pervasive inclination of al combatants to view enemy civilians as legitimate targets.22

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that is, the mess of the religious divide and perpetual antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. Before their departure, the genius English solution divided India into two: India and Pakistan. This was hardly a suitable going away gift, considering their 347 years stay in the sub-continent.

The Independence of India

The Indian Constituent Assembly (CA) held a special session at midnight of August 14, 1947 at the new capital, Delhi. The Assembly Hall was filled with people. The national flag of tri-color was unfurled and hoisted amidst the cheers and tears of joy and pride. However, this flag did not Gandhinian Spinning wheel in the middle as it was put originally. The new flag carried the wheel of Dharma from Buddhism as India's affirmation to secularism. While Pakistan was divided with Jinnah two nation theory: India for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims, India continued its thousands of years old tradition of secularism. This also invited Muslims to feel comfortable and safe in the new Indian nation.

Jawaharlal Nehru of Allahabad was appointed as the first prime minister of free India. "Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight our, when the world sleeps, India will wake to life and freedom. We should take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity."

As the tri color flag of India was hurled in the dark nights, the Indians for the first time could claim themselves free from the colonialism and imperialism of others. Now they had a new destiny and new roads to take to make it successful. Nehru and Rajendra
Prasad, the first President of India invited Mountbatten to become the first Governor-General of the Indian dominion. Pakistan invited Jinnah to be its Governor-General.

Could India ever be a country? This question was answered by, John Strachey, a British administrator in 1888. "This is the first and most essential thing to learn about India, that there is not, and never was an India, or even any country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious... That men of the Punjab, Bengal, the North-Western Provinces, and madras should ever feel they belong to one great nation, is impossible." However, India was able to forge individual identity on the "existence of a national identity." Where was Gandhi on the birth of India? He was so disgusted and heart broken with the division that he wrote, "the rot be and with the alien government. We, the inheritors have not taken the trouble to rectify the errors of the past." He did not stay in Delhi to celebrate the independence and returned Naokhari District in East Bengal to continue the work to unite Hindu Muslims.

While Punjab riots were being contained there were sporadic violence occurring between Hindus and Muslims as thousands of refugees came to Delhi an other cities of Punjab. Gandhi began an enormous task of reconciliation between the two communities in India. On January 13, 1948, Gandhi began a fast to stop this madness by the people. He wanted to raise the "conscience of all, "Hindus Muslims and Sikhs. Ultimately, he was able to win pro-Muslim support from the Indian government while there was no Mahatama to help the fate of thousands of helpless Hindus in Pakistan, where no law and order protected them. They were given three choices; convert to Islam, pack up and leave or prepare to die.
Within the Congress, not everyone agreed to Gandhi's pro-Muslim intervention. He was seen too bend on appeasing the minority at the cost of majority thus creating further tensions. Certain and definite underlying frustration was building up due to that. While a great empathy and sympathy was promoted to support and protect the Hindus, the Hindus who were butchered, raped and whose property was confiscated by the Pakistani government were reduced to refugee status without anything in India. Their frustration was not heard or addressed. On January 20, 1948, Gandhi was assassinated as he was going to his daily prayers. Nehru announced in the emotional speech, "The light has gone our of our lives and there is darkness everywhere...."

There is always a question of reunification of India and Pakistan. If Gandhi had not been assassinated in 1948 and if he had been able to take his proposed foot journey to Pakistan to convince Hindus and Muslims, would they have reunited under the flag of one country?

The sprawling ancient land in modern India seems particularly compressed since its partition in 1947. Yet, it ranks as the seventh largest country in the world with total land area of 1,261,000 sq. miles (approximately 2000 miles from north to south and 1,500 miles from East to West). This subcontinent houses over 934 million people. Demographically, India is the second most populous country in the world; every 6th person is an Indian. With this, India also becomes the world's largest democracy and a staunch proponent of its principles in South Asia. India has defended her borders against unprovoked aggressions of her neighbors four times since her independence 45 years ago. With strong leadership and support of her citizens, she has prevailed without compromising her democracy.
In this process, her unique cultural diversity has only enhanced and not diminished. Jawaharlal Nehru, who became the first Prime Minister of India said, "the diversity of India is tremendous: it is obvious; it lies on the surface and anybody can see it."

Absorbing many cultures over thousands of years, she is a curious blend of diverse regions, languages, customs, costumes, cuisine but most of all, religions.

Representation of major religions of the world in India is an example of her inclusiveness. Hinduism is one of the oldest religions of the world and is practiced by approximately 83% Indians. Hinduism is a monotheistic religion which is truly a philosophy of life. It is based on doctrine of Karma; action-reaction, Dharma; duty, Atma-Paratma; soul, supreme soul and Reincarnation; cycle of birth and rebirth. It promotes the pursuit of Truth and individual growth through reflection, introspection, understanding and accountability. For its followers, it transforms into whatever they strive to become. Hinduism believes in compromise and thus looks at other religions as complementary and not as competitors. Precisely due to this it has accorded the status of separate religion and not denomination to its three offshoots; Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Islam is the second major religion and is practiced by over 11% people.

The roots of British domination and its disastrous after effects have marred the peaceful existence of an independent India. However, the indemonstrable spirit of Indian nationalism which rose up to the occasion to free India is capable of handling the perils of destructive forces and would come through.
Post-Independence National politics

In India since the 12th century when the Muslim ruling class influence really began to occur, a new kind of Indian culture has evolved. In the great revolt on 1857, rich and poor, farmer and the city folks, rajas and the subordinates, Hindus and Muslims all joined hands to toppled the foreign powers.

With ingenious policy of divide and rule, the British were able to plant the seed via communal electorate in 1907 which only grew under repeated reforms of 1909, 1919 and 1935.

India has always professed, practiced and adopted secularism. However, adoption of secularism however is not enough to halt the perennial feud between its two dominant religious groups; Hindu and Muslim. The animosities between them are never ending. No other issue in India unleashes passion of the masses as the issue of religion. The partition of India created Pakistan, thanks to British "divide and rule" policy. Close to three to four million people were killed and millions more were forced to migrate. The gruesome experience of the partition has left permanent scars on both sides. In its aftermath, the religious hostilities are still present and has led to fragmentation, frustrations and communal riots.

A solution to problems related to this enmity has never been more crucial than now. It has become the ultimate litmus test for government's effectiveness. The recent controversy is over Ramjanmbhoomi-Babri Masjid (birth place of Hindu God Rama and Mosque build by Mughal ruler Babar) in Ayodhya. Both Hindus and Muslims claim this place important to them. This issue was dormant and would have remained so since 1949, if in 1985 the controversy of Shah Bano, a Muslim woman's divorce had not erupted. No
other issue since the independence has attracted so much media and government attention.
It has forced the government to reevaluate its secularist stand, challenged its validity in
socio-political context, and strengthened the demands of a "one nation" (Akhand Hindu
Rashtra) by Hindus, and increased pressure of social, literary censorship and conservatism
by Muslims.
NOTES


2. The ancestors of these Arab traders in Kerala are called; Moplahs. This term comes from Malayalam word, "Mapilla" meaning, son-in-law.


8. Bary, De. Sources of Indian Traditions, p. 68.


13. Ibid., p. 51.


