Chapter II

MUSLIMS AND THE NEHRU REPORT
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The appointment of the all-British Simon Commission to review the working of the 1919 reforms gave an opportunity to the Congress and the Muslims to work together for the preparation of the draft Constitution. The ground had already been prepared by the Congress in 1926 at its Gauhati session where it concentrated its attention on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity and asked its Working Committee to "take immediate steps in consultation with Hindu and Mussalman leaders to devise measures for the removal of the present deplorable differences between Hindus and Mussalmans and submit their report to the All India Congress Committee not later than the 31 March 1927."

The next significant step in this direction took place on 20 March, when prominent Muslim leaders belonging to various groups met in Delhi under the presidency of Jinnah to discuss the question of Muslim representation in the legislatures. It was unanimously agreed that the Muslims would be prepared to give up separate electorates if the following proposals were accepted: (1) Sind to be separated from Bombay Presidency and constituted into a separate province; (2) reforms to be introduced in North West Frontier

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Province and in Baluchistan on the same footing as in any other province in India; (3) in the Punjab and Bengal, the proportion of representation to be made in accordance with the population; (4) in the Central legislature Muslim representation not to be less than one-third. If all these demands were accepted, Muslims would be prepared to accept joint electorates in all the provinces so constituted and to make to Hindu minorities in Bengal, Punjab and North-West Frontier Provinces the same concessions that Hindus majorities in other provinces were prepared to make to Muslims.

According to the Delhi proposals, the Muslims were expected to have majority in the legislatures of five provinces of which no less than three Sind, N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan contained an overwhelming Muslim majority. The end in view was explained by Jinnah in the following words:

...Muslims should be made to feel that they are secure and safeguarded against any act of oppression on the part of the majority and that they need not feel that during the transitional stage towards the fullest development of National Government the majority would be in a position to oppress and tyrannise the minority as majorities are prone to do in other communities. (3)

2 Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad, Historic Documents of the Muslim Freedom Movement (Lahore, 1970), p. 86.
The Working Committee of the Congress appreciated the preparedness of the Muslim leaders to accept joint electorates and passed a lengthy resolution on the Hindu-Muslim question for presentation at the A.I.C.C. session on 15 May in Bombay. It is significant to note that it accepted all the Muslim proposals. The A.I.C.C. unanimously adopted the same resolution with minor alterations. The principal change suggested was that Sind should not be separated on communal grounds but on general grounds applicable to all provinces. A change in the wording of the resolution removed the objection and it was passed unanimously. The Madras session of the Congress held in December 1927, gave full assurance to the Muslims that "their legitimate interests should be secured ... by the reservation of seats in joint electorates on the basis of population in every province and in the central legislature..." It also agreed to other Muslim proposals regarding Sind, N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan.

The Congress leaders were delighted at the prospect of united action with the Muslims. M. A. Ansari, in his presidential address, expressed the gratitude of the Congress for the Muslim leaders in the following words:

...I would be lacking in my duty if I did not place on record the deep appreciation of the Indian National Congress of the spirit of patriotism and statesman-
ship displayed by the Muslim leaders who rose above prejudice, suspicion and narrow communal outlook and boldly came forward with the proposals which presage a new orientation on Muslim policy in India. (6)

Talking about the resolutions passed at the Madras session, another Congress leader, Govind Ballabh Pant, characterized them "as the best and most suitable arrangement which carried with it the largest amount of support from both the communities." He also said that even though reservation of seats was not "compatible with complete independence" it had been accepted by Hindus at a meeting of the All-India Committee with the full concurrence of M. R. Jayakar and Madan Mohan Malaviya, both of whom had been the Presidents of the Hindu Mahasabha.

The All-India Muslim League also, at its session in Calcutta on 30 December 1927, accepted the Delhi proposals and decided to co-operate with the rest of the country in boycotting the Statutory Commission and in framing a Constitution for India on lines acceptable to all communities and all parties. This was the result of the lead given by Jinnah, Abdur Rahim, Ali Imam, the Raja of Mahmudabad and others. But at this juncture the solidarity of the League was broken as one section refused to boycott the Simon Commission and also opposed Jinnah and others on account of their readiness to

6 Ibid., Appendix 1, p. 9.
7 Ibid., p. 75.
give up separate electorates. A rival session of the League was convened at Lahore on 31 December under Muhammad Shafi. An anti-boycott manifesto was issued whereby Muslims were warned that "a resort to the sterile policy of boycott ... will bring nothing but shame and sorrow."

On the other hand, the Jinnah section contended that the proceedings of the League at Lahore were conducted in a most arbitrary and unconstitutional manner. A joint statement issued over the signatures of Mohammad Alam, Hissam-ud-din, Chaudhuri Afzal Huq, Mazhar Ali Azhar and Mohammad Sharif pointed that barely a dozen attended the meeting from provinces other than Punjab and N.W.F.P.

In accordance with the Madras Congress resolution, authorizing the Working Committee to confer with the other parties to draft a Swaraj constitution for India and to place the same for consideration and approval before a conference, the first meeting of the All Parties Conference was held in Delhi on 12 February 1928. The Muslims had already been offended by the views expressed by the representatives.

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8 The manifesto was signed by the Punjab Muslim Leaders. They were Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Muhammad Iqbal, Abdul Qayyum, Mian Abdul Haye and Maulvi Mahomed Ali. They pointed out that the Muslims who signed Jinnah's manifesto belong to provinces in which Muslims were in a helpless minority and asserted that their attitude could not mould the policy of Muslims in such provinces as the Punjab and Bengal, where they were in a majority.

9 Civil and Military Gazette, 9 December 1927.

10 The Tribune (Lahore), 11 December 1927.

sentatives of the Hindu Mahasabha. The latter had categorically rejected the principle of reservation of seats in favour of any majority community in any province. It was also inflexibly opposed to the creation of new Muslim provinces as a price for securing joint electorates. Its attitude made it clear that it considered separate electorates a lesser evil than the creation of new provinces.

At the All Parties Conference also, the Mahasabha displayed the same intransigence with regard to the Muslim demands. Therefore, the only achievement of the meeting was that a unanimous resolution was passed on N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan placing them on the same footing in respect of their form of Government and judicial administration as any other province. With regard to Sind, the Conference made separation subject to two conditions, namely, that the province should be financially self-supporting and secondly, the majority of its inhabitants must be in favour of separation. It was also pointed out at this meeting of the Conference that so long as the scheme of Government in the N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan was not placed on the same footing and Sind was not separated from the Bombay Presidency, separate electorates for Muslims and Sikhs would continue to remain in force.

12 Purshottamdas Thakurdas Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.
13 Ibid.
These resolutions met with adverse criticism from various quarters. The Hindu Mahasabha had practically dissented from them. Sardar Mangal Singh, Secretary, Central Sikh League, stated on behalf of his organization that he could not agree to reservation of seats on population basis nor could he accept a statutory communal majority. Jinnah, Gazanfar Ali Khan and Mohamed Ismail Khan made it clear that they would accept no deviation from the stand taken by the Congress at the time of the Madras session and would accept only those propositions which were in accordance with the principles embodied in the resolution of the League at its Calcutta session. With regard to the conditions laid down for the separation of Sind which were new, they made it clear that they could not accept them until they had consulted the Council of the All-India Muslim League which was to meet on 26 February.

At the next meeting of the Council of the League, however, Jinnah and Gazanfar Ali emphatically declared that only if the Hindu-Muslim question was settled at the All Parties Conference at its next meeting scheduled to be held on 9 March, would the Committee appointed by the Muslim League proceed to examine other questions and be willing to collaborate with the representatives of other organizations.

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
On this question the Conference, at its session, beginning on 9th March opined, that it was possible to provide for the safeguards contemplated by the resolutions of the Congress and the League, by devising a system of election on the principle of proportional representation by a single transferable vote or some other similar method. Two sub-committees were appointed: the first one to investigate the whole matter of communal representation and the second to enquire into the financial aspect of the separation of Sind.

The results of the above meeting of the Conference were not encouraging. After long hours of sittings and elaborate discussions, the advance made was insignificant. The initial enthusiasm among the members had also waned. Gandhi who did not participate in the meetings of the Conference but was interested in its achieving Hindu-Muslim unity was grieved at this state of affairs and bemoaned the 'mistletoe show' being put up by those who were participating in the Conference against the 'insolence' of Lord Birkenhead and his challenge to Indian people to form a constitution. He disapproved of the Congress resiling from its stand and exhorted the

16 Ibid.
17 Motilal to Gandhi, 24 February 1928, Motilal Nehru Papers, N.M.M.L.
Congress leaders that once they had 'committed' themselves to reservation of seats, they must adhere to it until they were able to evolve another formula which completely satisfied the Muslims. Shuaib Qureshi, the General Secretary of the Congress, supported Gandhi's views and insisted that Congressmen must stand by the resolutions of their Madras session.

But unfortunately Gandhi's views remained unheeded. The Conference could not make much headway. Some Congress Muslims like Shafee Daudi and Shah Muhammad Zubair suggested to Ansari that the provinces should be encouraged to settle their differences on provincial basis. Ansari fully subscribed to their views and commended the example of Bihar where the Hindus and Muslims had been having a sort of Round Table Conference for the purpose of arriving at an understanding among themselves. As a result he instructed various provinces like the Punjab, Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Sind to follow the Bihar as example. The key to the success of the All Parties Conference was in the hands of the Hindu Mahasabha

19 Shuaib Qureshi to M. A. Ansari, 5 May 1928, Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari Papers, N.M.M.L.
20 Ansari to Jawaharlal Nehru, 29 March 1928, All India Congress Committee Papers, N.M.M.L.
21 Ibid., A.I.C.C. Papers.
and the Muslim League. The former had made it difficult for the conference to hammer out an agreed solution by adopting a rigid attitude on the question of reservation of seats in a province for the majority community. On the other hand, in pursuance of the policy formulated by the Council of the Muslim League (Jinnah group) in March, its members had refused to take part in the subsequent deliberations of the Conference. Their main grievance was that the All Parties Conference had modified the Congress resolutions.

Other members had also got weary of the Conference because so far they had failed to secure any substantial results. The work of the Conference was going to be affected by the departure of Jinnah for Europe on 5 May. He had been mainly responsible for the Delhi proposals. The Muslims inside the Congress grew quite pessimistic regarding any definite solution of the outstanding questions being brought about in his absence because they felt Jinnah was the only man who could "deliver the goods on behalf of the Muslim League."

The All Parties Conference dispersed after appointing a Committee to deal with the communal problem as a whole, particularly in relation to the framing of the constitution.

The Committee appointed by the All Parties Conference

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22 Mohammad Yakub to Ansari, 5 May 1928, Ansari Papers.

23 Ansari to Motilal, 18 May 1928, Motilal Nehru Papers.
consisted of members belonging to various organizations. Motilal Nehru was appointed Chairman. Ali Imam and Shuaib Qureshi represented the (Congress) Muslim viewpoint. M. S. Aney and M. R. Jayakar spoke for the Mahasabha, Sardar Mangal Singh represented the Sikh League and Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Liberal viewpoint. But most of the members did not show any deep interest in the work of the Committee. Out of ten members appointed by the Committee Jayakar resigned and Ali Imam did not attend any meeting. Those who regularly attended the meeting were Shuaib Qureshi, M. S. Aney, Mangal Singh, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Motilal Nehru. Being the chairman of the Committee, Motilal persistently emphasized the supreme necessity of achieving a unanimous formula as he was sure that "an agreed report would be a strong weapon to carry on a campaign in the country against the Government." On the question of separation of Sind and the grant of equal status to N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan, Motilal was prepared to ignore the opposition of the Mahasabha. But the deadlock occurred over the reservation of seats in Punjab and Bengal. As Shuaib Qureshi was adamant on this question and Aney was not prepared to yield, it led to an impasse and the Nehru Committee (named after Motilal

24 Ibid.
25 Motilal to Gandhi, 22 June 1928, Motilal Nehru Papers.
26 Motilal to Purshotamdas, 23 May 1928, Motilal Nehru Papers.
Nehru) dispersed on 22 June without achieving any agreement.

When an informal conference was held on 7 July where Motilal had invited some non-members of both the communities, efforts were once again made to resolve the communal deadlock. The efforts bore fruit and the Muslims were partly satisfied, as their demands for reservation of seats in majority provinces was conceded for ten years. The resolution which was signed and passed by both the members and non-members ran as follows:

We are unanimously opposed to the reservation of seats in the legislatures either for majorities or minorities.... But if this recommendation is not accepted and an agreement can be arrived at only on a reservation of seats on the population basis, we recommend that such reservation be made for majorities or minorities without any weightage with a clear provision that it shall automatically cease at the expiry of ten years or earlier by the consent of the parties concerned. (28)

The Muslim suffered extreme humiliation when the first part of the above resolution was modified on the next day and only the reservation of seats for minorities in both central and provincial legislatures was permitted. Shuaib once again argued on behalf of Muslims that if the question of reservation

27 Shuaib to Motilal, 24 June 1928, Motilal Nehru Papers.
29 Ibid.
of seats in provincial legislatures was to be considered then in the Punjab and Bengal seats must be reserved for Muslims in proportion to their population. He based his argument on the fact that in these two provinces, the Muslims were handicapped by poverty and lack of education. On the other hand, the Hindus were well organized, wealthy, educated and in control of commerce and banking of the province. This had resulted in the majority being reduced to a minority in the legislatures of the two provinces.

This view was based on hard facts and was also shared by other Congress Muslims like Shafi Daudi, Tassaduq Ahmad Khan Sherwani, etc. The Muslim community in these two provinces consisted mainly of agriculturists. The principal Muslim castes in the Punjab were Arains, Rajputs and Jats most of whom were cultivators. Among the Hindu population, on the other hand, there were besides Jats and Ahirs who were largely agriculturists, also people belonging to such castes as Banias and Khatris who had taken in large numbers to western education and dominated not only land and commerce but also the various professions. Muslims were double the number of Hindus among the ordinary cultivators but among the landlords and urban middle classes, Hindus were nearly twice the number of Muslims. Almost all the big landlords were Hindus. The

30 Shuaib to Motilal, 2 July 1928, Motilal Nehru Papers.

real opposition of the Punjab Hindus was not due to any high national consideration, but the fear that they might lose their privileged position if the Muslim majority in the provincial legislature was guaranteed.

The Nehru Committee justified its refusal to reserve seats for the Muslim majority by emphasizing that there were 'natural areas' of reservation for Muslims in the three-fourths of Punjab which would ensure their fair representation. Figures were compiled from 1921 census by Jawaharlal Nehru, General Secretary of the Congress. Allowing one member for every hundred thousand of population he had concluded that the Muslims were bound to get over 47.3 per cent of total seats in the Punjab and thus "there was no foundation for the fears entertained by the Muslims." It should not be overlooked that figures were not given for adult population nor was any effort made to collect figures on the economic and educational condition of the Muslims.

At the Lucknow session of the All Parties Conference, held in August, it was announced that Muslim representatives from the Punjab had accepted joint electorates without reservation of seats for majorities. This was largely the result of the efforts made by a group of nationalists in the Punjab belonging to both the communities who had formed provincial

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committees on the Bihar and Madras model. This Punjab agreement was signed by S. D. Kitchlew, Zafar Ali Khan, Abdur Rahman Ghazi, Mohammad Alam, Afzal Huq, Abdul Qader, M. Daud Ghaznavi, Lajpat Rai, S. Kharak Singh, Gokal Chand Narang, Sheikh Sirajud-Din Piracha, Satyapal and Mangal Singh.

The Conference expressed its approval of the text of the Punjab agreement and adopted it which read like this:

The Punjab Muslims directly with the introduction of the scheme recommended by the Nehru Committee report accept its recommendations on the communal representation including joint electorates without reservation of seats for any community in the Punjab, provided that franchise is based on adult suffrage. (33)

Akram Khan and J. M. Sengupta accepted on behalf of Bengal Muslims and Hindus respectively the clauses of the report relating to Bengal. The Central Khilafat Committee led by Shaukat Ali expressed its disagreement with the Punjab agreement and stated that it stood for the Delhi proposals in toto. But M. Alam and Abdul Qader disagreed with him and stated that the Central Khilafat Committee had not authorized him to make the statement.

There is no doubt that the report (commonly known as Nehru report) did not have the backing of the entire Muslim

33 Ibid., p. 164.

34 All Parties Conference, 1928, Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to determine the Principle of the Constitution, p. 52.
community. But the support lent by one section of the Muslims enabled Motilal Nehru to declare to the Conference as well as to the country that some kind of unanimity had been arrived at as a result of the Lucknow Conference. The Supplementary report of the Committee stated that the fears of Muslims were more "imaginary than real" and "it was a matter of great satisfaction that the Punjab and Bengal Provincial Muslim League as well as the Punjab Provincial Khilafat Committee have at their open session fully accepted the agreement." On this ground it was asserted that "the question of reservation of seats for Muslim majorities must therefore be taken as finally settled."

The primary objective of Motilal Nehru was to get the Committee arrive at some kind of unanimity and once this was done he wanted to enlist as much support as possible for the report. In order to achieve this end, he expressed his desire of dissociating some of the communal parties like Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha if they were dissatisfied with the report. Nehru's attitude towards the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League before the Lucknow Conference stands in sharp contrast to the one he displayed after the Conference. Before the Lucknow Conference, when the prospects of the

35 Supplementary Report of the Committee appointed by All Parties Conference, p. 33.

36 Motilal to Gandhi, 26 June 1928, Motilal Nehru Papers.
meeting were quite gloomy and he was skeptical about anything substantial coming out of the Conference. He used to be as critical of the behaviour of Hindu Mahasabha as were the members of the League. Holding Hindu Mahasabha responsible for the failure of the various meetings of the Conference to achieve any constructive results, he wrote to Ansari:

...the Hindu Mahasabha should really have been kicked out in Delhi, but if that was not done so there, there is no reason why we should not adopt a stronger attitude in Bombay. To repeat an old story it is no use allowing a diseased limb to dangle by your side and obstruct your movement. (37)

He also felt that he should have told the Muslim leaders plainly that the Congress did not identify itself with the resolutions passed by the Hindu Mahasabha and that he would stand by the Madras resolutions.

Once the Lucknow Conference had given its assent to the Punjab agreement despite the persistent demand of the Muslims for reservation of seats, a campaign was started against those Muslims who had stood firmly by the Madras resolution. Endeavours were made to brush aside their opposition by proclaiming that the report had gained the overwhelming support of the Muslims. Considerable efforts were made by Motilal Nehru to counteract the propaganda of Shaukat Ali,

37 Motilal to Ansari, 1 May 1928, Ansari Papers.
38 Ibid.
Shafi Daudi and others who were attacking the Congress in the Muslim press by asking the Congress Muslims like Ali Imam, Ansari and Abul Kalam Azad who had given their wholehearted support to the report to allay the fears of the Muslim community by answering their criticisms and holding public meetings in favour of the report.

In deference to Motilal Nehru's wishes an organized campaign was launched by these people against the opposition of Shaukat Ali and his party. While speaking at the Lyallpur Conference, Ansari emphasized that the Nehru Report safeguarded the Muslim rights and interests better than the Madras Congress resolutions.

The Hindu Mahasabha was also jubilant. It had succeeded in its strategy of dissuading the Congress from sticking to its Madras resolution. While prominent Muslim leaders like Shaukat Ali, Shafee Daudi, Shuaib Qureshi, Hasrat Mohani, Abdulla Haroon and Abdur Majid Daryabadi were annoyed with the Congress because they felt that their interests had been jeopardized by the Nehru Committee's recommendations, the Hindu Mahasabha felt elated as the privileged position of the Hindus had not been disturbed. The prevailing mood of its leaders can be gauged from the following remarks of Jayakar. Immediately

39 Shaukat Ali to Ansari, 26 September 1928, Ansari Papers.

40 The Tribune, 2 September 1928.
after the Lucknow Conference, he wrote to N. C. Kelkar on 28 August:

Personally I am inclined to agree with the Nehru Committee's report not perhaps as an ideal arrangement, yet on the whole being more beneficial to the Hindus than any scheme so far suggested on the Congress side. 41

In another letter to H. S. Polak on 31 October, he applauded the Congress attitude by saying

...It is for the first time that Congress leaders like Motilal and Dr Ansari and others have descended on terra firma and come within the region of practical politics from the aerial clouds which they were chasing for so many years. 42

The gravity of the situation soon dawned upon the Congress leadership when Jinnah also expressed his indignation over the Nehru Report. Great hopes were pinned on him and Mohamed Ali who were away since May and had given their wholehearted support to Motilal Nehru in the endeavours for Hindu-Muslim unity. It is pertinent to note here that before Jinnah was to leave for Europe, Ansari had expressed his apprehension to Motilal as to what would happen to the report if both of them also went against the report. His apprehensions proved to be true when Jinnah, after getting the proceedings of the Lucknow Conference, gave a curt reply to

42 Jayakar to Polak, 31 October 1928, M. R. Jayakar Papers.
43 Ansari to Motilal, 5 May 1928, Ansari Papers.
Jawaharlal that though he had not gone through the report fully, since the publication of that report "much water has run down the Hoogly."

In fact Motilal was so keen on enlisting Jinnah's support that he expressed his readiness to go to Bombay to receive him. Instructions were given to Purshotamdas Thakurdas who was staying in Bombay to "rope in" Jinnah as soon as he returned to impress upon him the effectiveness of the decision arrived at Lucknow.

Notwithstanding his disapproval of the report, Jinnah on his arrival, appealed to Muslims not to get alarmed and expressed his appreciation of the efforts made by its authors. He reposed great faith in both Hindus and Muslims arriving at some agreement and felt that since the Nehru report was not the final word, it could be modified in future. He was thus quite hopeful of the communal deadlock being resolved.

At the Lucknow Conference, it had been decided to place the Nehru Committee's proposals before the Convention in order to ascertain the views of various leaders and their respective organizations. The Muslim League, which had

44 M. A. Jinnah to Jawaharlal Nehru, 20 October 1928, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, N.M.M.L.

45 Purshotamdas to Motilal, 29 October 1928, Purshotamdas Thakurdas Papers.

46 The Tribune, 8 October 1928.
abstained from the meetings of the All Parties Conference ever since February, participated in the Convention along with the Khilafat Committee on 28 December in Calcutta. Jinnah on behalf of the Muslim League and Tassaduq Ahmed Khan Sherwani on behalf of the Central Khilafat Committee put forward six amendments to the report. The Convention adopted two of these, namely, (1) a majority of 4/5ths of the two houses, first sitting separately and then together would be necessary for the amendment or alteration of the constitution by Parliament; and (2) the Punjab pact regarding communal representation should be incorporated in the Nehru Report. The remaining four which were not found acceptable by the Convention were: (1) that one-third of the elected representatives of both Houses of the Central Legislature should be Muslims; (2) that there should be reservation of seats in the Punjab and Bengal in the event of adult suffrage not being established; (3) that residuary powers should vest with the provinces and not the Central Legislature; and (4) that separation of Sind should not be postponed until the Nehru Constitution was established with adult suffrage. Placing the amendments on behalf of the Muslim League, Jinnah laid more stress on Muslims getting one-third representation in the Central Legislature. Quoting passages of the Nehru report

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where it was argued that the Punjab and Bengal would get many more seats over and above their proportion and the Muslims of the Minority Provinces would get their representation according to their population, Jinnah stated:

...the method which is adopted is neither quite fair to the provinces where the Musalmans are in a minority nor does it guarantee that we shall obtain one-third representation in the Central Legislature. Therefore, the two Musalmans Majority Provinces - Punjab and Bengal - will get more than their population, which means you are giving more to the rich who will, under normal conditions get the largest number of Muslim Representatives... We wish to restrict the Punjab and Bengal according to their population and desire that excess should be distributed amongst the minorities Muslim Provinces. (48)

It is important to note here that even the Muslim leaders associated with the Congress favoured such amendments like the desirability of residuary powers being vested in the provinces and one-third representation of Muslims in the Central Legislature. Their only difference with the League was that the latter attached great importance to the amendment providing that in case adult suffrage was not established, there should be reservation of seats on population basis for ten years.

Even after four out of his six demands had been strongly opposed, Jinnah made a conciliatory speech. This was the voice of a leader strongly desirous of achieving communal unity:

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48 Ibid., p. 79.
It is absolutely essential to our progress that Hindu-Muslim settlement should be reached, and that all communities should live in a friendly and harmonious spirit in this vast country of ours. No country has succeeded in either wresting a democratic constitution from a domination of another nation or establishing representative institution from within without giving guarantees for the securities of the minorities wherever such a problem has arisen. Majorities are apt to be oppressive and tyrannical and minorities always dread and fear that their interests and rights, unless clearly and definitely safeguarded by statutory provision, would suffer and be prejudiced but this apprehension is enhanced all the more when we have to deal with communal majority. (49)

For the sake of unity, Taj Bahadur Sapru supported Jinnah with regard to the demand for the reservation of seats in the Central Legislature. Indeed he described that demand as "not inconsistent with the Nehru Report." He told his fellow-delegates: "we must, as practical statesmen, try to solve the problem and not be misled by arithmetical figures." M. R. Jayakar, however, adopted a purely negative attitude. Speaking on behalf of Hindu Mahasabha he alluded to the division in the Muslim group and insisted that Jinnah represented only a small section of Muslims. He gave an ultimatum that if one word was changed in the Nehru Report regarding the Hindu-Muslim question, his party would withdraw its support.

49 Ibid., p. 78.
50 Ibid., p. 84.
from it. He warned the members: "If you accede to Jinnah's demands, the report will be torn to pieces and will be rejected by important communities who have now acceded to it as the final word in the matter." The Sikh League had already declined to accept the Nehru report while the Liberal Federation had taken up a non-committal attitude with regard to the Hindu-Muslim question.

While replying to the debate, Jinnah once again emphasized the need for Hindu-Muslim unity for the sake of attaining independence and urged upon the delegates the need for a reappraisal of the whole situation. He observed:

...If you do not settle this question today, we shall have to settle it tomorrow, but in the meantime our national interests are bound to suffer. We are all sons of this land. We have to live together. We have to work together and whatever our differences may be let us at any rate not create more bad blood. If we cannot agree, let us at any rate agree to differ but let us part as friends. I once more repeat, Believe me, there is no progress until the Musalmans and Hindus are united and let no logic, philosophy or squabble stand in the way of our coming to a compromise and nothing will make me more happy than to see the Hindu Muslim union. (52)

But the Convention failed to secure the Muslim League's concurrence with the Nehru Report and was adjourned sine die. In a special interview to the Associated Press representative, Jinnah held the Mahasabha responsible for the failure of the

51 Ibid., p. 91.
52 Ibid., pp. 94-95.
Convention. "The fate of Nehru Report", he said, "was sealed by the speech of Jayakar at the Convention." Even the Congress Muslims regretted the failure of the Convention and the way the League's suggestions had been treated at the Convention. They also blamed the Mahasabha for its uncompromising attitude. Tassaduq Sherwani deplored the 'stingy' way in which Muslim demands were dealt with at the Calcutta Convention. M. C. Chagla issued a statement to the press where he gave most grave exposition of his views:

I wish particularly to point out that the delegates whom the League sent to the Convention represented the most advanced sections of Muslim thought, that a large majority of them had already expressed their approval of the Nehru report and that several of them have fought their own people and broken with their own organization in order to support the national cause... If these delegates are going to be dubbed as communalists then perhaps is not a single Muslim nationalist anywhere in the country.

...I still hope that, before the Convention concludes its labours, it would be able to see its way to accepting the League's demands. Just as the Muslim League has fought and driven out the Shafi section... So also the Convention ought to deal with its Moonjies and Jayakars who threaten to leave the convention every time Muslims make any suggestion to alter or modify any of the provisions of the report. (54)

The failure of the Convention can only be attributed to the inability of Congress leaders to stand up firmly against the
pressures of the Hindu Mahasabha and override its opinions. From the very beginning Motilal had expressed his desire to adhere to any solution if the contending parties adhered to it. He was in favour of Muslims getting one-third representation in the Central Legislature as he felt it would hardly make any difference to Hindu majority. He had even brought round Lajpat Rai to his point of view. But the sudden death of the latter before the Convention was a great blow to the cause of the Hindu-Muslim unity as his colleagues in the Mahasabha had no knowledge of his understanding with Motilal. The latter had started his negotiations with Lajpat Rai before the Convention and though Lajpat Rai had been influenced by Motilal's arguments, yet he thought it expedient not to give in at that stage when the Muslims were insisting on other concessions also. It was decided by both of them that Hindu opposition to the Muslim demands might continue and even "stiffen up to the time the Convention was held." The object in view was to reduce the Muslim demands to an irreducible minimum." In accordance with the understanding arrived at between the two, Lajpat Rai, while presiding at the Etawah session of the Mahasabha (27 October 1928) had put up a strong opposition to every part of the Muslim demands. At the time of the Convention, the Hindu Mahasabha leaders made full use of his Etawah speech.

55 Motilal to Gandhi, 18 August 1929, Motilal Nehru Papers.
No attempt was made by Motilal and his colleagues to mollify the dissatisfied Muslims. Probably he did not consider it an act of prudence to "refuse to avail of the opportunity of getting the report through simply to please that section of Muslims led by Jinnah." He was convinced that Jinnah and Mahomed Ali had been discredited in the eyes of their party members and had lost their confidence.

It is possible that Motilal was influenced by the thinking of men like Jayakar and Lajpat Rai. According to them, Jinnah then did not have much following among the Muslims. Jayakar's views have already been mentioned above. As for Lajpat Rai, in a letter to Motilal Nehru he observed: "Jinnah has really no following. Yaqub is very slippery and Fazl-i-Husain has completely gone out of hand. ...I think you have more Muslims than Jinnah has with himself. ...I may frankly tell you that I won't accept any changes."

Jinnah's immediate reaction after the failure of the Convention was that Muslims as a body should reconsider their entire position vis-a-vis the Congress. He was confirmed in his belief that the disorganized condition of the Muslims had encouraged the Congress to ignore their demands which they had once accepted. Now he started emphasizing the supreme need of Muslim solidarity under his leadership for extracting

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56 Motilal to Gandhi, 18 August 1929.
concessions from Hindus. Even the Congress Muslims were quite upset with the way the Muslim demands had been treated. Muslims had been alienated from the Congress to such an extent that when the All Parties Muslim Conference began its first session at Delhi on 31 December 1928, many Muslims were present there who used to figure prominently on the Congress platforms. Shafi Daoodi (who was a Khilafatist from Patna) became the Working Secretary and the Ali Brothers were the members of the Working Committee. Besides them other prominent leaders associated with this conference were Muhammad Shafi,

Motilal's correspondence with Purshotamdas Thakurdas reveals that Motilal had differences over the Nehru Report with Ansari also because the latter had misgivings about the treatment meted out to Muslims. In a letter dated 17 June, Motilal makes a very haughty remark about Ansari's behaviour:

...It is going to be a unanimous report. I like your way of putting it that it is disconcerting to find that I have differed from men like Ansari and Shuaib Qureshi instead of saying that it was unfortunate that Dr Ansari and Shuaib Qureshi should differ from a man like me. How could they dare?

Motilal to Purshotamdas Thakurdas, 17 June 1928, Purshotamdas Thakurdas Papers.

The objects of the Conference were declared to be "to safeguard and promote the rights and interests of Indian Musalmans at all stages of constitutional advance towards full responsible government in India and to organize the Indian Musalmans for the purpose of giving expression to Muslim opinion on questions affecting the Musalmans of India."

the Muslim League leader from the Punjab, Fazal Ibrahim Rahimtoola, a member of the Independent Party in the Central Legislative Assembly, Abdur Rahim Ghuznavi, one of the principal leaders of Bengal, and Shafaat Ahmed Khan, a member of U.P. Legislative Council. The elected members of the central and provincial legislatures held important places in it and this facilitated its constant contact with the Government. The Aga Khan remained in touch with officialdom as the President of the Conference. Jinnah was the only important Muslim leader who had stood aside. When the Secretary of the Conference invited Jinnah to the meeting in Delhi, Jinnah refused to attend and instead questioned the representative character of the Conference and its need for the Muslim community.

However, taking advantage of Jinnah’s rift with Congress, several attempts were made by the Shafi group, which had separated itself from Jinnah after the Madras session in 1927, to amalgamate itself with the Jinnah group. This effort succeeded and soon the two groups were merged into one. A representative meeting of the Council of the Muslim League was attended by both the sections on 3 March 1929. After protracted discussions a draft resolution was prepared by Jinnah to accommodate the various points of views in regard to policy and programme of the Muslim League in respect of forthcoming constitutional reforms. Now the Muslim demands

60 Ibid., pp. 20-22.
became commonly known as Jinnah's Fourteen Points but in substance they represented the same demands which the Muslim leaders had been pressing since 1927. Thus while advocating a federal constitution for India, Jinnah wanted the residuary powers to be vested in the provinces. The legislatures and other elected bodies were to be constituted on the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of minorities in every province without reducing the majorities in any province to a minority or even equality. Muslim representation in the Central Legislature was to be not less than one-third. Muslims were to be given adequate share in all services of the state on a communal basis. And lastly it was laid down that when all the other points would be accepted by the Congress, the League might agree to joint electorates.

The All Parties Muslim Conference now launched a campaign of vilification against the Congress. A manifesto was issued by its leaders under the heading "Zaruri Ailan" (Important Declaration) whereby the Muslims were asked to disobey the Congress and abstain from participation in its meetings and proceedings, thus reviving the early days of the Congress when Muslims were asked by Sir Syed Ahmad to keep aloof from the Congress. A notable success of the Muslim Conference was symbolized by Shafi Daoodi who resigned from the Swaraj

61 Indian Annual Register, 1929, vol. 1, p. 360ff.
Party in the Legislative Assembly as a protest against its anti-Muslim policy. In the words of Shafi Daoodi, the main object underlying the manifesto was to counteract the "evil effects" of Motilal's "ill conceived notion about the Hindu-Muslim unity."

The Nationalist Muslims, of course, retaliated by organizing a campaign to counteract the activities of the promoters of the All Parties Muslim Conference and to carry on a vigorous propaganda in support of the Nehru Report. Efforts were made by Sarojini Naidu to arrange a meeting between Gandhi and Jinnah with a view to arriving at a settlement of those communal differences which were left unsettled at the Convention. The Mahasabha got alarmed and started making insinuating remarks about Motilal, namely, that he had fallen a victim to the intrigues of Nationalist Muslims under the guidance of Jinnah to get these amendments accepted. Jayakar wrote a letter to Gandhi pressurizing him not to yield to Muslim demands on the ground that the government would deliberately make these concessions part of a constitution which would be entirely different from a scheme which they were struggling to evolve. A meeting of Hindus was held in Bombay in August when they sent a memorandum to Gandhi asking him not to arrive at any compromise with

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62 Shafee Daoodi to Motilal Nehru, 29 August 1929, Motilal Nehru Papers.
63 Jayakar to Malaviya, 3 August 1929, Jayakar Papers.
64 Jayakar to Gandhi, 25 July 1929, Jayakar Papers.
Muslims without consulting them. They also added that if anything was settled without consulting the Hindus, it would not be acceptable to them. Even the formation of groups like the Congress Muslim Party and the Nationalist Muslim Party was misinterpreted as a scheme designed to change the decisions of the All Parties Convention and to bring round the Congress towards the acceptance of one-third Muslim representation in the Central Legislature and unconditional separation of Sind. The whole plan, according to Moonje and Jayakar, was to isolate the Hindu Mahasabha, by getting the Congress and Liberal Federation agree to the Muslim demands.

It is pertinent to add here that the Hindu Mahasabha had already repudiated the Nehru Report at its Surat session held in April 1929, but now it was claiming to stand uncompromisingly by it and insisting that it should not be altered by one 'jot' or 'title'. It had apparently determined to stand firm because of its belief that the Muslims would themselves eventually come to accept the report as 'second best'.

A meeting between Gandhi and Jinnah was held in July 1929, but its outcome was not encouraging. After the meeting Gandhi wrote to Motilal in great anguish: "How that can be

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65 Ibid., 25 July 1929.
66 Jayakar to Malaviya, 31 July 1929, Jayakar Papers.
67 Moonje to Gandhi, 5 August 1929, Jayakar Papers.
done [resolving the deadlock] or whether it should be done, you know best. My mind is in a whirl in this matter. The atmosphere is too foggy for me to see clearly." Motilal on his part tried to shelve the issue by asking Gandhi to make the Hindu Mahasabha agree to the Muslim demands. He was sure that if it agreed to the four points on which Jinnah's amendments were rejected, the whole scheme of the Nehru Report would be adopted by the overwhelming majority of the League and the Khilafat Committee. But this could not be achieved and as a result the differences between the Congress and the Muslims also continued to remain unresolved. It was finally decided to ignore Jinnah and the Ali Brothers completely, as Motilal felt that all the three of them were "totally discredited" and had no following worth the name."

As the succeeding chapters will show, the Congress and the country as a whole had to pay a heavy price for this decision.

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68 Gandhi to Motilal, 23 August 1929, Motilal Nehru Papers.

69 Ibid., 23 August 1929.

70 Motilal to Gandhi, 14 August 1929, Motilal Nehru Papers.