CHAPTER 2
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PARTITION: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The hundred years reign of the East India Company from 1757 to 1857 was full of squalls and squabbles. The insidious changes made by the Company in social structure, economy and administration forced the Indian people to take the audacious step of revolt in 1857.

After the first war of independence of 1857, the British Crown assumed the responsibility of administrative machinery, and the power previously exercised by the Parliamentary Board of Control and by the Courts of Directors of the Company passed to the British Crown. But the assumption of authority by the British Government could not change the aura of hostility and antipathy into congeniality and the British Government relentlessly pursued the policy of 'Divide and Rule'. In order to penalise and suppress the Muslim community, for their role in the revolt of 1857, the British favoured and enticed middle and high class Hindus. But after 1870, they fostered Muslim communal tendencies. The British manoeuvred a clever strategy to divide feudal class from educated class, one caste from the other caste, one state from the other state, and one fraction from the other.

Consequently, the 1880s witnessed the emergence of an intelligentsia which was seething with discontent, and vigorously protested against the British rule and the British exploitation. These politically conscious intellectuals were the main force behind the
foundation of many new political organisations and institutions, the Indian National Congress being one of them. Though installed as a political platform for the Indians to engage them in temperate and gentlemanly discourse with their English masters, and to channelise their impulse of discontents, dissensions and dissatisfaction into a moderate way so that, they may remain away from hatching conspiracy and plotting revolt against the Crown, the formation of the Congress was primarily responsible for launching of India's independence movement.

From 1885 to 1905 the Congress leaders firmly believed in constitutional reforms and favoured slow but orderly progress within the British Dominion. During this period these leaders consecrated much of their energy in evoking nationalist ideas. They worked tirelessly to consolidate national solidarity, and tried hard to unify public opinion on political questions by arousing political awareness among the Indians. The main objective of the Congress was liquidation of the barriers of sectarianism. However, the Muslim religious and social reformers and political leaders never succeeded in conquering the impulse of contempt and despise for their Hindu counterparts. The rigid and orthodox interpretation of Islamic religion and tradition made them hostile towards Hinduism, and never allowed them to throw away their intolerance and orthodoxy. The egoistic Muslim leaders failed to muster a secular, progressive and reasonable outlook because they had closed their eyes to the demands of modern thought, reason and liberalism. The fatal consequence of this contaminated ideology was the intrusion of religion
into the politics. The Ilbert Bill debate, the Wahabi Movement, the agitation for cow protection and the Hindi-Urdu controversy further aggravated the tension and brought communal animosity to the surface.

Theodore Beck, the Principal of Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College, played a major role in separating the Muslims from the national stream. Beck had realised that the communal harmony and the Hindu-Muslim unity would weaken the foundation of the British Empire. In 1890, he prodded Ahmad Khan to submit a petition with regard to inappropriateness of democratic institutions for India. Largely, he was responsible for the anti-Congress character of the Aligarh Movement and the establishment of the United Indian Patriotic Association.

The founder of Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, was one of the greatest liberal thinkers among the Indian Muslims. But the emergence of the Congress in the Indian political scene and the rise of most acrimonious Hindi-Urdu controversy made him abandon his liberal thoughts. According to him, the genesis of Hindu revivalism and the emergence of Hindu communal feelings was against the liberal spirit of composite Indian culture to which Muslims had made a remarkable contribution. The revivalist movement made Muslims aware of their cultural and social isolation. He scathingly criticised the aims and objectives of the Congress as based upon an ignorance of history and present-day realities. In order to safeguard Muslim interests he formulated the doctrine of separatism and rigidly followed it. His firm conviction that the British power and patronage was indispensable for
security and well-being of Muslims in India, made him hostile and insolent towards all the progressive move of the Congress. J.J. Pal writes:

He [Ahmed Khan] enunciated a new theory of separatism which later on became the basis of the Muslim attitude to the Indian struggle for freedom. He was the first to propound the theory of the Hindus and Muslims as two different nations. Thus he laid the foundation for a separate Muslim nation, and this later on developed into the idea of creation of Pakistan.¹

Although till this stage Hindus and Muslims were not united by any single national stream yet communal differences did not overshadow the symbiotic relationship existing between the two communities.

At the end of the nineteenth-century, Indian peasants, labourers and rural people were highly desperate and the educated class was smouldering with discontent because of dearth of employment. In this atmosphere of deep discontent and dissatisfaction, Lord Curzon proposed the division of Bengal. Though the excuse of administrative difficulty was forwarded to shield the anomalous design of the proposal, this diplomatic move was made to create a deep chasm between the two communities, and to crush the spirit of the Renaissance in Bengal.

The division of Bengal flared political consciousness of the Muslims. On 1 October 1906, a deputation comprising thirty-five aristocratic Muslims, headed by Aga Khan, gathered in the regal ballroom of the Viceroy’s Simla palace, which requested Lord Minto to safeguard their political interests and rights against the Hindu majority. The deputation

also argued in favour of separate electorates for Muslims. Their plea was based on their contribution to the defence of the British Empire; their loyalty to the service of the Crown; their past political greatness and glorious tradition. In October 1908, the Government of India conceded the demand and recommended separate electorates for Muslims. They averred that the Muslims were not only a separate religious body but also an absolutely separate community, distinct from Hindus by marriage, food and custom and that deserved to be recognised as an entirely different race from the Hindus. Another reason given for allotting Muslims reserved seats and granting separate electorate was the fear that in territorial constituencies they would not be able to secure proper representation. Thus, Lord Minto, who started the process of ramification, inculcated the idea that what divided Hindus from Muslims was stronger than what was common between them. Henceforth, the Muslim masses were to be fed constantly on the political propaganda of separatism by fanatic leaders.

Factors like the growing popularity of the Congress, the Hindu revivalist movement, the myopic vision of the Aligarh School, the educational and economic backwardness of Muslims and the British aspiration to continue their rule over the Indian subcontinent were largely responsible for formation of the All India Muslim League in 1906. At the time of its establishment the League was largely a non-religious organisation. It was set up to safeguard the rights of the Muslim community. Wolpert states: "Thus founded by conservative loyalist
Muslim nobility, frank in their confession that British imperial protection was indispensable to their continual well-being, if not sheer survival, the Muslim League emerged without stated nationalist ambitions.\(^2\)

The feudal and the reactionary sections of the League thoughtfully gave a religio-cultural character to their demands. Initially, the League demanded cultural and political autonomy within the framework of a federal India, but later it began to demand a sovereign state carved out of India.

This strife between the Congress and the League continued till the Lucknow Pact was signed in 1916. The agreement was about the representation of Muslims in the various legislative councils. The Congress-League scheme sanctioned separate electorates for the Muslims in all provincial legislature and substantial weightage was accorded to the Muslims in the Hindu-majority provinces. The scheme also provided Muslims with one third of elected seats in the Central Legislature. The Pact provided a common platform to the Hindus and Muslims to continue their fight against the British imperialism. But the Lucknow Pact diverted the political consciousness along communal lines.

However, the Khilafat Conference held at Meerut gave new dimensions to the Hindu-Muslim unity. In September 1920, in the Calcutta session of the Congress Gandhiji suggested non-cooperation to achieve the goal of 'Swaraj' and resolve the problem of 'Khilafat'. Khilafat and Swaraj became bywords of the day. The Khilafat Movement had its

roots in religion and was inseparable from metaphysical idea. Its connection with religion eclipsed the fame of communal leaders. This mass movement was at its zenith when the unfortunate incident at Chauri-Chaura in U.P. turned the direction of history as Gandhiji terminated the Non-cooperation Movement and the Muslim community felt cheated and became desperate. The defeat of the Sultan of Turkey in September 1922, and the abolition of Khilafat in Turkey lent an air of unreality to the Khilafat Movement. Thus the Hindu-Muslim unity, which Gandhiji wanted to build upon the Khilafat issue, proved ephemeral. At the same time Mophla outbreak in Malabar killed the hopes of friendly settlement and proved to be a major setback for Hindu-Muslim unity. All these factors led to exacerbation of religious feelings and revival of latent communalism. In December 1924, for the first time ever since 1920, a conference of the League members was organised. The cleavage was evident. This session of the League clearly evinced the adoption of a new strategy and growth of communal animosity. Between 1922 to 1927 India was severely in the grips of communal riots. The malafide of English mind, behind this unreasoned savagery, was transparent. The reunification of Hindus and Muslims on the issue of Khilafat bewildered the British Government. Therefore, in order to vitiate and crush the spirit of national solidarity the British Government aggravated communal violence between 1922 and 1927.

On 20 March 1927, Jinnah presided over a meeting of Muslim members of the central legislature at Delhi. In this Conference Jinnah
offered to abandon the demand of separate electorates if: (1) Sind were separate from Bombay and given provincial status; (2) the North-West Frontier Provinces (NWFP) and Baluchistan were given full provincial status; (3) in provincial legislature seats were reserved to communities on the basis of population with minorities receiving weightage as agreed with the Hindus, and Muslims were conceded one third of the seats of the centre. After this session of the League an All Parties' Meeting was held at Calcutta in which S.R. Jayakar vehemently opposed these resolutions. Thus, a chance to dissolve communal tension slipped out of hands. Thereafter, the process of devolution took heavy toll of Hindu-Muslim Unity.

On 8 November 1927, the Secretary of State announced the appointment of the Simon Commission to review the Montford Constitution (1919). The Commission appointed for the constitutional reforms of India had not a single Indian citizen in it. V.P. Menon writes in this connection:

The exclusion of Indians from the personnel of Commission was considered an affront, not only because it implied for them a position of inferiority, but because it denied them the right to participate in the determination of the constitution of their own country. The proposal forced the leaders of all the parties to gather under one roof. But this alliance did not work to bring any kind of social conformity; the

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alliance's role being restricted to opposing the policies and works of the colonial rule.

In its Madras session the Congress passed a resolution advocating the boycott of the Simon Commission, and authorised its Working Committee to convene an All Parties' Conference in order to frame a constitution for India which would be acceptable to all parties. The Committee, set up under the leadership of Pandit Motilal Nehru, was supposed to determine the clauses, articles and principles of the constitution for India, and to prepare a report thereon. This report came to be known as the 'Nehru Report'. When the All Parties' Conference met in Calcutta in December 1928, Jinnah proposed some amendments to the proposals of the Nehru Report, which was rejected by the Congress leaders. After this session, embittered Jinnah formulated his 'fourteen points' for safeguarding Muslim interests in any future constitution. In the Calcutta session the Nehru Report was accepted with some amendments. The Congress resolved in this session that if the British Parliament accepted the Nehru Report before 31 December 1929, the Congress would adopt the report in its entirety. In the event of its non-acceptance, the Congress would insist on independence and organise non-violent, non-cooperation to achieve it. The government refused to comply with the demands proposed by the Congress. Therefore, the Congress gave plenipotentiary powers to Gandhiji, who then launched the 'Civil Disobedience Movement' and violated the 'Salt Law' on 6 April 1930. By the third week of May Gandhiji and all other key figures of the Congress
were arrested. When the Movement had continued for over a year, the Congress leadership was invited for a Round Table Conference, but negotiations proved abortive and on his return Gandhiji was arrested.

The report of the Simon Commission was published after the publication of the Nehru Report. It embodied the British view about future constitutional reforms. After the publication of this report two Round Table Conferences were held in London to discuss the scheme for the future constitution. The issue of representation for various communities was also raised, but no settlement was reached, with the result that Ramsay Mac Donald, the British Prime Minister, gave his own award on the issue.

The Communal Award was announced on 10 August 1932, discarding India's existence as a single nation. It accorded separate electorates not only to the Muslims but also to the Europeans, the Sikhs, the Indian Christians and the Anglo-Indians. Seats were reserved for Marathas in certain selected general constituencies in Bombay. The depressed classes were given seats which were to be filled by elections from special constituencies in which they alone could use their franchise. Gandhiji started fast unto death against this dissolute announcement, which ultimately ended in the form of the Poona Pact on 24 September 1932, by which Harijans were persuaded to stay within the Hindu fold. But the announcement brought calamitous results with it. Various communal organisations, which were otherwise lost in torpor because of the lack of public support, revamped their destructive activities. These
parties did not show any perspicacity to placate the Congress. On the contrary, these organisations opposed the progressive demands forwarded by the Congress. This firmly entrenched the communal consciousness among some Indians.

In 1935, the Government of India Act was passed, which contemplated a federation of British-Indian Provinces and Indian States. The articles of this Act also provided for provincial autonomy and a federal government at the Centre. But under this Act the Governors were given special powers to declare a state of emergency and to suspend the Constitution. Though this was one of the most unpleasant clauses of the Government of India Act and the Congress did not react favourably, declaring that the new constitution offered India only responsibility without power. Yet the Congress decided to participate in the forthcoming elections. It left the question of acceptance of office till after the General Election. The results of the General Election revealed an overwhelming victory of the Congress. In Madras, the United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa the Congress secured an absolute majority. In Assam and the North-West Frontier Provinces it emerged as the single largest party. Only in Bengal, the Punjab and Sind it was in minority.

After the results of the election were declared, the issue of acceptance of office was fiercely debated in the Congress. In July 1937, the Congress Working Committee resolved to accept the office. And when the Congress decided to accept the challenge of forming the government, it preferred to have a homogeneous ministry of its own. The results of the
election had not brought with it any glorious success for the League, and the Congress was in a position to neglect the members of the Muslim League. This also initiated the chain reaction of fission.

The miserable performance of the League in the elections of 1937 upset many of their airy assumptions. These elections also unraveled the fact that while Hindus enjoyed numerical superiority in the Hindu-majority provinces, the Muslims did not enjoy the same privilege in the Muslim-majority provinces of the Punjab and Bengal. The Muslim communalists inferred, by this alarming results, that while the Hindus were in a dominant position in the Hindu-majority areas, the position of Muslims was precarious in their own mainstays. This unpromising situation led the League to launch a propaganda clamouring that the Muslims were an endangered minority.

This was the time when the League entered into the second stage of its separatist tendencies. The Government of India Act, the results of elections of 1937 and the failure of the coalition talks in regard to the formation of ministry in the United Provinces forced Jinnah to renounce all relations with the Congress. Jinnah, who once stood as the messenger of communal harmony, became the greatest advocate of 'Two-Nation' theory, which was authored by Rahmat Ali, a Cambridge graduate. He coined the word 'Pakistan'—P standing for the Punjab, A denoting Afghanistan, K representing Kashmir, S embodying Sind, and Tan for Baluchistan—meaning a land of pures. The episode of 1937 had a traumatic effect upon Jinnah. After this bitter experience he made all-out
efforts to consolidate the position of the League and to establish it as the sole representative body of the Muslim community. In order to win the support of Muslims, Jinnah called the Congress a Hindu organisation. Side by side he started a drive to persuade small Muslim political parties to merge into the Muslim League.

On 3 September 1939, the Second World War broke out and the British Government dragged Indian Army into the War without consulting the responsible government on this issue. As a protest against this action the Congress Ministry resigned on 15 November 1939. After the outbreak of war, the new equilibrium demanded a unanimous opposition of the step taken by the British Government. The Congress and the government were drifting apart because of the lack of harmonious settlement. Nehru appealed to Jinnah to support the Congress view in protesting against the Indian Army being plunged into the War without its will. But Jinnah, instead of extending co-operation, declared 22 December as the 'Day of Deliverance' from the Congress Ministries. This caustic attack on the Congress created a new gulf between the League and the Congress. Three months later, the 'Pakistan Resolution' passed in the Lahore session of the League further contorted the intricate problem.

The third phase of the League's activities started during the World War II when Jinnah cleverly advocated the two-nation theory in colours of Ideology, Religion and History. He propounded the theory that Hinduism and Islam together did not make a composite Indian culture. He adopted
an anti-liberal attitude. Discussing Jinnah's changed attitude towards Hindu-Muslim relationship, Moin Shakir maintains:

What Jinnah was expounding was the typical anti-liberal attitude of the Muslim reactionary leadership. Jinnah's compromise with this leadership on the political level had to be followed by a compromise in ideology. It is unfortunate that Jinnah who could be expected to play the role of a modern and progressive leader, fell a prey to the reactionary forces in Muslim society for reason of political and personal ambition and ceased to be a forceful advocate of the complete separation of religion and politics. 4

As the War crisis took a grave turn, Churchillsent the Cripps Mission to India in 1942. On 29 March, Sir Stafford Cripps addressed a large gathering of the press, in which he declared that His Majesty's Government's object was to create a new Indian Union which shall be equal to other Dominion of the United Kingdom in every respect and in no way subordinate. But the Mission failed to reconcile with the Indian leaders because neither it was able to define the status and rights of the Executive Council in categorical terms nor was it able to give any assurance to the Indian leaders that India would be awarded her freedom after the war was over. Another objectionable clause of the proposal was the option given to the provinces to stay outside the Union if they so liked. The solution suggested by the Mission regarding communal problem also was unpalatable. The proposal was discarded by all the parties though on different grounds. The failure of the Cripps Mission filled the Indian

political scene with an air of disappointment, and generated the climate of conjectures and speculations.

At about this time Lord Wavell succeeded Lord Linlithgo as the Viceroy of India. The legacy left by Lord Linlithgo was difficult and oppressive. Especially, the achievement of communal settlement between the Congress and the League was an onerous task, because Jinnah had adopted an aggressive posture. At the Karachi session of the Muslim League, held in December 1943, he invented a new insinuating slogan: 'Divide and Leave'. Though the War was not yet over, the victory was not a distant future. It was evident that after the cessation of hostilities Britain would not be in a position to delay or deny India her freedom. Aware of the onerous task assigned to him Lord Wavell almost at once started chalking out the plan under which power could be transferred to Indians.

On 17 June, Gandhiji wrote from the Aga Khan Palace to the Viceroy and expressed his desire to approach the members of the Congress Working Committee for discussing the enigmatical Indian problem with a fresh view and also to negotiate with the Viceroy himself. Lord Wavell turned down both the demands. Now the Congress turned to Jinnah. The Working Committee of the Muslim League met on 30 July in Lahore. The members authorised Jinnah to have discussions with Gandhiji. The Gandhi-Jinnah meeting took place on 9 September 1944. But the talks proved futile. The inconclusive Gandhi-Jinnah summit convinced Lord Wavell that without the intervention of the British administration no
definite solution of the Indian problem could be reached. In May 1945, Lord Wavell went to London to acquaint his Majesty's Government with the bleak political situation of India. He came back with the proposal of a Round Table Conference, which was to be opened on 25 June at Simla. The government passed the orders of release of the Congress leaders arrested during the 'Quit India Movement' of 1942.

The main tasks to be solved at the Simla Conference were the question of parity between the Muslims and the Hindus other than the Schedule Castes in the new Executive Council and the League's demand to nominate all the Muslim members. Soon after the beginning of the Conference, the gathering at Simla concurred on certain major issues such as representation for minorities, whole-hearted support for war efforts and continuance of the reconstituted Executive Council under the Government of India till the end of the war. But the communal differences between the Congress and the League, as was apprehended, came to surface regarding the composition of the Executive Council. Jinnah was not ready to co-operate unless all the five Muslim members of the Council were nominated from the League and the Governor General's powers of veto were reinforced by a special safeguard for Muslims within the Council. Though this settlement was purely for an interim Government, League's demand was a clear refusal of the national character of the Congress. Thus, the Simla Parley failed not because of the political issue between India and Britain but because of the profligate communal issue. Larry
Collins and Dominique Lapierre have correctly assessed the situation as follows:

The root cause of the problem was the age-old antagonism between India's 300 million Hindus and 100 million Moslems, sustained by tradition, by antipathetic religions, by economic differences, subtly exacerbated through the years by Britain's own policy of Divide and Rule.⁵

Politically eminent persons were invited to Simla to start a useful debate on the issue of formation of a new Central Government. The Conference, however, degenerated into a futile kind of political haggling because of petty objections raised by the League. This political schism only exacerbated the problem.

Soon after the breakdown of the Simla Conference two important events occurred which made a new initiative possible. With the surrender of Japan on 15 August 1945, the War came to an end and the Labour Party won the General Elections held in Britain. Mr. Attlee's arrival on the British political scene charged the Indian politics with a new hope. Shortly after the elections of Britain, Lord Wavell went to England and after his return he announced two things: (a) the British Government was still anxious to implement the Cripps Offer and intended to convene a constitution-making body; (b) His Majesty's Government was willing to convene General Elections in the winter of 1945. The League declared that it would fight the elections on the issue of separate homeland for

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Muslims and the right of the League to represent all the Muslims. Jinnah and other members of the League demanded that the provinces of the Punjab, Sind, the NWFP, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam in their entirety be separated to form a sovereign state to be known as Pakistan.

After the elections, His Majesty's Government sent a Parliamentary Delegation to India. The members of the Delegation interviewed all the major figures of the Congress and the League on 5 January. During these talks with the members of the Delegation Jinnah boldly asserted that the League would not participate in any interim Government without resolving the problem of Pakistan and the question of parity with all the other parties. He was against a unified constitution making body and demanded two separate constitution making bodies—one for Hindustan and the other for Pakistan.

The British Government proposed to send a mission of Cabinet Ministers to solve this intricate problem. The Secretary of State explained that "the discussions now to begin are preliminary to the setting up of machinery whereby the forms of government under which India can realise her full independent status can be determined by Indians. The objective is to set-up an acceptable machinery quickly and to make the necessary interim arrangement."

Though Mr. Attlee was very keen to solve the Indian problem from a fresh angle, the communal problems were still unresolved because intellectuals of the Muslim League were encashing the fear of the great Muslim race being governed and subdued by the Hindus. For the first
time in the Lahore session, the League had spoken of the possibility of India's division. The demands put forth by the League were obscure, but one thing was clear that the League wanted to have full provincial autonomy in Muslim-majority area. But in later stages, they discarded the idea of composite nationality. The Muslims were nevertheless highly enthusiastic about their status and position in free India. The N.W.F.P., Kashmir, West Punjab and East Bengal became their dream homeland. This demand of the League bamboozled the problem.

When the Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 23 March 1946, its major task was to atone the two confronting standpoints. This plan envisaged an undivided India with a group system so that the Indus and the Ganges-Brahmaputra basins would have freedom for economic development, but it rejected the demand of separate Muslim homeland amputated from the body of the Indian subcontinent. The Cabinet Mission Plan stipulated the Indian Federation dealing with only three subjects of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications with the residuary subjects vesting in the provinces, thus granting the maximum autonomy possible to the provinces. The Mission divided the country into three zones: A, B and C. Zone A included Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa. The Punjab, Sind, the NWFP and British Baluchistan were kept under Zone B, which was largely a Muslim majority area. Zone C comprised Bengal and Assam where Muslims had a small majority over the rest. The Mission made this arrangement to allay
the fears of the League. This plan was very smartly framed and there were no objectionable clauses in it.

At first, Jinnah was not ready to accept the proposal but at last admitted that the arrangement made by the Mission was the best possible proposal for the solution of the communal problem. The peaceful settlement of the communal strife between the two leading parties was a momentous event. While the constitution-making was in process, the administration of India would be carried on by an interim Government, which except the Governor General the Viceroy assured, would be a purely Indian body.

But an ominous incidence was still ahead to change the direction of Indian history. After becoming the President of Congress, Nehru held a press conference on 10 July, in which he stressed that the Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly completely unfettered by arrangements. He believed that the non-Pakistan provinces (Zone A) would decide against grouping and so would the NWFP and Assam, leading the collapse of the other groups as well. This impulsive statement was against the spirit of the Cabinet Mission Plan. This statement revived the hopes of Jinnah to clasp the sceptre. The Muslim League met on 27 July in Bombay to decide its next step. It reiterated the demand for Pakistan. In order to strengthen his point of view Jinnah became pragmatic and logical rather than speculative. The Muslim League vigorously launched its campaign to achieve the goal of Pakistan. The League's Council withdrew its acceptance of the Mission's Plan and authorised its Working
Committee to draw up a plan for direct action. Jinnah declared 16 August as the 'Direct Action Day', which turned out to be one of the darkest days in the Indian history, when communal rioting engulfed the big city of Calcutta murders, arsons, loots, and pillages were rampant, involving very heavy damage to life and property. These events left no grounds for a peaceful settlement.

On 17 August, the Congress met in Delhi under the shadow of disastrous events, which were rocking Calcutta and several other parts of the Indian subcontinent. The Congress had ensured the Parliamentary Committee with the task of forming an interim Government. Jawaharlal Nehru extended his co-operation for friendly settlement, and offered the League five seats in an interim Government of fourteen. But Jinnah was not ready to enter the government, and he turned down Nehru's proposal. But the British Government was determined to form the Interim Government with or without the co-operation of the League. Therefore, the government invited the resignation of all the members of the existing Executive Council. On 24 August, a press communiqué was released stating the names of the members appointed by the King. The new Governor General's Executive Council included Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, M. Asaf Ali, C. Rajagopalachari, Sarat Chandra Bose, Dr. John Mathai, Sardar Baldev Singh, Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, Jagiwan Ram, Syed Ali Zaheer and Cooverji Hormusji Bhabha. Two Muslims were to be appointed later. The Interim Government took office on 2 September.
After assigning the responsibility of the Interim Government to the Congress leaders the Viceroy went to Calcutta. The miserable condition of the city revealed the fact upon the Viceroy that some kind of propitiation and agreement was the first necessity of the time to prevent the multiplication of virulent spores of violence and hostility. Ultimately, Lord Wavell's negotiations with Jinnah concluded successfully on 15 October. Liaqat Ali Khan, I.I. Chundrigar, Abdur Rub Nishtar, Ghazanfar Khan and Jogendra Nath Mandal were nominated to represent the League. The Muslim League representatives were allotted the portfolios of Finance (Liaqat Ali Khan), Commerce (I.I. Chundrigar), Communications (Abdur Rab Nishtar), Health (Ghazanfar Ali Khan), and Law (Jogendra Nath Mandal).

With the Finance Ministry in its hand the League was able to thwart each step taken by the Congress. After entering the Interim Government the League's representatives declined to accept the leadership of Nehru or even the convention of collective responsibility. Liaqat Ali Khan believed that the Interim Government consisted of "a Congress bloc and a Muslim bloc, each functioning under separate leadership". The budget presented by Liaqat Ali Khan came as the last blow to the Hindu-Muslim Unity. Liaqat Ali Khan levied twenty-five per cent tax on all business profits of more than one hundred thousand rupees. The Congress interpreted the budget as an attempt to penalise the Hindu capitalists. The scramble for power and position became more and more unpleasant. The mutual mistrust between the two communities was
aggravated by the unwillingness of the Congress leaders to share power with the members of the Muslim League. Maulana Azad writes:

...the Interim Government was born in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust between the Congress and the League. Even before the League joined the Government, its distrust of the Congress had influenced the composition of the new executive council.⁶

Shortly after the Muslim League entered the Interim Government, the Viceroy raised the question of summoning the League for accepting the membership of the Executive Council. The main hurdle in the way of the formation of the new Executive Council was the fundamental disagreement between the Congress and the League on points of interpretation. Jinnah emphasised that he was not ready to enter the Council unless the British Government enforced the intentions of the Cabinet Mission. This attempt was the last of innumerable series of efforts made by the British Government to settle the Indian problem. Exhausted of all its resources, the British Government decided to hand over the power to Indians. For this purpose the British Government invited Lord Wavell and the representatives of the League and the Congress to reach some kind of agreement. The discussions held from 3 to 6 December 1946 among Jawaharlal, Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan and Baldev Singh proved abortive. This time the plan collapsed due to obduracy of Jinnah and intransigent attitude of the Congress.

Clement Attlee was committed to starting the dismemberment of the imperialistic rule in India. But with regard to the transfer of power the Labour Government was facing a dilemma because the Indian situation was deteriorating very fast and communal antagonism had led India to a critical juncture, where Britain was ready to extend India her freedom but Indians were not in a position to find a solution to their problems.

Mr. Attlee, the British Prime Minister, and Lord Wavell, the Viceroy of India, held two opposite views regarding the Indian problem. Mr. Attlee was in favour of fixing a date for the transfer of power, whereas Lord Wavell was in favour of resolving the communal problem first. But ultimately, on 20 February the British Prime Minister declared that by a date not later than June 1948, the British Government would transfer the power to responsible Indian hands. The Congress Committee met on 2 March and welcomed the statement of 20 February. Though Jinnah refused to comment on the statement, he declared that the Muslim League would not yield its demand for Pakistan. When Lord Wavell found himself unable to assert before Mr. Attlee he tendered his resignation.

Lord Mountbatten, who succeeded Lord Wavell, arrived in Delhi on 22 March 1947. The next day he was installed as the new Viceroy and Governor-General of India. The appalling truth quickly dawned upon him that the inimical relations between the Congress and the League had reached such an impasse where debates, discussions, conferences and
persuasions were useless, and a speedy action was needed to avoid the calamitous civil war.

The British were ready to pull out of India. Only the terms of transfer of power were to be decided. Lord Mountbatten was briefed by Mr. Attlee before his departure for India to find an agreed solution for a united India on the basis of the Cabinet Mission Plan. But in the course of his talks with leaders of the parties particularly with Jinnah he became more and more convinced that there was no possibility of a friendly settlement between the Congress and the League. Therefore, he started drafting an alternative plan for the transfer of power. And he succeeded in producing a plan within six weeks of his arrival which he sent to London with Lord Ismay on 2 May. Lord Mountbatten urged His Majesty's Government to communicate the approval of the plan by 10 May.

The proposal sent by Mountbatten was approved by the British Cabinet, but certain major changes were made in the original plan. Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan, Patel, Nehru and Baldev Singh were invited to Delhi to discuss the plan on 17 May. But the Viceroy was doubtful about the acceptance of the plan by these leaders. Because the plan approved and modified by the British Cabinet envisaged demission of authority to provinces or such confederation of provinces as might decide to group themselves in the interim period before the actual transfer of power. Therefore, Mountbatten laid before Nehru the proposal he had received from London, which Nehru turned down with a hostile reaction, because he was against the notion of provinces initially becoming independent.
After the refusal of the plan by Pandit Nehru Mountbatten asked V.P. Menon to draft an alternative plan. Before taking the plan to London on 18 May, the viceroy had consultations with Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, Liqat Ali Khan and Baldev Singh. There the British Cabinet accepted the new plan and Lord Mountbatten came back to India on 31 May 1947.

Hitherto all the moves were based on the idea of a united India. The Cabinet Mission had considered every aspect of the division of India and rejected it. But in the new situation no peaceful agreement of the solution was possible. Therefore, the new plan piloted by V.P. Menon suggested the division of India.

On 2 June Nehru, Patel, Kriplani, Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan, Abdur Rab Nishtar and Baldev Singh met at the Viceroy's house. In this meeting the Viceroy pointed out the terms of transfer of power. The Viceroy told the gathering that power would be transferred on the basis of Dominion status, but the new government or governments would be free to withdraw later from the Commonwealth if they so wished. After his meeting with the party leaders the Viceroy communicated the progress to the Secretary of State. On 3 June Attlee announced the plan in the House of Commons. The Viceroy and major Indian leaders broadcast over All India Radio the acceptance of the 3 June plan.

No sooner had the partition of the country been decided upon than His Majesty's Government started preparing the draft of the Indian Independence Bill. This Bill in its final form contained only twenty clauses and three schedules. The Bill stipulated that the Constituent
Assembly of each of the two Dominions would be the legislature of the respective Dominions which meant that the existing Central Legislative Assembly and Council of State would be automatically dissolved. The Bill also contemplated that until the Constituent Assemblies of the respective Dominions made other provisions, each of the Dominions would be governed in accordance with the Government of India Act, 1935. The Indian Independence Bill was passed by the House of Commons on 15 July and by the House of Lords the next day.

In accordance with the 3 June plan two Boundary Commissions were set up to demarcate the boundary lines between India and Pakistan. Each Boundary Commission comprised a chairman assisted by a panel of four judges, two representing the Congress and two nominated by the League. Sir Cyril Radcliffe was appointed the Chairman of both the Commissions. The Commission was directed to demarcate the boundary line on the basis of contiguous majority area as Muslims and non-Muslims. The scalpel of Radcliffe vivisected India into two separate nations. The Indian subcontinent achieved its freedom but lost its unity.

Though the Congress and the League accepted the plan of the division of the country along communal lines, the people of India were not ready to brook with this sudden rude shock. After the announcement of the Radcliffe Award on 17 August, minorities from the either side of the new boundary line began to flee. V.P. Menon describes this mass migration. "What started as a trickle very soon developed into a flood
which, sweeping through East Punjab, engulfed the city and province of Delhi and overflowed into the Western districts of the United Provinces."

Innocent people became victims of the forces beyond their control. The irrational haste with which partition was precipitated, unnerved Indian people. This tremulous ethnic violence asphyxiated the emotional ties between the two communities and turned them into wild beasts. Both Hindus and Muslims perpetrated heinous acts upon each other. The partition of the Indian subcontinent on the communal basis brought with it one of the bloodiest upheavals in the history of India.

The main factor responsible for the early transfer of power was the advent of Labour Party with an absolute majority. Mr. Attlee as said earlier was determined to transfer the power to Indians. Before the Labour Party came to power, Churchill had sent the Cripps Mission to solve the Indian problem, but it failed miserably. The major reason of failures of so many summits and conferences was that a true dialogue never took place between the Muslims and the Hindus because the League considered the Congress to be a Hindu organisation and the Congress held that League was working as a pawn for the Britishers. In this atmosphere of distrust any genuine dialogue was just impossible.

The year 1937 was the year of jubilation for the Congress because it had given a good account of itself in the elections but its hegemonial attitude made Jinnah to label it a Hindu organisation, and lean more and

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more towards the idea of Pakistan. The concept of Pakistan grew gradually—in 1940, it was just a hypothesis, by 1942-43, Muslims used it as a coup to get favourable results, but by 1946, the polarisation of politics was complete and people were either pro-Congress or pro-League. And in the year 1947, the idea rocked the country vigorously.

The most culpable countenance and most perilous centrifugal force that led India to such a disastrous event was the League's separatist tendency, which was not only cultural but also religious. The British Government assumed that by offering the communal award and constitutional reforms, they would win the Muslim support. But these moves of the government only paved the path for Pakistan, and the Muslim voice became more and more strident.

During 1939 to 1942 the Congress remained in wilderness due to lack of national programmes. It tried to start futile rancorous talks with the Viceroy, but the British Government adopted a sedentary attitude towards the Indian problem. And when the Congress reclined to support the War effort in 1942 Lord Linlithgo nurtured Muslim communalism. And the Cabinet Mission Plan came as a radical deviation from the policies hitherto stipulated. Ultimately, the British Government succumbed to partition.

The partition of India in its true historical sense was the resolution of crisis of unity between two rival standpoints, and Pakistan emerged out of a long series of untoward incidents. The Muslim League started a malicious campaign of vilification against the Congress by deliberately
spreading rumours and propagandist texts of atrocity. The Congress was unable to acclimatise itself to the rapidly changing atmosphere and still tenaciously clung to its assumption that liberal Muslims were its colleague, and the evasive attitude of the British bureaucrats and administrators precipitated the tragedy.

The demarcation of the new boundary line was based on the erroneous concept that the future relationship between the two newly born Dominions would be friendly. But when partition came and mass migration started the carnage was unexpected and violence engulfed everything.