CH-I

INTRODUCTION

India achieved Independence on 15th August, 1947 after being under the colonial rule for more than 200 years. India, however, emerged not as one whole state but was divided into two nation states – India and Pakistan. This division resulted in the biggest displacement of people who had lived together through centuries. To understand partition, the displacement and rehabilitation of the people, it is essential to look into their historical experiences.

The Muslim rulers, initially, formed a powerful minority but the conversions helped them to have a sizeable Muslim support. The Muslim nobility, however, continued to maintain their separate exclusive identity and so did the upper caste Hindus.1 Centuries of association was bound to have its own effect on the lives of the members of both the communities. Cultural exchanges at higher level in the fields of art and architecture could not be resisted. The most important result of the contact was the birth of the ‘Urdu’ language, which was coveted by the elites of both the Hindus and the Muslims. Yet Sanskrit was still considered as the ‘Dev Bhasha’ by the upper class Hindus and Persian was still the favourite language of the Muslim nobility. However, even Urdu failed to, completely, bridge the gap between the two communities and at a later stage, it was one of the major issues that spearheaded the mutual distrust between the Hindus and the Muslims. Even though a perfect socio-cultural synthesis between the communities did not come about, it enabled them to live side by side.

After the failure of the Mutiny, the British began to follow the policy of “Divide Etimpera”2 the old Roman Motto meaning “Divide and Rule”. The communal forces helped in widening the social and economic differences which were exploited by the British for their own ends. Towards the end of the 10th century, religious reform and revival movements were initiated by both

2 Ibid., p. 15.
Hindu and Muslim social and religious reformers, which paved the way for the rapid growth of communalism by the end of the century.

English education which Hindus warmly welcomed built a bridge between their ancient and modern cultures. But Muslims who turned aside from English education and preferred to stay behind the times, deprived themselves of its benefits. As a result jobs, commerce and industry also became monopolies of the Hindus. Thus, the Hindus became rich and this economic disparity was one of the major causes of dissension between the Hindus and the Muslims as Muslims, gradually, became a poorer lot.

Muslims formed roughly a quarter of India’s population, yet they, with a few honourable exceptions, would have nothing to do with Nationalist movements. After the downfall of the Mughal Empire and failure of Sepoy Mutiny, Muslims gradually isolated themselves from the majority community. To some extent Hindu leaders were responsible for alienating Muslims from the mainstream of nationalism. In their efforts to raise the self-pride of Hindus, they harped on the exploits of Rajputs, Marathas and Sikhs, all of whom had long fought Muslim rulers. This economic dissension was reflected in the non-cooperation of the Muslims in the Nationalist Movement. The reaction of the religious reformers further alienated them when the reformers eulogized their ancient civilization. Tilak’s, Shivaji cult, the national anthem identifying Mother India with Hindu goddess ‘Durga’, the revolutionaries’ devotion to the Geeta – were eyed by the Muslims with suspicion. In his presidential address to the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1908, Tagore accused the Hindu gentlefolk of having never cared to draw their Muslim brothers into the nationalist fold. Seven years later, he said, in his political novel ‘Home and the World’, “If there is any such entity as India, Muslims must be a part of it.”

Infact, it was the colonial state, which played a major role in creating

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4 Ibid.
differences among the communities. The Muslims began to be given preferential treatment.

Political reforms of the British also helped in keeping the two communities apart. The Act of 1892 of the British Government was the first step towards the introduction of the representative system in India. It was based on the importance of the classes in Indian society. It set the basis for a demand of separate electorates. On the advice of Mr. Archbold, Principal of the Aligarh College, a deputation of Muslims led by His Highness, The Aga Khan, presented an address to the viceroy. In 1906, a Muslim deputation waited upon Lord Minto, the viceroy, and placed their demand for separate representation in Legislative Councils, Municipalities and district boards. Since this demand was tailored to suit imperial interests, Minto readily accepted it. An official gleefully wrote to Lady Minto: “A very big thing has happened today – a work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long years. It is nothing less than the pulling back of sixty two millions of people from joining the ranks of seditious opposition.”5

Three months later the All India Muslim League with Government’s blessings was founded. It all along acted as the mouthpiece of Muslim landlords and businessmen – but failed to represent Muslim peasants and workers. Government conferred on the League the special status of its favourite wife, because it was openly hostile to the Congress, which it denounced as a Hindu organization. One of its objectives was to infuse Muslims with ‘feeling of loyalty’ to the British Crown.

Communalism in Indian politics was sown by Morley–Minto reforms in 1909 when elections on communal basis were introduced – Hindu voters would elect Hindu legislators and Muslim voters–Muslim legislators. Muslims were now treated as a privileged community, and allotted proportionately more seats

in legislatures than their numbers justified. This policy of separate electorates continued till independence.

Employment in government services, entry to educational and professional institutions were fixed on communal basis. People who worked for communal harmony were in danger of imprisonment. Press censorship was a marked feature. British press, ceaselessly, attempted to stir up communal discord. The gap between the two communities was further widened. Communal Award of 1932, was a device to perpetrate the Hindu-Muslim divide. The official communal award was declared in 1932 by Ramsay Macdonald. This award provided for separate ‘Hindu’, ‘Untouchable’ and ‘Muslim’ electorates in the new federal legislature. It treated the Hindus and the Harijans as two separate political entities – an attempt at weakening the Hindus, which also widened the Hindu-Muslim divide. The Congress was opposed to sectarian politics and the principle of separate electorates.

The Zamindars and landlords, the jagirdari elements, finding that open defence of landlords’ interests was no longer feasible, switched over to communalism for their class defence. This was not only true in U.P. and Bihar but also in Punjab and Bengal. In Punjab, the big landlords of West Punjab and the Muslim bureaucratic elite had supported the semi-communal semi-castiest and loyalist Unionist Party. But they increasingly felt that the Unionist Party, being a provincial party, could no longer protect them from the Congress radicalism, and so, during the years 1937-45, they, gradually, shifted their support to the Muslim League, which eagerly promised to protect their interests. Hindu Zamindars and landlords and merchants and moneylenders in northern and western India too began to shift loyalties towards Hindu communal parties and groups. To attract them, V.D. Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha President, began to condemn the ‘selfish’ class tussle between the

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landlords and tenants. Similarly, in Punjab, the Hindu communalists became even more active than before in money lending and trading interests.

Both, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, had run the election campaign of 1937 on liberal communal lines – they had incorporated much of the nationalist programme and many of the Congress policies, except those relating to agrarian issues, in their election manifestoes. But they had fared poorly in the elections. The Muslim League won only 109 out of 482 seats allotted to Muslims under separate electorates, securing only 4.8 percent of the total Muslim votes. The Hindu Mahasabha fared even worse.

After the 1937 elections, the Congress refused to share with the Muslim League the ministries in those provinces where Muslims were in substantial minority. Jinnah took it as a personal snub. He feared that Muslims would not get a fair deal in free India where Hindus would be in majority. This unfounded fear, turned the apostle of communal unity into an obstinate advocate of communal state, Pakistan. In 1944, Gandhi went to Jinnah's house and had eighteen day long talks with him. He drew a blank, as Jinnah was determined on having Pakistan. The idea of Pakistan was stoutly opposed by the Congress and other political parties; but it caught the imagination of a large section of Muslims who had been nourishing a deep-seated separatist feeling. They raised the slogan: 'We shall wrest Pakistan by fighting to the last.' To this Jinnah added: "We shall have India divided or we shall have India destroyed". It was neither a political rhetoric nor an empty threat. The threat took a frightful shape in the Great Killing in mid August of 1946.

The increased fissures between the Hindus and the Muslims were brought to the forefront in the elections of 1945. Elections to the central and

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8 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
provincial legislatures in 1945 brought forth the diametrically opposed approaches of the two major parties – the Congress and the Muslim League. The Congress fought the elections on the basis of a United India whereas the Muslim League fought against the backdrop of the partition of India. In Punjab, the propaganda of the League proclaimed, “these elections will decide whether there is to be Pakistan or not.” The election results revealed the Muslim League’s rapid advance since 1944. The Muslim League had captured seventy-five of the eighty-six Muslim seats in Punjab. The Congress had eclipsed all competitors for the Hindu vote.

After the Second World War in 1945, circumstances became favourable for the independence of India. Labour Party came to power in England after putting forth independence of India as one of the major issues. Prime Minister C.R. Attlee took personal interest in the plan for transferring power. Attlee sent a mission to India, comprising of Cabinet Ministers, to put forward its proposals. The mission was to consist of Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India; Sir Stafford Cripps, the President of the Board of Trade and Mr. A.V. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty. The Cabinet Mission made a serious attempt to meet the Muslim League’s point of view half-way in an effort to preserve the unity of India. It provided limited powers for the centre. The offer of an interim government comprising of 5 Hindus, 5 Muslims, 1 Sikh and 1 Christian or Anglo-Indian was proposed. Jinnah, initially, opposed it but, ultimately, a coalition interim-government was formed with the avowed objective of holding the Congress to ransom, lest anything should be done which prejudiced its claim to Pakistan. In quest of this, the Chief weapon of the Muslim League was the emphasis on legality, “preventing the government from functioning as a cabinet and to increase the power and influence of the Viceroy in order to save themselves from being overridden by the Congress

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A perennial confrontation continued between the League and the Congress.

The Pakistan demand had been reiterated at the Muslim League Legislators’ convention at the beginning of April, 1946. At this convention, anti-Hindu venom had been poured out by the League leaders. There had not been direct action since 1943. On 18 July, Secretary of State for India, speaking in the House of Lords, attributed the failure of the negotiations to the intransigence of Mr. Jinnah. This, added fuel to the fire and Jinnah called a meeting of the Muslim League Council at Bombay on 29 July, 1946. The council adopted two resolutions – one, withdrawing the acceptance of cabinet proposals and the other was – the Direct action. The Direct Action day in Calcutta was directed at the Hindus and the Hindus were also prepared to retaliate against any attack from the Muslim groups. The irony was that the advocates of unity i.e. the Congress seemed sadly resigned to partition even as early as 1945, while the advocates of partition, fearful of its consequences, hoped that some links would survive. The Congress working committee declared on 15 September, 1945 that while it was “wedded to Indian freedom and unity”, nevertheless “it cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will.” In view of this, Jinnah had only to win the elections in the Muslim majority Provinces to secure Pakistan. The gruesome killings of Calcutta triggered riots in East Bengal in October and November, 1946. This led to widespread violence in many places and there was an orgy of murders, arson, loot and rape. The British had, finally, come to grips with the Indian situation when Britain’s Prime Minister, Clement Richard Attlee, announced in

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17 Note by Mudie (undated); Nicholas Manseragh & Lumby (ed.). *'Transfer of Power'*, Vol. VIII, p. 6.
the House of Commons on 20 February, 1947, “His majesty’s Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take necessary steps to effect the transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948”. This statement “altered the course of history. The echoes of this momentous announcement reverberated throughout the subcontinent.”

The distrust, disagreement and hardened reactions had reached such a pass that Patel remarked, “the way we had been proceeding would lead to disaster and we would then not have one Pakistan but several.

There were vital differences between the congress and the Muslim League regarding the cabinet mission Plan. The Congress apparently felt that when it came to forming Zonal Govt., a province or a part of a province could opt out of the Zone. It had not really accepted either the three-tier Govt. or limitation on the power of the constituent assembly laid down in the plan. After the elections of the constituent assembly, the Congress insisted on its effective functioning, and the constituent assembly started its working on Dec.9, 1946.

Apart from fundamental differences regarding the long-term arrangement, there had never been smooth working of the interim government in the hope that this would keep out the Congress. The object of the Congress members in the interim Government was to bring into existence, healthy conventions of non-interference by the viceroy and the interim government to be seen as working as a team, so that it may be replaced by the national government in due course. The Muslim League members had entered the government with the avowed object of holding the Congress to ransom, lest anything should be done which might prejudice its claim to Pakistan. In this campaign, their chief weapon was the emphasis on legality “preventing the Govt. from functioning as a cabinet and to increase the power and influence of the viceroy in order to save themselves from being overridden by the Congress

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There was continual friction between the League and the Congress in the Interim Government. Liaquat Ali Khan, who was the Finance Member of the Interim Government, seldom agreed to the proposals coming from the Congress members.

Since the Cabinet Mission Plan had practically failed, a change in the Viceroy was considered necessary. The British Prime Minister, Lord Attlee said, “I had great admiration for Lord Wavell, both as a soldier and as a man, but I did not think he was likely to find a solution. I did not think that he and the Indians could really understand each other. New men were needed for new policy.”

On the appointment of Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy of India, the British Prime Minister made a significant speech in the Parliament. He said, “His Majesty’s Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948...... His Majesty’s Government will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government of British India should be handed over, on the due date, whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India or some areas to the existing Provincial Government or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people.” For the first time, the Indians felt that the British, irrevocably, intended to leave. It “paved the way for partition and even represented an indirect concession to the League demand for Pakistan.” Gandhiji rightly said when he wrote to Nehru, “This

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25 Ibid.
may lead to Pakistan for those provinces or portions which they want.”

This statement, together with the Muslim League’s policy of obstruction, served to prepare Muslim League’s tactics. Unlike his predecessor, Lord Mountbatten had demanded, and had been given, a free hand in settling the Indian question without reference to the Home Government. The negotiations could not bank upon an appeal to the Home Government. He insisted on binding the parties to what he got settled.

Meanwhile, instead of any communal settlement in the Punjab, there broke out communal riots in the districts of Rawalpindi, Attock and Multan. These riots vitiated the political atmosphere. On 8 April, 1947 the Congress passed, among others, the following resolution “… these tragic events (the communal riots in the Punjab) have demonstrated that there can be no settlement of the problem of the Punjab by violence and coercion can last. Therefore, it is necessary to find a way out which involves the least amounts of compulsion. This would necessitate the division of Punjab into two provinces, so that the predominantly Muslim parts may be separated from the non-Muslim parts.”

The resolution adopted a new stand which told the Muslim League that it could not have it both ways. It could not claim to take Muslim majority areas out of India and insist on keeping non-Muslim majority portions in Pakistan. They could not include the whole of the Punjab into Pakistan. The areas with non-Muslim majorities must be allowed to opt for inclusion in India. But the division of Punjab could only be conceded after the Congress had reconciled itself to the creation of Pakistan. By this time, the new Governor-General had discussed his tentative plan with the Congress leaders and Mr. Jinnah. The Congress high command, barring Maulana Azad had tentatively accepted the partition of India. This laid the foundation of the Partition Plan.

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The Partition Plan

After discussing the Indian constitutional problem with different leaders, Lord Mountbatten came to the conclusion that (a) on the assumption that Mr. Jinnah’s power and purpose were sustained, partition would have to be provided for.30 (b) Partitioning of the centre involved similar treatment for those provinces where two communities were evenly balanced.31

The next problem, as Lord Mountbatten himself stated, “was to see if the Congress party which had always stood for a United India, would be prepared to consider the partition of the country as a price for quick transfer of power and the restoration of peace. It was pointed out that in the case of provinces, like the Punjab and Bengal, partition would undoubtedly be involved. The Congress was not prepared to agree to a partition of the country with the entire Muslim majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal going to Pakistan. Partition of India for them was necessarily acceptance only in the non-Muslim majority portions of the Punjab and Bengal were to be placed in India. When this was put to Mr. Jinnah, he was against the performance of a surgical operation on the provinces which had ancient histories of unity.”32

Meetings between Mr. Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, the Maharaja of Patiala and Sardar Baldev Singh, the Defence Member of the interim Government, were arranged. Since the Sikhs had already put forth the demand for a Sikh State, the talks, naturally, centred on that issue. There were several reasons for the breakdown of Akali-Muslim League talks. There had never been any previous understanding between them…. An influential Akali leader Giani Kartar Singh, attended the Muslim League M.L.As’ Conference in Delhi in April, 1947 and tried to probe into Muslim League’s attitude towards the Sikhs in case of the establishment of Pakistan. He was told nothing apart from

31 Ibid., p. 55.
being given assurances of good treatment. It has been rightly stated that Mr. Jinnah “himself knew no more of the Punjab than Neville Chamberlain of Czechoslovakia.” He was not anxious to give the Sikhs a Sikh state of their conception and his only concern was to keep as much of the Punjab in Pakistan as he could.

An accord between the Akalis and the Muslim League would only have been possible if the Sikhs and the Muslims could have come to some sort of terms, which were mutually acceptable. The Sikh leaders made the choice of being with India. Keeping in view their culture, history and past traditions, which were more akin to the Hindus than to the Muslims, they, permanently, linked their destinies with that of India.

Lord Mountbatten, publicly, announced the Plan on June 3, 1947. The following provisions were made for the partition of the Punjab and Bengal in that plan:

(a) The Provincial Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab, excluding European Members, will be asked to meet in two parts – one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other - the rest of the province. For the purpose of determining the population of the districts, the 1941 census figures will be taken as authoritative.

(b) The members of two parts of each Legislative Assembly, sitting separately, will be empowered to vote whether or not the Province should be partitioned. If a simple majority of either side decides in favour of partition, division of the province will take place and arrangements will be made accordingly.

(c) In the event of partition being decided upon for the purposes of the final partition of those Provinces, a detailed investigation of boundary

question will be needed, a boundary commission will be set up by the Governor – General.  

Acceptance of the Plan

On 3 June, Lord Mountbatten reminded Mr. Jinnah that Nehru, Patel and Kriplani had made an absolute point that they would reject the Plan unless the Muslim League accepted it as a final statement. This invited him to secure public support for the plan. The Muslim League, therefore, accepted the 3 June Plan by passing the following resolution on 9 June, “The Council resolves to give full authority to the President of the All India Muslim League to accept the fundamental principles of the Plan as a compromise, although it cannot agree to the partition of Bengal and the Punjab or give its consent to such partition, it has to consider H.M.G’s plan for the transfer of power as a whole.” The Congress committee passed the following resolution of 15 June, 1947, “In view, however, of the refusal of the Muslim League to participate in the constituent Assembly and further in view of the policy of the Congress that it cannot think in the terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in the Indian Union against their declared and established will, the All India Congress committee accepts the proposals embodied in the announcement of 3 June, which have laid down a procedure for ascertaining the will of the concerned.”

The working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Panthic Pratinidhi Board jointly passed a resolution on 14 June, 1947 emphasizing that “in the absence of the provision of transfer of population and property, the very purpose of the partition would be defeated.” Giani Kartar Singh, President of Shiromani Akali Dal, said on 16 July, 1947, “The Sikhs will not rest contented

38 The Hindustan Times, Delhi, 15 June, 1947.
till the boundary line is demarcated in such a way that it leaves at least 85 percent Sikhs in India and both the states of Pakistan and India are committed to facilitate the transfer of the remaining 15 percent from Pakistan to India.”

According to Lord Ismay, the Mountbatten Plan was a case of “Hobson’s choice”. None in India thought that it was perfect. Lord Mountbatten, himself, admitted this in a radio broadcast on the day of its announcement. He said, “The whole plan may not be perfect, but like all plans, its success will depend on the spirit of goodwill with which it is carried out.”

The Plan like most things in politics was, essentially, a compromise from every point of view. The Congress, which had been struggling for independence, did achieve it but its conception of Indian unity was shattered. The Muslim League won its Pakistan, which it so forcefully demanded, but much against its wishes the Punjab and Bengal were partitioned leaving Pakistan “truncated”.

Irrespective of merits and demerits of the Plan, after its acceptance by the two major parties, Lord Mountbatten decided to implement it and moreover, he established various organizations for that purpose.

**Punjab Boundary Commission**

The 3 June Plan suggested a national division of the Punjab, which had been included in the Indian Independence Act, 1947. It was stated that the “districts specified in the second schedule of the Act shall be treated as the territories to be comprised in the new province of the West Punjab and the remainder of the territories comprised in the new province of the East Punjab.” But the notional division, as the very name indicated, could last only for a short period and was to be replaced by the Punjab Boundary Commission Award. It has been stated in the 3 June Plan that national division was “only a

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40 Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 425.
preliminary step of a purely temporary nature as it is evident that for the purpose of a final partition these provinces (Assam, Bengal and the Punjab) a detailed investigation of boundary questions will be needed. As soon as a decision involving partition has been taken for either province, a Boundary Commission will be set up by the Governor General, the membership and the terms of reference of which will be settled in consultation with those concerned.\textsuperscript{43}

The first and foremost work connected with the Boundary Commission was the appointment of its Chairman. Mr. Jinnah suggested Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the Vice Chairman of the Boundary Commission of Assam – Bengal and the Punjab.\textsuperscript{44} The secretary of state for India confirmed the choice of Sir Cyril Radcliffe whom he described as “a man with high integrity, legal reputation and wide experience.”\textsuperscript{45} The formal proposal for the appointment of Sir Cyril Radcliffe was, however, made by Lord Mountbatten in the form of a note, dated the 26 June, which was accepted, unanimously, in the first meeting of the Partition Council on the 27 June, 1947.\textsuperscript{46} According to the announcement of the Governor General on the 30 June the following were appointed members of the Punjab Boundary Commission:

1. Mr. Justice Mehar Chand Mahajan,
2. Mr. Justice Teja Singh,
3. Mr. Justice Din Muhammad,
4. Mr. Justice Muhammad Munir.

The Punjab Boundary Commission had just started its work when a significant change occurred in the structure of the commission. An amendment was introduced in the Indian Independence Bill signifying that “In Section 4

\textsuperscript{43} Partition Proceedings. Govt. of India, Vol. VI, Parliamentary Library, p. 2.
the expression award means in relation to the Boundary Commission the
decision of the Chairman of the commission, contained in his report to the
Governor General at the conclusion of the commission proceedings." But for
this amendment, the commission could not have worked smoothly, because the
Muslim members and the non-Muslim members, even though selected from
among the judges of the High Court, were likely to be equally divided on
account of the clash of their communal interests. The chances of any
compromise were remote; first, because members had no authority to promote
any bargaining between the two sides likely to affect a settlement, secondly
because the political atmosphere was too vitiated for any compromise
settlement. It cannot, however, be denied that this amendment, as a whole,
finally reduced any chances of a settlement by the commission and, practically,
reduced the commission to a one-man body.

Its terms of reference were thus defined, "The Boundary commission is
instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab on the
basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of the Muslims and the non-
Muslims. In doing so it will also take into account other factors."47

According to the notional division of the Punjab, the districts included in
West Punjab were Rawalpindi, Attock, Gujarat, Jhelum, Mianwali, Muzafargarh, Shahpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Multan, Gujranwala, Gurdaspur, Lahore, Sheikhupura and Sialkot. All the
remaining districts of the united Punjab, viz. Rohtak, Gurgaon, Hissar, Karnal, Ambala, Simla, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Jullundur, Hoshairpur, Amritsar and Kangra were included in the East Punjab.48

The Commission followed a judicial procedure. Its first meeting was
held on the 14 July under the Chairmanship of Sir Cyril Radcliffe and it was

46 Ibid., p. 7.
announced that all interested parties should submit their memoranda to the commission by 18 July.

The counsel for the Muslims advocated that the boundary line to be drawn between the East Punjab and the West Punjab should be drawn near the Sutlej. The core of their claim rested on the ‘Population Majority’ in the disputed areas and it was asserted that the ‘Population Majority’ was the major test to be taken into consideration while determining the boundary. It was argued that the major political parties in India had agreed on the partition of the provinces on the basis of “contiguous Muslim majority areas” because this basis was included in the 3 June plan itself. On this basis, it was argued that the disputed districts of Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Sheikhupura, Lyallpur, Montgomery and Multan could not, either in whole or in part be taken away from the West Punjab because these districts were Muslim majority areas.

Great emphasis was laid on the population factor and it was argued that the districts of Gurdaspur should belong to the West Punjab as had been done in the notional division on account of the majority of the Muslim population. But there would not have been any straight line demarcating the boundary between the East Punjab and the West Punjab and there would have been numerous pockets created in the East Punjab. Amritsar would have been left an island surrounded by Pakistan territory, which would have created numerous administrative and international problems. Moreover, such demarcation would have done grave injustice to the other parties, as in that case only the population factor would have been taken into account and not the other factors mentioned in the terms of reference.

In his report, Justice Mehar Chand Mahajan recommended that the boundary line should be near the Ravi including Lahore in the East Punjab, and Justice Teja Singh advocated that the boundary line should be near the Chenab, including parts of the districts of Sheikhupura and Gujranwala, Montgomery and Lyallpur in the East Punjab. The Hindu-Sikh case rested on the economic
conditions as the non-Muslims had played a major part in the development of the Central Punjab. The Bari Doab and more particularly the districts of Gurdaspur, Amritsar and Lahore had been described by historians and settlement officers as the “homeland of the Sikhs” who owned more than two-thirds of the area and paid more than two-thirds of the land revenue of this tract. The total revenue of these districts was Rs. 55,23,439 and others Rs. 7,02,555. The total acreage cultivated was 37,55,127 acres. Sikhs owned 20,12,783. Muslims 12,4804 acres and rest by others.49

The Hindus and the Sikhs had played a major role in the development of industry, commerce and trade of Lahore, the metropolis of the Punjab. More than 75 percent of commerce, banks and commercial institutions were in the hands of the non-Muslims. The survey of Lahore carried out by the Punjab Government Board of Economic Enquiry indicated that 80 percent registered factories in Lahore belonged to the non-Muslims. Of the total capital investment in Lahore, viz. Rs. 6.29 crores, the non-Muslims’ share was Rs. 5.12 crores. Of the 90 bank branches, only 3 belonged to the Muslims. Of the 80 offices of insurance companies, only two belonged to the Muslims.

It was argued that about one third of the Muslim population was not rooted in the soil and was essentially of a floating character, consisting of faqirs, weavers, herdsmen, cobblers, potters, carpenters, oilmen, bards, barbers, blacksmiths, butchers, washermen and mirasis. According to the Census Report of 1931, out of the total Muslim population of 14,929, 896, this class of persons numbered about 45 percent.50

In case the line of argument followed by the Hindu and the Sikh members was accepted, the main consideration would have been economic factors rather than the population factor. It would have been contrary to the spirit and terms of settlement arrived at between the two major political parties – the Congress and the Muslim League, viz partitioning on the basis of

contiguous Muslim majority areas. Justice Din Muhammad asserted that terms of reference followed the settled cause decided by the major political parties, so much so that the terms of reference were even included in the 3 June Plan in para no. 9, i.e. “It will be instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas by Muslim and non-Muslim”.  

After 31 July, the commission retired to Simla where Sir Cyril who had gone to Calcutta to attend the meetings of the Bengal Boundary commission also joined it. Justice Mahajan has given a very vivid description of the working of the commission at Simla, “Rather anxiously, the non-Muslim and Muslim members never met together for consultation or discussion. Mr. Justice Din Mohammad frankly told me at the outset that so far as he was concerned he would write the report conceding the demands of the Muslim League and I could do what I liked. As a result of this, all four of us wrote separate reports.”  

Justice Mahajan was the first to submit his report on 3 August, 1947. While discussing various points, he suggested the following boundary line. “In my view the frontier of India and Pakistan should be demarcated on the west of Ravi and in the neighbourhood of the river, as strategically speaking, this is the only workable frontier. The frontier line will take the cause of the Basantar river as leaving the tract of Shekargarh Tehsil on the west side. This line should join the river Ravi below Narwal. From there, it should follow the cause of the Ravi upto Shahdara. From Shahdara, it should proceed via Sheikupura to Nankana Sahib, include that town in the East Punjab and then it should join the Dev Nala upto its confluence with the river, Ravi, followed till Channu and then should adopt the border of the Montgomery District with the Multan District and join the river Sutlej some distance above the Islam Headworks.”

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50 Census Report, Punjab, 1931. Table XVII, Race Tribe or Caste.
Justice Teja Singh submitted his report on the next day, i.e. 4 August, 1947. While emphasizing the importance of the Sikhs, Sikh shrines and the contribution of the Sikhs to the development of the land, he suggested the boundary line, "I would draw the north-western boundary of the Eastern Punjab along the river Chenab from where it enters the Punjab going right upto Khanki from there turn to the right bank of the lower Chenab Canal upto Nanwana, then follow the bank of the Rakh Branch upto the place where it enters the Lyallpur District, go along the present boundary between the districts of Sheikhupura and Lyallpur and Montgomery districts, turn to Channu, then following first the present western boundary of the Montgomery District and then upto the banks of the River Sutlej and the present southern boundary of the Montgomery District came to Sulemanki where the districts of Ferozepur and Montgomery and the Bhawalpur state join."54

Justice Din Mohammad and Justice Mohammad Munir submitted their reports on 5 August and 6 August respectively. Justice Din Mohammad mainly emphasized the importance of the population factor. Justice Mohammad Munir replied to the points raised by the Counsel for the Sikhs. According to O.H.K. Spate, "The Muslim case was much better presented technically. It presented a beautiful and a very comprehensive series of maps, excellently produced and covering all aspects of the problem."55 The counsel for the Muslims did not suggest any specific line but both strongly supported the boundary line suggested by the Muslim League. The boundary line proposed by the Muslim League was to divide the Pathankot Tehsil in order to retain Madhupur Headworks in the West Punjab. A few miles it ran along the river Beas, then followed the crest of the Shiwalik for some 80 miles. The line ran south-east, but near Rupar Headworks on the great bend of the Sutlej it turned west, and as far as the Rajputana boundary ran roughly parallel to the Sutlej along the Ludhiana – Ferozpur railway and the Bikaner canal both included within the

54 Ibid., p. 214.
West Punjab." The last meeting of the commission was held in the premises of the Service Club, Simla. Sir Cyril Radcliffe presided. Regarding the fixation of the boundary line, he said, "Gentlemen you have disagreed and, therefore, the duty falls on me to give the award which I will do later on." 

The Award

The announcement of the Punjab Boundary Award raised a good deal of controversy. Mr. Jinnah, the Governor-General of Pakistan, publicly, condemned the Award in his broadcast speech on the 31 August, 1947. He said, "we have been squeezed in as much as it was possible and the latest blow that we have received was the Award of the Boundary Commission. It is unjust, incomprehensive and even a perverse award." "In the award, a particular cause of anger to the Muslims was that a large part of the Muslim – majority area of Gurdaspur went to the East Punjab, thus giving India an extended frontier with Kashmir."

"Muslim League leaders were dismayed for Gurdaspur was of vital significance, it was then the only usable link between India and the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (for India). A few months later, when the conflict over Kashmir arose Pakistan leaders blamed what they considered to be manifestly an unjust decision on Gurdaspur."

The demarcation of the boundary line in the district of Gurdaspur would not have aroused so much cries from Pakistan, had there been no Indo-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir. As a whole, the Gurdaspur district has a 50.4 per cent Muslim population. "The Radcliffe Commission had been instructed to determine the boundary on the criteria of communal composition and other factors. Although unstated, these were acknowledged to the economic

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56 Ibid., p. 209.
considerations, particularly the effect of demarcation on the canal irrigation systems and the rail and the road communications. In this instance, Radcliffe adjudged these “other factors” compelling and awarded Gurdaspur to the East Punjab. According to Justice Din Mohammad, who was a member of the Punjab Boundary Commission, the main reason for awarding Batala and Gurdaspur Tehsils to India was that their award to Pakistan would have isolated the important Amritsar district from the surrounding Indian soil. This seemed another factor, which could easily override percentage of population.

The case of Gurdaspur District was so clear that even two Muslim members of the Punjab Boundary Commission were convinced that Gurdaspur would go to India. Justice Mohammad Munir, a member of the Punjab Boundary Commission, who subsequently became the Chief Justice of the Pakistan High Court, said in his farewell address in Lahore in April, 1960, “Today I have no hesitation in disclosing...... it was clear to both Mr. Din Mohammad and myself from the very beginning of the discussions with Mr. Radcliffe that Gurdaspur was going to India and our apprehensions were communicated at a very early stage to those who had been deputed by the Muslim League to help us. At least it accepted the inevitability of the case of Amritsar going to India.

The Tehsils of Ferozpur and Zira were awarded to India. Sir Cyril Radcliffe gave the following reasons in his award for this transfer, “I have hesitated for long to cover those not inconsiderable areas east of the Sutlej River and in the angle of the Beas and Sutlej River in which Muslim Majorities are found. But on the whole, I have come to the conclusion that would be in the true interests of neither state to extend the West Punjab to a strip on the far side of Sutlej and there are factors such as the disruption of railway communication

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61 Ibid., p. 339.
63 The Tribune, Ambala Cantt., April 26, 1960.
and water systems that ought in this instance to displace the primary claim of contiguous minorities.\(^{64}\)

Before the publication of the Award, Sir Evan Jenkins, the Governor of the Punjab, contacted the Viceroy’s Secretary and asked for advance information about the Punjab Boundary Award.

The Viceroy’s Secretary, whom Sir Evan Jenkins contacted on telephone, was Sir George Abell, one of the senior most members of the British I.C.S. in India. As secretary to the viceroy, he corresponded with the Governors. In the Viceroy’s staff, he had succeeded Sir Evan Jenkins with whom he had friendly relations. Sir George, therefore, contacted the secretariat of the Boundary Commission. According to Brecher, “Abell got in touch with the secretary of the Radcliffe Commission and on the basis of the telephonic conversation drew a sketch map which was sent to Jenkins.\(^{65}\) This telephonic conversation might refer to the description of the boundary which was produced before the security Council. About the sketch map, it appears certain that it was not prepared at Lahore or at Simla, it was sent from Delhi. Sir Francis Mudie the Governor of West Punjab denied the knowledge of the forwarding letter or the description of the boundary line indicated in the sketch map. He only saw the map which was left by Jenkins. The forwarding letter and the description might have been detached by Jenkins or his secretary before the map was placed in the confidential box of the Governor. The map was subsequently shown to Mr. Jinnah, Governor General and Mr. Liaqat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan.\(^{66}\)

The map would have gone unnoticed, had there been no difference between what it depicted and the subsequent award. In this map, the tehsils of Ferozepur and Zira were shown in Pakistan, whereas the Award put the tehsils in India. Sir Francis Mudie was the first to note this change and has asserted

\(^{64}\) Para 10, Radcliffe Award.
that Sir Cyril Radcliffe had changed his original award. Pakistan leaders hold that the award had been tampered with in order to make it favourable to India. The Pakistan leaders accused Lord Mountbatten, using his personal influence to alter the Punjab Boundary Award. Commenting on this episode, Lord Mountbatten declared that he considered it beneath his dignity to issue a formal denial of such a charge.

There is no evidence of the Viceroy’s interference in the working of the Boundary Commission. On the contrary, Alan Campbell Johnson writes, “Mountbatten from the outset had given his staff the most explicit directions that they were to have no contact whatsoever with Radcliffe while was engaged in his difficult and delicate arbitral task and has himself kept clear of him after the first welcome.”67 Similarly, Brecher writes, “The author has been told by various persons that there was no communication between Mountbatten and Radcliffe throughout the labour of the commission.”68 A close scrutiny of the partition proceedings would convince any impartial observer that the Punjab Boundary Award was in accordance with the decision of the Partition was discussed there frequently. Thus, it appears wrong to infer that Lord Mountbatten intervened or Sir Cyril Radcliffe made eleventh hour changes under some political pressure.

The Punjab Boundary Award was released to the leaders of India and Pakistan on 16 August in the afternoon and announced on the 17th morning. The awards of Bengal and Assam were announced on 14 August. The demarcation of the boundary line in the Punjab was more contested than that in Bengal and when the award came, it was more precise in its description of the boundary than the Bengal Award. Alan Campbell Johnson notes the reaction to the release of the Punjab Boundary Award in the meeting of representatives of India and Pakistan on the afternoon of 16 August. “But the rejoicings of the

66 Ibid., p. 361.
morning were too soon tampered by the depression of the leaders this afternoon. When Mountbatten handed over to them the Radcliffe Award…… Liaquat was there…… I was present at this sober and sullen gathering where the only unanimity was in denunciation of this or that communal ‘injustice’. The field was then left clear for Mountbatten to point with well-timed emphasis the moral that in so far as it was impossible for all parties to be equally satisfied with Radcliffe’s verdict, the best evidence of its fairness to rest in the undoubted equality of their displeasure."69

Sir Cyril Radcliffe himself had rightly assessed the Punjab Boundary Award when he wrote "... The Award cannot go far towards satisfying sentiments and aspirations deeply held on either side but directly in conflict as to their bearing on the placing of the boundary,"70 "Whatever had been the Award, it would not have satisfied both parties as the claims of the respective parties ranged over a wide field of territory."71

The Punjab Boundary Award was bitterly resented in both the East Punjab and the West Punjab. The West Punjab resented the Award for the loss of Gurdaspur District and the Ferozepur Canal head works and the East Punjab resented it for the loss of Lahore and the canal colonies of Sheikhupura (including Nankana Sahib), Lyallpur and Montgomery Districts. The Radcliffe Award made only minor changes in the notional division provided in the 3 June Plan and was, subsequently, included in the Indian Independence Act. The Award allocated to the East Punjab thirteen districts comprising the whole of Jullundur and Ambala Divisions. In addition, the East Punjab had the whole of Amritsar district, three tehsils of Gurdaspur District and a portion of Lahore District from Lahore Division. The award granted to the West Punjab sixteen districts comprising the whole of the Multan and Rawalpindi Divisions and the

70 Para 12, Radcliffe Award.
71 Para 9, Ibid.
major portion of the Lahore division, viz. the districts of Sheikhupura, Gujranwala, Sialkot and Lahore. In addition, the West Punjab had the Shakargarh Tehsil of the Gurdaspur District. On the whole, the West Punjab received about 62 percent and the East Punjab about 38 percent of the area of the erstwhile United Punjab.72

The Award split the canal irrigation system, which was so vital to agriculture in the Punjab. Perhaps, it was not possible to preserve the integrity of this system. Sir Cyril Radcliffe himself admitted this fact when he stated, "I have not found it possible to preserve undivided the irrigation system of the upper Bari Doab which extends from Madhopur (in Gurdaspur District) to the Western borders of the district of Lahore although I have made small adjustments of Lahore - Amritsar district boundary to mitigate some of the consequences." Similarly the head of the Depalpur Canal which irrigated the West Punjab, was left in the East Punjab. Sir Cyril wrote, "I must call attention to the fact that the Depapur Canal which serves areas in the West Punjab takes off from the Ferozepur headworks and I find it difficult to envisage a satisfactory demarcation at this point."74

The Award could not keep intact the Mandi Hydro-Electric Scheme either. It supplied electric powers to the districts of Kangra, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Lahore, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Sheikhupura and Lyallpur. In anticipation of the dislocation and disruption of the system, the Governor of the Punjab, under the special powers granted to him by section 9 of the Indian Independence Act 1947, issued "The Punjab Partition (Mandi Hydro Electric System Operation) order 1947", by which this system was to continue to serve all the districts in the East Punjab and the West Punjab till 15 November, 1947 without any financial obligation on the part of either Government.75

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73 Para 11, Radcliffe Award.
74 Para 10, Ibid.
The districts or tehsil boundaries, which had been demarcated by the settlement officers, were made the international boundaries between India and Pakistan. Regarding the boundary line in the Gurdaspur district, it was stated, "The boundary shall follow the line of that river down the western boundary of the Pathankot, Shakargarh and Gurdaspur tehsils. The tehsil boundary and not the actual course of the Ujh river shall constitute the boundary between the East and West Punjab." At another place, it was mentioned, "the boundary continues along the boundary between the districts of Ferozepur and Montgomery to the point where the boundary meets the Bhawalpur State. The district boundaries and not the actual course of the Sutlej river shall in each case constitute the boundary between the East and the West Punjab." Making the district boundary lines the international boundary was perhaps the only solution as the rivers of the Punjab were not suitable to form the international boundaries.

The Punjab Boundary Award was resented by the people of both East Punjab and West Punjab. As the Independence Day on 15 August came closer, it became apparent that partition 'undoubtedly' would be followed by disorder. To avoid British responsibility in the expected mass violence the Viceroy decided to postpone the announcement of the Boundary Commission Award until the transfer of power. The irony was that while Pakistanis and Indians on 15 August awoke to freedom, those living in the disputed areas of Central Punjab, in their first moments of freedom, did not know whether they belonged to India or Pakistan.  

The dye had been cast – people had realised the final reality and this resulted in killing, loot, rape, abduction, burning and forcible occupation of property. A large exodus to and fro started as people, in panic, looked for safe havens. O.H.K. Spate writes about partition as "enforced movements of people

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76 Para 1, Annexure A of schedule attached with the Radcliffe Award.
77 Para 4, Ibid.
on a scale absolutely unparalleled in the history of the world." A stage had been reached where people just wanted to ensure their survival and the protection of their womenfolk. No price was deemed to be heavier in saving one's physical self.

A mass migration of people hitherto unforeseen took place. The government of newly Independent India, with depleted resources, made a Herculean effort to arrange for the re-settlement of these uprooted people. There was a crying need for food, clothing and shelter. Jobs and employment opportunities needed to be created. Initially, refugee camps were the first priority. The government machinery and the local population strove endlessly to bring physical, financial and mental succour to the migrants who were in a new environment. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his speech on August 19, 1947 stated, "The Punjab problem is one of the first priority with us.... Many have lost their lives, many other have lost everything that they possessed. We cannot restore the dead, but those who are alive must certainly receive aid from the state now, which should later rehabilitate them."

The country stood divided. India saw the dawn of freedom at the stroke of midnight on 15 August, 1947 after prolonged enslavement of 200 years under the British yoke. India had to pay a heavy price for its freedom - a large chunk of its land was partitioned, giving way to the formation of a new state – 'Pakistan'. What was achieved after centuries of struggle and sacrifice was a 'Divided India'. Millions had lost their home and hearth. An unprecedented exodus of people had been caused. Millions had traversed the lengths of hundreds of miles on foot, bullock carts, buses and trains.

The partition, brought in its wake, social, economic, cultural, psychological and political upheavals. The unpreparedness of the people and the government for such an unprecedented eventuality was evident in the

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process of migration, evacuation and resettlement. The sudden division of an administrative, economic and cultural unit had a deep impact on the migrants as well as the local population. The major task of rehabilitation of these helpless displaced persons now fell upon the government of Independent India.