The rise of Muslim separatism during Indian struggle for freedom frustrated all attempts of Indian nationalists to find a solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem in conformity with their view of nationalism. What were the factors or forces that raised this phenomenon? The general tendency of several Indian leaders and historians as well as of British administrators, statesmen or historians was to assign a single cause to its rise. The Indian nationalists were inclined to blame the British rulers for deliberately creating divisions among Indians to perpetuate their hold over their Indian Empire.¹

¹ A.Patwardhan and Asoka Mehta, The Communal Triangle in India (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1942); Rajendra Prasad, India Divided (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1946); Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1959); B.M. Chaudhri, Muslim Politics in India (Calcutta: Orient Book Company, 1946); G.N. Singh, Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development (Delhi; Atma Ram and Sons, 1963); Atulananda Chakrabarti, Call It Politics (Calcutta: Thacker Spink and Co Ltd., 1941).
Some British scholars attributed it to Muslim backwardness following from their slow response to the western education as a result of which they were left behind the Hindus in the competition for jobs and economic advancement. The Muslim communal leaders put the blame on Hindu nationalists for giving such colours and designs to their nationalism as could largely appeal only to Hindu sentiments. The communists and socialists explained it in terms of economic disparity existing in Indian society and what appeared as a communal tension, they argued, was in fact economic tension resulting from economically backward sections who were incidentally Mohammedans against the urban bourgeois who were mostly Hindus.


4. "Behind the communal antagonism, which have been promoted to protect the system of exploitation and imperialist rule, lie social and economic questions. This is obvious in the case of the middle-class communalist competing for positions and jobs. It is no less true where communal difficulties reach the masses. In Bengal and the Punjab the Hindus include the richer landlord, trading and money-lending interests, the Moslems are more often the poorer peasants and debtors. In other cases big Moslem landlords will be found among Hindu peasants. Again and again what is reported as a "communal" struggle or rising conceals a struggle of Moslem peasants against Hindu landlords, Moslem debtors against Hindu moneylenders, or Hindu workers against imported Pathan strike-breakers." R. Palme Dutt, *India Today* (Bombay: People's Publishing House, 1947), p. 376.
However, this kind of monistic approach cannot explain the origin and growth of Hindu-Muslim problem, for there were numerous forces and factors underlying this problem and the impact of each factor varied from time to time and province to province. So it is not correct to generalise the conclusions drawn on the basis of the study of the conditions prevailing in one part of India. In fact, it is the multiplicity of causes that added complexity to the communal problem as a result of which its solution eluded the efforts, ingenuity and resourcefulness of Indian leadership.

Further, it is equally wrong to believe that the tension between the two communities had been more or less uniform during all the centuries since their confrontation with each other or its impact had been the same in all parts of India during the British rule. For instance, communal conflict acquired greater complexity in the Punjab as a result of the aspirations and fears of the Sikhs.

Similarly, the tension between the two communities deepened when the hostility between them served the imperial interests of the British. The relations between Hindus and Muslims, observes W.C. Smith, is not a "...set problem with an intrinsic solution rather it is a process, with a very long history. It is a developing process, which at various stages has raised the severe problems,
desperately demanding solutions (and often not getting them). At other stages it has raised no great problem at all. In other words, it has differed from century to century, from province to province, from town to town, from city to village. Also, it has differed from class to class and from one politico, economic setting to another. 5

Historically the tension between the two communities was partly the spillover of the relations between them during the Muslim rule over India. Unfortunately Islam came to this country in the wake of invasions, though there had been peaceful relations between the Muslim merchants and the Hindus of the Malabar Coast of India for centuries before the establishment and consolidation of Muslim rule over north India. 6 Consequently, the spread of Islam got mixed up with politics and the hardships that Hindus suffered at the hands of the new rulers as a result

5. W.C. Smith, op.cit., p.160. For instance the theory of Muslim backwardness had its origin in W.W. Hunter's The Indian Mussalmans, which was based on his analysis of the conditions of the Bengal Muslims. The conditions in other provinces especially in U.P. did not warrant this kind of condition. Paul R. Brass, Language Religion and Politics in North India (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1975), p.121.

6. The Congress Enquiry Committee Report on Kanpur Riots of 1931 highlighted this aspect in order to show that Islam was not essentially a religion of the sword and that the Hindus and the Muslims were not always at war with each other. N.G. Barrier (ed.), Roots of Communal Politics (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1976), pp.52-4.
of political or religious compulsions left a load of prejudices on the Hindu mind against the Muslims. Its effect was heightened by the exaggerated accounts of religious bigotry of Muslim rulers given by historians and chroniclers.

On the other hand, the descendants of Muslim aristocracy entertained a sense of superiority on the ground that their ancestors had ruled over India before the advent of the British. But it was rudely shaken when the Hindus had acquired an edge over them, after the establishment of British rule, in the race for government jobs by taking advantage of the English education, which the Muslim elite avoided for some time on account of their hostility towards the British.

Moreover, Hindu social taboos and customs that prevented free intercourse with non-Hindus restricted the channels of communication between the two communities. It is true that such irrational customs and superstitions started losing ground before the rising tide of reform movements during the 19th and 20th centuries among the Hindus. But, unfortunately, some of these movements developed such tendencies as were not conducive to inter-communal harmony. The same applies to the reform movements among Mohammedans. These carried them away from other communities in India, especially from the Hindus, by
laying emphasis on the unique features of Islam and its concomitant social system which was given as different from that of the Hindus. Such feelings were first nursed by the Wahabi movement. It was introduced in India by Sayyid Ahmed of Rai Bareli in the early nineteenth century. The Wahabis came in conflict with the Sikh rulers of the Punjab in their drive against the infidels. Their main aim was to take Islam to its pristine purity and to rid it of all later accretions and superstitions that had sapped its vitality. However, in their efforts to reform Islam, the followers of Ahmed set themselves to removing from their religion all those customs and observations that it had acquired as a result of its contact with the Hindus. They "... exhorted the Muslims not to participate in Hindu festivals, not to adopt Hindu customs in marriage ceremonies and not to dress like Hindus." Consequently, the Wahabi movement acquired anti-Hindu slant which led W.W.Hunter to believe that the Wahabis were anti-Hindus. This view, however, was challenged by Indian writers who argued that the Wahabis mainly aimed at the overthrow of the British rule over India in collaboration with other communities and their anti-Sikh campaigns only represented their deep-rooted protest against the existing alleged

maladministration under the Sikh rule and did not spring from any religious bias. Whatever may be the motive, it is an undenying fact that their propaganda and activities gave separatist orientations to the Muslim aspirations and raised the importance of Ulemas, an orthodox section of trained Muslim theologians, who laid emphasis on strict adherence to the teachings of the Koran. The Wahabi movement in fact was revivalist and anti-British in character.

Sir Syed Ahmed attempted to reverse such tendencies. He was against the leadership of the Ulemas who were opposed to the British rule. Born in a noble family of Delhi, Sir Syed (1817-1898) joined East India Company in 1839. Distressed at the deplorable condition of his community, which was partly the result of British repression of Muslims following the disturbances of 1857, he decided to raise the lot of his co-religionists by weaning them away from the policy of opposition to the British Government through his tracts of Ashab-i-baghawat-i-Hind (causes of Indian Mutiny) written in 1858 and Loyal Muhammadans of India written in 1860. On the one hand, he tried to dispel the impression from

British mind that Mohammedans were fundamentally opposed to the British rule. On the other hand, he attempted to convince his co-religionists that their religion did not prevent them from co-operating with the Christian power ruling over them. In this way he made efforts to reconcile the interests of the rulers and the ruled. Further, he re-interpreted the Koran in order to broaden the outlook of his community as well as to bring it closer to Christianity. With this end in view he also wrote commentaries on Old and New Testament that laid stress on the 'Fundamental Unity' between Islam and Christianity. Through his doctrine that laws of Islam were identical with those of Nature which were applicable to all, he threw the hint that the differences of Islam with other religions were only superficial and not real. Apparently, this outlook was conducive to the growth of Indian nationalism on the basis of a composite culture and love for motherland. Accordingly, he championed the cause of Indian unity for some time. In 1883 in a long speech at Patna, he emphasised that India was the motherland of both the Hindus and the Muslims and after having lived for centuries in this land both the communities had exchanged

many of their social customs. Similarly, in 1884, in a speech at Lahore he said, "In the word 'nation' I include both Hindus and Mohammedans, because it is the only meaning which I can attach to it." He equated the two communities with the two eyes of a beautiful bride whose face would be disfigured if either one or the other was injured.

However, Syed's complete identification with the interests of his own community nursed the plant of Muslim separatism by bringing him in conflict with the forces that stood for a composite Indian nationalism. Under the impression that the economic ruin and backwardness of the Muslims had been the result of anti-Muslim policy of the British following the failure of the rebellion of 1857, he arrived at the conclusion that his co-religionists could obtain their proper share in the political and economic advancement of the country only if they received the support of the British power in India. Putting metaphorically, his community, in his opinion, "had become a widow and accepted willingly the British nation as her husband." So he impressed

14. As R.C. Majumdar says, "He (Sir Syed) was not so much anti-Hindu as Pro-Muslim.... It was not that he loved the Hindus less but that he loved the Muslims more." R.C. Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1971) vol.1, p.436. Similarly J.L. Nehru says that Sir Syed was in no way anti-Hindu or communal separatist. J.L. Nehru, Discovery of India (Calcutta: Signet Press, 1946), p.298.
upon the Muslims to extend unstinted loyalty to the British Government and shun all such political activities as would bring them in conflict with it.

As a result, he launched a vigorous campaign against the Indian National Congress founded in 1885. The Hindi-Urdu controversy that started in 1867 and the influence of Mr. Beck, Principal, Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College, who was engaged in 'Empire building activities' in India, carried him further away from the concept of nationalism upheld by the Congress. If he assumed that the Hindus were not self-sacrificing, he himself did not show enough of this spirit by sacrificing the interests of a small section of the community for the larger interests of his country. He was afraid that the acceptance of the demands of the Congress by the Government would result in the dominance of the Hindu majority over the Muslim minority. He, therefore, sought British protection for his community to neutralise the numerical superiority of the Hindus. It may be true that Sir Syed Ahmed was not anti-Hindu, but his intense involvement in the promotion of the interests of his own community brought him into clash with those who pinned their hope of the progress of the country in the fusion of the interests of the two communities. "This had the inevitable result of diverting all the energies of the Muslim community into communal channels. It
deadened their Nationalistic tendencies and made them prone and amenable to Pan-Islamic influence. He was carried by the logic of his own fears and assumptions to the path that led to separation. "The goals he set before the community," according to Tara Chand, "were narrow and short-sighted, which made the accomplishment of the necessary task of communal conciliation and harmony more difficult." 16

The efforts of Justice Ameer Ali intensified this outlook. Though, like Sir Syed, he reformulated Islamic doctrine in terms of western ideas, his writings and efforts were diverted to creating that kind of political consciousness among Mohammedans which could not be easily reconciled to the political aspirations of the Hindus. His book 'The Spirit of Islam' was very well received by the English knowing Muslim intelligentia. Even Gandhi was very much impressed by his new interpretation of Islam. 17

According to Ameer Ali, Islam is liberal and democratic. The social order devised by it is all embracing. For him, Islam is a perfect religion.

15. N.G. Barrier, op. cit., p. 191.
Not only did he try to raise the image of Islam in the eyes of the world, he even did not hesitate to highlight the difference between the followers of Islam and those of other faiths. "The Hindus and Muslims," he observed in 1910, "are not the followers of two sects or communities, but of two wholly different systems." He was, therefore, opposed to the conception of nationalism held by the Congress. He wanted the Muslims to organise themselves. He stood for the demand for separate electorates and prepared Muslims for separatist policies. Thus the reform movements among the Mohammedans took a turn that led them towards isolationism and exclusiveness.

The same may be true of some reform movements among the Hindus. No doubt, these movements served the cause of nationalism by generating a sense of pride in their cultural heritage among the Hindus but this also gave rise to revivalistic tendencies among them. According to Tara Chand, "One of the effects of these movements of revivalism in Bengal and other parts of India, however, was to draw the exclusiveness of the Hindu community further inwards and to make it so subjective as to become almost oblivious of the existence of non-Hindus." This

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tendency was detrimental to the development of a broad national outlook in which all sectional and communal interests were merged.

This tendency found greater articulation in the propaganda and programmes of the Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayananda in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The whole life of the Swami represents an incessant struggle to rid his community of all the obsolete beliefs and customs. Even as a child he opposed his father for idol worship. He left his home at the age of fifteen in search of knowledge. In 1863 he began his apostolic career, toured India, delivered lectures, wrote books and organised Arya Samaj. Dayananda wanted Hindus to return to the pristine purity of Vedic religion which he considered as eternal, unalterable, infallible and divine. He repudiated polytheism, idolatory, Brahminical ascendency and hereditary caste system since all these, according to him, could not be traced to the Vedas. His mission was to invigorate Hinduism by liberating it from the hold of age old superstitions and obsolete institutions. His main planks were logic and Shast- 

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Christian missionaries and Muslim theologians. He formed cow-protection associations which resulted in rousing anti-Mohammedan feelings among the Hindus. Moreover, Dayananda started the Shudhi movement that aimed at reclamation and conversion, i.e. bringing back into the fold of Hinduism all those who had become converts to other religions or admitting to the Hindu-social system all those classes who were treated as untouchables by the Hindus. The propagandist and activities of the Samaj brought it in conflict with other religious communities especially the Muslims. In his missionary zeal Dayananda made scathing attacks on the doctrines of his opponents. His main work Satyarth Prakash contained chapters that cast adverse reflections on Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Vaishnavism. The object of his lectures, discourses and writings was not only to unfold his own view of religion but also to bring out the weaknesses in the religious beliefs of his opponents in order to show the soundness of his own religion. This raised fierce religious controversies especially in the United Provinces and the Punjab. It is true that Dayananda or his followers alone cannot be blamed for starting religious polemics. Christian Missionaries and Muslim theologians were equally responsible for mudslinging against other religions. However, it cannot be denied that this method of propagating one's religion strained the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims.
Political or economic disequilibrium between the two communities is believed, in some quarters, to be the main cause of the estrangement between the two communities under the British. It is stated that politically the Hindus became more advanced than the Muslims since they were the first to experience renaissance. Their new role in political life can be traced to the activities and ideals of Raja Rammohan Roy who was in fact the first apostle of a political creed based upon constitutional agitation in this country. He provided guidelines to the moderates in the Congress. He fought for the freedom of the Press and edited a Bengali journal 'The Samvada Kaumudi', which was among the earliest edited newspapers. He promoted western education and helped in the foundation of the Hindu College which was the best modern institution of its type in those days.

Similarly, the literary works of Bengali writers like Hem Chander Bandyopadhyaya, Nabin Chander Sen and Bankim Chatterji contributed a great deal to the regeneration of the Hindu society.

The Press played an equally important role in generating political awakening among the Hindus. They

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had a number of leading papers between 1835 and 1876. The 'Probhakar' of Ishwara Chandera Gupta was probably the earliest vernacular paper in the country which "ventured to tread on political grounds". Other prominent papers such as 'The Hindu Patriot', 'The Amrit Bazar Patrika', 'Kesari', Bombay; 'The Standard', Madras; and 'The Tribune', Lahore, cast themselves in the same mould.

The awakening resulting from these factors led to the emergence of several political groups in the country. The British Indian Association in Bengal (1876), The Bombay Association in the western Presidency, The Native Association in Madras and The Deccan Sarvajanik Sabha in Poona came into existence enhancing thereby political consciousness among the English-knowing intelligentsia in the country.

But political consciousness among the Muslims came very late partly because of their political condition i.e. the degeneration of their aristocracy and repressive policy of the British Government and partly because of the absence of able leaders and writers among them. Only a few societies Anjuman-i-Himayet-i-Islam, Lahore (1885), Nadwat-ul-Ulama, Lucknow (1894), Madras-i-Illahiyat, Caunpore, were established with the object of spreading and defending Islam from the attacks of its enemies. According to Farquhar, the

22. Ibid.  
Anjuman-i-Himayet-i-Islam of Lahore was a Muslim organisation parallel to a Hindu organisation Bharata Dharma Mahamandla. Each of them defended its religion on sectarian lines which added to the estrangement between the two communities.

Further, economic disparities between the two communities under the British rule were believed to be another important factor that prevented the two communities from developing a concept of nationalism that met the political aspirations of each community. It is stated that after the rebellion of 1857, the Britishers attacked the economic superiority of Muslim aristocracy and consequently within fourteen years i.e. by 1871, as argued by Hunter, it was impossible for a Mussalman in lower Bengal to continue to be rich. Their number in the Government service was far less than that of the Hindus. For instance, there were 43 Hindu Income-tax Assessors in Bengal as against six Muslims. To add fuel to the fire, sometimes vacancies were kept reserved for the Hindus. The Calcutta Persian paper 'Durbin' wrote on 14 July 1869 that "... when several vacancies occurred in the office of Sunderbans Commissioner, that official, in advertising them in the Government Gazette, stated that the appointments would be given to none but the Hindus."  

27. Quoted in Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, op. cit., p.27.
This policy was justified on the ground that the Muslims did not make sufficient efforts to equip themselves for these jobs. In reply to a Muslim deputation which demanded special favours for its community in jobs etc., the Government of India issued a comprehensive resolution on 5 July 1885 on this subject stating that "the chief drawback in the way of the advancement of Mohammedan community in times past has been their inability or unwillingness to take full advantage of the State System of education." 28

Similarly, Sir Arthur Lawley, Governor of Madras, as late as in 1906 stated that the Muslims"... must bring them passports of efficiency and educational capacity and must carry out the duties of any office in which they might be called upon to serve." 29

This situation placed the Muslims in a disadvantaged position in their competition for jobs and economic advancement with the Hindus.

Besides the economic changes following in the wake of British rule and its concomitant British capitalism led to vast developments in the means of transport and communication and replacement of small cottage industries by heavy industries. These affected the Mohammedans more

29. Ibid., p.277.
adversely as a large number among them had been earning their livelihood from the small handicrafts. In the absence of mutual understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims the latter held the former responsible for their economic backwardness since some of the Hindus had shared the gains resulting from the industrialisation of the country.  

Similarly in Bengal and the Punjab the struggle between the rich and the poor acquired communal tones because of the different economic position of the members of the two communities.

Another reason for the economic backwardness of Muslims during this period was noticed by Buchanan. Analysing its causes he wrote, "Much seems attributable to their lack of business experience during the centuries of Mohammedans rule. The respectable families generally had government connections while business was in the hands of the Hindu castemen often of large fortune and great shrewdness. When the British took over administration, the Mohammedans were thrown out of employment and were unable to make headway in other lines. Though they had received large official incomes, they had spent extravagantly and, consequently, had little capital to invest. They inherited the early Christian attitude towards

the taking of interest .... Also the strong family feeling, the emphasis on brotherhood within the fold and the cavalier attitude towards material wealth...." made them backward. Possibly the poverty of Muslim masses was partly due to the fact that in India Islam made greater thrust into the lower classes of Hindu community who were economically backward. Their conversion to Islam raised their cultural level without improving their economic condition. This made them more conscious of their economic disability which they attributed to their exploitation at the hands of the Hindus.

The cumulative effect of all these factors was that the rising Muslim intelligentsia became more concerned about the deplorable condition of their community and they sought the protection of the British to improve their economic and political conditions. Luckily for them, the alien Government was also in search of an ally in India that could act as a counterpoise to the rising wave of Indian nationalism which threatened the foundations of the British Empire. Since the Hindus were more under its impact the Government turned towards the Mohammedans. Consequently, there was a change in the policy of the alien bureaucracy towards

them which was evident from the reports of the British administrators and scholars investigating into the causes of the economic plight of Muslims in India. The first in the series was W.W. Hunter's, 'The Indian Mussalmans (1871)', followed by Lord Hobert's 'Education and Employment of Mohammedans in the Public Services (1872)'. A famous minute on Mohammedans in public service. Thorburn's Mussalmans and Money-lenders in the Punjab' belonged to the same category. The first portrayed the difficulties faced by Muslims in Bengal, while the second dwelt upon causes leading to the disappearance of Mohammedans from the Public Service in Madras. The ostensible purpose of Thorburn was to bring to light the exploitation of the Mohammedan peasants constituting 90% of the population in western Punjab by a small minority of Hindu money-lenders who, by taking advantage of the British legal and revenue systems, were expropriating the land of Muslim agriculturists by advancing money to them.

As already observed, no single cause can supply an adequate explanation of the emergence of Hindu-Muslim problem defying all solutions. For instance, economic

backwardness cannot explain though this has been upheld by such celebrated writers as W.W. Hunter in 'The Indian Mussalman' and W.C. Smith in 'The Modern Islam in India'. As already noted, the concluding argument of the former was based on the analysis of the situation of the Muslims in Bengal in the beginning of the last quarter of the previous century. His argument was applicable to some extent, to conditions in the Punjab, too. But it was not completely true for the whole of India. For, it was not applicable to the conditions of the Muslims in the United Provinces, whose political fears and aspirations were mainly responsible for the rise and growth of Muslim separatism. According to a recent study, "The Aligarh Movement, the ideology of Muslim separatism, and the political organisation of the Muslim community began, not in the backward areas of Muslim Bengal, but in north India and particularly in the United Provinces, where, far from being a backward people, the Muslim elite constituted a dominant elite bent upon preserving its dominance and preventing the rise to self-assertion of the backward Hindus and the achievement by the Hindus of a share proportionate to their numbers in education and government employment. It was the ideology of this dominant Muslim upper-class elite which ultimately spread throughout eastern and western India from its base in the United Provinces and
which led to the formulation of a set of political demands by Muslim political leaders for political concessions warranted not by their numbers, but by their desire to retain, if not dominance, at least equality with the much larger Hindu population of the country.  

In fact the argument of Hunter was fully exploited by Muslim leaders seeking greater share in the government jobs without examining the validity of their claim at all-India level. "The comments of the government of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh on the position of Muslims in government employment in the provinces at the time revealed that, in fact, not only were Muslims not under-represented in government offices, but they held positions, in the words of officiating secretary to the government, 'out of all proportion to the population figures'.

It is because of this situation that the Muslim leaders who met at Lucknow to crystalize their demands before waiting upon the viceroy were well advised by an important British officer to refrain from insisting on government jobs in proportion to their population as they were already getting more in the United Provinces.

34. Paul R. Brass, op. cit., p. 121.
35. Ibid., p. 150.
36. Letter of Harcourt Bulter to Mr. Harry dated 16 September 1906, From a microfilm, Harcourt Butler Papers, N.M.M.L.
Similarly, the historical experiences of the two communities cannot be treated as an absolute factor giving rise to Hindu-Muslim conflict during the British rule, for the history of the same period does not only reveal the struggle between the Hindus and the Muslims and the persecution of Hindu subjects by Muslim rulers but also supply ample records of the co-operation between the elite of the two communities under the Muslim rule. Besides, the process of cultural integration was noticeable during the long period of Muslim rule. So it was not history that solely determined the attitude of each community and put a seal to their mutual relations for ever. It was, rather, the way the historical experiences were received and interpreted by the leaders of both the communities during British rule which shaped the attitude of the two communities towards each other.

Likewise, it was not revivalism in both communities that created the problem. It simply added fuel to the fire once the choice was made by the elite regarding their political objectives.

However, the complexity of the problem following from the multiplicity of causes strained the nerves and wits of Indian leadership that looked upon the unity between the two communities as an important step towards
the political advancement of the country. The founders of the Indian National Congress set before themselves the task of uniting the different communities and provinces into one nation. Though conscious of the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims over social, moral and educational questions, they had full faith that "so far as general political questions affecting the whole of India... are concerned, Muslims could be brought home to work shoulder to shoulder with their fellow- countrymen, of other races and creeds for the common benefit of all." So Muslims were encouraged to attend the sessions of the Congress through special facilities so as to secure their full co-operation for attaining common political ends for the country. They rather strained their every nerve to secure the co-operation of the Mohammedans and sometimes managed their presence in the session by offering them special facilities. But the opposition of Syed Ahmed Khan and his lieutenants to the Congress deprived it of a substantial Muslim support. In spite of the assurances given by a Muslim President of the Congress, Buddruddin Tyabji and several

other Congress leaders to the effect that Congress would never discuss any matter which was detrimental to Muslim interests, they did not relent their hostile propaganda against it.  

Nevertheless, the Congress leaders were quite hopeful of surmounting this opposition through a widespread system of education which, according to them, would quicken the spirit of national awakening and self-respect, and efficient programme of civil duties for bringing the two communities on a common political platform. Besides, they tried to refrain from taking up issues that were likely to raise communal controversies. This approach was in accord with their endeavour to seek the solution of social and political problems without any religious bias. Thus S.N.Banerjea and G.K.Gokhale, the two stalwarts of the Congress during its early phase, tried to remove Muslim distrust of the Hindus through propaganda and education. The former appealed to both the communities to work for the attainment of their common ends just as their forefathers had done centuries before during the Muslim

rule over India. He told the Muslims that they could derive far greater advantage out of the Congress by joining it instead of criticising it from outside.\(^{40}\)

But Gokhale made more positive move. He appealed to the Hindu intelligentsia to do special work among Mohammedans with a view to removing their distrust of the Hindus. Such steps, he hoped, would result in gradually substituting confidence and good will and co-operation in place of the present distrust and suspicion and aloofness.\(^{41}\) He was not content with this programme alone. He also suggested workable proposals to remove the barriers between the two communities. Thus, on hearing the Muslim demand for separate electorates, he suggested a formula for the removal of the deficiencies and inequalities of general elections.\(^{42}\) He wanted the Government to "throw open a substantial minimum of seats to election on a territorial basis, in which all qualified to vote should take part without distinction of race and creed. And then supplementary elections should be held for minorities which numerically or otherwise are important enough to need special representation, and these should be confined to members of the minorities only."\(^{43}\) Later on he recommended a


\(^{42}\) Ibid.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
more complex scheme with the same end in view. It was based on multi-member constituencies, joint electorates and plurality of votes. According to this scheme, "There should be large constituencies each returning several members, of whom one or more (according to the numerical proportions of the two communities in area in question) must be Mussalmans. But the electorates must not be divided. The Hindus should vote for the Mussalman representative or representatives, and the Mussalmans for the Hindus. In the case, for instance, of a constituency returning three members, of whom one was to be a Mussalman, each Hindu would have three votes, one of which must be given to a Mussalman candidate and so also with the Mussalman voters."  

This scheme, in fact, involved reservation of seats for Muslims. Under this, a Mohammedan leader who pursued the interests of his own community without ignoring the interests of other communities alone could be elected. It could meet the Muslim demand without impairing national unity. Thus pointing out the merits of his scheme as against separate electorates, Gokhale said, "A system of communal representation secures, in practice, that the

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most anti-Hindu Mussalmans and the most anti-Mussalman Hindus will be elected; but under the system just outlined above the most pro-Hindu Mussalmans and the most pro-Mussalman Hindus would be chosen. Thus the communal animosity, which has become so markedly embittered in recent years, would be decreased, instead of strengthened by the introduction of democratic institutions. Thus, it is not correct to say that the system of separate electorates was proposed by Gokhale as Lady Minto would have Gandhi believe. Its seed had been rather sown in 1906 when a deputation of some Muslim leaders met Lord Minto, demanding separate electorates.

It is true that, subsequently, he reconciled himself to this demand in order to avoid necessary tension between the elite of the two communities in the hope that some day the good will generated by this act of Hindu leadership would take the edge off this pernicious system. In V.S. Srinivas Sastri's view, Gokhale took up the following position in this regard. "Undoubtedly, this is a pernicious doctrine, that any community in India should abstract itself from the general nationality and for election purposes consider itself a separate unit. This will impede the growth of a nationalistic sense in the country. Nevertheless, there is that feeling and no

government can afford to ignore it. Therefore, we must compromise with that feeling. We must see that, as we cannot kill it altogether, the best thing is to give it a narrow and restricted scope so that in more auspicious times we might attack it once more, may be, weaken it." According to Sastri it was in the interest of the growth of national spirit that Gokhale considered it "inopportune, inexpedient and injurious" to oppose what Mohammedans had obtained through Morley-Minto Reforms. So he opposed Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya on this issue on the ground that "it was far better to acquiesce in it than to oppose and lose all chances of peaceful working of the constitution upon a higher level than had been known." The extremist leaders such as Tilak, Aurobindo and B.C. Pal also realised the need of co-operation between the Hindus and the Muslims in their fight against the British for the political advancement of the country. Pal relied upon the transformation of attitudes of both the Hindus and the Muslims towards each other's culture for abridging the gulf between them. He reminded the Hindus that they must treat the Muslims as good citizens of India as they treated themselves since the ancestors of both the communities came from outside India and

49. Ibid.
settled down here after conquering the native.\textsuperscript{50}

He, therefore, wanted both of them to have sympathetic understanding of the history and culture of each other. According to him, an attitude of appreciation of the "universal elements of their respective cultures,"\textsuperscript{51} would be quite helpful in promoting understanding between them as it would generate tolerance towards each other's ideals and customs. He was sure that if educated persons in both the communities developed this kind of attitude masses would not lag behind.\textsuperscript{52}

However, the programmes and methods of mass communication of this group were not conducive to the promotion of understanding between the two communities. They failed to develop such ethos as could be acceptable to the Muslims. Their whole-hearted appreciation of the ancient Indian culture and their frequent references to Hindu ideals in their political campaigns discouraged Muslims from joining hands with them. The Ganpati and Shivaji Festivals inaugurated by Tilak to create political awakening in the country could not attract the Muslims since the Ganpati Festival had its association with Hindu religious traditions and Shivaji could hardly become

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 47.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
their hero because of his continuous struggle against the Muslim emperor Aurangzeb. Moreover, Tilak's emphasis on strengthening the Hindus to save them from the attacks of bullies only added to Muslims' suspicions about his motives and induced them to adopt similar methods to strengthen their community. This kind of atmosphere could be easily exploited by the British bureaucracy to keep the Muslims away from the political movement led by Tilak since his growing popularity among the people was becoming an eye-sore to the British rulers. They were, therefore, inclined to highlight the communal complexion of his programmes. For instance, Valentine Chiorl, the correspondent of 'The Times' attributed Hindu-Muslim tension in the 90's of the last century in the Bombay Presidency to the campaigns and propaganda of Tilak. Similarly, the Intelligence reported that Tilak's various programmes and activities were designed to strengthen the Hindus against the Mohammedans. It was reported that he encouraged the Hindus to use force against the Mohammedans and impressed upon the former to acquire familiarity with the use of the weapons. Another report puts the blame on Ganpati celebrations for widening the breach between the two communities. A British official reported that as a result of non-observance of the music rules before the mosque by Tilak and his party a fatal riot occurred on 13 September 1894.

55. Ibid., 205.
No doubt, Tilak's programmes and outlook had greater appeal for the Hindus. But it does not mean that he underrated the importance of communal unity in his fight against British bureaucracy. Had he not been anxious for Hindu-Muslim unity, he would never have allowed the Congress to pass the Lucknow Pact in 1916, for, it was Tilak's towering personality that neutralized its opposition by M.M. Malaviya and Amvika Charan Majumdar. Dr. Ansari, an eye-witness to the whole scene, wrote that Tilak's "liberality and magnanimity towards Muslims" was most notable in the Congress in the presence of Malaviya, Amvika Charan Majumdar, Congress President, S.N. Banerjea, Mrs. Besant and the leaders of the Muslim League, M. Ali Jinnah, president of the League, Mazarul Haq and the Raja of Mahumudabad. "His generous gesture," he adds, "was a great factor in winning over the Mussalmans and in inducing them to accept the proposals of the Lucknow Pact."56

In reply to the criticism that he had yielded too much to Muslims' demands, he argued that it was necessary to enlist their hearty support for "we cannot progress without their help and co-operation." "If there is a tripartite struggle," he added "two parties must join together to eliminate the third."57

56. D.V. Tahmankar, op. cit., p.244.
Nevertheless, in spite of all these earnest efforts of early Congress leaders, most of the Muslim leaders were not ready to give up their demand for separate electorates and weightage on the grounds of the political importance of their community and the services rendered by it to the Empire. It is with these ends in view that a deputation of Muslim leaders presented a memorial to the viceroy Lord Minto on 10 October 1906 and "prayed that the government will be graciously pleased to provide that both as the Gazette and the Subordinate and ministerial services of all Indian provinces a due proportion of Mohammedans, to be locally determined, shall always find place." on the plea that "the political importance of a community to a considerable extent gains, strength or suffers detriment according to the position that the members of that community occupy in the services of the state ... and pointed out that unfortunately the Mohammedans are not being represented adequately."  

In reply, the Viceroy acceding to their major demands, said, "The pith of your address, as I understand it, is a claim that in any system of representation whether it affects a Municipality, a District Board, or

58. The Muslims address to 'His Excellency, the Right Honourable the Earl of Minto, Harcourt Butler Papers (65), p.5, Para 9, N.M.M.L.
59. Ibid., p.4, Para 9.
a Legislative Council in which it is proposed to introduce or increase an electoral organisation the Mohammedan community should be represented as a community, you point out that in a many electoral bodies, as now constituted, cannot be expected to return a Mohammedan candidate, and that if by chance they did so it could only be at the sacrifice of such a candidate's views to those of a majority opposed to his own community whom he would in no way represent; and you justly claim that your position should be estimated not merely on your numerical strength but in respect to the political importance of your community, and the services it had rendered to the Empire, I am entirely in accord with you....

He further assured them that the political rights and interests of their community would be safeguarded in any administrative organisation with which he was concerned.

Encouraged by Viceroy's assurances, these leaders decided to set up an all-India body to pursue the exclusive interests of their community. Consequently, All-India Muslim League came into existence on 30 December 1906. Between 1907 and 1909 Provincial Muslim Leagues were founded in all the major provinces. But much more

61. Ibid.
important than the provincial leagues, in short term, was the establishment of the London branch of All-India Muslim League, the idea of which was mooted towards the end of 1907 by Amear Ali—a former judge of the Calcutta High Court, who had retired to England. The main purpose of this League was to protect the special interests of the Mohammedans.

At each stage of the process of reforms between 1907 and 1909, the All-India Muslim League and its London branch launched vigorous campaigns to ensure for their community a fair proportion of seats in the legislatures through the system of separate electorates and they succeeded to a great extent in their mission as their demand for separate electorates was accepted even against the wishes of Morley, Secretary of State for India, who suggested mixed electoral colleges in which a number of seats would be reserved for Muslims on the

62. According to Moin Shakir, Amear Ali Supported separate electorates and denominational universities. "The Purpose", according to the author, "was to dispel from the minds of Muslims the fear of an identically disastrous treatment which was meted out to the Buddhists by Hindu reaction in medieval India." Moin Shakir, Secularization of Muslim Behaviour, op.cit., p.18; In London Amear Ali led a protest deputation, to White Hall on 27 January 1909, against his scheme of joint electoral colleges. S.A.Wolpert, Morley and India (1906-1910) (California:Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p.193.
basis of their numerical proportion, but both the Hindus and the Muslims would vote in these constituencies.  

Gandhi was engaged in his South African struggle against the Government of South Africa when these developments in Muslim politics occurred in India. He was innocent of Muslim League's demands as he was mostly in prison at the time when Muslim League raised agitation. So in reply to a letter by Habib Motani he showed his inability to express his definite opinion on the demands of Muslim League delegation that waited on Lord Morley in India. However, he made a general remark that it was essential for the Hindus, being in majority, to be generous towards minorities in the interest of unity. To him it was remarkable that a Muslim should be appointed to the Viceroy's Council. "If Lord Morley has ordered such an appointment", he added "I think, he is justified. I make no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. My personal view is that, since numerically Hindus are in a great majority, and are, as they themselves believe, better placed educationally, they should cheerfully concede to their Muslim brethren the utmost they can."

"Further" he observed that, "as a satyagrahi I am emphatically of the view that the Hindus should give

to the Muslims whatever they ask for and willingly accept whatever sacrifice this may involve. Unity will be brought about only through such mutual generosity. If Hindus and Muslims observe, in their dealings with one another, the same principles that govern the relation of blood brothers, there will be unbroken harmony...."64 Not only this, he even supported publicly Mr. Ali Imam, president of the Bihar branch of All-India Muslim League, for his views that "the minorities should have special rights" as that was the "only way to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity."65

Being unaware of the forces underlying the Muslim League demands, Gandhi committed the mistake of identifying Muslim League with Muslim community, for the former was not the sole representative of the latter. It was composed of a small body of the elite who were more interested in securing higher jobs in the governmental hierarchy or greater share of political power that the forthcoming reforms would give to the Indians, than the interest of the masses in their community. However, there were still a number of Mohammedan

65. Ibid., p. 452.
leaders who were not convinced of the wisdom of the League's demands for separate electorates. For instance, Nawab Ali Khan, Bar-at-Law, speaking at Lucknow in 1908, said, "The principle of class and religious representation is a most mischievous feature of the scheme.... It is not good for Mohammedans to be taught that their political interests are different from those of the Hindus .... From a Mohammedan stand point too... that principle is fraught with danger." Similarly, it is learnt that Dr. Syed Hossain made a vehement speech accusing the Muslim leaders of selling the country for a morsel in a meeting of the League at Aligarh in 1908. According to Dr. Syed Mahmud, Ameer Ali opposed Sir Ali Imam who favoured joint electorates when the latter met Morley in England.

However, the acceptance of separate electorates for Muslims by the Morley-Minto Reforms hardened the attitude of several Muslim leaders regarding their demand for separate electorates which a large body of the Hindus considered as inimical to national unity. Mohammed Ali wrote in 'Comrade' that separate electorates was the only logical conclusion of a separation only too patent. Giving reasons for his support to separate electorates,

67. Dr. Syed Mahmud, Oral History Transcript, p.8, N.M.N.L.
68. Ibid., p.11.
he pointed out that his community wanted to work in unison with the Hindus, "but they dread the position of the second fiddle which the new fangled 'Nationalism' of some Indian public men and newspapers assigns to them". He deplored that "a 'Nationalism' which is avowedly Hindu in sympathies and aspirations, has developed Hindu symbolism and battle cries and formula of faith and draws its energies from Hindu religion and mythology." Continuing, he said, "It is this dread of being entirely swamped that has driven them to seek the best means for self-preservation." Thus far from uniting the two communities, Mohammed Ali's 'Comrade' added to the existing estrangement between the two communities especially because of the influence that his paper, as reported by the Government Intelligence, exercised on the students.

But shortly, events within the country and abroad gave such rude shocks to Muslims that they looked for support to the Congress. The committee appointed by the Government of India in 1913 to enquire into the state of Mohammedan Community reported that "Events... in the near East, coupled with the reversal of the partition of Bengal, occasioned a change of front in the policy of All-India Muslim League who decided in spite of the communal advantages

69. Comrade (Calcutta), 19 August 1911.
70. Ibid.
they had spontaneously received from the Government to throw in their lot with the Indian National Congress believing that only union with the latter would wring respect and consideration from Government.\textsuperscript{72}

This tendency was further pushed up by certain Muslim papers. Saiyid Fazal-ul-Hassan's Urdu-e-Mual\textsuperscript{a} a journal founded by Aligarh Urdu Press, advocated Hindu-Muslim action in India as the best means of compelling the British to look after Muslim interests in the world at large.\textsuperscript{73}

Recalling this change in Muslim attitude, Syed Mahmud writes,"... it was difficult for anyone to speak against the Congress or against the Hindus ... Even Sir Theodore Morrison, whom the students loved and feared, realised this change ... a rapid change was coming at Aligarh.\textsuperscript{74}

Above all the grant of further political power gave the budding friendship between the 'Young Party' leaders of the Muslim League and the Congress a definite objective towards which two organisations could move. Consequently, the League leaders took the unusual step of holding their annual conference at Bombay simultaneously with that of the Congress at the same place and time in order to promote

\textsuperscript{72} Home Pol. A, October 1913, Nos.100-118, N.A.I.
\textsuperscript{73} Home Pol. B, August 1912, Nos.120-1.
\textsuperscript{74} Dr. Syed Mahmud, op.cit., p.4.
co-operation between the two organisations and to ensure a joint policy. The Government Intelligence, reported that "... the 'Lucknow gang' in conspiracy with Jinnah, the Bombay barrister, appear to be determined to bring the League to Bombay" though "a decided opposition came from Bombay Muslims but Aga Khan approved the ideal of Congress and Muslim League to meet at Bombay." But it is to be noted that in this rapprochement the major initiative came from a small group of young league leaders who were described as the 'Lucknow gang' by the Government. As a result of the efforts of this group and the dominant section of the Congress leadership, Lucknow Pact was passed at the Congress session of 1916 that conceded the League's demand of separate electorates and weightage in the minority provinces. The Lucknow Pact offered the following percentage of seats to Muslims in the legislatures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Percentage of Muslims seats in Legislature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panjab</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75. F.R. (Bombay), Home Pol. D., December 1915, No. 26, National Archives of India.  
76. Ibid., F.R. (UP).  
However the alliance left certain sections in both the communities dissatisfied. For instance, the proportions of representation negotiated for the Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces were not satisfactory to the Muslims of these provinces and they continuously raised their demand for revision of the Pact in the subsequent years. Further, it was commented by the Government circles as well as by the opponents of the Pact that this edifice of the Pact was laid on weak foundations since Muslim delegates at the League and Congress sessions, who ratified the Hindu-Muslim Agreement on reforms, were not the true representatives of their community. It was reported that out of some 433 Muslim delegates, who went to attend the Congress session, over 400 were stooges from Lucknow packed into the session at the last moment. The Government noted that the Muslim League meeting was attended by comparatively a small number and that the delegates were carefully selected. Mian Mohammed Shafi's branch of the League in the Punjab was disaffiliated, and so he did not attend it. Apart from the president Mr. Jinnah, there were a few delegates from Bombay. Madras was almost entirely unrepresented and the delegates from Bengal were few. Important sections in the United Provinces were quite

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According to Judith M. Brown, "The League itself was not representative of the whole Muslim community. Indeed it could scarcely have been so because that community was so deeply divided, as were the Hindus, by regional differences, and, like the Hindus, the Muslims' interests depended mainly on their standing in their own localities. Between 1915 and 1916 the League probably only had between 500 and 800 members, provincial leagues existed only on paper, and the Council of the League, though theoretically made up of 300 members, was in practice a small group of autocrats. The negotiations with Congress carried on during 1915 by this so-called representative Muslim body were in fact dominated by a clique from the United Provinces, Bihar and Bengal, led by representatives of the United Provinces 'Young Party' who, far from being subdued by the Muslim League as its founders had hoped, now controlled it and were bent on using it for the politics of agitation." 80

It is true that all the members of the League that ratified the Lucknow Pact cannot be considered as the representatives of their community. But if this logic is applied, most of the decisions taken by the Government on the representations made by certain groups of Muslim

leaders from time to time or the agreements made by leaders at the Unity Conferences would be discredited. One can very easily doubt the representative character of the Muslim delegation that met the Viceroy in 1906, demanding special privileges for their community. At that time the Government, while admitting their demands, did not make it sure that the delegation represented all sections in their community. Similarly, this principle was hardly kept in view by the Government while selecting delegates to the Round Table Conference. But all this does reveal that solution to the problem was being sought through some kind of arrangement with the elite in both the communities. The problem was mostly tackled at the political level. When Gandhi appeared on the Indian political scene the problem had assumed enormous complexity and he tried to tackle it at various levels.