CHAPTER II

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The Indian National Congress obviously owed its genesis to the nineteenth century Indian national consciousness which in its inception had been influenced by liberal political tradition of the modern west as well as from indigenous socio-religious reforming bodies, such as the Brahma-Samaj, the Prarthana-Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Ram-Krishna Mission and the Theosophical Society. The gradual emergence of the Congress was a natural and inevitable phenomenon, since, its birth was being preceded by a number of socio-religious and political associations like the Land-holder's Society, the British-Indian Association, the Indian Association, the National Mohamedan Association and National Conference of Calcutta and Madras, the National Association and the Mahajan Sabha in Madras, the Bombay Association, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, the Deccan Association and the presidency Association of Bombay etc.

Though inspired by western rational thought, the socio-religious movements were indigenous in-spirit with predominately Hindu-bias. Most of the reforming bodies
were initiated by the Hindu-Brahmins and activatised by the Hindu elite. "Sir Valentine Chirol saw accurately", recorded Annie Besant "the truth that from the Hindu Revival was born the National Movement of Modern India, as from a similar revival was born the Maratha confederacy." Moderate leader like G. K. Gokhale held the view that the Hindus had 'contributed for more than the other community to the present national awakening in India'. Even the Brahmo Movement inspite of its 'unmistakable tendencies towards the modern European or Christian ethics and rationalism', did recognise the superiority of Hindu-religion and some Brahmos endeavoured to organise 'Hindu Mela', and 'National Society' for the promotion of unity and national feeling among the Hindus. The Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Society and the Rama Krishna Mission avowedly stood for the cause of Hindu-nationalism.

In spite of this background the Indian National

1 Annie Besant, How India Wrought for Freedom, p.III.
2 D. G. Karve & D. V. Ambekar (ed.), Speeches and Writings of Gokhale, At the Deccan Sabha, Poona, on 11 July 1909.
Congress, was born as a secular political body. Anglo-philism and liberalism were the fundamental characteristics of the early nationalists like Surendranath Banerjee, Woomesh Chandra Banerjee, Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govinda Ranade, Badruddin Tyabjee, Rahamatullah Sayani and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Having 'unbounded faith in the living and fertilizing principles of English culture and English civilization', they were the main props of secular nationalism, and ever remained 'loyalists' in respect of the British rule 'desiring its permanent continuance' and recounting its 'great and numberless blessings' on India. Some of the nationalist leaders like M. G. Ranade or Ananda Mohan Bose, adhered to their own religious faith in private-lives or some of them utilised religion to stir the urge for patriotism, yet on national cause, they were free from any sectarian-bias. So the early 'Congress Creed breathed the spirit of composite nationalism drawing its sustenance from divergent communities like Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Parsee etc.

The life and works of some of the outstanding

4 Congress Presidential Addresses, p.76.
5 Congress Presidential Addresses, p.3, 7-8.
Congress leaders like S. N. Banerjee, M. G. Ranade and G. K. Gokhale reveal the fact that, in spite of their deep personal attachment to their respective religions, they became ardent champions of secular nationalism, and thought of the Congress as a non-sectarian political body. Surendra Nath Banerjee, one of the founders of the Indian Association and the leaders of this new political movement, was not a Brahmo, yet he drew much inspiration from the religious movement of Keshab Chandra and the concept of political freedom as well as social emancipation, upheld by the Sadharan Brahmo Samajists. The political mission of Indian Association could be successful due to the earnest efforts of the Brahmos, particularly of the Sadharan Brahmo Samajists. Accompanying the Brahmo missionaries, Surendranath in his political mission visited Lahore, Madras, Bombay and other places and met the same persons the Brahmo leaders met. In 1878, he was the guest of Ranade, the leading Parthana Samajist of western India. But unlike the Brahmos his mission was purely secular with excessive stress on political and administrative reform.

6 Banerjea, _A Nation in Making_, p.37-38.
7 Ibid., p.50.
The campaign which Surendranath led on behalf of Calcutta Students' Association and Indian Association, on the issues of Civil Service, Vernacular Press Act and Ilbert Bill was predominantly political in nature, and gathered a much larger following than that of the religious and social revolt of Keshub Chandra Sen and the Brahmo-Samaj. But he was aware of the fact that in the mind of the Indian people politics and religion are indissolubly blended. So he considered it necessary to deliver his political message by assimilating religious lessons like, the Rise of Sikh Power and Chaitanya etc., to awaken the sense of national and patriotic fervour.

In his first eloquent lecture on the Rise of Sikh Power in the Punjab, Surendranath presented the Sikh-Movement as the Movement of Liberation and inspired different communities to the cause of National Unity. He said, "the blessed Nanak preached the great doctrine of Indian unity and endeavoured to knit together Hindus and Musalmans under the banner of a common faith. That attempt was eminently successful. Nanak became the

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spiritual founder of the Sikh Empire ... . In the name then of a common country, let us all, Hindus, Musalmans, Christians, Parsees members of the great Indian community throw the pall of oblivion over the jealousies, and dissensions of bygone times and embracing one another in fraternal love and affection live and work for the benefit of a beloved fatherland." Surendranath reinterpreted Chaitanya as the prophet of a new-socio-religious faith. Chaitanya preached against caste. He sought thus to unite Hindoos and Mussalmans under the banner of a common religion; Union was his watchword, and should not union bethe watchword of the age in which we live? The great struggle, the constitutional struggle for our rights and privileges has commenced. In that struggle union alone can ensure success'. Surendranath's address on 'Joseph Mazzini and the Young Italy Movement' was an inspiring and effective political message. "Upon my mind", he wrote, "all the writings of Mazzini had created a profound impression ... Mazzini had taught Italian Unity ... I

10 Speeches and Writings of Surendranath Banerjea, p.227-231.

11 At a meeting of Students' Association, Calcutta, 15 July, 1876, Speeches of S. N. Banerjea, 1876-80, R. C. Palit (ed.), p.63.
lectured upon Mazzini, but took care to tell the young-
men to abjure his revolutionary ideals, and to adopt
his spirit of selfsacrifice and devotion in the paths of constitutional development." With his oratorial
excellence, while presenting his address on Joseph Mazzini,
at Uttarpr a Hitakari Sabha on 2 April 1875, Surendranath pointed out: "moral and spiritual regeneration is the
precursor of political regeneration ... In the sameway,
the teachings of Gooroo Govind roused in the minds of his
disciples a lofty desire for political freedom, and
national ascendancy." Hindu Mela was predominantly Hindu
in spirit, but suggesting to develop it to a greater
National Institution, he pointed out, "Now why not make
it an Indian Mela ? Changing its character and widening
its scope, why not ask the representatives and leading
men of the different Presidencies to meet us once every
year ?"

Long before the foundation of National Congress,
Surendranath was working for the advancement of a common political interest and fraternal relation between Hindus

13 Speeches of S. N. Banerjea, Op cit., p.11.
14 Ibid., p.21.
and Muslims and 'spoke upon the question of Indian Unity, at numerous public meetings ...'. "There may be religious differences between us. There may be social differences between us," he asserted, "but there is a common platform of our Country's Welfare."

Surendranath was the guiding spirit behind the Indian Association and the National Conference of 1883 and 1885, yet after the first session of the Congress he completely identified himself with the Congress Movement and remained one of its most impressive figures until 1917 as well as 'the first favourite on Congress platform'. Surendranath believed that Congress had a divine mission. 'It is a dispensation of Almighty God for the unification of our people and the permanence of British rule in India'.

Through Congress movement he sought to realise his dream of a united and secular India, where religion

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16 Address on Indian Unity, Calcutta, 16 March 1878.
17 Report of the Poona Congress, 1895.
18 Presidential Address, Ahmedabad Congress, 1902.
would not be an obstacle to a common nationhood or to a common political ideal. Refuting the versions in a section of the English press that the Congress had found a place in the 'Hindu Pantheon', Surendranath asserted, "It is the Congress of the United India, of Hindus, of Mohamedans, of Christians, of Parsees and of Sikh ... here we stand upon a common platform, here we have all agreed to bury our social and religious differences."

Two other moving spirits behind public movements in Western India were the two Chitpaban Brahmins: Justice M. G. Ranade and G. K. Gokhale. Ranade was the patron and Gokhale was his protege, and both of them were ardent nationalists having faith in moderate methods in politics. Though Ranade was an active Prarthana-Samajist, he stood for the unity of all communities and cherished deep devotion for social reform. Because of their moderate views, secular concept of nationalism and mission of social reform, Ranade and Gokhale were opposed by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, whose social and political views were more in harmony with the orthodox public opinion of the Hindus.

19 Presidential Address, Poona Congress, 1895.
Dadabhai was a political ally of Ranade and Gokhale, though he was not in favour of discussing social issues in political platforms of the Congress.

Ranade had associated the sessions of Indian Social Conference with the annual session of the Congress, but it eventually led to a political clash with the Extremists headed by Tilak in the Poona Session of 1895. Tilak's paper upheld the view that the use of the Congress pavilion for ventilating social grievances was very likely to make Congress itself unpopular.

But Ranade's social programme avoided religious disputes between Hindus and Muslims as he and his team of zealous reformers like R. G. Bhandarkar, Behramji Malbari, N. G. Chandwarkar, K. T. Telang and Sir T. Madav Rao were keenly conscious to preserve the harmony between political, social, economic and cultural aspects of national life.

Ranade was not an official member of the Congress, but 'he was a constant figure on the Congress platforms as a visitor, and he was the power behind the throne, guiding,'
advising and encouraging the Congress leaders'.

Ranade's conciliatory and compromising attitude helped to prevent splits within the Congress as well as preserved the show of unity of this political movement. Anticongress attitude of Syed Ahmed, agitated many a Congress-Hindus. He sought to stem the communal frenzy and even pointed out the 'selfish interests' among Hindu groups within the Congress and warned them for 'practising Ahmadism'.

Schooled in the liberal political tradition of Ranade, Gokhale upheld throughout his life the moderate and secular philosophy. His rise in national politics began from 1902, and since 1905 till his death in 1915, Gokhale's ascendancy as the 'First Moderate' remained unchallenged. Like Dadabhai he appreciated 'the awakening of the Mahomedans of Aligarh to the necessity of political agitation', but wrongly expected that 'though the new organization may maintain its separate existence for a while, it must inevitably merge itself sooner or later into the larger and older organization of the

21 Banerjea, A Nation in Making, Op cit., p.46.
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National Congress'. He analysed that over the greater part of India the two communities had inherited a tradition of antagonism, and opined prophetically that 'there could be no future for India as a nation, unless a spirit of cooperation of a sufficiently durable character was developed and established between the two great Communities in all public matters'. And in this connection he was of opinion 'that a special responsibility lay in the matter with the Hindus, who had an advantage over the other community ...'.

He used to examine Hindu-Muslim relations in a spirit entirely free from prejudice and passion. His servants of Indian Society cherished to promote cordial good will and cooperation among the different communities.

24 Ibid., p.308.
26 The Tribune, 24 February 1907.
The partition of Bengal generated bitter hostility between Hindus and Muslims, but the charisma of Ghokhale as a secular leader never declined. For the communal riots born out of the Anti Partition Movement, Ghokhale blamed three parties - the Hindus, the Muslims and the officials. In his North Indian tour of 1907, he could evoke commendable response from the Muslim community at Lucknow, Aligarh, Lahore and many other places. By 1912, the Hindu-Muslim relation showed the distinct change for the better, and with much happiness Ghokhale emphasised for the promotion of greater and greater harmony between these great communities. "The India, of the future," expressed Ghokhale, "could not now be only a Hindu India, or a Mahomedan India; it must be compounded of all the elements which existed at present in Hindu, Mahomedan, Parsee, Christian, aye, and the Englishman who adopted India as his country."

No doubt, the early Congress organisation was led by the representatives of a small, urban and educated minority yet they were the mind and conscience of the

27 Gokhale to Wedderburn, 24 May 1907. Gokhale Papers, File 203.

28 Speeches and Writings of G. K. Gokhale, Op cit., p.393.
natives and they never displayed any kind of regional or religious loyalties, at the cost of national unity. In fact, it had no religious identity. The Congress movement got momentum imbibing the liberal, national and secular vision of its early pioneers like S. N. Banerjee, W. C. Banerjee, A. O. Hume, M. G. Ranade, Dadabhai Naoroji, Badriddin Tyabjee, Pherozeshah Mehta, Rahimatulla Sayani and G. K. Gokhale etc.

The character of the Congress constitution and organisation, and the political ideals of its early leaders, establish the truth that the National Congress was not entirely a Hindu affair. One of the prime objects of the Congress was 'the eradication, by direct friendly personal intercourse, of all possible race or creed prejudices amongst all lovers of our country and to fuller development and consolidation of ... sentiments of national unity'. So the organisation of the Congress was being developed to identify with the newly spirit of nationalism and to counteract the impact of communal animosities and conflicts. In fact, the composition of the Congress and the response to it was predominantly

29 Indian National Congress (Full text of Presidential Addresses) 1908, p.3.
Hindu, but by choosing the Congress Presidents from different regions and religious communities and by organising the annual sessions in different principal towns of India, the Congress movement infused a unique national spirit. It is interesting to note that the first Congress was presided over by a Hindu, the second by a Parsi, the third by a Musalman, and the fourth and fifth by two European Christians.

During the years between 1885 and 1921, there were 36 annual sessions and two special sessions in 1918 and 1920. Out of 32 persons who acted as Presidents during this period there were 19 Hindus, 3 Parsees, 5 Muslims, and 5 European Christians. The leading Parsees who presided the Congress Sessions were Dadabhai Naoroji (in 1886, 1893 and 1906) Pherozeshah Mehta (in 1890) and D. E. Wacha (in 1901). So also Badruddin Tyabjee, Rahimatullah Sayani, Syed Mohammad, Hasan Imam and Hakim Ajmal Khan presided the Congress sessions in 1887, 1896, 1913, 1918 (special) and 1921 respectively. The five Presidents of European Christian community were George Yule (1888), William Wedderburn (1889 and 1910), Alfred Webb (1894),

30 Annie Besant, Op cit., p.37, Vide the Appendix II.
Henry Cotton (1904), and Mrs. Annie Besant (1917).

The man who in fact gave shape and strength to the National Congress was A. O. Hume, a Scottish by birth and acted as General Secretary from 1885 to 1908. From 1914 to 1921 (except in the year 1917), one from Muslim community either Syed Mohammed, Fazlul Huq or Dr. M. A. Ansari was acting as General Secretary. From 1885 to 1913, there was none from Muslim community, but D. E. Wacha, a Parsi, acted either as Joint Secretary or General Secretary in between 1896 and 1913.

In fact, during the first twenty years of existence, Congress was dominated by Parsis like Naoroji, Mehta and Wachha who like their leading compatriots of Congress were famous for their secular outlook and religious moderation. A. O. Hume, the virtual executive head of the Congress used to exercise a 'loving and lovable despotism over Congressman'. He conceived the great idea of 'binding together the different people, and nationalities and communities and creeds of India into one

In its early decades the Congress movement was both non-sectarian and non-racial in spirit. The presidency of the Congress was offered to eminent Britons like Charles Dilke, Herbert Gladstone, John Morley, and Edward Blake, but they did not accept it. But for the death of his wife, Ramsay Mac-Donald would have presided over the Congress in 1911. Besides, there were some English friends of the Congress like Charles Bradlaugh, John Bright, William Digby, Eardley Norton who worked for the cause of Congress either in India or in Britain. Both Wedderburn and Digby worked as the President and Secretary of British Committee of the Indian National Congress respectively. Even the English people elected Naoroji to the British Parliament. Some liberal members constituted an Indian Parliamentary Committee in the Parliament in 1893.

The fifth Congress in its resolution, appointed leading men of different communities like Mr. George Yule, Mr. A.O. Hume, Mr. Adam, Mr. Eardley Norton, Mr. J. E. Howard, Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta, Mr. Surendranath
Banerjee, Mr. Mano Mohan Ghose, Mr. Shuruf-ud-din, Mr. N. Mudholkar and Mr. W. C. Banerji, to represent its views in England. This policy was also followed in the sixth and other Congress sessions.

In the annual sessions of the Congress, 'the Muslims' might have been less in number, yet they wielded greater influence over its deliberations. The Congress occasionally used to elect Muslims as Presidents and General Secretaries, and laid down in its constitution of 1908 that one fifth of the total number of representatives, on the All India Congress Committee should be Muslims, that the President could nominate five delegates to the Subjects - Committee to represent minorities and that 'in any representations which the Congress may make or in any demands which it may put forward for the larger association of the people of India with the administration of the country, the interests of minorities shall be duly safeguarded'.

Religious moderation became the adopted policy of the Congress organisation. The speeches, addresses and

33 Resolution on Congress Constitution, Fifth Congress, 1889.

34 Report of the twenty-third INC, 1908, pp.XXI,XXIV.
reports on Congress matters reveal the fact that, the Congress leaders ideologically and for political necessity, remain free from religious bigotries and exhorted their countrymen to foster socio-religious homogenity. The Congress movement could thus save itself from erosion within.

The Congress, however, could not escape criticism. There were opponents who call it a 'Hindu Congress' for the purpose of bringing discredit upon the movement. "A contemporary has thought fit to describe the Congress", wrote Surendranath, as a Hindoo-Congress. It is strange that a Hindoo-Congress should be presided over by a Parsee gentleman and it is stranger still that the Hindoo Congress should have such a large element of the Mahomedan Community." Badruddin Tyabji a nationalist Muslim did not think of Congress as 'a movement by the Hindus' rather the result of the 'combined deliberations' of the most intellectual representatives of the different communities of India and refuted the idea of calling 'it a Babu or a

35 The Amrita Bazar Patrika, Editorial Notes 15 December 1887.

36 The Bengalee, Editorial on "The Congress", 1 January 1887.
Hindu-Congress'. R. M. Sayani, the twelfth President, spoke of the National Congress as a representative of all the communities of this great empire, Hindus, Mahomedans, Parsis and Anglo-Indians.

Most Congress Presidents reiterated the theme of 'National Unity' and sought the cooperation of all the communities and particularly of the Muslims in order to project the national and secular character of the movement. W. C. Banerjee, the first President analysed the Congress objectives as 'the eradication by direct friendly intercourse of all possible race, creed or provincial prejudices amongst all lovers of our country'. Congress was considered as 'a community of temporal interests and not of spiritual convictions that qualify men to represent each other in the vast majority of political questions'. In his introduction to the Report of the third Indian National Congress, 1887, General Secretary Hume, said about 'the fusion into one national

37. Tyabji to the Secretary of the Ellore Branch of the Central Mohomedan Association, 22 September 1889.
whole of all the different and, till recently, discordant elements that constitute the population of India, as one of the threefold objects of the Congress. To enlist the involvement of a homogeneous mass to the Congress movement, Dadabhai in his presidential address exhorted, "Indeed, I have never worked in any other spirit than that I am an Indian and owe duty to my country and all my countrymen. Whether I am a Hindu, a Muhammadan, a Parsi, I am above all an Indian. Our country is India, our nationality is Indian." Even after the formation of the Muslim League, the moderate Congressites never wavered from the politics of religious moderation. "We rejoice at the growing aspiration of the Mohammadan community. We are linked by an inseparable destiny", declared Surendranath in the Congress session of 1906.

When the Congress organisation began to grow, the bureaucracy including the highest executive became more apprehensive and stirred up bad blood between

42 Presidential Address by Naoroji, Lahore Congress, 1893.
different sections of the Indian community. Much of their official power and influence were utilised to oppose the national movement. Even Dufferin who appreciated the formation of the Congress organisation stood in opposition to Congress movement very soon and about the leaders of the Congress, he reported to Lord Cross, the Secretary of State for India, that 'their extravagant pretensions, as embodied in their resolutions have aroused the opposition and indignation both of the Mahommedan community and of the conservative section of the Society which is both large and influential'. Cross replied, "The masses of the people do not want to be ruled by the Boboos and it is our duty as well as our interest and still more the interest of the people, that there is to be English rule."

The Congress struggled to secure cooperation and representation of the Muslim community to vindicate its national character. "Its promoters have been moving heaven and earth to get the Muhammadans too into their camp", reported the Muslim Chronicle. "Our critics

44 Dufferin to Cross, 1 February 1887, Quoted in History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol.X, Bombay 1965, p.555.
45 Cross to Dufferin, 25 February 1887, Ibid.
46 The Muslim Chronicle, 20 February 1897.
regarded the National Congress as a Hindu Congress, and the opposition papers described it as such. We were straining every nerve to secure the cooperation of our Mohammedan fellow countrymen in this great national work. We sometimes paid the fares of Mohammedan delegates and offered them other facilities", wrote Surendranath. The strategy of Congress was to refrain from discussing socio-religious questions. Dadabhai asserted that Congress was a purely political body and it 'must confine itself to questions in which the entire Nation has a direct participation, and it must leave the adjustment of social reforms, and other class questions, to class Congresses'. Tyabjee, the third Congress President suggested to confine the discussion to such questions as affect the whole of India at large, and to abstain from the discussion of questions, that affect a particular part or a particular community only'.

The Fourth Congress (1888) in its resolution

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47 Banerjea, A Nation in Making, Op cit., p.100.
48 Presidential Addresses of Naoroji, Calcutta session, 1886.
49 Presidential Addresses to the third INC, Madras, 1887.
assured the Muslims "that no subject shall be passed for discussion by the Subjects Committee or allowed to be discussed at any Congress by the President thereof, to the introduction of which the Hindu or Muhammedan Delegates as a body object, unanimously or nearly unanimously ..." This assurance was also expressed in the Congress Constitution of 1908 and 1920. Most of the leading persons of the Congress were ardent social reformers, and they also realized the difficulty to have a consensus in social matters in this land of diversities. The Congress delegates all agreed to the primary object of 'Union' and 'that questions on which all felt alike ought alone to be taken up by the Congress;' reported N. G. Chandarvarkar a leading Congressite and social reformer.

On occasions, the Congress in order to preserve its secular creed appeased the Muslim community, acting against the wishes of its Hindu supporters. In the Congress of 1887, Raja Sashi Sekhareswar Roy of Tahirpare in Bengal gave notice of a resolution urging the

50 Resolutions of the Fourth Congress on Constitution, p.63.
prohibition of cow-slaughter and 'the resolution ... served to add to the difficulties of our position' wrote Surendranath. The Congress declined to take up the questions of cow-killing as such.

The Congress sounded its strong sense of disapproval of the creation of separate electorates on the basis of religion under the Indian Council Act of 1909. The Regulations had caused widespread dissatisfaction, throughout the Country by reason of unjust, invidious, and humiliating distinctions made between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of His Majesty in the matter of electorates, the franchise, and the qualifications of candidates. But S. N. Banerjee and M. M. Malaviya could not move forward without the support of Gokhale, who had held the view that 'any agitation on our part at this juncture may have the effect again of driving the Government of India and the Mohammedan community into each other's arms'.

Gokhale was in favour of separate Mohammedan representation and he hoped 'when this is done, their interests are generally so far identical with ours that they are bound

52 Banerjea, A Nation in Making, Op cit., p.100.
53 Twenty-fourth Congress, Lahore, 1909, Resolution No.IV.
54 Gokhale Papers, Gokhale to Krishna Swami Aiyer, 18 May 1909.
before long to come and range themselves by our side."

The Partition of Bengal, formation of the Muslim League and the device of communal electorate aggravated the Hindu-Muslim estrangement. But the Congress remained non-partisan and instead, urged the Government to form Conciliation Boards in order to prevent the occurrence of riots. In its twenty eighth Session, the Congress appreciated 'of the adoption by the All India Muslim League of the ideal of self-Government for India within the British Empire'. The Moderate's strategy of conciliation and non-sectarian attitude to the political problems, in fact, became conducive to the formation of Congress-League Pact in 1916. The Lucknow Congress affirmed in its resolution that the proportion of Mohammedans in the Legislative Councils and the Legislative Assembly as laid down in the Congress-League scheme must be maintained. The Congress allowed the excess of Muslim representation in

55 Gokhale Papers, File 203, Part II.
56 Twenty-fifth Congress, Allahabad, 1910, Resolution XVII.
57 Twenty-eighth Congress, Karachi, 1913, Resolution IV.
58 Twenty-first Congress, Lucknow, 1916, Resolution XIII.
the legislature of certain provinces to which the Hindus stood opposed.

But the moderate era having its deep faith in prayer, petition, protest and secular creed yielded nothing but left a legacy of smouldering discontent between Hindu and Muslim patriots. The true achievement of the early moderate nationalists was of consolidating the Congress movement in combating various internal limitations and contradictions. The early Congress movement owed little responsibility for the Hindu-Muslim estrangement. The Congress business was steered with much care in the teeth of opposition by the extremists, anarchists and communalists.

The Moderate's policy of conciliation, compromise and communal harmony in consolidating the Congress movement was seriously challenged by two forces of which one was the Muslim opposition, led by Syed Ahmed Khan and the other resurgent Hindu nationalism, spearheaded by Tilak.

Syed Ahmed Khan, the foremost leader of the Indian Muslims in the 19th century, was the first person to disapprove and then to oppose the Congress movement. His policy and programme did much damage to the Congress
cause as well as rocked the Hindu-Muslim unity and amity and paved the way for Muslim political separatism. Most of the prominent Muslim leaders including Syed Ameer Ali, Nawab Abdul Lateef, Syed Hussain Bilgrami, and Nawab Solar Jung as well as vast consensus of Muslim India followed his lead in political matters. Sir Syed was opposed to the Congress demand of representative Government and recruitment to services by open competition, as he thought to be detrimental to his communities' interests. When the Congress became more vociferous for these demands, the clevage between Hindu and Muslim became more intense and provoked the Muslims to agitate for separate electorates.

Out of 72 delegates in the first Congress only two were the Muslims. The indifference and absence of the Muslims distressed the Hindu leaders but delighted the British Officials and the Anglo-Indian newspapers. The Englishman condemned the National Congress as a

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'Hindu Congress'. Later on when the Muslim hostility to the Congress became more pronounced, the Muhammedan Observer asserted, 'surely the Congress cannot represent our co-religionists inspite of themselves'.

But following the establishment of the Indian National Congress, political tempo among the Indians rose very-high. Reflecting this, a native paper, on the eve of the second Congress commented, 'The political life of Indians is becoming more and more strong day by day ... every class in India is ready to join the Congress. Mussalmans have promised to unite with Hindus like brothers', but the same paper warned 'if the tide of political enthusiasm is opposed very bad results will be produced'.

Muslim opposition began to crystallise just on the eve of second session of the Congress in 1886. To Syed Ahmed and his followers, the Congress movement seemed to be 'seditious'. "The Congress" asserted Sir Syed "cannot prove its claim to represent the opinions, ideals and

61 Quoted in The Indian Mirror, 20 December 1887.
62 Quoted in The Englishman, 22 November 1888.
63 The Sahachar, 15 December 1886, BNNR, Paper No.10.
64 AIG, 23 November 1886.
aspirations of the Muslims." Therefore, in spite of the sincere care of the Reception Committee of the second Congress, to ensure Muslim representation, the number of Muslim delegates remained very small, i.e. 33 out of 436 delegates and none was a prominent member of the Muslim community. Two Muslim organisations, the Central National Muhammedan Association and the Muhammedan Literary Society guided by Ameer Ali and Nawab Abdul Lateef Khan respectively did not send their delegates to the Calcutta Congress.

But the attitude of the Muslim community towards the Congress was neither always uniform nor unanimous. A paper from Cuttack reported that the Muslims of this place assembled in a mass meeting and adopted a resolution expressing sympathy with the National Congress held in Calcutta. Exposing the imperialist attempt to engender ill-feeling between Hindus and Muslims with a view to paralyse the activities of the Indian National Congress, one Calcutta paper remarked, 'some English officials are

67 The Utkala Dipika, 8 January 1887.
trying to fan a new fire of ill-feeling between Hindus and Mussalmans which had been gradually dying out.

On the other hand anti-Congress sentiment of a large section of Muslims also was growing and spreading fast. They held that the National Congress would not be able to reduce the powers of Government, because there was lack of proper national feeling in the country, nor had the country become fit for representative Government 'as the different races inhabiting it were not on the same moral and intellectual level'.

Badruddin Tyabjee, a prominent jurist of Bombay was selected as the third Congress President and the organisers of the Congress expected that the selection would counteract the anti-Congress agitation and impress upon the Muslims the non-communal character of the Congress. But, in fact from now began Syed's active opposition to the Congress. He apprehended that the selection of Tyabjee would set the beginning of an erosion in Muslim political solidarity and would adversely affect the social and political conditions of the Muslims. He

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68 The Navavibhakar Sadharani, 4 July 1887, BNNR.
69 The Urdu Guide, 12 October 1887, BNNR.
warned that Muslims in India, by joining the Congress would 'groan under the yoke of a future Hindu rule'.

Syed Ameer Ali, who too held the anti-Congress political faith of Sir Syed, proposed in a letter to Tyabjee to hold a Conference of Mahomedans 'in order to discuss questions of importance vitally affecting the general interests of the Mohammedan community' and sought the later's cooperation. In reply Tyabjee wrote, "I have always been of opinion that in regard to political questions at large the Mussalmans should make a common cause with their fellow countrymen of other creeds and persuasions, and, I cannot help deprecating any disunion on such questions between ourselves and the Hindoos or Parsees. ...it seems to me that our proper course is to join the Congress at Madras and to take a part in its deliberations from our own peculiar stand point."

Dadabhai Naoroji, in the beginning, appreciated


71 Ameer Ali to Tyabjee, 28 November 1887, Tyabjee Papers, No.39.

72 Tyabjee to Ameer Ali, 3 December 1887, Tyabjee Papers, No.85.
the Aligarh movement and wrote to Wacha, "Let the Mahommedans go ahead ... it is good that they are roused to some activity." But very soon he became apprehensive of a systematic opposition led by Syed Ahmed and conveyed to Malbari from England. "I hope Mr. Hume will be able to bring round Syed Ahmed and prevent the opposition to the Congress. The disunion among ourselves will do very great harm. Here interest in India is growing gradually, but, this split will check it very much."

In the Madras session, Tyabjee in his presidential address remarked, "I, for one, am utterly at a loss to understand why Mussulmans should not work shoulder to shoulder with their fellow countrymen of other races and creeds for the common benefit of all." But while the Congress was in the session in Madras, Syed Ahmed warned his co-religionists in his spirited outburst at Lucknow, to hold themselves aloof from 'this political uproar', i.e. the Congress. He narrated that the Congress would safeguard the Hindu interest and promote a civil war. In its

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73 Dadabhai to Wacha, 21 September 1887.
74 Dadabhai to Malbari, 18 April 1888.
75 Presidential Address, Third INC, Madras, 1887.
76 Syed Ahmed's speech at Lucknow on 28 December 1887, 'On the Present State of Indian Politics, Op cit.', pp.11-12.
editorial note the Amrita Bazar Patrika commented, "Sir Syed Ahmed argued on this case against the National Congress in this fashion: I have not joined it, therefore, it is not national. It is not national, therefore, it is Hindu. It is Hindu, therefore, it is Bengallee. It is Bengallee, therefore, its object is to overturn the British Government. When the British rulers are expelled, the Musalmans will be trodden under foot by the Bengallees. So brother Musalmans do not in the name of God, join the Congress."

Two and half months later in his speech at Meerut Syed warned the Muslims that if they joined the Congress nothing but national disaster lay in store for them. He put forth that the Hindus and Muslims were two different nations.

Syed's outburst against the Congress created a stir all over India and paved the path for political polarization. Young Bengal described his speech as 'queer, foolish, childish, sycophantic', whereas Muslim Herald

77 The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 19 January 1888.
79 The Pioneer, 11 January 1888.
admired Sir Syed with high acclamation; 'we proudly accept the Syed as our leader and exponent - the summit and the crown of Islam, a faith that binds together with withes of iron 50,000,000 Indian Musalmans'.

The Congress leaders became critical of the views of Sir Syed. Lajpat Rai was shocked at the too blatant a volteface of Sir Syed, and charged him in a series of open letters to the Tribune of Lahore. "By your present attitude, by your present utterances, you mean to prove that all that you once said, all that once did", wrote Lajpat Rai, "but utter nonsense", and again in his next letter he continued, "Sir Syed, for God's sake reconsider your position and do not disappoint us just when the morning of hope has begun to dawn over us and our mother-land."

In his anti-Congress contention Syed Ahmed was actively helped by Theodore Beck, the Principal of M.A.O. College. Not only Beck, but two other succeeding

80 Quoted in The Pioneer, 2 February 1888.
81 The 'Open Letters' originally appeared in the Urdu Weekly Kohi-Noor of Lahore.
82 Ibid.
Principals, T. Morrison and W. A. J. Archbold used to inspire the Aligarh movement on communal line whereas other Britons like Hume, Wedderburn and Cotton were busy in organising the Congress movement on national line. Beck was of opinion that the parliamentary form of Government was 'unsuited to a country containing two or more nations tending to oppress the numerically weaker', and later on he also wrote to Tyabjee accusing the methods of National Congress as dangerous and would 'sooner or later cause a Mutiny among the inhabitants'.

The controversy was growing intensely when Tyabjee in a letter to the Pioneer, defended the Congress movement and tried to build the favourable feeling of the Mussalmans towards the Congress. He reminded his co-religionists that their 'opposition from within the Congress will be far more powerful and effective than from without'. Similarly he pointed out to Amzer Ali, that 'if any section of the Mussalman community should keep aloof from the Hindus then it would retard the national

83 The Pioneer, 2 and 3 November 1887.
84 Beck to Tyabjee, Letter No.166.
85 B, Tyabjee to the Editor, Pioneer, Letter No.87.
progress of India as a whole*. In reply Syed wrote "I object to every Congress in any shape or form whatever which regards India as one nation ...".

No doubt, the choice of Tyabjee as the third President established the credibility of National Congress as a secular movement. Despite his social status and prominence in Muslim community, Tyabjee was no match to Sir Syed. The Congress leaders perhaps, were never serious to bring Syed to the Congress fold. When Tyabjee became the judge of the High Court and held that office till his demise in 1906, he naturally became secluded from the political life and there was none to guide and integrate the Muslim community with secular nationalism. Later on in a letter to Hume, Tyabjee pointed out that "we must base our proceedings upon the fact that an overwhelming majority of Mahomedans is against the movement ... it follows that the movement ipso facto ceases to be a general or National Congress." Observing the increasing bitterness

86 B. Tyabjee to Ameer Ali, 13 January 1888, Similar letters were addressed to Sir Syed Ahmed and Nawab Abdul Lateef.

87 Syed Ahmed to Tyabjee, 24 January 1888.

88 B. Tyabjee to A. O.Hume, 27 October 1888, Letter No.98.
between Hindus and Muslims, he, then, suggested to prorogue the Congress for at least five years. In reply, Hume asserted that over one million middle class Muslims were with the Congress and not more than one hundred thousand really 'opposed to us'.

Later on, challenging the version of Sir W. W. Hunter, that with the exception of certain parts of lower Bengal, Muslims from all parts of India attended the Congress sessions and took part in their proceedings. Main Muhammad Shafi, remarked that mere attendance of these delegates did not prove that the followers of Islam believed in the views of the Congress and they were never the voice of Islam.

To counteract the impression created in England that whole of the people of India were with the Congress, Syed Ahmed laid the foundation of the United Indian

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89 Ibid.
90 Hume to Tyabjee, 5 November 1888.
91 The Pioneer, 13 July 1888.
92 Later on rose to eminence and became the President of the Muslim League.
93 The Pioneer, 13 July 1888.
Patriotic Association in August, 1888, associating both Hindu and Muslim members of upper classes in opposition to the middle class - Congress. The Association could immediately enlist the cooperation of many a prominent patrons and enjoyed the affiliation of 52 Anjumans. The Association had non-communal character and in fact some Hindu chiefs were the active participants of it. Raja of Bhinga thought of the Congressmen 'for the most part crude, ill considered and unpractical, showing no signs of political ability or insight'. So also the Maharaja of Benaras wanted the Hindu and Muhammadan brethren to 'close up this Congress business and not prolong the quarrel which can have one inevitable and disastrous end'.

The anti-Congress stand of Syed was so alarming that, the Congress in its fourth session (1888) passed the famous resolution prohibiting the discussion in the Congress of any subject to which 'the Hindu or the

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94 AIG, 28 September 1888.

95 Raja of Bhinga, A pamphlet titled as Democracy not suited to India, Seditious character of the Indian National Congress (Ed.) T. Beck, United Indian Patriotic Association.

96 Report of the INC, 1888, Resolution XIII.
Mohammedan delegates as a body object unanimously or nearly unanimously. Most of the orthodox Muslims were not prepared to abide by Syed's lead in religious matters. Some Ulemas issued a Fatwa warning the Muslims against supporting him and his patriotic Association. Congress tried to exploit this anti Syed' sentiments but it could not utilise this faction to its advantage for long.

In the Congress session of 1889, when the resolution on the expansion and reform of legislative councils put to discussion, Maulavi Hidayat Rasul claimed for equal representation of his community for elected seats in the councils. Lala Lajpat Rai pleaded that no distinction should be made among the members of the different communities in regard to political privileges. As for himself he emphatically declared "I am a Hindu, in the Punjab, the Hindus are in a minority, and so far I am concerned I should be quite content to be represented by any good Mahommedan or Sikh member." Though majority delegates voted against the proposal yet it alienated a

97 Ibid.
section of devoted Muslims from the Congress fold.

Sir Syed and his people were not happy over the Indian Councils Act of 1892 as it provided an elective element in the councils and partially fulfilled the Congress demand. Syed's apprehension came to be true when he saw that many Congress leaders utilised the constitutional means and found the way to sit in these councils. Emphasising on the heterogenous character of the voters, in matters of race, religion, social manners, economic conditions and political traditions, Sir Syed pointed out that 'the representative system could never be productive of any good and hoped that the Congress propaganda would not mislead the British public'.

Inspite of Syed's appeal and assurance of the Viceroy no effective steps were taken to secure for the Muslims a reasonable number of seats and the number of Muslims in the council remained significantly small.

Sir Syed had held anti Congress views earlier, but Theodore Beck boosted him much in that direction.

99 The Pioneer, 29 September 1893.
100 Speeches by the Marquis of Lansdowne, 1888-1894, pp.375-377.
The occurrence of Hindu-Muslim riots, Hindu-Urdu controversy and anti-cow killing agitation, introduction of elective principles into legislatures, called forth Syed Ahmed to adopt still a harder line with the Congress. At the instance of Beck, he started the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association of Upper India, in 1893, professing to protect the political interests of Mahommedans, to discourage popular political agitation among Mahommedans and to lend support for the stability of the British Government. The objects of Sir Syed were in fact the same as before but the new Association was intensely pro-Islamic. It was to be directed by a council, in which there were eleven prominent Muslims, one Briton Theodore Beck. The establishment of Defence Association truly, did much harm to the cause of Congress movement, and aggravated the Hindu-Muslim estrangement.

To heal up the factions within and without the Congress, the organisers made earnest attempt to present a united political front and as such Rahmatulla Sayani, a prominent Muslim solicitor of Bombay was chosen to preside

101 Rules of the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental Defence Association of Upper India.
102 Ibid.
over the twelfth session of Congress held in Calcutta in 1896. Very soon Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan, came with a proposal of equality of political representation of Hindus and Muslims in the councils as well as in the municipal and local boards, as the condition of Hindu-Muslim unity. In addition to it, Sir Syed further claimed that the Hindu agitators should also move the Government to sanction the proposal. Sayani pointed out Ismail Khan's proposal to be premature and asserted that the Congress had no concern whatever with the religion or the religious exercise of any of its members. He explained, "If the Congress does not as is alleged, adequately represent all the races, surely the fault lies not on the shoulders of the Congress leaders who invite all the races, but on the shoulders of those races themselves who turn a deaf ear to such invitation and prefer not to respond to it ... So long the Mussalmans do not join the Congress movement in the same number and with the enthusiasm as the Hindus do the Congress cannot in fairness be asked to carry out such suggestion in the manner and to the extent indicated in the suggestion." Sayani also stressed that due to lack of

103 The Moslem Chronicle, 9 January 1897.
education, Muslims remained indifferent to the Congress movement. But Sir Syed's contention was that no Muslim of real and substantial education can ever join the Hindus in their political struggle.

However, Sayani's speech aroused bitter stir and infuriated many leading Muslims. The Moslem Chronicle, in its editorial note explained that lack of education was not the factor for dissociation rather the antagonism of Hindu press prevented the Muslims 'from making common cause with the Hindus by joining the Congress'. "If there has been yet no union, between the Hindu and Mussulman", commented the Burdwan Sanjivani, "the Mussalman alone is not to blame for it. The Hindus have always systematically given bad names to the Mussalmans ... they always have taken a morbid delight in vilifying the Mussulmans and showing scant respect to Mussulmans of position."

On the other side: in fact, the secular character of the Congress movement came to be confronted with the spirited upsurge of Hindu nationalism from the nineties.

105 Presidential Address, p.22, Editorial, 30 January 1897.
106 The Burdwan Sanjivani, 20 November 1888,BNNR.
of the 19th century. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the emerging champion of Hindu orthodoxy made earnest effort to utilise religion for the political purpose and wanted that 'the Congress should rally the support of the masses by stimulating religious and patriotic zeal'. Tilak's campaign against 'Social Conference', Age of Consent Bill, his initiative in organising 'Cow protection Societies', his brilliant analysis and interpretation of the doctrine of Action (Karma) as narrated in the Celestial Song (The Gita) and his serious effort in reviving the 'Ganapati Puja' and 'Shivaji festival', were part and parcel of his religious-political faith in order to assert the orthodox Hindu ideal in realm of politics. So also the movement of Arya Samaj, with its watchwords 'Back to the Vedas' and 'Aryasthana for Aryas', generated much pro-Hindu stir in the national politics. In Bengal, the revolutionaries sought to fortify their patriotism by developing the cult of Kali, the goddess of strength and of destruction. Thus a fervent nationalism which, then emerged, was both militant and anti-western, and drew much inspiration from a romanticised 'Hindu Past'.

The use of Hindu religious symbols, the partition 107 The Native Opinion, 10 November 1895, BNNR.
of Bengal, the formation of Muslim League and the pro-Islamic policy of the British Government destroyed the close affinity between Hindus and Muslims and in turn inaugurated the process of confrontation between the two communities. The impact of religious ideas led to polarization within the Congress. The Brahmo ideals of liberalism, harmony, reconciliation as held by the Moderates to build the National Congress as a cohesive body, with the affinity of divergent communities were challenged by the extremists, who advocated the ideology of Hindu national unity and identity as their basic political faith. The breach within Congress became sharp and the lustre of Moderate leaders, gradually began to fade out. Comparing Naoroji and Tilak, the Bandemataram, an extremist organ commented, "Mr. Naoroji represents the generation that is passing away, ideals that have lost their charm and methods that have been found to be futile, with Mr. Tilak it is different ... He is preeminently the man who acts and action is to be the note of our future political energies."

So also "the Swadeshi propaganda developed a
particularly pronounced Hindu ideal ...' Appreciating this predominating Hindu note, in the new upheaval Bepin Chandra expressed 'I do not regret this Hindu emphasis of what in the nature of things was bound to be practically a Hindu movement'. Much before the beginning of Swadeshi movement, the Maratha exhorted, "Take an oath, a holy oath by the love of India and by the noble memory of the heroic Aryan ancestors that as long as Indians are not treated as equal subjects, resolve to die rather than take an inch of Manchester cloth." And again the proclamation of Swaraj in the Calcutta session of 1906 was made as a result of the political impact of the Hindu extremists.

It was not therefore, possible that the Muslim sympathy should be in favour of Cow-protection Society or towards the Shivaji festival, Ganapati Puja and worship of Bhavani or taking terrorist vows before Kali's image.

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111 The Maratha, 9 March 1896.
During the first decade of the 20th century, the Congress movement was coming very much under the vigorous intensity of Hinduism. The imperialists, then, never failed in their strategy in alienating further the two communities, Hindus and Muslims for their political purpose.

Struggling against these heavy odds, the Moderates, never refrained themselves in their endeavour, to promote and project political solidarity of different communities, particularly of Hindus and Muslims. But reconciliation between the resurgent Hindu nationalism and the separatist Islamic idealism ever remained a distant political hope.