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11. Role Of Jinnah After 1937 With Special Reference Of Lucknow Session Of Muslim League

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The Congress Party obtained an absolute majority in the Legislative Assemblies in five provinces, namely, Bihar, the Central Provinces, Madras, Orissa and the United Provinces; while in a sixth Province, Bombay, they won 87 out of 175 seats. In the Provinces where there was a large Muslim vote they were not so successful, though in both Bengal and Assam they formed the largest single group, while in the North-West Frontier Province they were strongly represented. The Province in which they met with the least success was the Punjab, and it was of crucial interest for the British to note that the large non-Congress majority in this Province was not by any means composed entirely of Muslims. The Unionist Party in the Punjab, which won 88 seats, comprises Hindus, Sikhs, Mohammedans and Indian Christians. A number of other Hindu and Sikh seats were won by members of the moderate parties who may be expected on a number of matters to co-operate with the Unionist Party. In the elections for the six Legislative Councils, Congress did not meet with the same success as in the Assemblies.¹

Mohammad Iqbal wrote to Jinnah on June, 1937 that he was the only Muslim in India to whom the community had a right to look up for safe guidance through the storm which was coming to North-West India, and perhaps to the whole of India. He stated that it was actually a state of civil war which, but for the police and military, would become universal in no time. During the last few months there had been a series of Hindu-Muslim riots in India. In North-West India alone there were at least three riots. In each of these four cases, the vilifier either Hindu or Sikh was murdered. According to Iqbal

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the new constitution with its idea of a single Indian federation was completely hopeless. A separate federation of Muslims in North-West India and Bengal provinces, was the only course by which one can secure a peaceful India and save Muslims from the domination of non-Muslims. Iqbal felt that the interest in the All-India Muslim League was rapidly growing in Punjab, and the holding of the coming session in Lahore would give a fresh political awakening to the Punjab Muslims.²

The Lucknow Session of the All-India Muslim League held in the October of 1937 was the most critical that had ever taken place during its existence for the last more than thirty years. The policy and the programme that were going to be decided there would decide the fate and the future of the Muslims of India and country at large. On 12th April, 1936, the Muslim League at its session, the first time in its history, undertook the policy and programme of mass contact. The League considered the forthcoming elections of 1937. It had no alternative but to enter into the field and contest the elections to the Provincial Legislatures.³

Jinnah had strongly objected to the Congress interfering with Muslim affairs in Bengal and called upon the Congress to let Muslims alone. Nehru compared Jinnah's views to what Bhai Parmanand had been saying on behalf of the Hindu communalists. Jinnah's statement meant that in no department of public activity must non-Muslims have anything to do with Muslim affairs. In politics and social and economic matters the Muslims must function separately as a group and deal with other groups as one nation deals with another. So also in trade unions, peasant unions, business, chambers of commerce and like organisations and activities, Muslims in India were indeed a nation. Nehru said that he represented the Muslim comrades who still stood in the ranks of forces and who remained true to the Congress through the strain and stress of past years. Congress represented the hunger and poverty of the masses, Muslim as well as Hindu; the demand for bread and land and work and relief from innumerable burdens which crushed them; the urge to freedom from an intolerable oppression.¹ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in a statement urging Muslim voters of Bombay to support S.A. Barelvi in the 1937 elections to the Bombay Legislative Assembly observed that even if Muslims wished to view the situation only from their point of view or for their own collective interest, the only right path of success for them was that they should support the Congress and not keep aloof from it. He suggested that Muslims cannot do anything by keeping aloof from the majority. There were only two courses before them, either by supporting the Congress to win the sympathy and help

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of enlightened and tolerant Hindus or by keeping aloof from it to strengthen the hands of fanatical Hindus. The elections had provided for them a valuable opportunity. By supporting Congress candidates they could have demonstrated that they were not behind any other community in their efforts to win Independence for the country and promote its welfare.⁴

In October 1937 Muslim League session was held at Lucknow which was described later by Gandhi as the "Session through which Jinnah declared war on the Congress party". Jinnah criticized the Congress for emphasizing the economic issues. For him all the talk of hunger and poverty was intended to lead the people towards socialistic and Communist ideas for which India was far from prepared. Jinnah raised the issues like Hindi was to be the national language of India and VandeMataram was to be the national song and will be forced upon all. The Congress flag was to be obeyed. The result of the Congress party policy would be class bitterness, communal war and a strengthening of the imperialistic hold as a consequence. He further pointed out that wherever the Congress was in a majority it refused to co-operate with the Muslim League and demanded unconditional surrender. Jinnah also accused that any individual Muslim member, who was willing to unconditionally surrender and sign their pledge, was offered a job as a minister although they did not command the confidence or the respect of an overwhelming majority of the Muslim representatives in the legislatures. Jinnah also attacked the governors for ignoring their 'special responsibility to safeguard and protect the minorities' and becoming 'a party to the flagrant breach or the spirit of the Constitution and the Instrument of Instructions in the matter of appointment of Muslim ministers. Referring to the Congress campaign of Muslim mass contact, Jinnah warned that it was 'calculated to divide, weaken and break the Muslims and an effort to detach them from their accredited leaders. He termed the Congress resolutions asking the Secretary of State to call a Constituent Assembly on the basis of adult franchise as the height of all ignorance. The resolution on Palestine warned the British Government that unless it changed the present pro-jew policy, the Muslims of India would look upon Britain as the enemy of Islam. The session declared that the object of the League 'shall be the establishment in India of full independence in the form of a federation of free democratic States in which the rights and interests of the Musalmans and other minorities were adequately and effectively safeguarded in the Constitution. The last resolution outlined the economic, social and educational programme, comprising abolition of usury, moratorium on all debts, prohibition, establishment of rifle

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clubs and a military college, and finally abolition and removal of all un-Islamic customs and usages from Muslim society. Leaders from different provinces separately supported the resolution.⁵

But soon after the Lucknow session, Gandhi wrote to Jinnah that he looked upon his speech at Lucknow Session as a declaration of war. Thereafter Gandhi, Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose also wrote letters to Jinnah. All the three offered to meet him. Jinnah preferred to see Gandhi first but categorically rejected the suggestion that Maulana Azad should remain present at the meeting. That Gandhi should recognize the All India Muslim League as the only authoritative and representative organization of Mussalmans in India, and on the other hand Gandhi should represent the Congress and other Hindus throughout the country. Gandhi rejected the proposal. During his talks with Subhas Chandra Bose on 26 May 1938, Jinnah insisted that the Congress should not only accept the Muslim League position as the only representative organization of the Muslims in India and should specify in the preamble of any agreement that it was entering into a pact on behalf of the Hindus. Finally on July 25, 1937, the Congress informed Jinnah that his pre-condition for talks and agreement could not be accepted. Jinnah referred to various suggestions which had appeared in the press; including acceptance of the communal award, fixation of shares for Muslims in provincial services, statutory guarantee to Muslim Personal law and culture and that Congress should take up the Shahidganj mosque agitation and use its moral pressure to enable the Muslims to gain possession of the mosque, Muslims should be given freedom to perform cow-slaughter etc. Nehru added that apparently the formula evolved by Jinnah and Rajendra Prasad in 1935 did not now satisfied the Muslim League and no settlement on these lines was therefore acceptable to them. With regard to these matters, Nehru clarified that so long as there was no Constituent Assembly, it was impossible to incorporate various demands in the Constitution. But the Congress was always prepared to incorporate the Karachi resolution on Fundamental Rights including the rights of minorities in any future Constitution. Many of the demands in the 14-point charter had been conceded in the Communal Award and some others were acceptable to the Congress. The Congress had already agreed that till an alternative solution was found, the Communal Award should not be disturbed. In fact, this was the position taken by Jinnah himself before 1935. Lastly he added that though the Congress considered the Muslim League an important communal organization, it was difficult to accord it recognition as the only authoritative and representative organization of the Muslims. Nehru cleared that a Congress ministry was

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functioning in the Muslim majority province of the NWFP and many other Muslim organizations such as the Jamiat, Ahrars, etc., were actively associated with the Congress were willing to form coalitions on the basis of a definite programme and in furtherance of a clear policy.⁶

Soon after these correspondences, Jinnah presided over the special session of the Muslim League held at Calcutta on April 1938. In his presidential address, Jinnah dilated on the phenomenal growth of the Muslim League and pointed out that as a party it was also functioning in seven provincial assemblies and in the Central Assembly. He expressed happiness that in response to the Muslim League call, Shahidganj Day which was observed on February 18 in practically every city and town of India and also in a number of villages. He referred to the numerous complaints of ill-treatment and injustice to the Muslims in the Congress provinces and declared that a committee had been appointed under the chairmanship of Rajah Sahib Muhammad Mehdi Sahib of Pirpur to make enquiries into the complaints. He ridiculed Congress resolutions on Fundamental Rights as mere paper resolutions. He reiterated the charge that the Congress was imposing Hindi in order to completely destroy Urdu. He exhorted the Muslims to fight to the last ditch all the dreams and notions of Hindu raj. The Calcutta session of the League in 1938 was a special session held within six months of the Lucknow session. Though it was exploited to continue the propaganda campaign against the Congress, the real purpose of the session was to sort out the political difficulties which the pro-Muslim League governments in Assam, Bengal, and the Punjab were facing. FazlulHuq'sKrishak-Proja party had been split and a group of 30 of his supporters had left the party. The session was a desperate attempt to pressurize the defections. Jinnah demanded that the Congress should reshuffle its ministries in various provinces and reach an understanding with the League for Congress - League coalitions in every province. The session passed a resolution commending the Huq ministry in Bengal and the Saadulla ministry in Assam 'particularly for resisting the machinations of the Congress', and further appealed 'to every Mussalman to accord wholehearted support to the ministries in Bengal and Assam'. The second resolution pertained to Sir Sikander's difficulties in the Punjab. There was a section of the Muslims which had threatened a civil disobedience movement on the Shahidganj issue. The resolution appealed to the Muslims to create and maintain a peaceful atmosphere in order to facilitate a settlement with the Sikhs. The third resolution gave a call to 'Muslims of India to take special steps to combat the Congress' anti-Muslim activities in the Frontier province. The fourth resolution

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condemned the U.P., Bihar, C.P., and Bombay Governments for their 'failure to save the loss of lives and property of the Muslims in the communal riots.'⁷

On 8 October 1938, Jinnah presided over the Sind Muslim League conference held at Karachi. At this conference, he made determined efforts to bring all the provincial Muslim legislators into the League fold. The conference was also addressed by FazlulHuq and Sir Sikander Hayat Khan. Both advised the Muslim MLAs to sink their differences and form a united Muslim League party to take over the provincial government. In his presidential address, Jinnah also referred to the breaking up of the Republic of Czechoslovakia. Reference to the seizure of Sudetanland by Hitler for a reunion with Germany was made by both Jinnah and Haroon to emphasize the determination of the community and to suggest that the ultimate aim was to unite with the West Asian Muslim countries. The sub-committee of the conference agreed to a draft resolution demanding the partition of India. The resolution read. The Sind Provincial Muslim League Conference considered it absolutely essential in the interests of an abiding peace in the vast Indian continent and in the interests of unhampered cultural development, the economic and social betterment and political self-determination of the two nations, known as Hindus and Muslims, that India should be divided into two federations namely, the Federation of Muslim States and the Federation of non-Muslim States.⁸

In December 1937 Jinnah had presided over the conference of the All India Muslim Students' Federation which was held at Calcutta. Thereafter he started the practice of holding simultaneous sessions of the Muslim League and the Muslim Students' Federation. Apart from students, Jinnah also organized Muslim women's Conferences to wean Muslim women away from the All-India Women's Federation. Provincial conferences of Muslim women were held throughout the country in 1938 and women leaders were given the task of organizing women's branches of the Muslim League. Thus during 1938, Jinnah, in order to divert the attention of Muslim youth from leftist ideologies took various steps to communalize them. FazlulHuq, the Bengal Premier, was not slow in fomenting communal tension in his province. In June 1938, Subhas Chandra Bose had undertaken a tour of Bengal to counteract the vilification campaign of the Muslim League. His tour was highly successful in that huge Muslim crowds not only used to listen to him but gather at different railway and bus stations to accord a reception to him. On June 15, he was taken out in a huge procession comprising a

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mixed crowd of over 10,000 Hindus and Muslims at Brahmanbaria. The local Muslim League was so incensed that its volunteers indulged in stone-throwing in which Bose and 15 others sustained injuries.

At the Bombay provincial conference at Sholapur on May 6th, 1939 Jinnah strongly attacked the Congress for interference in the Princely States and accused it of following a policy of crushing and defeating the Muslims. On July 3, 1939 the Muslim League working committee at a meeting held at the residence of Jinnah, passed several resolutions. He appealed to the rulers of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bhavnagar, and Patiala to redress the grievances of the Muslims in their States. He also issued warning against the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha of the bitterness among the Muslim masses due to the agitation by the two parties in the Hyderabad state.

The League had resolved that, whereas the Parliamentary System of Government was being introduced in this country. The new Constitution presupposed the formation of political parties with a well-defined policy and programme. The requirement included education of the electorate, co-operation between groups with approximate aims and ideals, and ensuring the solidarity of the Muslim Community and to secure for the Muslims their proper and effective share in the provincial Governments. It was essential that the Muslims organised themselves as one party. For this purpose appointed Jinnah to form a Central Election Board, consisting of not less than 35 members, with powers to constitute and affiliate Provincial Election Boards in various provinces.

Jinnah told that no settlement with majority community was possible, as no Hindu leader speaking with any authority showed any concern or genuine desire for it. Any offers of peace by the weaker party always meant confession of weakness, and an invitation to aggression. He asked to look at the nations of the world, and see what happened to Abyssinia, to China and Spain and not to say of the tragedy of Palestine. For him the Congress Muslims were making a great mistake when they preach unconditional surrender. It was the height of defeatist mentality to throw ourselves on the mercy and goodwill of others and the highest act of perfidy to the Muslim community. He asked the Muslims to ignore the slogans and the taunts such as were being used against the Muslims, - communalists and reactionaries.⁹ These terms and words and abuses were only intended to create an inferiority complex amongst the Muslims and demoralise them. The All-India Muslim League unequivocally stood to safeguard the rights and interests of the Muslims. That was its basic and cardinal principle.

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The League was not going to allow the Musalmans to be exploited either by the British Government or any other party or group inside the legislatures or outside. The League, of course, passed other resolutions at Lucknow relating to Waziristan, Palestine etc, but the real business which out shadowed everything else was the declaration of war against Congress. From the all-India point of view, the effects of the Lucknow meeting was difficult to be judged. Tentatively Britishers anticipated some of the consequences like, reduced the chance of Congress Ministries provoking a crisis with Government, brake on Congress activities, their policy likely to be less extreme now, the Congress aim of a mass revolution in a few years being fizzled out, undermining of any alliance between Muslims and Congress in the North-West Frontier Province, promotion of separatist tendencies as between Provinces, aggravation of the communal situation which may ultimately lead to an agreement between Congress and Muslims etc.

The war and the British Government gave Jinnah his opportunity. Both stimulated in him in the evening of his life the belief that he was a man of destiny. Though always conscious of his own importance, he was burdened with no such sense of mission before. The fact that he had retired to England and set up practice before the Privy Council in London furnishes the most convincing proof that he had sincerely persuaded himself that there was no more use for him in India. It is not clear why he returned to this country in 1935, but whatever the reason, the call of the motherland could not have been the paramount one. He found in the Muslim League a convenient instrument for advancing his ideas and ideals as well as his ambitions. ne refusal of the Congress to form a coalition ministry with the League in the United Provinces after the elections of 1936-37 furnished him with the necessary *causis belli*. Taking a more realistic view of the episode, the Sapru Report says: 'There was no knowing when it (Congress) might have to resume the conflict. The maintenance of party discipline and solidarity was, therefore, considered as of prime importance. The theory of undiluted party government thereby received additional strength.' The Report adds: 'Personal disappointments brought factions and increased both the strength and virulence of opposition.'¹⁰ The relations of Nehru, who has been unjustly condemned as the villain of the piece, with the U.P. League leaders remained cordial long after the event. For instance, ChoudhuriKhaliquz-Zaman, a prominent leader of the League in the province, wrote to Nehru an intimate letter on November 28, 1937 in which he said: 'As soon as the Congress will embark on any active programme of fighting (against the British

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imperialism), I hope the League will not lag behind, but will fight in closest association with the Congress. Similarly, in regard to the work inside the legislature, the League has fully endorsed the Wardha programme and its members are bound to support it.' But facts were not relevant to the League's campaign, formidable indictments were drawn up against the Congress and given wide publicity. The Pirpur Report, published at the end of 1938, that is, in less than 1^{1/2} years after advent of the Congress to power, declared in all solemnity that 'the Muslims think that no tyranny can be as great as the tyranny of the majority'—a truism that proved nothing against the target of the League's attack. In the following year, two more such accusations were published, reiterating the familiar complaints against the Congress. Sir Harry Haig, former Governor of the United Provinces, said: 'In dealing with questions raising communal issues, the Ministers, in my judgment, normally acted with impartiality and a desire to do what was fair. The Congress administration on its constructive side has been inspired by enthusiasm, imagination and a considerable degree of idealism.' The London Times wrote that the Congress Ministers were 'well-disposed towards the Muslims', while Professor Coupland, wrote that as an impartial investigator would come, I think, to the conclusion that many of these charges (by the League) were exaggerated or of little serious moment, that many of the incidents complained of were due to irresponsible members of the Congress party, and that the case against the Congress Governments as deliberately pursuing an anti-Muslim policy was certainly not proved.' In spite of the manifest untenability of the League's agitation, the Congress leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rajendra Prasad and Azad, sought to elicit from Jinnah, both through correspondence and by personal contacts, the precise nature of his complaints against their organisation. In order to clinch the Issue, Maulana Azad, the Congress President, wrote to Jinnah on October 5, 1939 suggesting that the 'highest judicial authority in India,' Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of the Federal Court, should be requested to report whether the Congress administration had in fact been tyrannical to the Muslim minorities. The League leader rejected the offer on the ground that he had placed the matter before the Viceroy who was, he said, ' the proper authority to take such action and adopt such measures as would meet our requirements.' It was of course, too much to expect – and Jinnah evidently knew it – that the Viceroy would entertain any such extraordinary request.¹¹

All such controversies, however, proved futile with the outbreak of the war which brought new and intractable problems in its train. The League leader intelligently anticipated that the attitude of the

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Congress towards the crisis would inevitably place him on the pinnacle of negative power. On December 22, 1939, his party celebrated what it called the Deliverance Day to mark the 'emancipation' of his co-religionists from what it regarded as the monstrous misrule of the Congress and thus inexorably turned its back not only on the great national organisation but also on an India as she was known to her children from time immemorial. With a candour unusual in a man of his reserved disposition, Jinnah said in March 1940: 'After the war was declared the Viceroy naturally wanted help from the League. Suddenly there came a change in the attitude of the Viceroy towards me. I was treated on the same basis as Mr. Gandhi. This was the severest blow to the Congress High Command. I was wonder-struck why all of a sudden I was promoted and given a place side by side with Mr. Gandhi. The answer was the All-India Muslim League.'¹² He, therefore, disdained to meet the Congress except on his own terms, especially when Linlithgow was so desperately anxious to cultivate his friendship. Soon after the Congress divested itself of the responsibilities of government, a revealing correspondence began between the Viceroy and the League leader, both of whom set out to decide the fate of India with the full consent of the British Government. In a letter dated November 5, 1939, Jinnah asked the Viceroy that no declaration should be made by the British Government or any constitution enacted 'without the approval and consent of the two major communities of India, viz., the Mussalmans and the Hindus.' Evidently, it was still premature for him to declare that the Muslims constituted a separate nation. Being an astute man, he regulated his demands strictly in terms of the response he received from the other side. As will be seen presently, he soon dropped the Hindus from his consideration as an element that needed to be consulted when determining the country's future. Linlithgow, in his reply of December 23, assured Jinnah that 'His Majesty's Government are not under any misapprehension as to the importance of the contentment of the Muslim community to the stability and success of any constitutional developments in India. You need, therefore, have no fear that the weight which your community's position in India necessarily gives their views will be underrated.'

The League leader had no doubt about the significance of the Viceroy's assurance, but the situation was so favourable to him that he demanded an even more categorical pledge concerning his community. He, therefore, asked in his letter of February 23, 1940 for a definite promise that 'no commitments will be made with regard to the future constitution of India or any interim settlement

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with any other party, without our approval and consent.' The majority community and the other minorities in the country were thus jettisoned from the political picture. Jinnah promised to throw the entire weight of his party on the side of the British Government in the prosecution of the war if the latter realised the wisdom of trusting the leadership of the Muslims, especially 'where the question of determining their own future is concerned.' The offer was too good, and in the context of the Congress' hostile attitude, too invaluable to be treated lightly. There cannot be any doubt that the famous partition resolution, adopted by the Muslim League at its Lahore session on March 22-24, 1940, was the direct outcome of the open encouragement given to its leader to make whatever demands he chose upon the British Government. The Lahore resolution maintained that "no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'Independent States' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign

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