

Sir Muhammad Iqbal's 1930 Presidential Address to the 25th Session of the All-India Muslim League Allahabad, 29 December 1930

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Gentlemen, I am deeply grateful to you for the honour you have conferred upon me in inviting me to preside over the deliberations of the All-India Muslim League at one of the most critical moments in the history of Muslim political thought and activity in India. I have no doubt that in this great assembly there are men whose political experience is far more extensive than mine, and for whose knowledge of affairs I have the highest respect. It will, therefore, be presumptuous on my part to claim to guide an assembly of such men in the political decisions which they are called upon to make today. I lead no party; I follow no leader. I have given the best part of my life to a careful study of Islam, its law and polity, its culture, its history and its literature. This constant contact with the spirit of Islam, as it unfolds itself in time, has, I think, given me a kind of insight into its significance as a world fact. It is in the light of this insight, whatever its value, that, while assuming that the Muslims of India are determined to remain true to the spirit of Islam, I propose not to guide you in your decisions, but to attempt the humbler task of bringing clearly to your consciousness the main principle which, in my opinion, should determine the general character of these decisions.

1. Islam and Nationalism

{1.1} It cannot be denied that Islam, regarded as an ethical ideal plus a certain kind of polity — by which expression I mean a social structure regulated by a legal system and animated by a specific ethical ideal — has been the chief formative factor in the life-history of the Muslims of India. It has furnished those basic emotions and loyalties which gradually unify scattered individuals and groups, and finally transform them into a well-defined people, possessing a moral consciousness of their own. Indeed it is not an exaggeration to say that India is perhaps the only country in the world where Islam, as a people-building force, has worked at its best. In India, as elsewhere, the structure of Islam as a society is almost entirely due to the working of Islam as a culture inspired by a specific ethical ideal. What I mean to say is that Muslim society, with its remarkable homogeneity and inner unity, has grown to be what it is, under the pressure of the laws and institutions associated with the culture of Islam.

{1.2} The ideas set free by European political thinking, however, are now rapidly changing the outlook of the present generation of Muslims both in India and outside India. Our younger men, inspired by these ideas, are anxious to see them as living forces in their own countries, without any critical appreciation of the facts which have determined their evolution in Europe. In Europe Christianity was understood to be a purely monastic order which gradually developed into a vast church organisation. The protest of Luther was directed against this church organisation, not against any system of polity of a secular nature, for the obvious reason that there was no such polity associated with Christianity. And Luther was perfectly justified in rising in revolt against this organisation; though, I think, he did not realise that in the peculiar conditions which obtained in Europe, his revolt would eventually mean the complete displacement of [the] universal ethics of Jesus by the growth of a plurality of national and hence narrower systems of ethics.

{1.3} Thus the upshot of the intellectual movement initiated by such men as Rousseau and Luther was the break-up of the one into [the] mutually ill-adjusted many, the transformation of a human into a national outlook, requiring a more realistic foundation, such as the notion of country, and finding expression through varying systems of polity evolved on national lines, i.e. on lines which recognise territory as the only principle of political solidarity. If you begin with the conception of religion as complete other-worldliness, then what has happened to Christianity in Europe is perfectly natural. The universal ethics of Jesus is displaced by national systems of ethics and polity. The conclusion to which Europe is consequently driven is that religion is a private affair of the individual and has nothing to do with what is called man's temporal life.

{1.4} Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. In Islam God and the universe, spirit and matter, Church and State, are organic to each other. Man is not the citizen of a profane world to be renounced in the interest of a world of spirit situated elsewhere. To Islam, matter is spirit realising itself in space and time. Europe uncritically accepted the duality of spirit and matter, probably from Manichaeism. Her best thinkers are realising this initial mistake today, but her statesmen are indirectly forcing the world to accept it as an unquestionable dogma. It is, then, this mistaken separation of spiritual and temporal which has largely influenced European religious and political thought and has resulted practically in the total exclusion of Christianity from the life of European States. The result is a set of mutually ill-adjusted States dominated by interests not human but national. And these mutually ill-adjusted States, after trampling over the moral and religious convictions of Christianity, are today feeling the need of a federated Europe, i.e. the need of a unity which the Christian church organisation originally gave them, but which, instead of reconstructing it in the light of Christ's vision of human brotherhood, they considered fit to destroy under the inspiration of Luther.

{1.4} A Luther in the world of Islam, however, is an impossible phenomenon; for here there is no church organisation similar to that of Christianity in the Middle Ages, inviting a destroyer. In the world of Islam we have a universal polity whose fundamentals are believed to have been revealed but whose structure, owing to our legists' [=legal theorists'] want of contact with the modern world, today stands in need of renewed power by fresh adjustments. I do not know what will be the final fate of the national idea in the world of Islam. Whether Islam will assimilate and transform it, as it has before assimilated and transformed many ideas expressive of a different spirit, or allow a radical transformation of its own structure by the force of this idea, is hard to predict. Professor Wensinck of Leiden (Holland) wrote to me the other day: "It seems to me that Islam is entering upon a crisis through which Christianity has been passing for more than a century. The great difficulty is how to save the foundations of religion when many antiquated notions have to be given up. It seems to me scarcely possible to state what the outcome will be for Christianity, still less what it will be for Islam." At the present moment the national idea is racialising the outlook of Muslims, and thus materially counteracting the humanizing work of Islam. And the growth of racial consciousness may mean the growth of standards different [from] and even opposed to the standards of Islam.

{1.5} I hope you will pardon me for this apparently academic discussion. To address this session of the All-India Muslim League you have selected a man who is [=has] not despaired of Islam as a living force for freeing the outlook of man from its geographical limitations, who believes that religion is a power of the utmost importance in the life of individuals as well as States, and finally who believes that *Islam is itself Destiny and will not suffer a destiny*. Such a man cannot but look at matters from his own point of view. Do not think that the problem I am indicating is a purely theoretical one. It is a very living and practical problem calculated to affect the very fabric of Islam as a system of life and conduct. On a proper solution of it alone depends your future as a distinct cultural unit in India. Never in our history has Islam had to stand a greater trial than the one which confronts it today. It is open to a people to modify, reinterpret or reject the foundational principles of their social structure; but it is absolutely necessary for them to see clearly what they are doing before they undertake to try a fresh experiment. Nor should the way in which I am approaching this important problem lead anybody to think that I intend to quarrel with those who happen to think differently. You are a Muslim assembly and, I suppose, anxious to remain true to the spirit and ideals of Islam. My sole desire, therefore, is to tell you frankly what I honestly believe to be the truth about the present situation. In this way alone it is possible for me to illuminate, according to my light, the avenues of your political action.

2. The Unity of an Indian Nation

{2.1} What, then, is the problem and its implications? Is religion a private affair? Would you like to see Islam as a moral and political ideal, meeting the same fate in the world of Islam as Christianity has already met in Europe? Is it possible to retain Islam as an ethical ideal and to reject it as a polity, in favor of national polities in which [the] religious attitude is not permitted to play any part? This question becomes of special importance in India, where the Muslims happen to be a minority. The proposition that religion is a private individual experience is not surprising on the lips of a European. In Europe the conception of Christianity as a monastic order, renouncing the world of matter and fixing its gaze entirely on the world of spirit, led, by a logical process of thought, to the view embodied in this proposition. The nature of the Prophet's religious experience, as disclosed in the Quran, however, is wholly different. It is not mere experience in the sense of a purely biological event, happening inside the experient and necessitating no reactions on its social environment. It is individual experience creative of a social order. Its immediate outcome is the fundamentals of a polity with implicit legal concepts whose civic significance cannot be belittled merely because their origin is revelational.

{2.2} The religious ideal of Islam, therefore, is organically related to the social order which it has created. The rejection of the one will eventually involve the rejection of the other. Therefore the construction of a polity on national lines, if it means a displacement of the Islamic principle of solidarity, is simply unthinkable to a Muslim. This is a matter which at the present moment directly concerns the Muslims of India. "Man," says Renan, "is enslaved neither by his race, nor by his religion, nor by the course of rivers, nor by the direction of mountain ranges. A great aggregation of men, sane of mind and warm of heart, creates a moral consciousness which is called a nation." Such a formation is quite possible, though it involves the long and arduous process of practically remaking men and furnishing them with a fresh emotional equipment. It might have been a fact in India if the teaching of Kabir and the Divine Faith of Akbar had seized the imagination of the masses of this country. Experience, however, shows that the various caste units and religious units in India have shown no inclination to sink their respective individualities in a larger whole. Each group is intensely jealous of its collective existence. The formation of the kind of moral consciousness which constitutes the essence of a nation in Renan's sense demands a price which the peoples of India are not prepared to pay.

{2.3} The unity of an Indian nation, therefore, must be sought not in the negation, but in the mutual harmony and cooperation, of the many. True statesmanship cannot ignore facts, however unpleasant they may be. The only practical course is not to assume the existence of a state of things which does not exist, but to recognise facts as they are, and to exploit them to our greatest advantage. And it is on the discovery of Indian unity in this direction that the fate of India as well as of Asia really depends. India is Asia in miniature. Part of her people have cultural affinities with nations of the east, and part with nations in the middle and west of Asia. If an effective principle of cooperation is discovered in India, it will bring peace and mutual goodwill to this ancient land which has suffered so long, more because of her situation in historic space than because of any inherent incapacity of her people. And it will at the same time solve the entire political problem of Asia.

{2.4} It is, however, painful to observe that our attempts to discover such a principle of internal harmony have so far failed. Why have they failed? Perhaps we suspect each other's intentions and inwardly aim at dominating each other. Perhaps, in the higher interests of mutual cooperation, we cannot afford to part with the monopolies which circumstances have placed in our hands, and [thus we] conceal our egoism under the cloak of nationalism, outwardly simulating a large-hearted patriotism, but inwardly as narrow-minded as a caste or tribe. Perhaps we are unwilling to recognise that each group has a right to free development according to its own cultural traditions. But whatever may be the causes of our failure, I still feel hopeful. Events seem to be tending in the direction of some sort of internal harmony. And as far as I have been able to read the Muslim mind, I have no hesitation in declaring that if the principle that the Indian Muslim is entitled to full and free development on the lines of his own culture and tradition in his own Indian home-lands is recognized as the basis of a permanent communal settlement, he will be ready to stake his all for the freedom of India.

{2.5} The principle that each group is entitled to its free development on its own lines is not inspired by any feeling of narrow communalism. There are communalisms and communalisms. A community which is inspired by feelings of ill-will towards other communities is low and ignoble. I entertain the highest respect for the customs, laws, religious and social institutions of other communities. Nay, it is my duty, according to the

teaching of the Quran, even to defend their places of worship, if need be. *Yet I love the communal group which is the source of my life and behaviour; and which has formed me what I am by giving me its religion, its literature, its thought, its culture, and thereby recreating its whole past as a living operative factor, in my present consciousness.* Even the authors of the Nehru Report recognise the value of this higher aspect of communalism. While discussing the separation of Sind they say, "To say from the larger viewpoint of nationalism that no communal provinces should be created, is, in a way, equivalent to saying from the still wider international viewpoint that there should be no separate nations. Both these statements have a measure of truth in them. But the staunchest internationalist recognises that without the fullest national autonomy it is extraordinarily difficult to create the international State. *So also without the fullest cultural autonomy — and communalism in its better aspect is culture — it will be difficult to create a harmonious nation.*"

3. Muslim India within India

{3.1} Communalism in its higher aspect, then, is indispensable to the formation of a harmonious whole in a country like India. The units of Indian society are not territorial as in European countries. India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages, and professing different religions. Their behaviour is not at all determined by a common race-consciousness. Even the Hindus do not form a homogeneous group. The principle of European democracy cannot be applied to India without recognising the fact of communal groups. The Muslim demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is, therefore, perfectly justified. The resolution of the All-Parties Muslim Conference at Delhi is, to my mind, wholly inspired by this noble ideal of a harmonious whole which, instead of stifling the respective individualities of its component wholes, affords them chances of fully working out the possibilities that may be latent in them. And I have no doubt that this House will emphatically endorse the Muslim demands embodied in this resolution.

{3.2} Personally, I would go farther than the demands embodied in it. *I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India.* The proposal was put forward before the Nehru Committee. They rejected it on the ground that, if carried into effect, it would give a very unwieldy State. This is true in so far as the area is concerned; in point of population, the State contemplated by the proposal would be much less than some of the present Indian provinces. The exclusion of Ambala Division, and perhaps of some districts where non-Muslims predominate, will make it less extensive and more Muslim in population — so that the exclusion suggested will enable this consolidated State to give a more effective protection to non-Muslim minorities within its area. The idea need not alarm the Hindus or the British. India is the greatest Muslim country in the world. The life of Islam as a cultural force in the country very largely depends on its centralisation in a specified territory. This centralisation of the most living portion of the Muslims of India, whose military and police service has, notwithstanding unfair treatment from the British, made the British rule possible in this country, will eventually solve the problem of India as well as of Asia. It will intensify their sense of responsibility and deepen their patriotic feeling.

{3.3} Thus, possessing full opportunity of development within the body politic of India, the North-West Indian Muslims will prove the best defenders of India against a foreign invasion, be that invasion one of ideas or of bayonets. The Punjab with 56 percent Muslim population supplies 54 percent of the total combatant troops in the Indian Army, and if the 19,000 Gurkhas recruited from the independent State of Nepal are excluded, the Punjab contingent amounts to 62 percent of the whole Indian Army. This percentage does not take into account nearly 6,000 combatants supplied to the Indian Army by the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. From this you can easily calculate the possibilities of North-West Indian Muslims in regard to the defence of India against foreign aggression. The Right Hon'ble Mr. Srinivasa Sastri thinks that the Muslim demand for the creation of autonomous Muslim states along the north-west border is actuated by a desire "to acquire means of exerting pressure in emergencies on the Government of India." I may frankly tell him that the Muslim demand is not actuated by the kind of motive he imputes to us; it is actuated by a genuine desire for free development which is practically impossible under the type of unitary government contemplated by the nationalist Hindu politicians with a view to secure permanent communal dominance in the whole of India.

{3.4} Nor should the Hindus fear that the creation of autonomous Muslim states will mean the introduction of a kind of religious rule in such states. I have already indicated to you the meaning of the word religion, as applied to Islam. The truth is that Islam is not a Church. It is a State conceived as a contractual organism long before Rousseau ever thought of such a thing, and animated by an ethical ideal which regards man not as an earth-rooted creature, defined by this or that portion of the earth, but as a spiritual being understood in terms of a social mechanism, and possessing rights and duties as a living factor in that mechanism. The character of a Muslim State can be judged from what the *Times of India* pointed out some time ago in a leader [=front-page article] on the Indian Banking Inquiry Committee. "In ancient India," the paper points out, "the State framed laws regulating the rates of interest; but in Muslim times, although Islam clearly forbids the realisation of interest on money loaned, Indian Muslim States imposed no restrictions on such rates." I therefore demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim State in the best interests of India and Islam. For India, it means security and peace resulting from an internal balance of power; for Islam, an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian Imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilise its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times.

4. Federal States

{4.1} Thus it is clear that in view of India's infinite variety in climates, races, languages, creeds and social systems, the creation of autonomous States, based on the unity of language, race, history, religion and identity of economic interests, is the only possible way to secure a stable constitutional structure in India. The conception of federation underlying the Simon Report necessitates the abolition of the Central Legislative Assembly as a popular assembly, and makes it an assembly of the representatives of federal States. It further demands a redistribution of territory on the lines which I have indicated. And the Report does recommend both. I give my wholehearted support to this view of the matter, and venture to suggest that the redistribution recommended in the Simon Report must fulfill two conditions. It must precede the introduction of the new constitution, and must be so devised as to finally solve the communal problem. Proper redistribution will make the question of joint and separate electorates automatically disappear from the constitutional controversy of India. It is the present structure of the provinces that is largely responsible for this controversy.

{4.2} The Hindu thinks that separate electorates are contrary to the spirit of true nationalism, because he understands the word nation to mean a kind of universal amalgamation in which no communal entity ought to retain its private individuality. Such a state of things, however, does not exist. Nor is it desirable that it should exist. India is a land of racial and religious variety. Add to this the general economic inferiority of the Muslims, their enormous debt, especially in the Punjab, and their insufficient majorities in some of the provinces as at present constituted, and you will begin to see clearly the meaning of our anxiety to retain separate electorates. In such a country and in such circumstances territorial electorates cannot secure adequate representation of all interests, and must inevitably lead to the creation of an oligarchy. The Muslims of India can have no objection to purely territorial electorates if provinces are demarcated so as to secure comparatively homogeneous communities possessing linguistic, racial, cultural and religious unity.

5. Federation As Understood in the Simon Report

{5.1} But in so far as the question of the powers of the Central Federal State is concerned, there is a subtle difference of motive in the constitutions proposed by the pundits of India and the pundits of England. The pundits of India do not disturb the Central authority as it stands at present. All that they desire is that this authority should become fully responsible to the Central Legislature which they maintain intact and where their majority will become further reinforced on the nominated element ceasing to exist. The pundits of England, on the other hand, realising that democracy in the Centre tends to work contrary to their interests and is likely to absorb the whole power now in their hands, in case a further advance is made towards responsible government, have shifted the experience of democracy from the Centre to the provinces. No doubt, they introduce the principle of Federation and appear to have made a beginning by making certain proposals; yet their evaluation of this principle is determined by considerations wholly different to those which determine its value in the eyes of Muslim India. The Muslims demand federation because it is pre-eminently a solution of India's most difficult problem, i.e. the communal problem. The Royal Commissioners' view of federation, though sound in principle, does not seem to aim at responsible government for federal States. Indeed it does

not go beyond providing means of escape from the situation which the introduction of democracy in India has created for the British, and wholly disregards the communal problem by leaving it where it was.

{5.2} Thus it is clear that, in so far as real federation is concerned, the Simon Report virtually negatives the principle of federation in its true significance. The Nehru Report, realising [a] Hindu majority in the Central Assembly, reaches a unitary form of government because such an institution secures Hindu dominance throughout India; the Simon Report retains the present British dominance behind the thin veneer of an unreal federation, partly because the British are naturally unwilling to part with the power they have so long wielded and partly because it is possible for them, in the absence of an inter-communal understanding in India, to make out a plausible case for the retention of that power in their own hands. To my mind a unitary form of government is simply unthinkable in a self-governing India. What is called “residuary powers” must be left entirely to self-governing States, the Central Federal State exercising only those powers which are expressly vested in it by the free consent of federal States. I would never advise the Muslims of India to agree to a system, whether of British or of Indian origin, which virtually negatives the principle of true federation, or fails to recognise them as a distinct political entity.

6. Federal Scheme As Discussed in the Round Table Conference

{6.1} The necessity for a structural change in the Central Government was seen probably long before the British discovered the most effective means for introducing this change. That is why at rather a late stage it was announced that the participation of the Indian Princes in the Round Table Conference was essential. It was a kind of surprise to the people of India, particularly the minorities, to see the Indian Princes dramatically expressing their willingness at the Round Table Conference to join an all-India federation and, as a result of their declaration, Hindu delegates — uncompromising advocates of a unitary form of government — quietly agreeing to the evolution of a federal scheme. Even Mr. Sastri who only a few days before had severely criticised Sir John Simon for recommending a federal scheme for India, suddenly became a convert and admitted his conversion in the plenary session of the Conference — thus offering the Prime Minister of England an occasion for one of his wittiest observations in his concluding speech. All this has a meaning both for the British who have sought the participation of the Indian Princes, and for the Hindus who have unhesitatingly accepted the evolution of an all-India federation. The truth is that the participation of the Indian Princes, among whom only a few are Muslims, in a federation scheme serves a double purpose. On the one hand, it serves as an all-important factor in maintaining the British power in India practically as it is; on the other hand, it gives [an] overwhelming majority to the Hindus in an All-India Federal Assembly.

{6.2} It appears to me that the Hindu-Muslim differences regarding the ultimate form of the Central Government are being cleverly exploited by British politicians through the agency of the Princes who see in the scheme prospects of better security for their despotic rule. If the Muslims silently agree to any such scheme, it will simply hasten their end as a political entity in India. The policy of the Indian federation thus created, will be practically controlled by [the] Hindu Princes forming the largest group in the Central Federal Assembly. They will always lend their support to the Crown in matters of Imperial concern; and in so far as internal administration of the country is concerned, they will help in maintaining and strengthening the supremacy of the Hindus. In other words, the scheme appears to be aiming at a kind of understanding between Hindu India and British Imperialism — you perpetuate me in India, and I in return give you a Hindu oligarchy to keep all other Indian communities in perpetual subjection. If, therefore, the British Indian provinces are not transformed into really autonomous States, the Princes’ participation in a scheme of Indian federation will be interpreted only as a dexterous move on the part of British politicians to satisfy, without parting with any real power, all parties concerned — Muslims with the *word* federation; Hindus with a majority in the Centre; the British Imperialists — with the *substance* of real power.

{6.3} The number of Hindu States in India is far greater than Muslim States; and it remains to be seen how the Muslim demand for 33 percent [of the] seats in the Central Federal Assembly is to be met within a House or Houses constituted of representatives taken from British India as well as Indian States. I hope the Muslim delegates are fully aware of the implications of the federal scheme as discussed in the Round Table Conference. The question of Muslim representation in the proposed all-India federation has not yet been discussed. “The interim report,” says Reuters’ summary, “contemplates two chambers in the Federal Legislature, each

containing representatives both of British India and States, the proportion of which will be a matter of subsequent consideration under the heads which have not yet been referred to the Sub-Committee." In my opinion the question of proportion is of the utmost importance and ought to have been considered simultaneously with the main question of the structure of the Assembly.

{6.4} The best course, I think, would have been to start with a British Indian Federation only. A federal scheme born of an unholy union between democracy and despotism cannot but keep British India in the same vicious circle of a unitary Central Government. Such a unitary form may be of the greatest advantage to the British, to the majority community in British India, and to the Indian Princes; it can be of no advantage to the Muslims, unless they get majority rights in five out of eleven Indian provinces with full residuary powers, and one-third share of seats in the total House of the Federal Assembly. In so far as the attainment of sovereign powers by the British Indian provinces is concerned, the position of His Highness the Ruler of Bhopal, Sir Akbar Hydari, and Mr. Jinnah is unassailable. In view, however, of the participation of the Princes in the Indian Federation, we must now see our demand for representation in the British Indian Assembly in a new light. The question is not one of [the] Muslim share in a British Indian Assembly, but one which relates to representation of British Indian Muslims in an All-India Federal Assembly. Our demand for 33 per cent must now be taken as a demand for the same proportion in the All-India Federal Assembly, exclusive of the share allotted to the Muslim states entering the Federation.

7. The Problem of Defence

{7.1} The other difficult problem which confronts the successful working of a federal system in India is the problem of India's defence. In their discussion of this problem the Royal Commissioners have marshalled all the deficiencies of India in order to make out a case for Imperial administration of the Army. "India and Britain," say the Commissioners, "are so related that India's defence cannot, *now or in any future which is within sight*, be regarded as a matter of purely Indian concern. The control and direction of such an army must rest in the hands of agents of Imperial Government." Now, does it [not] necessarily follow from this that further progress towards the realisation of responsible government in British India is barred until the work of defence can be adequately discharged without the help of British officers and British troops? *As things are, there is a block on the line of constitutional advance.* All hopes of evolution in the Central Government towards the ultimate goal prescribed in the declaration of 20th August 1917, are in danger of being indefinitely frustrated, if the attitude illustrated by the Nehru Report is maintained, that any future change involves the putting of the administration of the army under the authority of an elected Indian Legislature. Further to fortify their argument they emphasize the fact of competing religions and rival races of widely different capacity, and try to make the problem look insoluble by remarking that "the obvious fact that India is not, in the ordinary and natural sense, a single nation is nowhere made more plain than in considering the difference between the martial races of India and the rest." These features of the question have been emphasised in order to demonstrate that the British are not only keeping India secure from foreign menace but are also the "neutral guardians" of internal security.

{7.2} However, in federated India, as I understand federation, the problem will have only one aspect, i.e. external defence. Apart from provincial armies necessary for maintaining internal peace, the Indian Federal Congress can maintain, on the north-west frontier, a strong Indian Frontier Army, composed of units recruited from all provinces and officered by efficient and experienced military men taken from all communities. I know that India is not in possession of efficient military officers, and this fact is exploited by the Royal Commissioners in the interest of an argument for Imperial administration. On this point I cannot but quote another passage from the Report which, to my mind, furnishes the best argument against the position taken up by the Commissioners. "At the present moment," says the Report, "no Indian holding the King's Commission is of higher army rank than a captain. There are, we believe, 39 captains of whom 25 are in ordinary regimental employ. Some of them are of an age which would prevent their attaining much higher rank, even if they passed the necessary examination before retirement. Most of these have not been through Sandhurst, but got their Commissions during the Great War." Now, however genuine may be the desire, and however earnest the endeavour to work for this transformation, overriding conditions have been so forcibly expressed by the Sken Committee (whose members, apart from the Chairman and the Army Secretary, were Indian gentlemen) in these words: Progress...must be contingent upon success being secured at each stage and upon military

efficiency being maintained, though it must in any case render such development measured and slow. A higher command cannot be evolved at short notice out of existing cadres of Indian officers, all of junior rank and limited experience. Not until the slender trickle of suitable Indian recruits for the officer class — and we earnestly desire an increase in their numbers — flows in much greater volume, not until sufficient Indians have attained the experience and training requisite to provide all the officers for, at any rate, some Indian regiments, not until such units have stood the only test which can possibly determine their efficiency, and not until Indian officers have qualified by a successful army career for the high command, will it be possible to develop the policy of Indianisation to a point which will bring a completely Indianised army within sight. Even then years must elapse before the process could be completed.”

{7.3} Now I venture to ask: who is responsible for the present state of things? Is it due to some inherent incapacity of our martial races, or to the slowness of the process of military training? The military capacity of our martial races is undeniable. The process of military training may be slow as compared to other processes of human training. I am no military expert to judge this matter. But as a layman I feel that the argument, as stated, assumes the process to be practically endless. This means perpetual bondage for India, and makes it all the more necessary that the Frontier Army, as suggested by the Nehru Report, be entrusted to the charge of a committee of defence, the personnel of which may be settled by mutual understanding.

{7.4} Again, it is significant that the Simon Report has given extraordinary importance to the question of India's land frontier, but has made only passing references to its naval position. India has doubtless had to face invasions from her land frontier; but it is obvious that her present masters took possession of her on account of her defenceless sea coast. A self-governing and free India will, in these days, have to take greater care of her sea coast than [of her] land frontiers.

{7.5} I have no doubt that if a Federal Government is established, Muslim federal States will willingly agree, for purposes of India's defence, to the creation of neutral Indian military and naval forces. Such a neutral military force for the defence of India was a reality in the days of Mughal rule. Indeed in the time of Akbar the Indian frontier was, on the whole, defended by armies officered by Hindu generals. I am perfectly sure that the scheme for a neutral Indian army, based on a federated India, will intensify Muslim patriotic feeling, and finally set at rest the suspicion, if any, of Indian Muslims joining Muslims from beyond the frontier in the event of an invasion.

8. The Alternative

{8.1} I have thus tried briefly to indicate the way in which the Muslims of India ought, in my opinion, to look at the two most important constitutional problems of India. A redistribution of British India, calculated to secure a permanent solution of the communal problem, is the main demand of the Muslims of India. If, however, the Muslim demand of a territorial solution of the communal problem is ignored, then I support, as emphatically as possible, the Muslim demands repeatedly urged by the All-India Muslim League and the All-India Muslim Conference. The Muslims of India cannot agree to any constitutional changes which affect their majority rights, to be secured by separate electorates in the Punjab and Bengal, or [which] fail to guarantee them 33 percent representation in any Central Legislature. There were two pitfalls into which Muslim political leaders fell. The first was the repudiated Lucknow Pact, which originated in a false view of Indian nationalism and deprived the Muslims of India of chances of acquiring any political power in India. The second is the narrow-visioned sacrifice of Islamic solidarity, in the interests of what may be called Punjab ruralism, resulting in a proposal which virtually reduces the Punjab Muslims to a position of minority. It is the duty of the League to condemn both the Pact and the proposal.

{8.2} The Simon Report does great injustice to the Muslims in not recommending a statutory majority for the Punjab and Bengal. It would make the Muslims either stick to the Lucknow Pact or agree to a scheme of joint electorates. The despatch of the Government of India on the Simon Report admits that since the publication of that document the Muslim community has not expressed its willingness to accept any of the alternatives proposed by the Report. The despatch recognises that it may be a legitimate grievance to deprive the Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal of representation in the councils in proportion to their population merely because of weightage allowed to Muslim minorities elsewhere. But the despatch of the Government of India fails to correct

the injustice of the Simon Report. In so far as the Punjab is concerned — and this is the most crucial point — it endorses the so-called “carefully balanced scheme” worked out by the official members of the Punjab Government which gives the Punjab Muslims a majority of two over Hindus and Sikhs combined, and a proportion of 49 percent of the House as a whole. It is obvious that the Punjab Muslims cannot be satisfied with less than a clear majority in the total House. However, Lord Irwin and his Government do recognise that the justification for communal electorates for majority communities would not cease unless and until by the extension of franchise their voting strength more correctly reflects their population; and further unless a two-thirds majority of the Muslim members in a provincial Council unanimously agree to surrender the right of separate representation. I cannot, however, understand why the Government of India, having recognised the legitimacy of the Muslim grievances, have not had the courage to recommend a statutory majority for the Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal.

{8.3} Nor can the Muslims of India agree to any such changes which fail to create at least Sind as a separate province and treat the North-West Frontier Province as a province of inferior political status. I see no reason why Sind should not be united with Baluchistan and turned into a separate province. It has nothing in common with Bombay Presidency. In point of life and civilization the Royal Commissioners find it more akin to Mesopotamia and Arabia than India. The Muslim geographer Mas’udi noticed this kinship long ago when he said: “Sind is a country *nearer* to the dominions of Islam.” The first Omayyad ruler is reported to have said of Egypt: “Egypt has her back towards Africa and face towards Arabia.” With necessary alterations the same remark describes the exact situation of Sind. She has her back towards India and face towards Central Asia. Considering further the nature of her agricultural problems which can invoke no sympathy from the Bombay Government, and her infinite commercial possibilities, dependent on the inevitable growth of Karachi into a second metropolis of India, it is unwise to keep her attached to a Presidency which, though friendly today, is likely to become a rival at no distant period. Financial difficulties, we are told, stand in the way of separation. I do not know of any definite authoritative pronouncement on the matter. But assuming there are any such difficulties, I see no reason why the Government of India should not give temporary financial help to a promising province in her struggle for independent progress.

{8.4} As to the North-West Frontier Province, it is painful to note that the Royal Commissioners have practically denied that the people of this province have any right to reform. They fall far short of the Bray Committee, and the Council recommended by them is merely a screen to hide the autocracy of the Chief Commissioner. The inherent right of the Afghan to light a cigarette is curtailed merely because he happens to be living in a powder house. The Royal Commissioners’ epigrammatic argument is pleasant enough, but far from convincing. Political reform is light, not fire; and to light every human being is entitled, whether he happens to live in a powder house or a coal mine. Brave, shrewd, and determined to suffer for his legitimate aspirations, the Afghan is sure to resent any attempt to deprive him of opportunities of full self-development. To keep such a people contented is in the best interest of both England and India. What has recently happened in that unfortunate province is the result of a step-motherly treatment shown to the people since the introduction of the principle of self-government in the rest of India. I only hope that British statesmanship will not obscure its view of the situation by hoodwinking itself into the belief that the present unrest in the province is due to any extraneous causes.

{8.5} The recommendation for the introduction of a measure of reform in the North-West Frontier Province made in the Government of India’s despatch is also unsatisfactory. No doubt, the despatch goes farther than the Simon Report in recommending a sort of representative Council and a semi-representative cabinet, but it fails to treat this important Muslim province on [an] equal footing with other Indian provinces. Indeed the Afghan is, by instinct, more fitted for democratic institutions than any other people in India.

9. The Round Table Conference

{9.1} I think I am now called upon to make a few observations on the Round Table Conference. Personally I do not feel optimistic as to the results of this Conference. It was hoped that away from the actual scene of communal strife and in a changed atmosphere, better counsels would prevail and a genuine settlement of the differences between the two major communities of India would bring India’s freedom within sight. Actual events, however, tell a different tale. Indeed, the discussion of the communal question in London has

demonstrated more clearly than ever the essential disparity between the two great cultural units of India. Yet the Prime Minister of England apparently refuses to see that the problem of India is international and not national. He is reported to have said that "his government would find it difficult to submit to Parliament proposals for the maintenance of separate electorates, since joint electorates were much more in accordance with British democratic sentiments." Obviously he does not see that the model of British democracy cannot be of any use in a land of many nations; and that a system of separate electorates is only a poor substitute for a territorial solution of the problem. Nor is the Minorities Sub-Committee likely to reach a satisfactory settlement. The whole question will have to go before the British Parliament; and we can only hope that the keen-sighted representatives of [the] British nation, unlike most of our Indian politicians, will be able to pierce through the surface of things and see clearly the true fundamentals of peace and security in a country like India. To base a constitution on the concept of a homogeneous India, or to apply to India principles dictated by British democratic sentiments, is unwittingly to prepare her for a civil war. As far as I can see, there will be no peace in the country until the various peoples that constitute India are given opportunities of free self-development on modern lines without abruptly breaking with their past.

{9.2} I am glad to be able to say that our Muslim delegates fully realise the importance of a proper solution of what I call [the] Indian international problem. They are perfectly justified in pressing for a solution of the communal question before the question of responsibility in the Central Government is finally settled. No Muslim politician should be sensitive to the taunt embodied in that propaganda word — communalism — expressly devised to exploit what the Prime Minister calls British democratic sentiments, and to mislead England into assuming a state of things which does not really exist in India. Great interests are at stake. We are 70 millions, and far more homogeneous than any other people in India. Indeed the Muslims of India are the only Indian people who can fitly be described as a nation in the modern sense of the word. The Hindus, though ahead of us in almost all respects, have not yet been able to achieve the kind of homogeneity which is necessary for a nation, and which Islam has given you as a free gift. No doubt they are anxious to become a nation, but the process of becoming a nation is kind of travail, and in the case of Hindu India involves a complete overhauling of her social structure.

{9.3} Nor should the Muslim leaders and politicians allow themselves to be carried away by the subtle but fallacious argument that Turkey and Persia and other Muslim countries are progressing on national, i.e. territorial, lines. The Muslims of India are differently situated. The countries of Islam outside India are practically wholly Muslim in population. The minorities there belong, in the language of the Quran, to the 'people of the Book'. There are no social barriers between Muslims and the 'people of the Book'. A Jew or a Christian or a Zoroastrian does not pollute the food of a Muslim by touching it, and the law of Islam allows intermarriage with the 'people of the Book'. Indeed the first practical step that Islam took towards the realisation of a final combination of humanity was to call upon peoples possessing practically the same ethical ideal to come forward and combine. The Quran declares: "O people of the Book! Come, let us join together on the 'word' (Unity of God), that is common to us all." The wars of Islam and Christianity, and later, European aggression in its various forms, could not allow the infinite meaning of this verse to work itself out in the world of Islam. Today it is being gradually realised in the countries of Islam in the shape of what is called Muslim Nationalism.

{9.4} It is hardly necessary for me to add that the sole test of the success of our delegates is the extent to which they are able to get the non-Muslim delegates of the Conference to agree to our demands as embodied in the Delhi Resolution. If these demands are not agreed to, then a question of a very great and far-reaching importance will arise for the community. Then will arrive the moment for independent and concerted political action by the Muslims of India. If you are at all serious about your ideals and aspirations, you must be ready for such an action. Our leading men have done a good deal of political thinking, and their thought has certainly made us, more or less, sensitive to the forces which are now shaping the destinies of peoples in India and outside India. But, I ask, has this thinking prepared us for the kind of action demanded by the situation which may arise in the near future?

{9.5} Let me tell you frankly that, at the present moment, the Muslims of India are suffering from two evils. The first is the want of personalities. Sir Malcolm Hailey and Lord Irwin were perfectly correct in their diagnosis when they told the Aligarh University that the community had failed to produce leaders. By leaders I

mean men who, by Divine gift or experience, possess a keen perception of the spirit and destiny of Islam, along with an equally keen perception of the trend of modern history. Such men are really the driving forces of a people, but they are God's gift and cannot be made to order.

{9.6} The second evil from which the Muslims of India are suffering is that the community is fast losing what is called the herd instinct. This [loss] makes it possible for individuals and groups to start independent careers without contributing to the general thought and activity of the community. We are doing today in the domain of politics what we have been doing for centuries in the domain of religion. But sectional bickerings in religion do not do much harm to our solidarity. They at least indicate an interest in what makes the sole principle of our structure as a people. Moreover, the principle is so broadly conceived that it is almost impossible for a group to become rebellious to the extent of wholly detaching itself from the general body of Islam. But diversity in political action, at a moment when concerted action is needed in the best interests of the very life of our people, may prove fatal.

{9.7} How shall we, then, remedy these two evils? The remedy of the first evil is not in our hands. As to the second evil, I think it is possible to discover a remedy. I have got definite views on the subject; but I think it is proper to postpone their expression till the apprehended situation actually arises. In case it does arise, leading Muslims of all shades of opinion will have to meet together, not to pass resolutions, but finally to determine the Muslim attitude and to show the path to tangible achievement. In this address I mention this alternative only because I wish that you may keep it in mind and give some serious thought to it in the meantime.

10. The Conclusion

{10.1} Gentlemen, I have finished. In conclusion I cannot but impress upon you that the present crisis in the history of India demands complete organisation and unity of will and purpose in the Muslim community, both in your own interest as a community, and in the interest of India as a whole. The political bondage of India has been and is a source of infinite misery to the whole of Asia. It has suppressed the spirit of the East and wholly deprived her of that joy of self-expression which once made her the creator of a great and glorious culture. We have a duty towards India where we are destined to live and die. We have a duty towards Asia, especially Muslim Asia. And since 70 millions of Muslims in a single country constitute a far more valuable asset to Islam than all the countries of Muslim Asia put together, we must look at the Indian problem not only from the Muslim point of view, but also from the standpoint of the Indian Muslim as such. Our duty towards Asia and India cannot be loyally performed without an organised will fixed on a definite purpose. In your own interest, as a political entity among other political entities of India, such an equipment is an absolute necessity.

{10.2} Our disorganised condition has already confused political issues vital to the life of the community. I am not hopeless of an intercommunal understanding, but I cannot conceal from you the feeling that in the near future our community may be called upon to adopt an independent line of action to cope with the present crisis. And an independent line of political action, in such a crisis, is possible only to a determined people, possessing a will focalised by a single purpose. Is it possible for you to achieve the organic wholeness of a unified will? Yes, it is. Rise above sectional interests and private ambitions, and learn to determine the value of your individual and collective action, however directed on material ends, in the light of the ideal which you are supposed to represent. Pass from matter to spirit. Matter is diversity; spirit is light, life and unity.

{10.3} One lesson I have learnt from the history of Muslims. At critical moments in their history it is Islam that has saved Muslims and not vice versa. If today you focus your vision on Islam and seek inspiration from the ever-vitalising idea embodied in it, you will be only reassembling your scattered forces, regaining your lost integrity, and thereby saving yourself from total destruction. One of the profoundest verses in the Holy Quran teaches us that the birth and rebirth of the whole of humanity is like the birth and rebirth of a single individual. Why cannot you who, as a people, can well claim to be the first practical exponents of this superb conception of humanity, live and move and have your being as a single individual? I do not wish to mystify anybody when I say that things in India are not what they appear to be. The meaning of this, however, will dawn upon you only when you have achieved a real collective ego to look at them. In the words of the Quran, "Hold fast to yourself; no one who erreth can hurt you, provided you are well guided" (5:104).