

The Politics of Iqbal (1926-1938)

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Muhammad Iqbal returned to British India in September 1908.¹ The three years, he spent in England and Germany (1905-1908) had sufficiently equipped him with a mixture of Western and Islamic philosophy to be applied in later years in the British Indian environment from a Muslim viewpoint. He was different of what he was before. With his personal conviction duly supplemented by the political developments both in and outside British India made him to champion the cause of the Muslims both at world level as well as the Indian political scene.

The end of the World War 1 (1914-18) saw the end of the Ottoman Power of the Muslims in the Middle East, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and North Africa. Before this the Balkan Wars (1911-1914) had brought miseries to the Muslims in Eastern Europe. As a result of the First World War not only the mighty Ottoman Empire was reduced to a small modern state of Turkey, the institution of Muslim Caliphate was abolished in Turkey in 1924. The Muslims in British India also suffered greatly. These events in the Muslim world coupled by the miseries suffered by the Indian Muslims during the Non-Cooperation and the Khilafat Movements (1919-1924) were a great shock to Iqbal. Consequent upon these developments, the Hindu nationalism in the garb of Indian nationalism skillfully led by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi came to the forefront.

These events had a great impact on the thinking of Iqbal. A reflection of these developments can be seen in his poetic works, i.e., *Shikwah* (1911), *Jawab-i-Shikwah* (1912), *Asrar-i-Khudi* (1914), *Rumuz-i-Be Khudi* (1918), and *Payam-i-Mashriq* (1913).²

Iqbal was basically a poet-philosopher of the world of Islam. What he thought, he expressed in his Urdu³ and Persian⁴ poetry. The subject matter of his writings was revival of Islam in modern times and to safeguard future of the Muslims of South Asia. From 1908 to 1922 he reminded the Muslims of their glorious past and made them aware in the light of what they should do to face their problems. Most of his poetry was recited at the functions arranged by the *Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam*, Lahore. He never thought of himself entering politics until compelled by the circumstances after the failure of the Khilafat Movement and the rise of militant Hindu nationalism in the form of *Sangathan*, *Shuddhi* movements duly projected by the All India Hindu Mahasabha in 1920s. The All India Hindu Mahasabha had emerged such a strong force that even the Indian National Congress, founded in 1885 as a secular body, had become helpless and could not but function as a Hindu organisation.

This movement was started by Pandit M.M. Malaviya with these two objects:

1. To remove untouchability;
2. To popularize physical exercises and sword play among the Hindus to enable them to protect themselves.

For this purpose the *Sangathan* persuaded the Hindus to learn drill and the use of arms.⁵ The founder of the *Shuddhi* movement was Swami Sharadhanand. The Hindus started this movement aimed at the mass conversion of certain backward groups of Muslims who had adhered to some Hindu customs after having accepted Islam. The main instrument was social pressure. After the murder of the founder in 1927, this movement was not active any more. After this Rajendra Prasad mainly defended this movement. The Muslims replied with the Tabligh and Tanzeem movements.⁶

These factors led Iqbal to enter practical politics in 1926 by getting himself elected to the Punjab Legislative Council (Punjab Assembly). Thus the great philosopher entered the political arena with a mission to safeguard the future of the Muslims of the subcontinent. After serving his nation for about 12 years in the political field, Iqbal died on 21st April 1938 at a

time when the Muslim League had not yet made a change in its political goal.

Though Iqbal had died, his ideas remained alive. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah acknowledged that the views of Iqbal contained in the letters written to him were substantially in consonance with his own and had finally led him to the same conclusion through a careful examination, and study of the constitutional problems facing British India.⁷ Addressing 26th session of the All-India Muslim League (AIML) in December 1938 at Patna, the Quaid said: "His (Iqbal's) death is an irreparable loss to Muslim India".⁸

Iqbal had philosophical explanations to all the political problems faced by the Muslims. He had deeply watched the political functioning of the AIML since its birth in 1906. He knew how the hand of cooperation by AIML with Indian National Congress (INC) was mis-construed by certain Hindu leaders particularly Gandhi. He had come to a conclusion that the Muslim League's co-operation with INC in the shape of Lucknow Pact (1916) had adversely effected the Muslim majorities in Bengal and the Punjab. Even then the Hindu leaders were not happy. This also made him to apply the weapon of influential poetry in order to make the Muslims conscious of their golden past so that they should shun apologetic style of politics and come to the forefront as brave Muslims fighting for the survival of their political future by safeguarding their cultural, social and religious values.

Last twelve years of Iqbal's life were actually the climax of his philosophical thinking ripening in the political field. These twelve years 1926-1938 were not only the most important years of his life, but were also very crucial to the development of freedom struggle both at the All-India level as well as the Punjab politics in which Iqbal played a pivotal role.

When Iqbal entered political arena in November 1926 there were elections held in British India both for the Central Legislative Assembly and the provincial legislative assemblies. Jinnah had won election from Bombay Muslim constituency for the Central Assembly called Indian Legislative Assembly.⁹ Iqbal was elected as a member of the Punjab Assembly on 23rd November 1926.¹⁰ He had contested the election not on any par-

ticket, but in his individual capacity on the basis of his personal reputation. This showed his disregard in politics of the Punjab Unionist Party, the dominant party of the province. He had his own philosophical grounds for coming to the Assembly.¹¹ He also had no faith in the All-Parties Conference. As a matter of fact he considered it another trick of the Congress and Hindu leaders to befool the Muslims. He had come to realize that the Congress and Hindu leaders were not sincere towards the Muslims. Instead, they wanted to deprive the Muslims from all the chances of their separate political identity.

The creed and programme of the Punjab Unionist Party founded in 1923 by Fazl-i-Hussain was disliked by Iqbal.¹² For Iqbal the only purpose of the Unionists in the Punjab was to keep themselves in power. For that purpose it showed itself as a non-communal group attracting equal support from the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh landed and commercial aristocracy of the province. They had no special interests for the Muslims like that of the Muslims League. Their creed and programme was more akin to the Indian National Congress. Basic question or objection of Iqbal was that if the Unionist Party had its pro-Congress programme why do they not join the Congress.¹³

At that time, Muslim League was split into two sections. The Punjab branch of the All India Muslim League was headed by Sir Mohammad Shafi. Iqbal was member of the Punjab Muslim League. This was because his philosophy was very close to the Muslim League's aims and objects. His policy was opposed to the philosophy of the Congress.

Iqbal believed that the Muslim, Sikh and Hindu landed and commercial aristocracy in the Punjab was created by the British Government to suppress the Muslim peasants who formed majority of the population of the province. In his Assembly speeches Iqbal protected the rights of peasants and the poors of the Punjab.¹⁴

During 1925-26 the communal difference in the Punjab had come to the forefront resulting into the armed clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims.¹⁵ The *Sangathan* movement aimed at forcibly converting the Muslim back to Hinduism in the name of *Shuddhi* was started in the Punjab. It was duly countered by the Muslims by establishing the Tabligh Party in

order to keep Muslims aware of their religious requirements. In his questions to Malik Barkat Ali, Vice-President of the Punjab Muslim League, on 20th August 1924, the Quaid-i-Azam as leading member of the Reforms Enquiry Committee, had pointed out to the rise of bitter relations between the two communities (Hindus and Muslims) in major towns of Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan and Amritsar.¹⁶

Apart from the Muslim League and the Unionists, other Muslim parties of the Punjab were: (i) the Majlis-i-Ahrar and (ii) the Khaksar. The Majlis-i-Ahrar was founded in December 1929 by a group of pro-Congress Muslim leaders led by Chaudhry Afzal Haq.¹⁷ The Khaksar Movement was organised by Inayatullah Mashriqi (1888-1963) in 1931.¹⁸ The aim was to give military training to the Muslims. Mashriqi believed that unless the Muslims were not militarily trained with *bailcha* in their hands to protect themselves, they would not be able to fight for the freedom. Iqbal kept himself away from both these smaller parties, because he believed in first mental preparedness of the Muslims around a certain philosophy at the All-India level and then to resort to direct action.¹⁹

Main purpose of Iqbal's efforts was aimed at strengthening the hands of the Muslim League in the Punjab. But shortly after his entry into politics he was disappointed because of AIML's willingness to discard separate electorate in March 1927 as proposed under the Delhi Muslim Proposals. Iqbal was of the firm view that the separate electorates for the Muslims should be maintained at all costs.

In the past the All-India Muslim League had struggled hard to attain separate electorates for the Muslims during 1906-1909. Consequent to its pressure, the Minto-Morley Report of 1909 had granted the Muslims the right of separate representation to the central and provincial assemblies through separate electorates.²⁰ INC had also agreed to this right of the Muslims under the Lucknow Pact of 1916. On this basis the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms 1919 had broadened and further strengthened the constitutional protection granted to the Muslims. But in 1920s INC turned against this right of the Muslims. The Congress leaders emphasised on Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders that if they give up separate electorates, the

Hindu would be ready to grant them reservation of 1/3rd seats in the Central Assembly and the Central Cabinet, and that the Congress would be ready to accept any other demand coming from the Muslims. On this basis the Muslim leaders under Jinnah's presidency evolved Delhi Muslim Proposals in March 1927 by which a package of Muslim demands was prepared urging the Muslims to give up separate electorates. The following package of demands was prepared:

- i. Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency and constituted into a separate province;
- ii. Reforms should be introduced in the N.W.F.P. and in the Baluchistan on the same footing as any other province in the British India.
- iii. The Muslims are prepared to make to Hindu minorities in Sind, Baluchistan and N.W.F.P. the same concessions that Hindu majorities in other provinces are willing to make to Muslims minorities.
- iv. In the Punjab and Bengal the proportion of representation should be in accordance with the population.
- v. In the Central Legislature, Muslim representation would not be less than a third and that also by mixed electorates.

Though the Delhi Muslim Proposals were mere proposals and required their "enblock" acceptance by INC before Muslim's discarding separate electorates,²¹ yet Iqbal felt seriously against them. He was not ready to surrender separate Muslim electorates at any cost. In a meeting of the Punjab Muslim League held on 1st May 1927 at Lahore presided over by Sir Mohammad Shafi, Iqbal moved the following resolution which was adopted unanimously:

...in the existing political conditions in this country separate communal electorates provided the only effective means of making the central and provincial legislatures truly representative of the Indian people, and the League was emphatically of opinion that as long as an equally effective guarantee was not forthcoming, the Muslim community could not but continue to insist on the retention of communal electorates, as an essential part of the Indian constitution.²²

His designs to strengthen the AIML were soon frustrated in December 1927 when the AIML became divided into two

groups: i) Jinnah group, and ii) Shafi group on the issue of co-operation with the Statutory Commission known as the Simon Commission.²³

In order to review the working of the Government of India Act 1919, the political leaders of British India had been demanding appointment of a Constitution Commission earlier than ten years as required under the Act for recommending to the British Government next instalment of Reforms. Most of the pressure in the Central Legislature came from Jinnah and his associates. But the Government was not accepting their demand until in 1927 when difference of opinion emerged amongst the Muslims on the issue of retention of separate electorates and the British Government was wise enough to fish in the troubled waters. Announcement for appointment of a seven members Commission headed by Sir John Simon was made in November 1927.²⁴ As the date of visit of the Simon Commission was drawing closer, the AIML became a divided house on the issue of co-operation with this Commission. Before the holding of the AIML session in December 1927, Jinnah had announced his boycott of this All-White Commission.²⁵ His basic objection was why any Indian member had not been appointed on this Commission? Though Jinnah could muster support from the INC and most of the other parties for his programme of the boycott of the Simon Commission and in that he succeeded to a great extent, yet his power base AIML became divided. While Jinnah group of AIML met in Calcutta, Shafi group arranged its separate meeting in Lahore in about the same time in December 1927. In the meeting of the Shafi group of the AIML, Allama Iqbal was elected as Secretary-General of AIML.²⁶

Iqbal was a man of independent thinking. With Shafi also he could not work for more than six months. On 12 June 1928 a memorandum reportedly prepared by Sir Mohammad Shafi and Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal on behalf of Shafi group of AIML was presented to the Simon Commission. Under the Memorandum it was pointed out that British India was not a country but a "vast sub-continent, as large as Europe minus Russia", divided into a number of provinces, many of them larger than some of the countries of Europe. "This sub-continent is inhabited by 310,000,000" of people, divided in creed, race, language, social customs, traditions and material interests. "Unless the principal

communities, among which this vast heterogeneous mass of Indian population is divided, are duly represented upon the various legislatures and local bodies in the country, the result will not be a representative government, but an oligarchy".²⁷ The memorandum also demanded formation of United States of India under the British Crown, with residuary powers being left with the provinces/states. This was to be achieved by abolishing dyarchy in the provinces introduced by the Government of India Act 1919.²⁸

While this memorandum had demanded from the British Government initiation of steps in the direction of aforementioned objectives, Iqbal objected to the form of language used by Shafi who mainly finalized the Memorandum. Iqbal felt deceived on this Memorandum by Shafi. In his letter of 22 June 1928 addressed to the Vice-President of Shafi group of AIML, as Shafi was not available in Lahore, Iqbal resigned from the Secretaryship of the Shafi group of AIML. Iqbal's basic charge was that Shafi deceived and changed the draft of Memorandum out of his own wish without letting Iqbal know about it. Iqbal came to know of it when the Memorandum presented to Simon Commission was published in the newspapers. According to Iqbal, the Memorandum as published in the press actually makes "no demand for full provincial autonomy and suggests a unitary form of government in which law, order and justice are to be placed in the direct charge of the government". Iqbal thus concluded his letter:

It is hardly necessary for me to say that this suggestion is only a yield form of dyarchy and means no constitutional advance at all. Since I still stick to my opinion, expressed at the first meeting of the Drafting Committee, that the AIML should demand full provincial autonomy which, in my opinion, is the demand of the whole Punjab Muslim community, I ought not, in the circumstances, to remain the Secretary of the League. Therefore, kindly accept my resignation.²⁹

Publication of the Nehru Report in the newspapers in August 1928,³⁰ by which the basic Muslim right for separate electorates was permanently rejected by the Hindu leaders on behalf of the All-Parties of India, further added to Iqbal's dejection with the development of British Indian politics. This, he felt, was because of the Muslim disunity which encouraged the Hindu leaders to do so. He started for searching for new

avenues to bring about Muslim unity at the All-India level. On 7 September 1928, in association of 17 other central and provincial legislators, Iqbal emphatically declared that "we find it impossible to agree with the Nehru Committee's Report as adopted by the All-Parties Conference at Lucknow, in so far as the communal interests of the Mussalmans of India, especially in regard to separate representation by means of separate electorates, is concerned".³¹ The tension between Hindus and Muslims was mentioned by Iqbal as "worse than ever".³² To counter the threat posed to the Muslim rights by the All-Parties Conference's Nehru Report, Iqbal and other legislators demanded holding of an All-Parties Muslim Conference.³³

The All-Parties Muslim Conference and AIML, in their meetings, hotly debated the recommendations of the Nehru Report. There were four main groups of the Muslims who participated in these discussions:

1. Jinnah group.
2. Shafi group.
3. Pro-Nehru Report group led by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.
4. Delhi Muslim group.

While the first two groups favoured total rejection of the Nehru Report, the third group desired its acceptance. Fourth group desired its acceptance with certain amendments. All these meetings were attended by Iqbal. Finally on April 1, 1929 a Unity Conference presided over by Jinnah, duly attended by Iqbal, evolved consensus on Jinnah's 14 points. With the exception of the Muslim group headed by Azad, representing Jamiatul Ulama-i-Hind, all the other three groups agreed on 14 points of Jinnah. Iqbal also approved these 14 points.³⁴

On this basis Iqbal struggled hard to bring real unity between Jinnah and Shafi groups of AIML.³⁵ Between them the unity was finally created on 1 March 1930.³⁶ In the AIML Council meeting on 14 March 1930, it was decided that next annual session of the AIML would be held in December 1930 at Allahabad to be presided over by Dr. Muhammad Iqbal.³⁷ Iqbal delivered his famous presidential address at Allahabad at a time (December 1930) when Jinnah, Shafi and most of the Muslim

leaders were in London attending the first Round Table Conference. At Allahabad Iqbal presented his idea and philosophy of Muslim state in South Asia in a most coherent manner.³⁸

When in British India Iqbal presented his concept of separate Muslim State, in London Round Table Conference the Muslim leaders were debating the safety of Muslim interests on the basis of Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah's 14 points.

Dawn of the year 1931 saw bitter expressions against the Congress leaders even from those Muslim leaders who had either erstwhile or in the recent past had been very close to Gandhi and other leaders of Indian National Congress. For instance at the All India Muslim Conference held at New Delhi on 2 March 1931 presided over by the Aga Khan, resolution moved by Maulana Hasrat Mohani, a close pro-Khilafat associate of Gandhi, was passed by which the dominion status recently demanded by the Indian National Congress during the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930) was termed as an attempt to establish Hindu *Raj*.³⁹ At this conference, the Muslims unanimously determined to resist it at all costs.⁴⁰ Maulana Shaukat Ali also, a strong supporter of Gandhi during the Khilafat Movement, realized the Hidden Hindu nature of Gandhian politics. He became very bitter against Gandhi. In his press interview in April 1931, Maulana Shaukat Ali warned Gandhi to "leave Muslims alone" and they were no longer going to rely on him.⁴¹ Maulana Shaukat Ali did not content himself to this. He also criticised those "handful" Muslims who were supporting Gandhi and INC against the separate electorates for the Muslims. Even the government was warned by him that if any effort to accede to the Congress demand for dominion status without first settling the Muslim position was accepted by the government, the Muslims would not hesitate in creating trouble in the country.⁴² The Congress circles felt so much perturbed by this threat of Maulana Shaukat Ali that they offered to have dialogue with him. The dialogue finally broke down in July 1931 when the Congress, sticking to its policy, refused to accept the Muslim demand for separate electorates.⁴³ Naturally the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims further widened.

In order to solve the constitutional problem of British India three Round Table Conferences (RTCs) were held in

London. The first RTC was held on 12 November 1931-19 January 1931,⁴⁴ second on 7 September — 1 December 1931,⁴⁵ and third during November-December 1932.⁴⁶ While Iqbal attended the last two conferences, Jinnah attended the first two. After attending the first RTC Jinnah came to British India for a short while. In September 1931 he proceeded again to England, but this time with Iqbal. Both the leaders sailed from Bombay on 5 September 1931.⁴⁷ During this three week journey to London they discussed and debated the future of Muslims of South Asia. Iqbal played pivotal role in projection of Muslim interests in the London deliberations.⁴⁸

Despite the hectic debates at the RTCs no settlement amongst the Muslims, Hindus and Government benches could be developed. Like Jinnah, Iqbal's plea was that in a state of indecision amongst the parties participating in the RTCs, the British Government should announce their own Communal Award as their policy statement for the future constitution. But the British Government did not do so immediately. On his return home from London in February 1932, Iqbal impressed upon the Government for early grant of the Communal Award. In order to pressurise the Government for this purpose the All-India Muslim Conference was held on 21-22 March 1932 at Lahore. Iqbal presided over this conference.⁴⁹ In this presidential address Iqbal threatened the Government to announce the Communal Award within two months. Next day, he even declared:

If a decision is not announced before the end of June, the next meetings of the Executive Board of the Conferences shall be held on 3 July this year, at the latest to launch a programme of direct action.⁵⁰

The Communal Award was announced in August 1932. The British Government had their own priorities to announce this Communal Award.⁵¹ Though it was a little late than what Iqbal expected, yet Iqbal was happy over the official announcement on the communal issue. Excepting the disturbance of Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal, the Communal Award in general secured the communal rights of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and other minorities of British India. Therefore, he was not happy with the reduction of Muslim seats in the

Punjab Assembly from 57 per cent (as their population demanded) to 49%. In the Punjab Assembly, the Hindus were given 27% representation according to their population, but the Sikhs were given 18% representation. The population ratio of the Sikhs in the Punjab province was not more than 13%.⁵² Similar was done in the Bengal. Despite these injudicious decisions against the Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal, the Hindu and Congress leaders vehemently criticised the Award.

As President of the All-India Muslim Conference, Iqbal issued press statement on 24 August 1932 by which he countered the objection raised by Sir Tej Behadur Sapru and other Hindu leaders of the Congress against the Award,⁵³ Iqbal dispelled the Hindu apprehension that the Award was more favourable to the Muslims, particularly the Muslims of the Punjab. He explained:

In the Punjab the Sikh minority has been given weightage to an extent which reduces the Muslim majority probably to the narrowest possible margin. The Muslims of Bengal who have been given 48.4% instead of their 51 per cent, needed another two per cent, only to ensure an odd majority for them. His Majesty's Government thought it fit to observe the terms of the Minority Pact as far as it related to the Europeans and to ignore it as far as it related to Bengal Muslims.⁵⁴

The statement was concluded by Iqbal by saying that by application of the principle of protection of rights of the smaller minorities without reducing any majority into minority, it were the "Muslims who suffered" most.⁵⁵ Despite such convincing observations Iqbal hoped that "in working out the new constitution Muslims, in their majority provinces, will, in view of their past history and traditions, prove themselves free from all pettiness of mind and narrowness of outlook. Their only duty, to mind, is war against illiteracy and economic slavery".⁵⁶

Prior to the issuance of this press statement a private meeting of the eminent Muslims of Lahore and the surrounding districts was held at the residence of Sir Muhammad Iqbal.⁵⁷ It was after having thoroughly discussed the Award that the aforementioned statement was issued.

During 1932-34 Iqbal functioned as President of the All-India Muslim Conference. The Conference was founded in late 1928 after the publication of the Nehru Report in August 1928.

The idea of All-India Muslim Conference was floated by Iqbal and other Muslim leaders to counter the bad effects created by the Congress sponsored All-Parties Conference and its Nehru Report on the simple minded Muslims at a time when the AIML was a divided house. Since 1928, Iqbal continued to function as a member of this Conference until in 1932, on his return from London after attending the RTC, he was elevated to the position of its President. The Ahrar party disliked Iqbal's becoming President of the All-India Muslim Conference because of his modern Islamic approach reflected in his poetry and his lectures compiled under the title, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. On the concluding day of the Conference, i.e. 22 March, 1932, the Ahrarees created disturbance at the start of the meeting at Lahore, at a time when Sir Muhammad Iqbal entered the pandal.⁵⁸ There was an exchange of *lathis*, blows, and brickbats between the Ahrarees and volunteers of the Muslim Conference. Soon the Ahrarees were expelled and the volunteers of the Muslims Conference restored peace after which the deliberations started. Various resolutions concerning the future of the Muslims were passed. The most important resolution related to the threat of direct action, as discussed earlier. The Muslim Conference also demanded "the immediate introduction of provincial autonomy in all the provinces of British India simultaneously while details of the Federation scheme are being explored and worked out".⁵⁹ Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan (Allahabad), Sir A.F. Ghaznavi (Bengal), Syed Murtaza Sahib (Madras), Abdus Samad (Baluchistan), Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad, MLA, Saifullah Khan (Kalabagh), Masud Ahmed (Patna), Malik Mohammad Ameen (Attock), Malik Feroz Khan Noon (Lahore), Nawab Syed Mehrshah (Jhelum), and Abdullah Haroon, MLA (Sind) were amongst the prominent persons who attended the Conference.⁶⁰ In his presidential address on 21 March 1932, Iqbal made it clear that he did not advise the Muslims to join the Congress which had started a campaign to bolster up a false claim of representing the whole of British India to defeat the British and the Minorities Pact and to force the Government to settle the minorities question with the "Congress alone".⁶¹

Iqbal emphasised that no settlement would be acceptable to the Muslims, which did not satisfy the Muslim demands, namely the separate electorate, majority rights in the provinces

where they were in a majority and equal status for the Frontier province, complete provincial autonomy, the transfer of power from British Parliament to the Indian provinces, equality of federal units, classification of subjects not into Federal, Central and Provincial, but Federal and provincial only, the unconditional separation of Sind and one-third share of representation at the Centre.⁶² He also "protested" against the policy of "repression" in the N.W.F.P. and urged the Government for the withdrawal of ordinances issued by the Governor in the province. He also did not forget the suffering Muslims of Kashmir at the cruel hands of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. As a way for the amelioration of the Muslim rights he demanded that some kind of popular Assembly in Kashmir should be created.⁶³

Iqbal also proposed the amalgamation of various Muslim political organisations into only one which should have its branches everywhere in British India, for which, raising of 50 lakhs of rupees, formation of a youth league, a well-equipped volunteer corps throughout the country, establishment of men's and women's cultural institutions in big cities and the formation of an Assembly of Ulama "to protect, expand and interpret the Islamic laws in the light of modern conditions".⁶⁴ He also advocated that the Ulama Assembly must receive constitutional recognition so that no bill affecting the personal law of the Muslims should be put on the legislative anvil before being passed by that Assembly.⁶⁵

On 5 March 1933 at New Delhi a meeting of the Executive Board of the All-India Muslim Conference was held under the Presidentship of Sir Muhammad Iqbal in which about 50 leaders including Sir Muhammad Yaqub, Maulvi Shafi Daoodi, Abdul Aziz (Peshawar), President of AIML, Seth Abdullah Haroon, and Malik Barkat Ali participated. After hectic debate, but on Iqbal's initiative, the following resolution was passed:

In view of the fact that as the objects of the All-India Muslim Conference and the All-India Muslim League are identical this meeting of the All-India Muslim Conference approves the proposed amalgamation of the two organisations and further proposes that a Joint Committee be appointed to draft a constitution for a joint organisation.⁶⁶

It was also proposed that a joint meeting of the executive Board of the All-India Muslim Conference and the Council of the AIML be held in the afternoon to consider the programme of action to be taken for holding a session of the joint organisation.⁶⁷

Thus under Iqbal's guidance steps were taken to merge the All-India Muslim Conference with the All-India Muslim League. Iqbal's close associate in the Punjab, Malik Barkat Ali had even unequivocally declared in the meeting that the All India Muslim League's "services to the Muslim community could not be surpassed by those of any other similar organisation".⁶⁸

As a follow-up of this decision the Executive Board of All-India Muslim Conference and the AIML Council met on 6th March 1933 and decided, after a thorough discussion, to merge the two organisations into one, a decision jubilantly praised by the attending leaders.⁶⁹ Next year the meeting of the All-India Muslim Conference was held in February 1934. Iqbal resigned from the Muslim Conference to pave the way for its merger with the AIML. But there were still a few persons who wanted to maintain All-India Muslim Conference. Iqbal dissociated himself from them. Instead it was Nawab of Chattari who presided over the Conference.⁷⁰

In May 1933 more than seventy Muslim leaders belonging to the provinces of UP, Punjab, Bombay, Sind, Madras, C.P. and Berar, Ajmer, Delhi, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Bengal and Burma issued a joint manifesto to the press whereby they called upon all the Muslims of British India to shun all their sectarian, regional or other small Muslim organisations, and come out openly to support the cause of the All-Indian Muslims.⁷¹ In their long manifesto they advanced a number of arguments for struggling for the preservation of Muslim rights on the basis of one political organisation. Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan, Nawab Mohammad Ismail Khan, Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Sh. Sadiq Hasan, Malik Barkat Ali, Begum Shah Nawaz, Maulvi Akhtar Ali Khan, Sir Fazal Currimbhoy, Sh. Abdul Majid (Sind), Jamal Mohammad, Sir Abdur Rahim, Maulvi Fazlul Haq, Kh. Hasan Nizami, Syed Lal Badshah, Ali Gul, Mian Ahmad Shah were amongst the signatories to this manifesto.⁷²

Iqbal attended the meeting of the AIML Council held on 12 March 1933,⁷³ in which it was "unanimously resolved to invite Mr. Jinnah to give a lead to the Mussalmans of India in the present political situation and with that end in view to hold the annual session of the League on April 29 and 30, 1933 or on such other date as would suit the convenience of Mr. Jinnah."⁷⁴ This decision was conveyed to Jinnah in London by Abdul Aziz, President of All-India Muslim League. In the next meeting of the AIML Council, Aziz informed that Jinnah would be returning to British India in December, 1933.⁷⁵ On this basis Mahik Barkat Ali and seven other leaders of Muslim League belonging to different provinces, requested President of the All-India Muslim League not to hold session of All-India Muslim League in April that year as originally planned. They suggested that the AIML session should be held in December 1933 after Jinnah's return because "the presence of a personality like Mr. Jinnah is essential to lead, guide and unite the community in the present chaotic state of Muslim politics".⁷⁶ On this basis, Abdul Aziz, President of AIML, notified in a press statement dated 12 May 1933 issued from Lahore that:

I have, therefore, decided that the annual session of the All India Muslim League should be held on Mr. Jinnah's return in December, 1933.⁷⁷

Thereupon differences of opinion emerged amongst the leaders of the Muslim League and the AIML was divided into two groups i.e. (i) Hidayat Group; and (ii) Aziz Group.

The Aziz Group arranged 23rd session of AIML at Howrah in Bengal on 21 October 1933 presided over by Mian Abdul Aziz,⁷⁸ while the Hidayat Group arranged separate 23rd session of the AIML at Delhi on 25-26 November 1933 presided over by Hafiz Hidayat Husain.⁷⁹ Unity between these two groups was finally achieved on 4 March 1934 when both Hafiz Hidayat Husain and Abdul Aziz agreed to leave the AIML presidency in favour of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.⁸⁰ Finally Jinnah came and arranged meeting of the united AIML Council on 1-2 April 1934 at Delhi.⁸¹ Because of his illness Iqbal could not attend this united meeting, but all of his close associates including Sir Mohammad Yaqub attended this meeting of the Council.⁸²

The Hindu Congress leaders like Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were not happy with all these developments favourable to emerging Muslims stronger and united. Jawaharlal Nehru charged Iqbal and other Muslim leaders as communal leaders. In retaliation to this on 6 December 1933, Iqbal issued a statement to the press from Lahore.⁸³ Countering Nehru's arguments, Iqbal said:

The offer made by H.H. The Aga Khan to Mr. Gandhi in London, in 1931, still holds good. If, under Pandit Jawaharlal's leadership, the Hindus and the Congress agree to the safeguards which the Mussalmans think necessary for their protection as an All-India minority, the Muslim community will still be ready as camp-followers of the majority community in India's political struggle.⁸⁴

The White Paper stipulating the nature of Indian federation was announced in March 1933.⁸⁵ Though the provinces were given a sort of provincial autonomy but all these powers were nullified by granting veto power to the Governors of the provinces against the provincial legislatures. At the federal level the Viceroy was empowered as Governor-General against the Central Legislative Assembly.⁸⁶ In a statement to the press in March 1933, Iqbal observed that the White Paper "was unlikely to satisfy either the country or the Muslim community".⁸⁷ In an other statement in the same month Iqbal demanded certain radical changes in the proposed Reforms Scheme before they were made acceptable to the Muslims.⁸⁸

After the achievement of unity of the two factions of AIML and All-India Muslim Conference, Iqbal gave an interview to the representative of the *Times of India*, in which he warned the Congress and Hindu leaders "not to oppose the Communal Award, but instead both Hindu and Muslim leaders should make joint efforts for an agreed settlement". He even threatened that "opposition to the Communal Award will make the cleavage between Hindus and Muslims much sharper and the hope of an agreed settlement will become more remote than before".⁸⁹ Such sane calls and warnings could not deter the Congress leaders from attacking the Communal Award and also could not make them soften their attitude towards the Muslims. They became more stiff in expression of their anti-Muslim feelings.

In their opposition to the Muslim rights, the Hindus arranged Anti-Communal Award Conference in October 1934 at Bombay which was presided over by Ramachanda Chatterji.⁹⁰ In his presidential address Chatterji declared that the Communal Award sounded, as a matter of fact, a "death-knell to Indian Nationalism". Almost the same view was expressed by Pandit M.M. Malaviya.⁹¹

On the basis of the Communal Award and the White Paper the Government of India Act 1935 was passed by the British Parliament by which a new federal system in British India duly controlled by the Viceroy and the Governors in the provinces was introduced.⁹² Though Iqbal was not satisfied with the nature of federal system of the new constitution, yet he had hopes on its provincial aspects. On this basis he desired that in the ensuing elections the AIML should contest election by re-organising itself and popularising its programme amongst the Muslim masses of South Asia.⁹³

On his return from England, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah devoted himself for re-organising the AIML. Iqbal duly supported him in this endeavor. For that purpose the province of Punjab was also toured by Jinnah in May 1936. He met Iqbal at the latter's residence at Mecleod Road, Lahore. At a special meeting of the Punjab Muslim League on 12 May 1936, Iqbal was elected President of the Punjab Muslim League with Malik Barkat Ali and Khalifa Shujauddin, its Vice-Presidents, and Ghulam Rasul, its Secretary.⁹⁴ Four days before assumption of office Iqbal with Shujauddin, Malik Barkat Ali and their associates issued a joint statement to the press wherein it was declared that "our nation has full confidence in Jinnah's integrity and political judgement".⁹⁵

A decision in this respect had already been taken by the AIML in its 24th session at Bombay on 11-12- April 1936 under Jinnah's Presidency. On Jinnah's move, the following resolution was adopted:

The League considers that, having regard to the conditions at present in the country, the Provincial Scheme of the constitution be utilized for what it is worth, inspite of the most objectionable features contained therein, which render the real control and responsibility of the ministry and the legislature over the entire field of the government and the administration negatory.⁹⁶

Resolution No. IX was passed for re-organisation and popularisation of the AIML in the provinces, districts, cities and villages.⁹⁷

As a follow-up of the AIML's aforementioned decision, Iqbal, as President of the Punjab Muslim League, appointed a Committee in the Punjab to popularise the League programme in the province in which persons like Malik Barkat Ali, Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, Raja Ghazanfar Ali, Pir Tajuddin, Khalifa Shujauddin were included.⁹⁸ Thus he guided the programme of spread of League's message throughout the cities, districts and villages of the Punjab. As far as his self was concerned he practically could not tour outside Lahore because of his illness during 1936-1938.⁹⁹ His illness prevented him from attending even most important meetings of the Muslim League. He could not attend the AIML meeting held at Bombay in April 1937. So was the case with the public meeting held outside Delhi gate, Lahore on 11 October 1936.¹⁰⁰ But as President of Punjab Muslim League, though confidentially, Iqbal wrote a number of letters to Quaid-i-Azam during May 1936 to November 1937 in which he apprised the AIML President of the latest political position of the Muslims both in British India and in the Punjab province.¹⁰¹ The content of these letters are discussed in a number of ways. Though various factors like the tussle between Ahrarees, Ittihad-i-Millat of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Unionists and the League workers and leaders,¹⁰² contributed to the failure of Muslim League in the Punjab elections held in January 1937, major factor was Iqbal's illness which did not allow him to tour the Punjab areas.

The election results were announced in February 1937.¹⁰³ The elections for 1585 seats in eleven provincial assemblies were contested by the INC, AIML, Unionists, and other parties. In addition there were 186 seats in upper houses of six provincial legislatures of Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Bombay, Madras, and the United Provinces. Of these total 1771 seats INC won 706 seats, being less than 40 per cent.¹⁰⁴ Even all the Hindu seats were not secured by the INC. The non-Congress parties or individuals won 211 Hindu seats. The AIML won 102 seats out of 482 seats reserved for the Muslims i.e. about 22 per cent.¹⁰⁵ Most of the other Muslim seats did not go to the Congress which contested 58 seats and won only 26, and that also mostly the Red Shirts

of the N.W.F.P. The Muslim seats mainly went to the regional or smaller Muslim parties, or the independent Muslims. The same was the case with Punjab where the Unionist Party won most of the seats. The Party position in the results of the Punjab elections was as follows:¹⁰⁶

* Congress	18
* Muslim League	2
* Other Muslims	4
* Non-Congress Hindus and Sikhs	36
* Unionists	88
* Independents	27
Total	175

Provincial part of the 1935 Act was implemented on 1 April 1937 followed by the INC, dialogues with the British Government for not using the veto power vested with the Governors granted under the new constitution. The parleys continued without any major result until in July 1937 the ministries were formed in the provinces. The Congress had won clear majority in five provinces (Madras, U.P., C.P., Bihar, and Orissa). In Bombay it formed government in co-operation with other pro-Congress groups. In the N.W.F.P., it formed government in co-operation with the Red-Shirts. Thus in seven out of total eleven provinces the Congress ministries were installed. In the Punjab, the Unionist Party, headed by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan (as Sir Fazl-i-Hussain had died in 1936) formed government in co-operation with the independents, Khalsa Nationalist Sikhs and the Hindus. Sikandar formed his ministry with six (three Muslims, two Hindus and one Sikh) Ministers.¹⁰⁷

Failure of the AIML in the elections of 1937 and the installation of the Unionist Ministry in the Punjab deeply grieved the ailing Iqbal. Pondering on the causes of the Muslim League failure, Iqbal wrote to Jinnah on 28 May 1937:

The League will have to finally decide whether it will remain a body representing the upper classes of Indian Muslims or Muslim masses who have so far, with good reason taken no interest in it. Personally I believe that a political organisation which gives no promise of improving the lot of the average Muslims cannot attract our masses.¹⁰⁸

One great lesson, which emerged from the 1937 election results was that if the AIML popularises its programme amongst the Muslim masses it was going to emerge as the only representative party of the Muslims of British India. For that purpose smaller Muslim parties and the regional groups will have to be dispensed with. Another lesson these elections gave was that the INC had lost confidence of the Muslim masses all over the country, and the ground was open for the Muslim League to work. When in this background the Congress ministries were installed, it lost further confidence of the Muslims because it did nothing to allay the Muslim fears of Hindu domination, as reflected by its policies in the Hindu majority provinces.¹⁰⁹

In his efforts to attract the smaller and regional Muslim party leaders to attend the AIML Lucknow session in October 1937, in the background of installation of Congress Ministries, Quaid-i-Āzam invited Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, Chief Minister of the Punjab, to attend the League session.¹¹⁰ The League session was held on 15-18 October 1937 duly attended by Sikandar and others. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan merged Ittihad-i-Millat into the AIML and attended the meeting.¹¹¹ Jinnah expected a similar action from Sikander. Malik Barkat Ali, Vice-President of Punjab Muslim League was also there representing the Punjab Muslim League in the absence of its President, Allama Iqbal. Barkat Ali put this proposition to Sikander:

The Unionist Party which has been re-organized by Sir Fazl-i-Hussain in 1936 and which subsequently contested elections of 1937 has ceased to exist; and the Muslim members of this party, after pledging to the membership, have become members of the Muslim League.¹¹²

Sikandar refused to accept this. Finally a pact known as "Jinnah-Sikandar Pact" was concluded whose terms were as follows:

1. Sir Sikandar on returning to the Punjab will call a meeting of his party and advise all members of his party who have not already signed the League pledge to do so and join the League.

As such they shall be governed by the rules and regulations of the Central and provincial Board of the All-India Muslim League. This, however, will not affect the present parliamentary coalition of the Unionist Party;

2. After the adoption of this arrangement, in all future elections and bye-elections for the legislature the groups constituting the present Unionist Party will jointly support candidates put by their respective groups;
3. Muslim members of the legislatures who are elected on League ticket or accept the League ticket will constitute the Muslim League Assembly Party. The MLAP shall be free to maintain or enter into a coalition or alliance with any other party. Consequently with the fundamental principles of the policy and programme of the League, such alliances may be evolved before or after the elections;
4. In view of the aforesaid arrangement, the Provincial League Parliamentary Board shall be reconstituted.¹¹³

On his return to Lahore after attending the AIML Lucknow session, Sikandar began to give different interpretation of Jinnah-Sikandar Pact.¹¹⁴ This evoked a fierce controversy between Iqbal and Sikandar.¹¹⁵ In his letter of 1 November 1937 Iqbal wrote to Jinnah:¹¹⁶

Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan with some of the members of his party saw me yesterday and we had a long talk about the differences between the League and the Unionist Party. Statements have been issued to the press by both sides. Each side putting its own interpretation on the terms of Jinnah-Sikandar agreement. This has caused much misunderstanding. As I wrote you before, I shall put you in possession of those statements in a few days' time. For the present I request you to kindly send me as early as possible a copy of the agreement which was signed by Sir Sikander and which I am told is in your possession. I further want to ask you whether you agreed to the Provincial Parliamentary Board being controlled by the Unionist Party. Sir Sikander tells me that you agreed to this and therefore, he claims majority in the Board. This, as far as I know, does not appear in the Jinnah-Sikander agreement.

In this respect Iqbal's letter of 10 November 1937 to Jinnah was more revealing:¹¹⁷

After having several talks with Sir Sikander and his friends I am now definitely of the opinion that Sir Sikander wants nothing less than the complete control of the League and the Provincial Parliamentary

Board. In your pact with him it is mentioned that Parliamentary Board will be reconstituted and the Unionists will have majority in the Board. Sir Sikander tells me that you agreed to their majority in the Board. I wrote to you sometimes ago to enquire whether you did agree to the Unionist majority in the Board. So far I have not heard from you. I personally see no harm in giving him the majority that he wants a complete change in the office-holders of the League especially the Secretary who has done so much for the League. He also wishes that the finances of the League should be controlled by his men. All this to my mind amounts to capturing of the League and then killing it. Knowing the opinion of the province, as I do, I cannot take the responsibility of handing over the League to Sir Sikandar and his friends. The pact has already damaged the prestige to the League in this province and the tactics of the Unionists may damage it still further. They have not so far signed the creed of the League and I understand they do not mean to. The session of the League in Lahore, they want in April instead of February. My impression is that they want to give time for their Zamindara League to function in the province. Perhaps you know that on his return from Zamindara League whose branches are being made in the province.

Iqbal's functioning, despite his illness, as President, Punjab Muslim League did signally contribute in popularising the AIML programme in the Punjab. While Jinnah-Sikander Pact speaks of the sagacity of Jinnah, Iqbal turned this pact in favour of Muslim League. It was because of his illness that Iqbal could neither attend 25th session of AIML held at Lucknow in October 1937 nor AIML's special session held at Calcutta on 17-18 April 1938, though the last one was held on Iqbal's suggestion. Iqbal died on 21 April, 1938 and was graciously buried in just outside the Badshahi mosque, Lahore.

Although Iqbal died in 1938, yet the trend set out by him i.e. popular support for the separate Muslim state progressed in the wider sense; Jinnah's idea of Pakistan presented in March 1940 at Lahore was approved by the ever greatest gathering of the Muslims of South Asia as a befitting devotion to Iqbal's intellectualism.

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