



1947 : RETHINKG BRITISH/ CONGRESS/MUSLIM LEAGUE AND THE STUDY OF PARTITION*

“I suppose it was the compulsion of events and the feeling that we wouldn’t get out of that deadlock or morass by pursuing the way we had done; it became worse and worse. Further a feeling that even if we got freedom for India with that background it would be a very weak India, that is, a federal India with far too much power in the federating units. A larger India would have constant troubles, constant disintegrating pulls. And also the fact that we saw no other way of getting our freedom—in the near future I mean. And so we accepted partition and said, let us build up a strong India. And if others do not want to be in it, well how can we and why should we force them to be in it?” Jawaharlal Nehru

INTRODUCTION

The partition of India has been historically projected as a logical culmination of the long standing British policy of Divide and Rule and the Muslim League’s ideology of communalism and separateness. Indian leaders largely place the blame on the Indian National Congress and commonly agree that if they had shown adequate understanding, tact and boldness, the partition of the motherland could have been avoided. In Pakistan however, the partition is considered as quite logical and inevitable to the growth of Muslim communalism and the threat of subordination to Hindu majoritarianism.

Jinnah was a very shrewd politician and often dodged his political rivals by his adroit handling of the political situation. His popular cry of “Islam in Danger” brought the Muslim masses under the banner of the Muslim league and made Mr Jinnah the political Messiah of the Muslims. To add fuel to fire the acts of omission and commission of the Hindu Mahsabha further fanned the fanaticism of the Muslim League. The common belief among the Muslims that they would have to reconcile themselves to the status of a minority community in a democratic country where the majority ordered decision, further denied any hope for reconciliation .The partition of India appeared inevitable amidst these circumstances and vested interest of the two different communities of the Hindus and the Muslims.

The British wanted to make the Muslims their allies in order to counter the perceived threat of the Hindu educated class. The British feared the potential threat from the Muslims, since the Muslims were the former rulers of the subcontinent and ruled India for over 300 years under the powerful Mughal Empire. In order to win them over to their side, the British helped support the All-India Muslim Conference. They instilled the notion that the Muslims were a separate political entity and by the beginning of the 1900s they gave the Muslims separate electorates in local government all

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over British India. Thus the idea of the separateness of Muslims in India was built into the electoral process of India.

Muslim leaders led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah felt that the Hindus, by dominating the Indian National Congress, were beginning to dictate decision-making in British India. The Muslims felt they should have their own state in order to protect their Islamic heritage. So in 1940, the All-India Muslim League declared its desire for a separate state. Hindus began to feel uncomfortable about being a minority in a majority Muslim State. Relations between the two groups began to deteriorate.

On August 16, 1946, in its demand for a separate Pakistan, the Muslim League called for "Direct Action" day. Direct Action day witnessed thousands of Muslims and Hindus fighting in mixed areas. Calcutta became the scene of the most brutal violence in what became known as the great 'Calcutta killings'. Within 72 hours, more than 5,000 people died, at least 20,000 were seriously injured, and a hundred thousand residents of Calcutta City alone were left homeless. As Jinnah remarked **"If not a divided India, then a destroyed India"**.

British and Indian leaders such as Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel decided that the only solution to the conflict was the acceptance of partition. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel observed **"I felt that if we did not accept partition, India would be split into many bits and would be ruined completely. My experience of office for one year convinced me that the way we have been proceeding would lead us to disaster. We would not have had one Pakistan but several. We would have had Pakistan cells in every office"**

Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, was given full power to negotiate any agreement he could to help come to some sort of conclusion. Mountbatten saw that the only way for the British to withdraw was to transfer power to two governments, not one. With this in mind, he pressurized and finally persuaded the Indian National Congress to accept the idea of a divided India. He made the announcement of the partition and declared the boundaries, which would divide India into two. His plan was to create two separate wings in the areas where the Muslims were in a majority, in northwest India and in eastern Bengal which together would form Jinnah's Pakistan. This meant that both Bengal and Punjab would be divided between India and Pakistan.

Thus, August 14, 1947 saw the birth of the new Islamic Republic of Pakistan- a Muslim nation separate from the predominantly Hindu India. At midnight the next day (on Aug. 15, 1947) India won its freedom from colonial rule. Pakistan was comprised of two regions: West Pakistan on the Indus River plain, and East Pakistan, which is now known as Bangladesh.

In a speech to the nation in the night of August 14th, Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India said **"A moment comes which comes but rarely in history, when we step from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation long suppressed, finds utterance."**

Colonial policy of 'divide and rule' forms a background to understanding the manner in which communal politics developed in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s ultimately culminating in Partition. Traditionally British policy has been blamed for creating rifts based on perceived divergent economic and political interests between the two communities – Hindu and Muslim, which had been historically and traditionally united. In the census too the British categorized people according to religion and viewed and treated them as separate from each other.

For Indians, the partition was the logical outcome of Britain's policies of dividing and ruling. For Pakistanis it was their founding moment. It was the outcome of the struggle of Muslims to have their separate identity recognized by both the British and the Indian nationalist movement. For the British, the partition was a necessity because they could no longer afford the cost of maintaining

No other event has influenced contemporary Indian history culture, literature, and historiography in a manner more profound than the Partition of 1947. The events that preceded Partition form an interesting study in the interplay of politics and ideology and the role of individuals like Jinnah. The rapid rise to power of the Muslim League in the 1940s and the Congress' acceptance of Partition, with seeming readiness were some such paradoxes.

From a traditional historical perspective, the Partition of India has been seen as 'inevitable' in which it is seen as the obvious and eventual culmination of the 'logic of communalism' and Muslim separatism. Kenneth Cragy writes that **"Partition was the most eloquent and compelling instance of the Islamic sense of separate identity"**. HG Wells, who also saw Partition as inevitable, felt that political fragmentation among sovereign states is inevitable.

The theory of inevitability was born out of the 'Two-Nation theory', believed to have been first articulated by Syed Ahmed Khan, and subscribed to by the official historians of Pakistan. The 'Two-Nation' theory essentially says that the Indian Muslims were always a distinct, divergent and separate community and therefore ought to live in a distinct political space. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who founded the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College, believed that education and cooperation with the British was vital for the survival of the Muslim community.. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was thus the first to conceive of a separate Muslim homeland. While many nationalist writings regard Syed Ahmed Khan as the perpetuator of such separatist tendencies and one who helped carve out a niche for India's Muslims within the spheres of colonial policy and discourse, it needs to be understood that his politics was essentially elitist. He could not and did not have even partial mobilization of the subordinate classes and therefore one cannot draw any definite correlation between his ideas and electoral representation in Muslim politics. Some people felt that the very nature of Islam called for a communal Muslim society. Many groups within the Muslim community may have had ideals of an exclusive identity and rule by an Islamic government.

What could have been the crucial turning point leading to the formation of Pakistan. Some see the Nehru Report (1928) as the point where there was a parting of ways. Others point to the failure of coalition ministries in the United Provinces and Bombay in 1937, while others again assert that the period of Congress rule from 1937-39 was more significant to the rise of separatist tendencies in the country. Still some others point out that the crucial issue leading to Partition came as late as the Shimla Conference in 1945 and the decision of the British government to hold elections before negotiating a settlement, or even as late as the League's call for direction.

The idea of a separate state first started to be talked about after the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements. The first articulation of a demand for a separate Muslim state was first done by Mohammad Allama Iqbal in 1930, though the idea of a separate Muslim state in a new form was elaborated by Rehmat Ali at the time of the Round Table Conference which was to include Punjab, NWFP, Kashmir, Sindh, and Baluchistan and coined the name Pakistan. This idea however did not receive a serious consideration and initially even the League rejected it as an impracticable idea.

It was only after 1937 that this idea came into the formal political sphere with the performance and subsequent resignation of the Congress Muslims in 1939, the fluid political climate of World War II, the Quit India Movement of 1942 and the government's readiness to modify its strategy towards the Muslims League. Mushirul Hasan has argued that the creation of Pakistan had more to do with tangible material considerations and power sharing, than with any ideological or even instinctive urge to create a separate Islamic state. In this context it is also important to analyse the role played by Jinnah and the Muslim League; whether it was their concerted effort which made the Partition of India inevitable. After the creation of the Indian national Congress and its time as

a 'representative' party for the people of the Indian sub-continent, there was felt a need to reassess its claims at unbiased representation. From the very start of its existence the Congress had shown clear its interest to safeguard the rights of Hindus, alone. Some of the Congress leaders adopted a revolutionary policy to establish Hindu Raj in the sub-continent under the guise of a national movement.

Tracing the history of Congress, Alan Octavian Hume a civil servant, political reformer, ornithologist and horticulturalist in British India. He was the founders of the Indian National Congress, a political party that was later to lead in the Indian independence movement. A party, of the Indians and for the Indians. For that purpose he met senior English bureaucrats and with their guidance, along with local Indian contribution a political party was formed in 1885. It was called the All Indian National Congress.

The aims of the National Congress were declared as follows: -

- i) To be the promotion of friendly relations between nationalist political workers from different parts of the country.
- ii) Development and consolidation of the feeling of national unity irrespective of caste, religion or province,
- iii) Formulation of popular demands and their presentation before the Government.
- iv) Most significant of all, the training and organization of the public opinion in the country.

It has been said that Hume's main purpose in encouraging the foundation of the Congress was to provide a 'safety valve' or a safe outlet to the growing discontent among the educated Indians. He wanted to prevent the union of a discontented nationalist intelligentsia with a discontented peasantry.

The 'safety valve' theory is, however, a small part of the truth and is totally inadequate and misleading. More than anything else, the National Congress represented the urge of the politically conscious Indians to set up a national organization to work for their political and economic advancement.

Its first president was an Indian and Mr. Hume was its first general secretary. On 28th December 1885 the first session of the Congress was held with 72 members among whom, 58 were Hindus and only 2 were Muslims. This obvious difference in the ratio of membership continued throughout the history of the Congress's existence as the only political party in the Indian sub-continent. For instance in the Congress session held in 1894 there were 118 Hindu members of Congress and only 20 were Muslims. The difference of proportion between the two nations' representatives highlighted a great deal of truth about the intentions of the Congress.

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The chief Muslim leaders in India at that time were Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and his Aligarh comrades who believed that the English government was accusing Muslims to be the real force behind the "mutiny of 1857". According to Sir Syed, Muslims should stay aloof from all political matters to give the government the impression that they were not concerned with the politics so that they can save themselves from the government's wrath. Attainment of modern western education was the focus of the educated sections of Muslim society. The rest of the Muslim population was either too unaware of the current political affairs because of their educational backwardness or too afraid for their lives.

However In spite of all anti-Muslim activities of the Congress, some Muslim politicians extended their support because they agreed with the claim of the Congress that all the people living in India

were one nation and Congress planned to keep it that way. Muslim politicians like Maulana Azad, Maulan Mohammad Ali Johar and even Mohammad Ali Jinnah were also in favor of united India and they believed that in spite of all the newly emerging Hindu-Muslim differences there was still the chance of their unity and that's why they remained with the Congress.

With time the Congress on the other hand started to become more and more prejudiced against the Muslims. Hindus, being in majority in the party started using it to achieve their own ends. The Congress during all her life in united India kept claiming that it represented all the communities living in India no matter what their faiths were. But the reality was quite the opposite. During the last decade of the 19th century Congress and its policies became excessively biased and violent toward the Muslims. Extremist Hindus like Tilak, Madan Mohan Malvia, Rash Behari Ghosh and Banerjee became its major leaders who practically took arms against the Muslims, their faith and practices. Their violent protests against cow slaughter and division of Bengal are living proofs of Congress's pro-Hindu approach. The projection of Hindu fanaticism by the congress gradually drove the Muslims away from it and the idea of Muslim league was conceived as a protectorate of the rights of the Muslim community.

The birth of All India Muslim League at Dacca on 30th December 1906 came as an expression of the desire of the muslims to safeguard their rights and interests

Following reasons paved way for the establishment of Muslim league:-

1. Indifferent Attitude of the Congress towards Muslims: All India National Congress was a predominantly Hindu body. Its interests were always at odds ends to those of the Muslims. By 1906, Muslim leaders were convinced that they must have their own party which may speak for the community on all important occasions.
2. Educational and Economic Backwardness: Muslims had lagged far behind from the Hindus in education and economic progress. Educational and economic conditions could only be up graded by establishing a separate Muslims organization that could represent the wishes of the Muslims.
3. Urdu-Hindi Controversy: The Urdu-Hindi controversy began with the demand of Hindus to replace Urdu by Hindi as official language in Deva Nagari Script. Sir Anthony Macdonal, the then Governor of UP ousted Urdu from public offices. Congress clearly sided with Hindi and supported the movement against Urdu and there was no other political party to support Urdu. Thus, the need of formation of a Muslim political party was felt severely.
4. The Evolution of Minto Marley Reforms: The turning point came in the summer of 1906 during John Morley's budget speech, in which he hinted of constitutional reforms. At that time Muslims did not have a political platform to demand their share. It was reasserted that they wanted a separate political platform.
5. The Success of Simla Deputation: Minto offered fullest sympathy to the Muslim demands. The success of Deputation compelled the Muslims to have a separate political association of their own.
6. To Save Muslim Entity: The belief uttered by sir Syed Ahmed Khan that the Muslims were somehow a separate entity. The Muslims did not believe that Hindus and Muslims formed one nation. They were different by religion, history, languages and civilization. It became essential for Muslims to establish a political party of their own.

A resolution to form the All India Muslim League was passed by Nawab Salimullah Khan and was seconded by Hakim Ajmal Khan, Maulana Muhammad Ali and Moulana Zafar Ali. The resolution was passed by All India Educational Conference on 30th December 1906. A committee was

formed to prepare its draft constitution. Sir Agha Khan was appointed as President and Syed Hassan Balgrami was appointed as secretary, while Nawab Mohsim-ul-Mulk and Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk were made joint secretaries with six Vice- Presidents, a Central Committee with forty Members was also constituted. In this way Muslim league was established and become the sole representative of Muslims.

Knowing the circumstances which led to the formation of Muslim league was not difficult to make out what it aimed to.

However, the Muslim league laid the following points as its objectives:-

1. To create among Muslims the feelings of loyalty towards British Government and to remove misconception and suspicious.
2. To Safeguard the political rights of the Muslims and to bring them into the notice of the Government.
3. To prevent among the Muslims, the rise of prejudicial feelings against the other communities of India.

The first session of all India Muslim league was held at Karachi on 29th December, 1907 and was presided over by Adamji Peer Bhai.

It was being felt from the beginning that the All India Muslim League would not achieve considerable success without winning the British Public opinion to its side. Therefore, Syed Ameer Ali organized the branch of Muslim league at London. The inaugural meeting was held on 6th May 1908, at London Caxton Hall. It was participated by the Muslims and those Britishers who favoured their view point.

There come into being a political body which was to play a decisive role in the destiny of the Muslim people of the Indian sub-continent. The day the Muslim delegation won recognition of the demand of separate electorate, the course of the Muslim freedom struggle was charted. It was the beginning of the growth of Muslim national consciousness. It farmed visible institutional expression in the form of Muslim League which after a forty (40) years struggle was to achieve for the Muslims the culmination of their national aspiration, Muslim League became a mass movement of the Muslims and succeeded in achieving Pakistan.

After the acceptance of the demand of separate representation in the Minto Morely reforms, it was common sense to have political party to fight elections for Muslim representation. Whatever may have been the effects of Muslim league, but it made clear that the interests of Muslims must be regarded completely separate from those of the Hindus. Any fusion of both the communities in future was not possible. It steered the ship of Muslim destiny safely through of Political chaos and turmoil to the safer harbour of Pakistan.

Jinnah and the Muslim League led the struggle for the partition of British India into separate Hindu and Muslim states. With regard to mass mobilization and Jinnah's appeal to the religious sentiments of the Muslim community, the revisionists are of the opinion that Jinnah needed Islamic fervor to rally the Muslim masses to achieve his aims.. For Jinnah, the ideal situation lay in one Hindu and one Muslim federation, making it possible to bring the two into a system of political unity on a federal basis. This was of course based on the assumption that just as the rights of the non-Muslims would be protected in the Muslim states, the Muslims in Muslim-minority provinces would also be protected.

In the popular realm the Congress seemed to stand for unity as opposed to the League, which supposedly stood for partition. This idea needs to be reexamined. Congress commitment to freedom conditional to a unified subcontinent was a significant part of their ideology. They conveniently sidestepped the "Muslim problem" by taking a line that freedom should precede and not follow the resolution of the communal problem. Ultimately the vital and most crucial and determining factor in the Partition was the nature of the central government. Confronted with a

choice between 'unity' and a 'strong centre' Congress was beginning to favour the unity even if it came at the cost of strong central control. This commitment also came from the vision of Congressmen like Nehru, who had been influenced by the Socialist model who realized the importance of a strong centre for economic modernization through centralized planning.

We can therefore surmise that Partition was not an 'inevitable' culmination of Muslim separatism, the 'communal logic' or even colonial policy. Partition should be understood in its specific contexts and not as a logical culmination to divisions dating pre-colonial times. The creation of Pakistan far from being the logical conclusion of the 'two-nation theory' was in fact its most decisive political abortion. Partition of India, ranks beyond any doubt as one of the greatest tragedies in human history. It was not inevitable. India's independence was inevitable; but preservation of its unity was a prize that, in our plural society, required high statesmanship. That was in short supply. A mix of other reasons deprived us of that prize primarily significant among them was separatism, communalism, self-interest, tactful dealing, miscalculation, and narrowness of outlook.

While Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League bear heavy responsibility - since they demanded and pressed for Pakistan - the Congress cannot escape blame. Least of all the hypocritical Sangh Parivar. Its chief mentor V.D. Savarkar formulated the two-nation theory in his essay *Hindutva*, published in 1923, 16 years before Jinnah came up with it. The Hindu Mahasabha leader Lala Lajpat Rai wrote in *The Tribune* of December 14, 1924:

"Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States: (1) The Pathan Province or the North-West Frontier; (2) Western Punjab (3) Sindh and (4) Eastern Bengal. If there are compact Muslim communities in any other part of India, sufficiently large to form a province, they should be similarly constituted. But it should be distinctly understood that this is not a united India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India." This was 16 years before the League adopted the Pakistan Resolution in Lahore, on March 23, 1940. Prof. Muhammad Aslam Malik claims: The author is out to prove a thesis which some people in India also espouse - Jinnah was for Partition from the mid-1930s and the Lahore Resolution was not a bargaining counter. He thinks that his leader is belittled if the contrary is averred. One is reminded of the judge who said "this court may often be in error, but it is never in doubt."

Recently, the veteran socialist Prem Bhasin wrote: "The ease with which a large number of Congressmen and women - small, big and bigger still - have walked into the RSS-BJP boat and sailed with it is not a matter of surprise. For, there has always been a certain affinity between the two. A large and influential section in the Congress sincerely believed even during the freedom struggle that the interests of Hindu Indians could not be sacrificed at the altar of a united Independent India."

Gandhi and Nehru opposed such elements doggedly, but they were not prepared to relent on their preference for a centralised federation. Meanwhile, the Muslim Right had begun to play with the Partition idea since Iqbal's famous address to the League session in 1931. But his group of Muslim provinces was confined to western India as a member of the Indian Union. However Jinnah did not subscribe to such schemes. Both the Congress and the League were opposed to the federal part of the Government of India, 1935. Nehru wrote to Rajendra Prasad on July 21, 1937: "During the General Election in U.P. there was not any conflict between the Congress and the Muslim League. It was the decision of both the parties to avoid conflict as much as possible and to accommodate each other." In October 1937, the League adopted as its objective complete independence and became a mass party. That round of the Congress-League parleys for coalition failed was bad enough. Far worse, as Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote to Shiva Rao, was the behaviour of Congress Ministries.

Jinnah's talks with Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose failed dismally. The Congress took a fateful step. It began advocating the establishment of a Constituent Assembly as a solution to the

problem. As K.M. Panikkar pointed out in a brilliant memorandum, dated October 10, 1945, no such Assembly can succeed except on the basis of a Congress-League accord and unless "a procedure of bringing the parties together on some minimum basis of agreement is evolved before the Constituent Assembly meets."

In an article in the journal *Time and Tide* of London (January 19, 1940) Jinnah asserted that "there are in India two nations, who both must share the governance of their common motherland". This implied clearly a pact to govern a united India. The theory was aimed at asserting a claim to equality in standing.

." In his masterpiece *Pakistan or The Partition of India* (1946), Dr. B.R. Ambedkar reproached Gandhi for not putting searching questions to Jinnah on the text when they met in 1944. "What does the word 'finally', which occurs in the last para of the Lahore Resolution, mean? Did the League contemplate a transition period in which Pakistan will not be an independent and sovereign State?"

Ayesha Jalal holds: "By apparently repudiating the need for any centre, and keeping quiet about its shape, Jinnah calculated that when eventually the time came to discuss an all-India federation, British and Congress alike would be forced to negotiate with organised Muslim opinion, and would be ready to make substantial concessions to create or retain that centre. The Lahore resolution should therefore be seen as a bargaining counter, which had the merit of being acceptable (on the face of it) to the majority-province Muslims, and of being totally unacceptable to the Congress and in the last resort to the British also. This, in turn, provided the best insurance that the League would not be given what it now apparently was asking for, but which Jinnah in fact did not really want"

What If India Were Not Partitioned?

This is the quintessential 'What If' question. It is counterfactual because now we can never know what would have happened if India had not been partitioned. But we can speculate about the possibilities and try and construct plausible scenarios for purposes of understanding and discussion.

1. Undivided India need not have been the world's poorest country as had been presumed. The resources, attention and energy that have gone into the continued hostility since Partition could have been channelised into concrete economic development. The huge market and the complementarities of arbitrarily divided ecosystems could have yielded great benefits. Huge investments went into making up for the division of the Indus water system, for example.
2. A democracy need not be a mechanical and rigid system. Malaysia, with three, not two, hostile communities found a way to adjust its system of governance to suit its constraints. South Africa, with its bitter history of *apartheid*, found a way in its constitution to work around the hostilities. There was no reason India could not have found a similarly workable formula.
3. There is no reason to think in terms of one community ruling the other. Indeed, that is a framework that is incompatible with democratic governance. The fact is that almost right up to Partition, the Punjab's Unionist Party had found a mechanism to govern with a coalition of the major communities.
4. Even after Partition there is no Nizam-e-Mustafa. The fact that a large number of Hindus in India today want the Kingdom of Ram does not mean that their demand needs to lead to a redefinition of India. These kinds of demands need to be resolved in the political arena.
5. Jinnah did not feel from the start that the fault-line in undivided India would have remained Hindus versus Muslims. In fact, Jinnah was the advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity because he

believed it was possible. The management of any fault line is up to the leadership as shown by the examples of Malaysia and South Africa mentioned earlier. Ireland is another example.

6. Three parts of undivided India had a Muslim majority but the demand for Pakistan did not originate in these areas. In fact the Muslim majority areas of the west were the last to sign on and even then very reluctantly. The Muslims of Kashmir seemed quite satisfied with the situation under the Farooq Abdullah government. Their attitude is more a function of India's mismanagement (and post-partition Pakistan's incitements) than of some innate hatred of Hindus. There is no cure for mismanagement. Even the Muslim west and east could not coexist in the face of political folly.
7. The rising trends and threat of terrorism could have been successfully controlled with the message of peace and brotherhood as revealed in the preamble of the Indian constitution

The Partition of India thus arose from a complex interaction of changing communal policy, communal question and the demands and strategies of the Congress and the League. The Partition of India in 1947 also needs to be seen in the context of the relationship between 'high politics' and popular sentiments. The Partition of India arose out of the specific conditions of the post-war period, growing communal tensions and the nature of political strategy of the League and the Congress. It was the outcome of a failure of leadership and a choice for the best possible alternative. India lacked the statesmanship of the caliber of Nelson Mandela who could see beyond the immediate political gains and losses.

The cost of the Partition is hard to imagine – almost a million deaths, ten million homeless, and continued conflicts. Add to this the subsequent costs in Bangladesh and the ongoing ones in Kashmir. If the inability of Hindus and Muslims to live together is given as the sole reason for the Partition, it should be considered that in all the one thousand years that Muslims lived in India, there was never once this scale of conflict or bloodshed. It was possible to live together. In fact Hindus and Muslims continue to live together in India even though their relations were poisoned and made immensely difficult by the fact of the Partition.

One could just as well argue that the Partition was a disaster for both Hindus and Muslims as also for the Sikhs whose homeland was cut into two. A united India would never have allowed the Saudis or the Americans to set up *madrassas* and train *jihadis* within its territories. Dim-witted dictators would never have been able to occupy the positions of power they were in post-Partition Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Partition thus remains as an indelible stain on the strength of Indian Nationalism, the consequences of which can never be undermined even after several years of Indian Independence.

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