

A HISTORY
OF
THE HINDU-MUSLIM PROBLEM
IN INDIA

FROM THE EARLIEST CONTACTS UPTO ITS PRESENT PHASE.
WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS SOLUTION.

Being the Report of the Committee appointed by the
Indian National Congress (Karachi Session 1931) to
enquire into the Cawnpore Riots of March 1931.

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**RESOLUTION DATED BOMBAY, THE 31st DE-
CEMBER 1931, OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE
OF THE ALL-INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE OF
THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.**

The Working Committee having read the Cawnpore Enquiry Report thanks the authors for the great pains they have bestowed upon it, and hereby authorizes the General Secretary to have it published for general information. The Working Committee however wishes it to be understood that the publication is not to be interpreted to mean that it has endorsed the correctness of the historical survey made in the Report or its appropriateness in an Emergency Enquiry into a Local Communal Disturbance.

NOTE.

This Report was duly presented to the President, All-India Congress Committee, in October 1931. After considering it the Working Committee of the All-India Congress Committee resolved to publish it, at its meeting of the 31st December 1931. Within a few days, most of the members of the Working Committee and four out of six members of the Enquiry Committee were in jail. These facts and the events that followed account for the extraordinary delay in its publication. But the publication, though so late, is necessary, to carry out the Resolution of the All-India Working Committee and because it deals with matters of lasting interest and value, *viz.*, historical causes and practical remedies.

April 1933.

SUNDARLAL,
Secretary,

Cawnpore Riots Enquiry Committee

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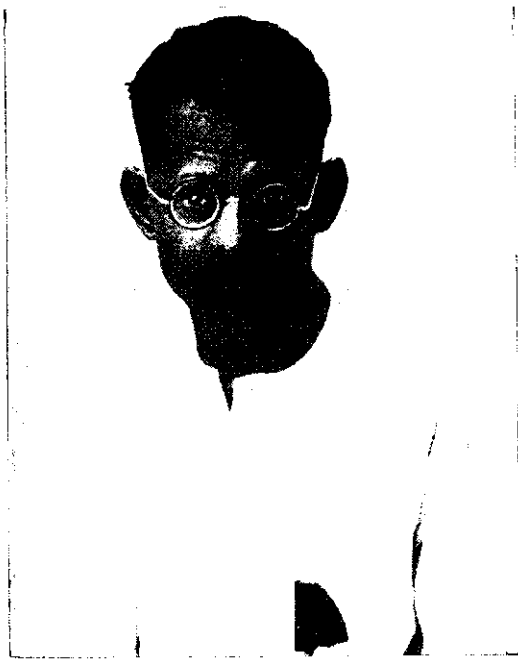
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SHRI GANESH SHANKAR VIDYARTHI

*Photo taken in April 1930, as President-Dictator of the
U. P. Provincial Congress Committee.*

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FROM

DR. BHAGAVAN DAS,
Chairman, Cawnpore Riots Enquiry Committee.

TO

SIRDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL,
President,
All-India Congress Committee,
Ahmedabad.

Benares,

October 4th, 1931.

SIR,

I submit herewith the Report of the Cawnpore Riots Committee, appointed by Resolution No. IV of the Indian National Congress at its session in Karachi in March 1931.

I regret the delay which has occurred. It is due partly to the nature of the work, partly to the other public and private engagements of members, and, for the rest, to my inability to foresee certain difficulties and provide against them in time so as to expedite the work.

I must also in this letter express our gratitude to the Cawnpore Congress Committee and to the Congress workers at Cawnpore without whose loyal support and unremitting help our work would have been impossible. Shri Piareylal Agarwal, Secretary, Town Congress Committee, Shri Iqbal Krishna Kapoor, Advocate, and Dr. Jawaharlal, with their co-workers deserve especial mention.

Next I must thank the Chairman and the staff of the Cawnpore Municipal Board for supplying us with much valuable information that we needed in connection with our work. Our thanks are also due to the Managing Committee of the Gaya Prasad Library for putting a set of rooms in their spacious Library building at our disposal for conducting our enquiry. We must also thank the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian citizens of Cawnpore, who unreservedly responded to our invitation for giving evidence before us, for without such whole-hearted and trustful co-operation of all communities it would have been impossible for us to come to correct conclusions. I should also thank two young friends, Shri Ganesh Lal and Shri Sadik Ali, who during all these six months have unremittingly helped the Committee with their honorary services in the heavy task of keeping, arranging, and producing records and accounts, comparing and correcting copies, etc.

Finally, at Benares, the deep thanks of our Committee are due to Shrimati Bhagavati Devi Gupta and Shri Shiva-prasad Gupta for having most generously housed this whole Committee and its assistant staff very comfortably in their spacious house and given us all free hospitality for four whole months, bearing patiently and smilingly the endless inconveniences which such a large party of guests for such a long period unavoidably causes to the host.

I conclude with an expression of the hope that you may find the Report useful for its purpose, excuse the delay that has occurred in submitting it to you, and in case you think it would be helpful, to arrange for the early printing and publication of the same in English as

well as Hindustani, in both the Urdu and the Nagri scripts, for the benefit of all concerned.

Yours sincerely,

BHAGAVAN DAS,

Chairman,

Cawnpore Riots Enquiry Committee.

MEMORANDUM OF WORK

(24th March, 1931, to 4th October, 1931.)

Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Cawnpore on the 24th March 1931. Many of the local leading workers had left the city to attend the Karachi Congress, which began session on 29th March 1931.

Local Congress workers wired news of the riots to Karachi on 25th. President Jawaharlal Nehru requested Shri Purushottam Das Tandon, there present, and wired to some others at Lucknow and Allahabad, to proceed at once to Cawnpore, and help to pacify the situation.

Shri Purushottam Das Tandon, with some local Congressmen, arrived at Cawnpore on the 28th March; Choudhury Khaliquzzaman, Maulana Zafarul-Mulk Alvi, Shri Mohanlal Saxena and others had come from Lucknow in the meantime. They convened Joint meetings of prominent Hindu and Muslim citizens, issued a peace proclamation, formed a Unity Board, took out joint processions of Hindus and Muslims on 29th, 30th, and 31st, through the affected areas, and did all that was possible to restore peace. By the end of the month the fury of the riots had subsided altogether. Much confidence had been restored. Yet the apprehensions and susceptibility to panic at the slightest rumour, almost always false, continued, and the main bazars also remained closed, despite official efforts to open them.

On 30th March 1931, the Congress at Karachi passed the following resolution :

COMMUNAL STRIFE IN CAWNPORE.

4. This Congress deplores the communal strife that is going on in Cawnpore and that has resulted in a large number of deaths and even a larger number injured. The Congress tenders its respectful sympathy to the families of the deceased and the injured. The Congress notes with deep grief the news of the death, during the strife, of Syt. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, President, United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee, who was one of the most selfless among national workers and who by his freedom from communal bias had endeared himself to all parties and communities. Whilst tendering condolence to the family of the deceased, the Congress notes with pride that a prominent worker of the first rank was found sacrificing his precious life in the attempt to rescue those in danger and restore peace and sanity in the midst of strife and insanity. The Congress asks all concerned to utilize this noble sacrifice for promoting peace and never for vengeance, and to that end appoints a Committee to discover the causes of the tension and to take such measures as may be necessary to heal the breach and to prevent the poison from spreading to the adjoining areas and districts.

COMMITTEE.

Syt. Purushottam Das Tandon.

Khwaja Abdul Majid.

Syt. T. A. K. Sherwani.

Syt. Zafarul-Mulk.

Pandit Sunderlal.

with Dr. Bhagavan Das (Chairman).

Pandit Sundarlal reached Cawnpore on the 5th April. On the 7th April, the new President of the Congress, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, ex-President Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and Seth Jammalal Bajaj arrived there. They held conversations with Hindu and Muslim leaders, led a joint procession through the markets, and appealed to both Hindu and Muslim businessmen to open shops. The appeal was responded to at once, and after full 13 days the city again began to live its normal life. Yet the panicky condition, especially during nights, continued more or less for some time longer. Mischief-makers now and then started false rumours and alarms, or actually threw stones here and there. These were counteracted by Congress workers proclaiming (by beat of drum etc.) the falseness of the alarm, and also by similar official proclamations.

On the 8th April, two other members of our Committee, Doctor Bhagavan Das and Maulana Zafar-ul-Mulk arrived. Shri Purushottam Das Tandon had left meanwhile. Khwaja Abdul Majid and Shri T. A. K. Sherwani sent intimations of inability to work on the Committee for various reasons. By permission of the Congress President, obtained by wire, Shri Manzar Ali Sokhta and Shri Abdul Latif were co-opted finally in place of Khwaja Abdul Majid and Shri T. A. K. Sherwani.

A questionnaire was drawn up in Hindustani (in two scripts, Urdu and Hindi) and in English. The English version is given as an appendix with this report.

Invitations to give evidence by written statements in answer to our questionnaire, and also orally, were issued to some 200 persons, Hindu, Muslim and Christian, Indian

and European, non-official and official. Copies of the questionnaire were enclosed.

The officials declined to appear. They wrote back pleading inability on the ground of their being Government servants.

On the 9th and 10th April members of the Committee met several local leaders and discussed the situation.

On the afternoon of the 10th April, a full private meeting (public meetings having been forbidden by the District Magistrate) was held in the Gaya Prasad Library Hall. Over 300 leading persons of the city, Hindu and Muslim, gathered. Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Pt. Hridaynath Kunzru, Dr. Syed Mahmud, Dr. Bhagavan Das, and Principal S. C. Chatterji, of the Christ Church College, spoke.

The Committee began sittings, for recording evidence, on the afternoon of the 11th April, in a couple of rooms kindly placed at the disposal of the Committee by the authorities of the Gaya Prasad Library, which is situated in a central place, on the Meston Road, at a short distance from where the riots began.

That same evening, a meeting of the local Unity Board, composed of leading Hindus and Muslims, was held. Members of our Committee attended by invitation. Pt. Sundarlal addressed the Board at length, placing our views and suggestions before them, especially regarding the formation of joint Mohalla Panchayats and Civic Guards and the dropping of all criminal cases.

Shri Manzar Ali Sokhta arrived on the 12th, Shri Purushottam Das Tandon on the 13th, Shri Abdul Latif on the 17th.

From the 12th onwards, some members of the Committee used to go round daily for local inspections, in the forenoons, spending about four hours each day in this work, recording notes of what they saw and heard, also addressing small gatherings on the need for and the way of harmony and peace. In the afternoons they sat in the Gaya Prasad Library, from 3 p.m. till 8, 9, sometimes 10 p.m., recording evidences.

The work of local inspection was practically finished by the end of April, that of recording evidence by the 25th May.

The attendance of the Committee members varied. Pandit Sundar Lal and Shri Manzar Ali Sokhta were present almost throughout, and besides the regular Committee work, did a good deal in the way of visiting and enlisting the sympathies of local men of influence. The next most regular attendant was Maulana Zafarul-Mulk, who at great personal inconvenience and sacrifice used to travel daily to and fro between Lucknow and Cawnpore, compelled to do so by unavoidable professional engagements and illness of children at Lucknow. Dr. Bhagavan Das spent 26 days in Cawnpore and Shri Abdul Latif 20 days. Shri Purushottam Das Tandon, because of multifarious other engagements, could give very little time.

After the 25th May, Pandit Sundarlal and Shri Manzar Ali Sokhta were detained at Cawnpore by the Moharram troubles, till the 1st June.

Several times during the month of April, and on a few occasions also in May, Pandit Sundarlal and Shri Manzar Ali Sokhta were sent to various places in the Mofussil and also to some places in the adjoining districts of Fatehpur.

Farrukhabad, Etah, Mainpuri, etc., from some of which places it was reported that trouble was imminent between Hindus and Muslims. A number of Mohalla meetings of members of both communities were also held in the city in which various members of the Committee spoke on the need of unity and the means of bringing it about. Pandit Sundarlal and Shri Manzar Ali, who were at Cawnpore during Muharram, used to work in the city practically from morning till evening in connection with the Moharram trouble from the 25th May to the 1st of June.

On 2nd June, Pandit Sundarlal with his records and staff of assistants arrived at Benares, and Shri Manzar Sokhta on the 3rd. They and Dr. Bhagavan Das began preparing notes for the Report. The first idea was to meet at Lucknow, but as arrangements could not be easily made there, it was decided to do the work at Benares. Maulana Zafarul-Mulk unfortunately fell ill; Shri Abdul Latif also was detained by domestic illness, and Shri Purushottam Das Tandon by various engagements. Invitations were finally issued to all these three gentlemen to come to Benares on 1st July at latest. Shri Purushottam Das Tandon joined on the 30th June and Maulana Zafarul-Mulk on 2nd July. Shri Abdul Latif came on the 7th of July.

Since then, all the members have been spending what time they could to help in the drafting and compilation of the report at Benares. Out of the 109 days between 2nd June and 19th September, Pandit Sundarlal spent 91 days in Benares, Shri Manzar Ali spent 72, Shri Purushottam Das Tandon 47, Shri Abdul Latif 23, and Maulana Zafarul-Mulk Alvi 20. Dr. Bhagavan Das has been in

Benares all the days, The rest of the work having been almost finished, Pandit Sundarlal alone with some staff continued to remain at Benares from the 19th September upto the 4th of October, to get typing and other necessary work finished.

At Benares, our work has been confined mainly to the drafting, discussing, and revising of the Report and getting it fair-typed.

On the evening of the 5th July, four members attended, by invitation, a crowded meeting of the Hindu and Muslim citizens of Benares on the grounds of the Town Hall, and addressed them on the need for and the ways of establishing Hindu-Muslim Unity. During the first eighteen days of August, all the members were scattered in different places, three going to Bombay for the meetings of the All-India Congress Committee and other work. On the 30th August, Shri Manzar Ali went to Jaunpur, presided at the District Conference and spoke on Hindu-Muslim Unity among other topics.

Briefly, from the 8th April to the end of May was spent at Cawnpore collecting and recording evidence (of some 280 witnesses covering about 2000 typed and Nagri and Urdu MS. pages) and making local inspections. Lists of houses destroyed by fire or otherwise, wholly or in part, with estimates of cost of restoration, were also prepared by a separate Committee of local workers appointed by us. Another Committee we appointed prepared a list of the Hindus who helped, rescued, or protected Muslims, and *vice versa*, during the riots. We mention both in the Report. We also arranged to get copies of photographs

of about 60 striking situations taken during the riots. We are submitting the same with the Report.

From the 2nd of June upto date we have worked in Benares at the Report, with the exception of the first eighteen days of August mentioned before.

The Report, of about 385 typed pages, including appendices, etc., is thus the result of nearly two months of collection of evidence and 3 months of writing.

Our investigations at Cawnpore revealed to us the fearful nature and the extent of the tragedy and the terrible possibility of its spreading into other parts in India. The Cawnpore riots were not an isolated and unusual occurrence. The Benares riots which preceded them by only six weeks were serious enough to have required a full investigation. They were only put into the back ground by this much greater tragedy. Other extraordinary occurrences have been taking place since, in British as well as Indian India, in various places. Things have come to such a deplorable pass that "riots" can be caused almost at will by interested parties, wherever and whenever it may suit them.

The Cawnpore riots were only a most violent manifestation of a deep-seated disease which has been growing actively for the last ten or twelve years, out of germs fostered in the body politic of India, for some generations at least. From the conditions we saw and the evidence we recorded, we became convinced that mere temporary palliatives would be of no avail, and that by confining efforts only to areas of violent repercussions the Congress would be wasting energy. A thorough examination of the problem was needed and remedial measures had to be

devised which would be of general application and lasting utility. The more we thought over and discussed the question, the firmer grew our conviction that it was our duty to go into the matter thoroughly and to deal with the Hindu-Muslim Problem in its entirety, treating the Cawnpore riots as merely an aggravated symptom of the disease.

Once committed to this position, our task became rather heavy. Our personal experience and the evidence we took in the course of our investigations revealed to us that a deep impression existed in the minds of the people that the Hindu-Muslim problem was an age-long problem, that the two communities were inherently antagonistic to each other, that they had always shed each other's blood, and would continue to do so till one or the other was destroyed or was in a position to dominate over the other. We found that the conviction had sunk deep into the public mind, and by trying further to comprehend its nature we found that it had its root in a perverted view of history. Even some of our best Congress workers, both Hindu and Muslim, are possessed with this idea, which cannot be driven away from their mind because they sincerely believe that this is the lesson taught to us by the last several centuries of our history. This is a dangerous mentality which tends to make all efforts at reconciliation lifeless and unreal, and which generates a feeling of desperation and a callous disregard of the consequences of a situation which appears to them as insoluble. We felt that the first step towards the solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem was an attempt to remove this mentality from the workers as well as from the public. This could only be done by presenting before them a correct and constructive view of the

past relations of the two communities and by exposing the methods by which our history has been deliberately misinterpreted and misrepresented. The task was as difficult as it was essential. It required time; but we could not grudge time in a matter of such vital consequences. We are, therefore, submitting a historical retrospect covering the Muslim and the British periods. It is intended to show the development of the social and political forces which are responsible for the present situation. The Cawnpore incidents are then narrated to supply an ocular demonstration of the working of the forces described in the Historical Section, and the last Section deals with remedial measures.

BHAGAVAN DAS.

PART I.
HISTORICAL RETROSPECT.

FOREWORD.

THE PREVAILING MISCONCEPTION

THE prevailing impression is that the Hindu-Muslim problem in its present form is an age-long problem and that the two communities have, in their different religions and cultures, a source of inexhaustible and ineradicable antagonism which has made their mutual relations bitter, distrustful, and hostile from the very outset. This is an extremely wrong impression, created by interested parties through deliberate misrepresentations, about the propagation of Islam in India, about the nature and incidents of Muslim rule, and generally about the relations which subsisted during this period between the Hindus and the Musalmans.

In the following retrospect it is our purpose to correct this view which is generally met with in school histories and other interested works, and which at present is playing a considerable part in estranging the two communities. We feel that unless the people begin to see the past in a truer perspective it will be very difficult or well-nigh impossible to restore mutual confidence and to arrive at a real and permanent solution of the present differences. We consider, therefore, that an attempt to remove historical misconceptions is the first and the most indispensable step in the real solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem.

GENESIS OF THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM.

This problem is a problem arising out of the mutual distrust and the real or supposed conflict of rights and interests of the two major communities of India. In its very nature, it

implies the presence in each community of a separate collective consciousness as well as of separate collective communal motives under which each can as a single unit act and re-act against the other. The Hindu-Muslim problem, therefore, in its presents form, could only arise when each of the two communities has developed this separate collective consciousness, and such motives and objectives. This stage of development is reached in Indian history only after 1857. Throughout the Muslim period no All-India communal consciousness and corresponding motives and objectives are patently perceptible either in the Muslims or in the Hindus, and the political and economic relations of the two communities are found to be almost altogether free from communal bias or bigotry. Communalism in India develops as a concomitant to Indian Nationalism and is nothing but Nationalism driven into religious channels. In Hindus, it has allied itself to a territorial sentiment because of the more ancient connection of Hinduism with India and also because of confinement of Hinduism to this country. In Musalmans, it has got deflected towards Pan-Islamism because of the action of the divisive British policy, the foreign origin of Islam, and the existence of Muslims in other countries where Islam is politically regnant. But in both the communities these developments begin to take place naturally after the upsetting of the old social balances and ideals by British conquests and the introduction of the nationalistic ideal in Indian life through the spread of Western ideas and education.

SCOPE OF THE HISTORICAL RETROSPECT.

It is impossible in a report of this nature to deal with all the aspects of our social and political life; and even those that we touch upon will have to be dealt with very cursorily.

rily. It is not our purpose, nor is it possible for us, to write a complete history. We wish merely to indicate some lines of thought and describe some features and incidents of Indian history which are generally disregarded but in the light of which we can better understand the present and the past relations of the two communities.

We divide the Retrospect into two broad sections, the Muslim period and the British period. In the first section we take a bird's-eye view of the relations of the two communities from their first contacts upto the Mughal period, indicating broadly the affinities which existed between them and the broad synthesis towards which their life was moving. In the second, we try to show how the synthesis was disturbed and indicate the social, religious, and political factors which have been in the main responsible for the birth of the communal problem and the part which British policy has played in working it up and in bringing matters to the present crisis.
