

# The role of Dr. Mohammad Iqbal's as a legislator in The Punjab Council

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## Abstract:

Allama Muhammad Iqbal's tenure in the Punjab Legislative Council from 1926 to 1930 marked his steadfast advocacy for Muslim rights and critical stance on British colonial policies and socio-economic imbalances affecting Muslims in British India. Elected with overwhelming support, Iqbal initially aligned with the Unionist Party but soon distanced himself, objecting to its elitist, communal nature that prioritized the interests of the landed elite. In the council, he emerged as an independent, principled voice, calling for reforms in education, fair land revenue practices, and economic development, primarily to uplift Punjab's Muslims. He challenged disparities in educational grants, pushed for progressive land tax reforms, and supported industrial growth to address unemployment. Iqbal's legislative work consistently addressed inequities, particularly in education and employment, opposing policies that disadvantaged Muslims, such as unrestricted open competition for government positions. He instead advocated for a balanced approach to foster inclusivity. In the context of communal tensions, Iqbal strongly opposed separate electorates to protect Muslim interests, opposing joint electorates. His concerns also extended to protecting Muslim religious practices against Western and Hindu influences, as seen in his support for indigenous medicine and criticism of the Shuddhi movement, which sought to convert Muslims. During Hindu-Muslim riots, Iqbal stressed internal unity and advocated for religious legislation following the publication of the inflammatory *Rangila Rasool*. As communal divisions deepened, he urged economic self-reliance among Muslims and backed cooperation with the Simon Commission, leading to ideological divisions within the Muslim League. By his 1930 Allahabad Address, Iqbal fully articulated his vision for an autonomous Muslim-majority state, reinforcing his enduring influence on Muslim political thought and

laying the groundwork for what would eventually lead to the formation of Pakistan.

**Key Words:** *Allama Iqbal, Legislative Council, Punjab, Muslim Politics*

## Introduction

Allama Muhammad Iqbal's role as a legislator in the Punjab Legislative Council was marked by his principled approach, unwavering commitment to Muslim interests, and profound critiques of British colonial policies. Elected in 1926 with a strong mandate from Lahore's urban constituency, Iqbal entered politics with an independent vision focused on social justice and Muslim unity. Although he initially ran as an independent candidate, his affiliation with the Khilafat Committee and alignment with the concerns of the Muslim community reflected his larger goal: to advocate for the rights and distinct identity of Muslims in colonial India.

In the council, Iqbal distanced himself from conventional political methods, avoiding factionalism and divisive rhetoric. His commitment to serving the greater cause of Islam and the nation defined his legislative actions, and he frequently expressed disillusionment with the prevailing political structures, which he saw as exploitative tools of colonial power. By critiquing the elitist nature of the council and emphasizing unity beyond the urban-rural divide, Iqbal sought to inspire a new direction in Muslim leadership that placed national and communal welfare above personal and party interests. His tenure in the Punjab Legislative Council thus reflects a significant chapter in his political thought, underscoring his lifelong dedication to advocating for a just and autonomous future for Indian Muslims.

## Literature Review

*Iqbal in Politics* by Hafeez Malik is a detailed examination of Iqbal's political life, including his time in the Punjab Legislative Council. It discusses his legislative efforts, political ideas, and impact on issues of Muslim identity and rights. *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal* edited by Latif Ahmed Sherwani, is a collection that contains Iqbal's speeches, letters, and statements, offering a primary source perspective on his views and contributions as a legislator, particularly during the years he served in the council. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* by Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Though not solely about his legislative career, this seminal work provides insight into the philosophical ideas that shaped his political actions and legislative decisions during his council tenure. *Zinda Rood* is an extensive biographical account of Allama Iqbal, written by his son, Javed Iqbal. The title, which means "Living Stream," metaphorically reflects Iqbal's dynamic and enduring legacy. This work is notable for offering both personal insights and a comprehensive analysis of Iqbal's intellectual journey, philosophy, and impact on South Asian thought and politics. *Muslim Politics in the Punjab, 1921-47* by Qalb-i-Abid is a comprehensive study of the political dynamics and developments in Punjab during the final decades of British rule in India. The book delves into the complexities of Muslim political mobilization and the interactions between Muslim leaders, colonial authorities, and other political groups in the region.

While the mentioned works provide valuable insights into Allama Iqbal's political life and thought, several gaps remain in the literature, specifically regarding his role as a legislator in the Punjab Legislative Council. Identifying gaps in the literature on Iqbal's role as a legislator in the Punjab Council provided direction for new research. There is limited analysis of the specific motions, debates, and policy discussions he led or participated in within the council. A closer examination of council records could reveal more about his strategies and legislative style.

### Research Methodology

Archival and library-based research involves obtaining records of the Punjab Legislative Council proceedings, debates, and any available archival documents that capture Iqbal's speeches, debates, and resolutions. Reviewing period newspapers, such as *Inqilab*, *Zamindaar*, and *The Tribune*, provides additional context on council activities, political developments, and the public's reception of Iqbal as a legislator.

### Elections for the Punjab Council 1926

In the 1926 elections for the Punjab Council, Iqbal, along with other urban Muslim representatives, secured a seat as an independent candidate in Lahore's urban constituency. He remained deeply critical of electoral politics and the prevailing democratic system, viewing the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms as a "trap" designed to exploit the victims of colonial rule. Iqbal's principles forbade him from causing discord among Muslims for the sake of self-interest. (Iqbal, 2014).

Before the 1923 elections for the second reformed Council, Iqbal had been urged by friends to contest from Lahore. However, because his friend, Mian Abdul Aziz, was also running from the same constituency, Iqbal chose not to compete, as he valued their friendship more than personal gain. His principles forbade him from causing discord among Muslims for the sake of self-interest. (Inqilab, June, 13, 1923). For Iqbal, the preservation of the distinct identity and culture of Indian Muslims was of the utmost importance, both morally and politically.

In 1926, Iqbal finally agreed to run for office after Mian Abdul Aziz withdrew his candidacy and promised to support him. The wise citizens of Lahore, recognizing Iqbal's esteemed educational background, aimed to ensure his election to the Punjab Legislative Council without opposition. They successfully convinced Malik Muhammad Hussain, then President of the Lahore Municipal Corporation, to step aside and withdraw his candidacy in favor of Iqbal. (Shahid, 1998).

However, Iqbal's growing popularity concerned some powerful figures, particularly Shadi Lal, the Chief Justice of the Punjab Chief Court at the time. Lal reportedly persuaded Khan Bahadur Malik Muhammad Din, a barrister, to run against Iqbal. Malik Din's campaign leaned on negative strategies, exploiting local clan loyalties, sectarian bigotry, and personal rivalries, particularly between the Arain and Kashmiri communities, to garner support. In stark contrast, Iqbal chose a dignified approach, avoiding any form of divisive rhetoric, personal attacks, or sectarian appeals during his campaign. (Zamindaar, 1926).

Iqbal also avoided traditional election tactics, avoiding flashy promises and populist slogans. His campaign was simple, consisting of just twenty processions. Despite this modest approach, he garnered the support of numerous prominent figures in Lahore, including key members of the Arain community. While the Shiites and Ahl-i-Hadith factions did not back him, Iqbal received widespread support from other religious groups, including the Ahmadi community and the Lahori sect of Qadianis. (Nizami, 07 Nov, 2011).

In 1926, Iqbal spent almost the entire year involved in election campaigns. The inaugural session of the Punjab Legislative Council was held on January 3, 1927, where members took their oaths individually. Newspapers began reporting on forming an independent group under Iqbal's leadership within the council. However, Iqbal joined the majority party, the Unionist Party, to play a more effective role. After closely observing the working methods of the Unionist Party from within, Iqbal became disillusioned with both Sir Fazl-e-Hussain and the Unionist Party. (Zamindaar, Jan, 03, 1927)

Iqbal was sworn in as a member of the legislature on January 3, 1927, and his father, Sir Fazl-e-Hussain, wrote that much of the criticism of Fazl-e-Hussain can be attributed to Dr. Iqbal. Fazl-e-Hussain's political biography, Azeem Hussain, writes that Dr. Iqbal failed to take advantage of the opportunities presented to him, losing all the Unionist Party's goodwill by objecting to its policies and harshly criticizing its members in the press. As a result, Chaudhry Shahabuddin was re-elected as President of the Council. (Husain, 1946).

### **Affiliation with the Unionist Party**

In the elections for the second reformed council, a majority of Muslim members elected to the Punjab Legislative Council (PLC) hailed from influential rural families. These members were united under the leadership of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain and worked to consolidate the Unionist Party, which was formed through cooperation between Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh feudal landlords, primarily based on shared land interests. Of the 93 total PLC members, 26 were nominated or ex-officio, while 67 were elected. Among the elected members, 31 were Muslims representing both urban and rural constituencies. (Munnawwar, 1982)

When Iqbal entered the PLC, he faced a strategic choice: to align with the Punjab National Unionist Party (PNUP) or to organize a separate group of like-minded Muslim urban members within the assembly. Iqbal was well aware that the Unionists represented an alliance of landed elites that transcended communal divisions and focused on protecting vested economic interests. He recognized that Fazl-i-Hussain was a strong advocate for separate electorates for Muslims and supported the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900. In contrast, members aligned with the Congress Party and the Hindu Sabha favored joint electorates and sought to repeal the Land Alienation Act. (Afzal, 1969)

Faced with these realities, Iqbal chose to support the Unionists as the lesser of two evils. He sat on the treasury benches, recognizing that forming a separate bloc would weaken the Unionists and strengthen the position of the Hindu Sabha. However, there was ongoing debate about whether Iqbal had officially joined the Unionist Party or simply cooperated with them as an urban ally.

Iqbal's involvement with the Unionists allowed him to closely observe the inner workings of the party, particularly the conflicts between rural and urban interests that the Unionist Party exacerbated within the council and across the province. His experience in the party provided him with insights into the broader political dynamics of the landed classes' supra-communal alliance, which later informed his critical stance in the final years of his life. (Isra, Sarwar, 2019).

### **Unwavering in His Ideological Position**

Ideologically, Iqbal's views remained at odds with the non-communal nature of the Unionist Party. During his time in the council, he remained true to the promises made in his election campaign and refrained from using his position to further personal interests. Although his role as a legislator spanned only three years, some writers have suggested that he was a relatively quiet participant, not taking an active role in council proceedings.

### **Iqbal's Advocacy for Fair Land Revenue Reforms in the Punjab Legislative Council**

During his brief four-year tenure as a member of the Punjab Legislative Council, Iqbal passionately advocated for the application of income tax assessment principles to land revenue, the remission of land revenue for small holdings up to five bighas, and the implementation of compulsory education. On March 5, 1927, during the budget session of the Punjab Legislative Council, Iqbal highlighted a glaring inconsistency in the land revenue system. He argued that the land revenue system was fundamentally unjust because landowners were not given any exemption, even for the smallest plots. (Debates, PLC, March, 05, 1927).

When Chaudhry Chottu Ram introduced a resolution to address this issue, it faced strong opposition from government members on various grounds. Iqbal defended the resolution's essence, proposing exempting holdings of up to five bighas in non-irrigated areas from land revenue without necessarily applying the principle of income tax to land revenue assessments. (Debates, PLC, march, 05, 1927).

### **Iqbal's Call for Educational Reform, Industrial Growth, and Equitable Representation in Government**

Iqbal criticized the provincial administration's approach to education, calling for compulsory education and pointing out that the money allocated for education was not yielding results. He criticized the budget speech, arguing that the decline in student enrollment was due to inadequate school inspector propaganda and a disparity in grant allocation. Iqbal also highlighted the importance of industrial growth to combat unemployment, stating that the weaving and shoemaking industries in the province could protect the province from unemployment if shielded from competition with Cawnpore and Ahmedabad. (Debates, PLC, 1927).



Iqbal was against a resolution by Sikh member Sirdar Ujjal Singh advocating for open competition for government posts, arguing that it would further disadvantage Muslims, who were already lagging in education. He dismissed the idea of blind nationalism and urged the ruling powers to take actions that would uplift all communities equally.

In response to the argument that the current system hindered the growth of nationalism, Iqbal questioned whether it was even desirable to become a nation and argued that mutual trust between communities was necessary to establish a strong sense of unity. (Tariq, 1973).

### **Iqbal's Battle for Fair Land Reforms and Social Equity in the Punjab Legislative Council**

During his tenure in the Punjab Legislative Council, Iqbal actively criticized the elitist policies of the Unionist ministry and British officials. He was often seen as a "lone voice" standing up for the rights of the underprivileged, particularly Muslims. Iqbal meticulously studied the budget documents before presenting his views. In 1927, during his first year in the Council, Iqbal highlighted several issues, such as the lack of provisions for rural sanitation and medical care for women in the budget. He criticized the inconsistencies in taxation and the "barbarous" theory that all land belonged to the Crown. (Khurshid, 1996).

In early 1928, Iqbal revisited this issue, challenging the idea of state ownership of agricultural land, which Punjab Government Revenue Member Fazl-i-Hussain supported. He believed that the prevailing land revenue system was unjust, treating small landowners the same as absentee landlords. He suggested alternative solutions, such as cutting administrative expenditures and lowering the taxable income threshold under the Income Tax Act. After intense debate, Iqbal proposed exempting landholdings of up to five bighas in non-irrigated areas from land revenue. Fazl-i-Hussain strongly opposed this suggestion, arguing that such an exemption would cause a significant budgetary deficit. (Debates, PLC, May, 1928)

In the 1929-30 budget discussions, Iqbal proposed measures to reduce Punjab's financial dependency on Britain, advocating for cheaper alternatives like Japanese products and speaking out against inheritance taxes, which primarily affected feudal landowners. Despite the resistance of Fazl-i-Hussain and the landowner-dominated Council, Iqbal continued to push for policies that would cut government expenditures and identify new sources of revenue. (Debates, 1929).

In the 1930-31 budget debate, Iqbal castigated the government for its financial mismanagement, pointing to unemployment, the lack of industrial development, and the province's mounting debt as key factors behind Punjab's economic crisis. He suggested forming a recruitment committee to review cost-cutting measures and stressed the need for industrial development, particularly in sectors like weaving and shoemaking, which he believed could help reduce unemployment in the province. (Debates, 1929-30).

Iqbal maintained a strong connection to the education sector, frequently addressing the Council on the need to improve education in British Punjab. He observed that Punjab lagged

behind other provinces in both constitutional and educational development due to deliberate neglect by a disinterested foreign government.

### **Opinion Regarding Muslim Representation**

In July 1927, Sardar Ujjal Singh proposed a resolution urging the government to fill future government positions through open competition. Iqbal strongly opposed this proposal, recognizing that Muslims, being educationally disadvantaged, would struggle to compete with Hindus in such an open system. He advocated for a "principle of competition tempered by selection and nomination" and argued that such systems couldn't be universally applied in India, where communities were often in conflict and lacked mutual trust. (Debates, PLC, 1927).

Some members of the Council supported Ujjal Singh's resolution, claiming it would promote composite nationalism. Iqbal dismissed this idea, comparing it to a hen that cackles without laying an egg. He was sensitive regarding separate electorates and Muslim rights and opposed Jinnah's proposal for a joint electorate, which eventually led to a split in the All India Muslim League. (Tariq, 1973)

Iqbal was particularly concerned about Muslim representation in government services and frequently raised questions in the Council to stay informed about the number of Muslim officers and employees in various departments. For example, on July 22, 1927, Iqbal asked the Punjab Agriculture Minister to provide data on the number of Muslim and non-Muslim Executive and Assistant Executive Engineers in the Public Works Department, which revealed that only three were Muslims.

On November 22, 1927, Iqbal further highlighted the lack of Muslim employees in the Board of Examining Engineers, noting that no Muslim had been appointed for the past 21 years. He also raised concerns about irregularities in the disbursement of military scholarships by the District Inspector of Schools in Jhelum, bringing attention to discrimination in educational opportunities for Muslims. (Zamindaar, Nov, 22, 1927).

### **Iqbal's Reform Agenda: Advocating for Economic Relief, Educational Reform, and Social Welfare in the Punjab Council**

In January 1927, Iqbal was appointed a member of the Finance Committee and the Education Committee of the Punjab Council. On February 13, 1927, he gave notice to present two resolutions at the upcoming council meeting. First, given the unemployment among the educated class, the government should grant pieces of land to unemployed, educated individuals so they can engage in agriculture. Second, since the Government of India had waived Punjab's annual revenue contribution, a Commission of Inquiry should be set up to ensure that tax reductions are fairly distributed among all taxpayers. (Debate, PLC, Jan, 13, 1927).

### **Iqbal's Advocacy for Sanitation, Education, and the Preservation of Muslim Political Rights in the Punjab Council**

On March 15, 1927, Iqbal, as a member of the Finance Committee of the Punjab Council, proposed two suggestions during a speech on that year's budget. First, since the financial condition of the province was satisfactory and ample funds were available for development projects, a specific portion of the budget should be allocated to improving sanitation in villages and providing medical aid to women. Second, he suggested reducing taxes or land revenue. (Debates, PLC, March, 05, 1927).

On March 10, 1927, while serving as a member of the Education Committee, Iqbal commented on the educational policy of the Government of Punjab and emphasized the need for compulsory primary education. (Debates, PLC, March, 10, 1927).

In 1927, Srinivasa Iyengar was elected as the president of the Congress. Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the president of the Muslim League. Both were considering a strategy that could address the Hindus' complaints about the protection of Muslims and separate electorates. For this purpose, Muhammad Ali Jinnah convened a meeting of some leaders of the Muslim League in Delhi on March 20, 1927. In this meeting, the Delhi Proposals were approved. (Abid, 1992).

Iqbal opposed the abandonment of separate electorates. His perspective was that Hindus held economic superiority in Punjab, Bengal, and Sindh. Therefore, if Muslims gave up separate electorates, the Hindus would never allow those Muslim candidates to succeed in elections who could truly safeguard Muslim interests. (Abid, 1992).

### **Iqbal's Push for Social Reforms and Muslim Economic Empowerment in the Punjab Council**

On July 18, 1927, during a session of the Punjab Council, Iqbal drew attention to the brutal conduct of the police. Referring to the atmosphere of sectarianism and hatred in the province, he said:

"Implement a simple principle. Just a few days ago, one of my friends overheard a conversation between two respected Hindus. One asked the other: What should our policy be now? The other replied: Speak the words of nationalism, but in reality, keep an eye on the rights of our sect." (Sherwani, 1997).

On July 25, 1927, Iqbal gave notice of several resolutions he intended to present in the Council, including the following:

1. The Punjab government sold 325,000 acres of land in Neeli Bar, Montgomery District, mostly to capitalists; half of this land should be reserved for tenants.
2. A law should be enacted to prevent blasphemy against prophets and religious figures (this law was enacted in 1927).
3. A law should be made to prevent alcohol consumption in Punjab.
4. Swords should be exempted from the Arms Act.



As a result of Iqbal's efforts, the sword was exempted from the Arms Act in nine districts: Mianwali, Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, Jhang, Gurgaon, Hissar, Ambala, Shimla, and Kangra. (Debates, PLC, July, 25, 1927).

On November 9, 1927, Iqbal made a statement regarding the formation of the Simon Commission. He said that without a doubt, the exclusion of any Indian member from the Commission was an insult to India's dignity, but the reason for this insult was the mutual distrust and suspicion that the various communities of India harbored towards one another.

Among Muslim leaders, Maulana Muhammad Ali and Muhammad Ali Jinnah supported the boycott of the Commission, while Sir Muhammad Shafi, Iqbal, and Maulana Hasrat Mohani were in favor of cooperation. Iqbal, as the Secretary of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League, published a statement in newspapers, clarifying:

"The Muslim League of Punjab, after thoroughly considering all aspects of the issue, has passed a resolution. This resolution indicates that a boycott of the Commission will generally be harmful from a national perspective and especially from an Islamic viewpoint. In my opinion, this resolution reflects the sentiments of the Muslims of Punjab."

Maulana Muhammad Ali was not pleased with Iqbal's declaration of cooperation. In response, he criticized Iqbal and referred to Sir Muhammad Shafi as loyal to the Viceroy in his newspaper *Hamdard*. When Muhammad Ali Jinnah called on Muslims to boycott the Commission in December 1927, Iqbal, along with several Muslim leaders, issued a statement on December 8, 1927, explaining their stance. (Khurshid, 1977).

A few days ago, Mr. Jinnah and a few other prominent individuals published a statement that reflects a distressing indifference towards the current unfavorable conditions in the country. This statement ignored the fundamental fact that the Royal Commission is a product of the very unfortunate circumstances we face today. We humbly wish to warn our fellow countrymen in general, and our Muslim brothers in particular, that adopting the futile path of boycott, as proposed by Mr. Jinnah and his like-minded colleagues, will yield nothing but regret and remorse... We must safeguard those rights that the Hindus are refusing to grant us. Wisdom demands that, at this critical moment, we should not allow emotions to overpower reason and logic. (Mohizzuddin, 1981).

After the Punjab Muslim League disagreed with the All India Muslim League for the second time, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Dr. Kitchlew decided that the annual session of the Muslim League would be held in Calcutta instead of Lahore, under the presidency of Sir Muhammad Yaqub. Iqbal deemed this decision unconstitutional and, on December 14, 1927, stated along with Sir Feroz Khan Noon, saying:

"The reasons for holding the session in Calcutta are something else entirely, and not what is being presented to us or the public. The real reason is that the proposals passed on March 20 regarding joint electorates can be imposed on Muslims in Calcutta more easily than in Lahore. This is because the Muslims of Punjab are unanimously in favor of separate electorates."

At this stage, the Muslim League split into two factions: one was called the Jinnah League, and the other the Shafi League. On December 19, 1927, Iqbal, along with Nawab Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, commented on Jinnah's policy in a statement, saying:

"We have already made it clear that various communities are engaged in horrific displays of bloodshed, which has trampled India's self-respect. Unfortunately, Mr. Jinnah and his associates imagine a state of national unity that simply does not exist in reality. Can they tell us if they have ever received anything from the Hindus except for stubborn rigidity? We cannot rely on the illusory generosity of the majority. There is no room for assumptions and emotions anymore; we need solid reasoning." (Allana, 1967).

On December 29, 1927, while addressing a public meeting of Muslims at Bagh outside Mochi Gate, Iqbal declared:

"At present, Muslims are facing two issues: one is the attainment of Swaraj (self-rule), and the other is the establishment of communal representation. Unfortunately, the conduct of the majority in the country has disillusioned Muslims with the issue of Swaraj. Now they are concerned with the protection of their rights, and the progress of Muslims in India depends on this issue." (Sherwani, 1997).

Nevertheless, the League remained divided into two factions. The Jinnah League held its annual session in Calcutta under the presidency of Sir Muhammad Yaqub, where the Delhi proposals were approved. However, the Shafi League held its session on December 31, 1927, in Lahore, under the presidency of Sir Muhammad Shafi, where they insisted on retaining the separate right of representation. The following resolution, presented by Iqbal, was approved at the session:

"In the current system, Muslims of Bengal and Punjab are deprived of majority rights in the legislative assemblies. The All-India Muslim League strongly protests against this injustice and considers it contrary to the principles of democracy. The League demands that the injustice done to Muslims in 1921 be rectified." (Sherwani, 1997).

In January 1928, Maulana Muhammad Ali came to Lahore to persuade Iqbal to align with his views, but he was unsuccessful in the face of Iqbal's arguments.

In February 1928, Iqbal gave notice of a resolution he intended to present in the upcoming session of the Punjab Council, calling for the pardon and release of those convicted during the riots and disturbances in Lahore the previous year. On February 22, 1928, Iqbal addressed the Council, advocating for the promotion and recognition of both Allopathic and Ayurvedic medicine. On February 23, 1928, he participated in a debate on the application of income tax principles to land revenue and, in his engaging speech, clarified, using historical facts and legal details, that the government considers it its right to collect taxes because it claims ownership of the land. However, this concept has now become outdated. (Debate, PLC, 1928).

On April 18, 1928, at the annual meeting of the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, Iqbal delivered a speech in English on the philosophy of Islam. During this period, he was also writing a series of essays on Islamic philosophy, and this speech was a part of that series.

On June 24, 1928, Iqbal resigned from the secretaryship of the Shafi League in protest against the failure to demand full provincial autonomy in the memorandum prepared for the Simon Commission. In his public statement regarding the resignation, he criticized this as a display of double standards and an obstacle to constitutional progress. Iqbal's resignation had such an impact that Sir Muhammad Shafi was forced to amend the League's memorandum to include the demand for full provincial autonomy. After this amendment, Iqbal also signed the memorandum.

### **Iqbal's Critique of the Nehru Report and Simon Commission: Advocating for Muslim Rights**

On November 15, 1928, a delegation from the Shafi League, including Iqbal, gave testimony before the Simon Commission. Ultimately, the commission recommended partially accepting the demands of the Muslims. However, Iqbal was not satisfied with the commission's report. When the Simon Report was published in mid-1930, Iqbal harshly criticized it in his statement dated June 24, 1930. Nonetheless, the Viceroy's announcement regarding the Round Table Conference rendered the Simon Report insignificant, and this exercise too proved fruitless. (Andrew, 1930).

In August 1928, when parts of the Nehru Report were published in newspapers, Iqbal expressed his thoughts in a statement dated August 20, 1928. Commenting on the report in light of statistics, he made it clear that it posed a threat to Muslim representation and could lead to their transition from being a majority to a minority. In the same month, statements against the Nehru Report and the All Parties Conference were published in the newspapers of Maulana Shaukat Ali and Maulana Hasrat Mohani. After reading these statements, on September 4, 1928, during a meeting with a representative of the Free Press, Iqbal said: "I fear that the decisions of the All Parties Conference held in Lucknow and the astonishing revelations made by Maulana Shaukat Ali in his initial statement will worsen the communal situation in India. I support separate electorates. The reason for this is partly due to the current economic condition of the Muslims of India, particularly the Muslims of Punjab, but the major reason is the possibility of establishing communal peace and harmony, which in my view can only be achieved through separate electorates." (Azizi, 1972).

In November 1928, Iqbal gave notice in the Punjab Council for the upcoming session to present resolutions regarding the establishment of separate universities for the North-West Frontier Province and Balochistan and for the protection of agricultural lands. That same month, he participated in the Oriental Conference in Lahore, where he delivered a comprehensive paper in English on the topic of encouraging deeper study by Muslim scientists. (Debates, PLC, 1928).

On December 29, 1928, Iqbal participated in the All Parties Muslim Conference chaired by the Aga Khan in Delhi. Representatives of all Muslim parties, except for Jinnah's League,

attended the conference. In the meeting, the Nehru Report was condemned, and a resolution against it was passed. In support of the resolution, Iqbal said in his speech:

"I acknowledge the fact that the path laid out for Muslims by the late Sir Syed Ahmad Khan half a century ago was indeed correct, and after bitter experiences, we are now recognizing the importance of that path. Gentlemen, today I want to state very clearly that we need to formulate a separate political program. The resolution that has been unanimously presented at this conference today is correct, and I have a religious argument to support its validity, which is that our beloved Prophet, peace be upon him, said: *'My Ummah will never agree upon error.'* (Coupland, 1944).

After the conclusion of the All Parties Muslim Conference, Iqbal, along with Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain and Abdullah Chughtai, departed from Delhi on January 2, 1929, for a tour of South India. During this tour, he delivered lectures on Islamic theology in Madras, Mysore, Bangalore, and Hyderabad Deccan. By the end of January 1929, he returned to Lahore. (Khurram, 2010).

### **Iqbal and Jinnah's Alliance in Muslim Politics**

After the bitter experience of the rejection of Jinnah's amendments in the Nehru Report, Muhammad Ali Jinnah realized that no compromise with the Hindus was possible. This was the moment when, for the first time in their lives, Iqbal and Jinnah's political thoughts aligned, an accord that lasted until the end. Jinnah acknowledged this in a letter to Inamullah Khan dated May 16, 1944, where he wrote:

"Since 1929, there has been harmony between my views and those of Sir Muhammad Iqbal, and he was the only great and important Muslim who encouraged me at every step and stood firmly by my side until the very end." (Zaidi, 1993).

At this time, efforts were made to unite the Jinnah League and the Shafi League, but due to the conspiracies of the nationalist Muslim group within the Jinnah League, the union could not be achieved. On April 7, 1929, Iqbal, along with Sir Abdul Qadir and Sir Feroz Khan Noon, issued a statement exposing the conspiracies and intrigues of the nationalist Muslim group within the Jinnah League. (Burke, Qureshi, 1997).

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Disheartened by the actions of the nationalist Muslim faction in the Jinnah League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah amended some of the ten demands from the All-India Muslim Conference's resolution (including the requirement that Muslims should have a one-third share in every ministry at the central and provincial levels) and added four additional demands. He then published his formula, which became famous as the "Fourteen Points." (Ahmed, 1997).

Following the publication of Jinnah's Fourteen Points, the differences between the Jinnah League and the Shafi League were resolved, but a complete union of the two leagues was only achieved on February 28, 1930. This occurred when Dr. Ansari, Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman, Asaf Ali, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. Kitchlew, and their allies left the Jinnah League. Dr. Kitchlew and Abul Kalam Azad turned towards the Congress, while the rest formed the Nationalist Muslim Party, with Dr. Ansari as its president and Chaudhry Khaliq-uz-zaman as its secretary. (Ahmed, 1997).

The Fourteen Points now became the shared and collective demands of all Muslim political parties. However, due to the past fragmentation of the League or the presence of the nationalist Muslim element in the Jinnah League, the overall position of the Muslim League had significantly weakened. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to keep the All-Parties Muslim Conference active as a functional political body representing the Muslims of India, alongside the Muslim League. (Allana, 1967).

In September 1929, significant unrest spread among Muslims due to the British government's pro-Jewish policy in Palestine. On September 7, 1929, a grand meeting was held outside Delhi Gate in Lahore, attended by people from all parties. Presiding over this gathering, Iqbal stated in his speech:

"It is entirely incorrect to say that the Muslim conscience lacks patriotic sentiments. However, it is true that, in addition to patriotism, Muslims also hold a deep sense of religiosity and love for Islam, which is the very feeling that unites the scattered members of the community—and it always will. Muslims and their families are being martyred in Palestine. The center of this horrifying cruelty is Jerusalem, where the Al-Aqsa Mosque is located. This mosque is associated with the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) night journey, which is a religious truth deeply tied to the emotions of Muslims. According to Islamic law, the entire area around the Al-Aqsa Mosque is a charitable endowment, which Jews now claim ownership of. Legally and historically, they have no right to it. The British government has now agreed to send a commission to Palestine to investigate the situation, but I must declare that Muslims have no trust in it." (Tariq, 1973).

In the same year, the Sharda Bill concerning the legal age for marriage was introduced in the Central Assembly. Iqbal's position was that a law should be enacted whereby parents who send their underage daughter to live with her husband after marriage would be subject to punishment.

On 7<sup>th</sup> March 1930, during his final budget speech in the Punjab Council, Iqbal drew the government's attention to the province's financial issues and unemployment. On July 13, 1930, Muhammad Ali Jinnah had Iqbal elected as the President of the Muslim League Council, and under Iqbal's leadership, a League meeting was called in Lucknow on August 17, 1930, to formulate policy for the Round Table Conference. However, this meeting had to be postponed several times. Finally, it was decided to hold the meeting in Allahabad on December 29, 1930. (Debates, PLC, 1930).



The national service for which Iqbal entered active politics was fulfilled both within and outside the council. In the council, Iqbal addressed every significant public issue with full preparation, like a seasoned parliamentarian. These issues included matters of economy, religion, law, education, women's welfare, public welfare, and the socio-economic challenges facing Muslims. Besides addressing local issues within the council, Iqbal did not remain indifferent to international issues outside the council.

On May 1, 1927, in a speech at the Punjab Provincial Muslim League meeting, Iqbal strongly opposed the part of the Delhi Proposals which offered to abandon separate electorates. On June 28, 1928, in a press statement, he expressed disinterest in a federal system and insisted on complete provincial autonomy for the Muslim-majority provinces. On December 29, 1928, during a speech at the All-India Muslim Conference in Delhi, he clarified that there were regions in India where Muslims were in the majority and others where they were in the minority. Therefore, under such circumstances, Muslims needed to create a separate political program. (Chand, 2005).

According to Abdul Salam Khurshid, around this time, Maulana Murtaza Ahmad Khan (Maikash) published four articles consecutively in the newspaper *Inqilab*, discussing the need for Muslims to prepare geographical maps in early 1929. Relying on the latest census report, Iqbal engaged a German guest, an expert in cartography, to draw maps of India and its various provinces, showing the Hindu-Muslim population ratios. Hindu populations were represented with saffron dots and Muslim populations with green dots. (*Inqilab*, 1929).

Later, in November 1930, on Iqbal's suggestion, Muslim newspapers proposed that an Upper India Muslim Conference be convened immediately. Abdul Salam Khurshid writes:

He invited the editors of *Inqilab Mehr* and *Salik*, *Siyasat's* Syed Habib, and *Muslim Outlook's* Majeed Malik to discuss the idea, and following their advice, *Inqilab* proposed in an editorial article that Muslims of North India should hold a conference to address their specific issues. This was the first instance of a plan for a regional Muslim conference, as previous conferences had typically been held at the provincial or all-India level. (Khurshid, A, 1977).

On November 23, 1930, the Upper India Muslim Conference was established, and Iqbal was elected its president. The second meeting took place on December 19, 1930, where Iqbal and other members of the reception committee prepared an appeal in the name of the Upper India Muslim Conference, which was later published in newspapers. The words of this appeal also reflected Iqbal's thoughts, such as:

“The large Muslim population in these provinces was certainly not placed here by the Wise, All-Knowing, and All-Aware God without reason, but for some purpose, which is becoming more apparent to those with insight and understanding day by day.” (Sevea, 2012).

From all this, it becomes clear that, upon entering practical politics, Iqbal's mind was already envisioning the concept of a Muslim state comprising the Muslim-majority provinces in the northwest of the subcontinent. This vision can be seen in some of his speeches and proposals.

However, before presenting this revolutionary idea, he sought to express his thoughts through various channels to gauge Hindu reactions or to prepare Muslim public opinion in favor of such a proposal.

After 1930, there was considerable upheaval in Muslim politics. Maulana Muhammad Ali passed away, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah chose a reclusive life in London. This situation persisted until Jinnah returned to India in the last week of December 1933. Eventually, on March 14, 1934, Jinnah was re-elected as the president of the League, marking the League's revival. After the end of his term in the Punjab Council in 1930, Iqbal emerged as a significant political figure among the Muslims of the subcontinent. As the elected president of the All-India Muslim League, he delivered his famous address in Allahabad. Later, he traveled to England twice to participate in the Round Table Conferences, presided over the All-Parties Muslim Conference in Lahore, and continued to take a deep interest in the political future of both Indian and global Muslims until the end of his life. However, he never again stood as a candidate in provincial or other types of elections.

### Conclusion

In sum, Iqbal's political journey was marked by a deep commitment to the well-being and rights of Muslims in British India. From his early engagements in the Punjab Council, where he actively addressed critical issues such as economic disparity, education, and Muslim social welfare, to his resistance against decisions that threatened Muslim political autonomy, Iqbal displayed a visionary approach. His efforts laid the groundwork for the conceptualization of a separate Muslim state in the northwest regions of the subcontinent, a vision he began to articulate as early as 1930 in his famous Allahabad address.

Iqbal's political alliance with Muhammad Ali Jinnah also solidified the ideological foundation for Muslim nationalism, as both shared a commitment to securing an autonomous political future for Muslims. Even after the conclusion of his formal role in the Punjab Council, Iqbal continued to influence the direction of Muslim politics in India, participating in the Round Table Conferences in England and guiding various Muslim political organizations. Through his speeches, writings, and consultations with other leaders, Iqbal's contributions transcended his official roles, establishing him as a key architect of Muslim political thought. His legacy and ideas became foundational to the eventual formation of Pakistan and resonated widely, inspiring generations of Muslims in their quest for self-determination and identity.

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