

Who is Responsible for the Partition of India?

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THOSE WHO LIVED DURING THE Imperialist regime are familiar with the saying that, the British were responsible for dividing the Indian subcontinent and the people as their policy goal had been “**to divide and rule**”.

But the truth is just the reverse. Long before the coming of the British, Hindus and Muslims had been sharply divided. Muslims considered Hindus as *Kafirs* and the Hindus considered Muslims as ‘*Malechhas*’. This is evident from the literature written in those times.

Whatever be the position, arguably the British never wanted to divide the country in 1947. It is clear from their policy framed by the Cabinet Mission, known as Cabinet Mission Plan, in 1946, wherein they wanted to fulfil the demand of Muslim League, one way or the other, within the framework of united India. Moreover, the Prime Minister Clement Attlee made a last bid by appointing Professor W.H. Morris Jones, of Durban College to the staff of Lord Mountbatten to prepare the grounds wherein two sovereign states could remain united. Morris Jones told me in an interview: “As far as I can recall Sir Stafford (Cripps) and Lord Attlee called me in May, 1947 when Lord Mountbatten visited England. I was informed to prepare a plan which could have two sovereign countries for defence, communication and other similar purposes. Lord Attlee asked me if I had read anything of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and how it functioned. He advised me to study that and evolve that sort of plan”.#

It would be futile to blame any individual for the partition of India. We should study and examine the circumstances which led to the creation of Pakistan. It was the failure of interim govt. in 1946-47 which paved the way for division of the country. There was a constant conflict between the Muslim League members and Congress member from the very inception. The Congress objected to the inclusion of Abdul Rab Nishtar, from Frontier Province, in the Interim Government. The Congress argued that he had been defeated by Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s *Red Shirt* candidate in the election of 1946.

To this objection Jinnah retorted, if Nishtar was not taken in the Interim government, the Muslim League would quit and boycott the government. Similarly, Jinnah objected to the inclusion of Jagjivan Ram and the Congress adopted the same attitude, with the result that bickering increased on both sides. The object of the Congress members in the Interim government was to bring into existence healthy conventions from non-interference by the Viceroy and the Interim government. working as a team, so that it might be replaced by the National government in due course of time. The Muslim League members had entered the government with the avowed object of holding Congress to ransom, lest anything should be done which might prejudice its claims for Pakistan.

In early sixties of twentieth century, when I went to Central Secretariat for the first time to consult partition records, which, then, had not been transferred to the National Archives, I

was permitted to consult them, under the recommendations of Mr Prem Kirpal, Secretary, Department of Education. I was informed confidentially that there had been a very serious dispute within the Interim government while discussing the issue of Pakistan. The Congress members, including Pandit Nehru, opposed the idea. The Muslim League members insisted on it, so much so that Abdur Rab Nishtar rose from his seat and arrogantly argued with Pandit Nehru, saying: "Who are you to deny us? We shall have Pakistan!"

There is no record of this incident but it indicates the bitterness and frustration in which the Interim Govt. was working. Ultimately, Pandit Nehru threatened to resign. This paved the way for acceptance of the Pakistan plan prepared by Lord Mountbatten.

However, the Congress leaders insisted that transfer of power should be effected earlier. Consequently, date for transfer of power was changed from June 1948 to 15th August 1947 **with the result that decisions were made hurriedly to divide the country. Lord Wavell Plan was rejected because it had suggested piece-meal transfer for power.**

In the surcharged atmosphere, the sanest advice came from Maulana Abul Kamal Azad. He was of the view that India should wait for sometime more for the transfer of power because he believed the Partition and the creation of Pakistan could be avoided and people's suffering mitigated.

