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Assignment No. 2 (Units 5–9)

Total Marks: 100

SOLVED ASSIGNMENT GUIDE

(For Study & Reference)

Note: This guide is prepared for study and reference purposes. Students are advised to read the relevant units of the course book, understand the concepts, and write the assignment in their own words.

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Question 1: The Communal Award and the Muslims (20 Marks)

Discuss the salient features of the Communal Award as far as it affected the Muslim.

Introduction

The Communal Award, announced by the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald on 16 August 1932, was the British government's own settlement of the communal representation question after Indians had failed to settle it themselves at the Round Table Conferences. It laid down the composition of the provincial legislatures - the number of seats for each community and interest, and the system of electorates through which they would be filled - and it was to remain in force until the communities reached a mutual agreement to replace it. For the Muslims the Award was a document of mixed fortune. It preserved their most prized safeguard, separate electorates, and gave them weightage in the provinces where they were a minority; but in Bengal and the Punjab, the two provinces where they were a majority of the population, it reduced them to a minority of the seats. Discussing its salient features as they affected the Muslims means examining both sides of that bargain and the reaction it produced.

Background: Why the Award Was Imposed

The first two Round Table Conferences (1930-1931) had foundered on the minorities question. The Minorities Committee, on which Jinnah, the Aga Khan, Gandhi and others sat, could not reconcile the Muslim demand for separate electorates, weightage and provincial autonomy with the Congress claim that it spoke for all Indians and the Hindu Mahasabha's opposition to communal representation altogether. MacDonald, as chairman, warned that if Indians could not agree, the British government would impose its own decision; the failure of the Second Round Table Conference in December 1931 was followed by the announcement of the Award in August 1932. Gandhi's anger was directed chiefly at the Award's grant of separate electorates to the Depressed Classes, which he resisted by a fast unto death and which was then modified by the Poona Pact of September 1932, substituting joint electorates with a larger number of reserved seats for the Depressed Classes. The parts of the Award affecting the Muslims were not altered by the Poona Pact and continued to govern Muslim representation until the Government of India Act of 1935 embodied them in the new constitution.

Salient Features of the Award Affecting the Muslims

The features of the Award that mattered to the Muslims can be summarised as follows.

- Separate electorates retained and generalised. The Award confirmed separate electorates for Muslims in every province - the safeguard first won in 1909, defended in the Lucknow Pact and embodied in Jinnah's Fourteen Points. Muslim voters would continue to elect Muslim representatives from exclusively Muslim constituencies, so the community's representation could not be swamped by the general electorate. Separate electorates were

likewise continued or extended for Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans, and (until the Poona Pact modified it) the Depressed Classes.

- Weightage where Muslims were a minority. In the provinces where Muslims were a minority of the population - the United Provinces, Bombay, Madras, Bihar, the Central Provinces and Assam - the Award gave them a share of seats substantially larger than their share of population. In the United Provinces, for example, Muslims formed about 15 per cent of the population but received 66 of the 228 seats (about 29 per cent). This weightage recognised the political importance of the community beyond its bare numbers and protected Muslim minorities from extinction in Hindu-majority provinces.
- Muslims reduced to a minority in Bengal. In Bengal, where Muslims were about 54 per cent of the population, the Award gave them only 119 of the 250 seats in the Legislative Assembly - about 48 per cent, less than half. The balance was consumed by general (mainly Hindu) seats and by the very large allocation of special seats to Europeans (25), commerce, industry, landholders and other interests. The community that was a majority in the province was thus made a statutory minority in its legislature, and no Muslim ministry could be formed on Muslim votes alone.
- Muslims reduced to a minority in the Punjab. In the Punjab, where Muslims were about 56 per cent of the population, they received 86 of the 175 seats - about 49 per cent. Here the reduction was produced mainly by weightage to the minorities: the Sikhs, about 13 per cent of the population, received 32 seats (over 18 per cent), and Hindus also received weightage, besides special constituencies. The Muslim majority province was left, like Bengal, without a Muslim majority in its assembly.

- Concessions on Sindh and the Frontier. The Award proceeded on the basis of Sindh's separation from Bombay, which was effected in 1936 with the safeguard of separate electorates there, and it gave the North-West Frontier Province - a Muslim-majority province raised to full provincial status in 1932 - a legislature with separate electorates. Two of the long-standing territorial demands of the Fourteen Points were thus met in practice.
- Multiplication of special constituencies. The Award fragmented representation among many interests - landholders, commerce and industry, labour, universities, women and the several communities. For Muslims this diluted the value of their general weightage, since European and commercial members commonly voted with the government; it also confirmed that any future constitution would be built on communal arithmetic, a fact that structured all later negotiations.
- A settlement until Indians agreed otherwise. The Award was not presented as permanent: it would stand until the communities themselves agreed upon an alternative. This gave the Muslims security (their safeguards could not be removed by a majority vote) but also froze the Bengal and Punjab injustices, since no alternative acceptable to all parties was ever found; the Award's provincial scheme was accordingly carried into the Government of India Act 1935 and governed the elections of 1937 and 1946.

Table 1: Muslim seats under the Communal Award, 1932 (selected provinces)

Province	Total seats	Muslim seats	Muslim share of seats	Muslim share of population (approx.)
Bengal	250	119	47.6%	54%
Punjab	175	86	49.1%	56%
United Provinces	228	66	28.9%	15%

The table exposes the Award's paradox at a glance. Where Muslims were weak, the Award protected them beyond their numbers; where they were strong, it cut them below their numbers, so that in no provincial legislature of India did the Muslims possess a majority of seats, although they were the majority of the population in Bengal, the Punjab, Sindh, the Frontier and Balochistan. The arithmetic seemed designed less to satisfy Muslim claims than to ensure that every province required coalitions in which the government and non-Muslim interests held the balance.

Muslim Reaction to the Award

Muslim reaction was correspondingly divided. The preservation of separate electorates and minority-province weightage was welcomed as the survival of the community's basic safeguards, and the Congress, for its part, adopted an equivocal attitude of neither accepting nor rejecting the Award as a whole. But Muslim leaders sharply criticised the Bengal and Punjab allocations: Jinnah described the Award as unjust to the Muslims of the majority provinces while advising that it be worked until something better could be obtained. The Muslim League, after deliberation, resolved in 1934 to accept the Communal Award as the operative settlement - without abandoning its criticism of the Bengal and Punjab figures - until a mutually agreed alternative replaced it. This grudging acceptance was strategic: to repudiate the Award outright might have endangered separate electorates themselves, while to embrace it warmly would have endorsed the reduction of the Muslim-majority provinces. The grievance over Bengal and the Punjab, however, remained alive and was repeatedly cited in later years as proof that even

British arbitration would not give Muslims their due within a united India - an argument that fed directly into the demand for Pakistan, in which the majority provinces would no longer depend on awards made by others.

Conclusion

To conclude, the salient features of the Communal Award as far as they affected the Muslims were: the retention of separate electorates; generous weightage in the Muslim-minority provinces; the reduction of Muslims to a minority of seats in Bengal (119 of 250) and the Punjab (86 of 175) despite their majority of population; the practical concession of Sindh's separation and Frontier reforms; and the freezing of this scheme, through the Act of 1935, until an agreed alternative appeared. The Award thus protected the Muslim minority everywhere except where Muslims were strongest - and that contradiction explains both the League's reluctant acceptance of it and its place in the chain of disappointments that led to the Pakistan demand.

Question 2: The Main Thrust of the Muslim Partition Schemes (20 Marks)

What do you think was the main thrust of the various partition schemes put forward by the Muslim leaders from time to time.

Introduction

Between Allama Iqbal's presidential address at Allahabad in December 1930 and the Lahore Resolution of March 1940, Muslim political thinkers produced a remarkable variety of schemes for reordering India: federation schemes, confederation schemes, schemes for one sovereign

Muslim state in the north-west, and schemes for several Muslim states across the subcontinent. They differed in territory, in constitutional form and in their attitude to the rest of India. Yet the question asks what their main thrust was - the common direction in which they all pushed. The argument of this answer is that the thrust of the schemes was constant even when their blueprints were not: to escape the prospect of permanent subordination under a Hindu-majority centre by securing territorial self-government for the Muslim-majority regions, on the reasoning that Muslims were not a mere minority but a nation entitled to rule itself in its homelands. Reviewing the schemes in sequence shows how that thrust sharpened from autonomy within India to sovereign statehood.

The Major Schemes in Outline

Iqbal's Allahabad Address (1930) opened the series. Presiding over the Muslim League's session, Iqbal declared that he would like to see the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sindh and Balochistan amalgamated into a single state, and that the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appeared to him to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India. He framed this as self-government within the British Empire or without it, and justified it by the principle - drawn from European experience - that religion and nationality could ground a polity, and by the argument that Islam's legal and cultural system required a territorial home if it was to develop freely. Bengal, notably, lay outside his scheme, and his Muslim state could still be a unit of a loose Indian federation.

Chaudhry Rahmat Ali's scheme (1933) went much further. In the Cambridge pamphlet Now or Never, issued in January 1933 during the Round Table period, Rahmat Ali rejected federation

altogether and demanded that the five northern units - Punjab, Afghania (the NWFP), Kashmir, Sindh and Baluchistan - be granted the status of a separate, sovereign federation of 'Pakistan', a name he coined from their initials and from the Persian pak (pure). Unlike Iqbal, Rahmat Ali insisted that Muslims and Hindus were two separate nations whose difference was total - religion, law, heroes, epics and calendar - and that no common Indian nationality existed or should be constructed. In later writings he extended the logic into a whole map of Muslim homelands, including 'Bang-i-Islam' for Bengal and Assam and 'Osmanistan' for Hyderabad, but the Pakistan scheme of 1933 remained the core.

Other thinkers filled the spectrum between and beyond these poles. Dr Syed Abdul Latif proposed dividing India into cultural zones, with population transfers, so that Muslims and Hindus could each live under their own civilisation - accepting partition in principle but organising it as an internal reordering. The Aligarh professors Zafarul Hasan and Afzal Husain Qadri (1939) sketched three sovereign Muslim states - in the north-west, in Bengal, and around Delhi and Hyderabad - within a continent of separate federations. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, the Unionist Premier of the Punjab, drafted in 1939 an all-India confederation of seven zonal units whose centre would hold only defence, foreign affairs and communications by treaty - the least separatist of the schemes, but one that still made the units effectively sovereign. It is also worth recalling that the territorial idea was 'in the air': as early as 1924 Lala Lajpat Rai, a Hindu leader, had suggested dividing India into a Muslim and a non-Muslim state. The series culminated in the Lahore Resolution of 23 March 1940, in which the Muslim League demanded that the Muslim-majority areas of the north-western and eastern zones be grouped to constitute 'Independent States' in which the constituent units would be autonomous and sovereign.

The Main Thrust: Common Threads in the Schemes

Despite their differences, the schemes share a set of common drives that together constitute their main thrust.

- Rejection of a unitary, majoritarian India. Every scheme begins from the same fear: that in a single Indian state with a strong centre, the permanent Hindu majority would rule permanently, and Muslims - however many paper safeguards they were offered - would remain a subordinate minority. The schemes are answers to the Nehru Report and the failure of the Round Table Conferences: where Congress offered trust, the schemes demanded territory.
- A territorial rather than a merely constitutional solution. The older Muslim politics had sought security in electorates, weightage and reservations within common institutions. The schemes of the 1930s relocate security in geography itself: there must be regions of India where Muslims are the governing majority, form the ministries, control the services and shape education and law. Safeguards inside someone else's state are replaced by self-government in one's own.
- The two-nation logic, in varying degrees of explicitness. Rahmat Ali stated it absolutely; Iqbal grounded it in Islam's need for a polity; even the federation and confederation schemes assumed that Indian unity could only be negotiated between distinct national units, not imposed by a single nationalism. The schemes collectively assert that the Muslims of India are a nation, and that nations require homelands.
- Provincial autonomy and a weak or absent centre. Along the whole spectrum - Iqbal's consolidated unit, Sikandar's confederation, the Lahore Resolution's 'autonomous and

sovereign' units - residuary power must lie with the units, and any all-India centre must be limited to a few agreed subjects or created by treaty. This is the Fourteen Points' federalism driven to its conclusion.

- A constant territorial core. The north-western bloc - Punjab, NWFP, Sindh, Balochistan, with Kashmir claimed by Rahmat Ali - appears in every scheme without exception. Bengal is handled variously (excluded by Iqbal, separately sovereign for Rahmat Ali and the Aligarh professors, an eastern zone in the Lahore Resolution), which shows that the indispensable homeland was the north-west, while the east's status remained to be settled by politics.
- Protection of the remaining Muslims by reciprocity and safeguards. Most schemes recognised that millions of Muslims would still live in Hindu-majority India (and Hindus in the Muslim states); they relied on reciprocal treatment of minorities and on solemn safeguards rather than on exchange of population - Latif's transfer scheme being the exception. The thrust was the self-rule of Muslim-majority areas, not the impossible gathering of every Muslim into them.
- An evolutionary escalation. Read in sequence, the schemes move steadily outward: consolidated autonomy (1930), sovereign separation (1933), and a party's official demand for independent states (1940). The direction never reverses. Each failure of negotiation - the Nehru Report, the Round Table deadlock, the Congress ministries of 1937-1939, which Muslims experienced as a foretaste of Hindu Raj - pushed the next scheme further along the same road.

Differences Among the Schemes

The differences should not be hidden by the common thrust. The schemes disagreed about whether the Muslim state should stand within an Indian federation, within the British Empire, or in complete independence; about whether there should be one Muslim state (Rahmat Ali's Pakistan), two zones (the Lahore Resolution as commonly read), or several homelands (Rahmat Ali's later map, the Aligarh scheme); about Hyderabad and the princely states; and about population transfer. Jinnah himself kept the League's options open for years, used the word 'Pakistan' reluctantly, and allowed the Lahore Resolution to be drafted with deliberate flexibility. In other words, the schemes fixed the destination - Muslim self-government in the majority regions - while leaving the route, the boundaries and the final constitutional relationship to be determined by negotiation and power. That is why so many different drafts could serve a single movement.

Conclusion

To conclude, the main thrust of the various partition schemes put forward by Muslim leaders was the demand that India's Muslims, as a distinct nation, must cease to be a permanent minority under a Hindu-majority centre and must instead govern themselves in the territories where they were in a majority - above all the north-western bloc of the Punjab, the Frontier, Sindh and Balochistan, with Bengal's future attached to the same principle. Whether expressed as Iqbal's consolidated state within a federation, Rahmat Ali's sovereign Pakistan, Sikandar's confederation or the Lahore Resolution's independent states, the schemes all move in one direction: from safeguards within a common state towards sovereignty over a homeland. The

Lahore Resolution did not invent this thrust; it harvested a decade of schemes and made their common conclusion the programme of the Muslim League.

Question 3: Quaid-i-Azam's Strategy for the Reorganization of the Muslim League after 1940 (20 Marks)

What strategy did Quaid-i-Azam adopt for the reorganization of the Muslim League in the Post-1940 years?

Introduction

When the Muslim League adopted the Lahore Resolution on 23 March 1940, it committed itself to the creation of independent Muslim states; but the party that had adopted this revolutionary goal was organisationally weak - an elite body of landlords, lawyers and titled gentlemen with thin provincial branches, little money and, as the elections of 1937 had shown, the support of only a minority of Muslim voters. Between 1940 and 1947 Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah transformed it into the disciplined mass movement that swept the elections of 1945-1946 and won Pakistan. That transformation was the product of a deliberate strategy of reorganisation: building a centralised party machine down to the village, converting the League into a mass-membership organisation, mobilising students, ulema, women and the press, capturing or allying with provincial ministries, and negotiating with the British and Congress from the constantly asserted position that the League alone spoke for Muslim India. This answer examines each element of that strategy.

The Starting Point: A Weak Organisation in 1940

The scale of the task must first be appreciated. In the provincial elections of 1937 the League had won barely a quarter of the reserved Muslim seats and formed no ministry anywhere; in the Punjab it was eclipsed by the cross-communal Unionist Party, in Bengal by Fazlul Huq's Krishak Praja Party, and in the Frontier by the Congress-allied Khudai Khidmatgars. Provincial League bosses owed their positions to British favour or personal following rather than to the party, and the League's central leadership had no machinery to discipline them. Jinnah's own authority, though growing since his return from England in 1934 and the modest revival of 1937-1939, rested on his personal prestige. The Lahore Resolution therefore demanded a new kind of party, and Jinnah set about building it with the cold organisational realism of a lawyer preparing a case: first the machine, then the masses, then the electoral proof, and only then the final negotiation.

Organisational Reconstruction: A Centralised Party Machine

Jinnah's first move was to rebuild the League as a disciplined hierarchy. The party's constitution was operated so that authority flowed from the All-India Muslim League's Council and Working Committee - both dominated by Jinnah as president - down through provincial Leagues to district, tehsil and primary branches in towns and villages. Primary Leagues were enrolled in large numbers, and provincial organisations that had been personal fiefdoms were progressively brought under central direction: provincial parliamentary boards were subordinated to the Central Parliamentary Board, which controlled the award of party tickets, and provincial ministries owing office to the League were made answerable to the Working Committee. Jinnah insisted on the forms of constitutionalism - annual sessions (Lahore 1940,

Allahabad 1942, Karachi 1943, where his slogan 'Divide and Quit' answered Gandhi's 'Quit India'), council meetings and resolutions - because they demonstrated to the British that the League was a responsible, representative organisation and not a faction. Discipline was enforced personally: leaders who defied the centre, whether provincial premiers bargaining independently or dissidents flirting with Congress, found themselves isolated, and Jinnah's willingness to wait - sometimes for years - until provincial bosses needed the League more than it needed them became a famous feature of his method.

From an Elite Club to a Mass Movement

The second element was mass membership. The League slashed its membership fee to a nominal two annas, within reach of a peasant or a student, and launched enrolment drives through its new branch network; claimed membership rose into the millions by the mid-1940s. Jinnah toured the provinces tirelessly - Bengal, Punjab, the Frontier, Sindh, Assam and the Muslim-minority provinces - addressing enormous public meetings at which the demand for Pakistan was explained in simple terms: the League was no longer asking for favours but organising a nation to take its own state. The message was carried by an expanding party press: the English daily Dawn, founded at Delhi in 1941 under Jinnah's patronage (first as a weekly, then as a daily from 1942), the Urdu daily Manshoor and papers such as the Star, together with a flood of pamphlets and the League's own literature on the Pakistan demand. Volunteer organisations - the Muslim League National Guards and the Muslim Students' volunteer corps - gave the movement a uniformed, disciplined presence in processions and conferences. Religious idiom was not shunned: as the campaign deepened, the popular slogan 'Pakistan ka

matlab kya? La ilaha illallah' expressed in one line the identity the League was mobilising, even though Jinnah's own speeches kept to constitutional language.

Mobilising Every Section: Students, Ulema, Women and the Professions

Jinnah understood that the League's old social base was too narrow, and his strategy deliberately recruited the sections that could carry the movement into society. Students were treated as the army of the Pakistan movement. the All-India Muslim Students' Federation organised campus branches, and students from Aligarh and other universities fanned out in the election campaigns of 1945-1946 to work in villages where no League office existed, a contribution Jinnah publicly acknowledged as decisive. Sections of the ulema and the pirs were won over in the mid-1940s - the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, founded in 1945 under Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, supported the League against the Congress-aligned Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, and influential pirs such as the Pir of Manki Sharif in the Frontier and sajjada nashins in the Punjab brought their followings with them. Women were organised through the League's women's committees, with Fatima Jinnah and Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan prominent among those who addressed meetings and enrolled women members - a striking innovation in the conservative society of the time. Lawyers, doctors, traders and government servants were drawn into professional and local committees, and business houses, notably the Ispahanis and Habib Bank (founded 1941), supplied the funds the movement had previously lacked.

Political Strategy: Ministries, Alliances and Negotiation from Strength

Organisation was matched by a political strategy designed to prove, step by step, that the League was the sole spokesman of Muslim India. In the provinces, Jinnah converted nominal

adherents into real assets: League or League-supported ministries were established in Bengal (under Khawaja Nazimuddin from 1943), Sindh, Assam (under Sir Muhammad Saadullah) and, briefly, the Frontier (under Sardar Aurangzeb Khan in 1943), while in the Punjab the Jinnah-Sikandar Pact framework kept the Unionist ministry formally tied to the League until Sikandar Hayat Khan's death in 1942 opened the way to a direct League advance. In wartime negotiations Jinnah exploited Britain's need for Muslim support without selling the demand: the Cripps Offer of 1942 was rejected, but its clause allowing a province not to accede to the Indian Union was noted as the first British admission of the Pakistan principle; the Gandhi-Jinnah talks of 1944 were held on the basis of Pakistan itself; and at the Simla Conference of 1945 Jinnah wrecked the proceedings rather than concede the Congress claim to nominate Muslim members of the Executive Council - insisting that every Muslim member must be a Leaguer. The claim of sole representation, asserted repeatedly and never surrendered, was the diplomatic face of the organisational strategy: the machine existed to make the claim true.

The Electoral Test of 1945-1946 and the Final Consolidation

The strategy received its vindication in the elections of 1945-1946, which Jinnah had deliberately turned into a plebiscite on Pakistan. In the Central Legislative Assembly elections of December 1945 the League won every one of the thirty Muslim seats; in the provincial elections of early 1946 it won about 87 per cent of the Muslim seats - some 425 of 492 - including spectacular advances in the Punjab and Bengal and the capture of the Muslim vote in the minority provinces. The party that had been a rump in 1937 could now demonstrate, in the only currency the British accepted, that it represented Muslim India. Jinnah immediately converted the verdict into constitutional form: at the League Legislators' Convention held in Delhi in April

1946, every elected League member signed a pledge to the Pakistan demand, and the convention resolved on a single sovereign Pakistan state. When the Cabinet Mission scheme collapsed later that year, the reorganised party could also deploy its mass strength in the streets - the Council of Action and the call for Direct Action on 16 August 1946 showed that the League now possessed the street power it had lacked in 1940 - while Jinnah retained the discipline to accept, through the Mountbatten Plan of 3 June 1947, a Pakistan smaller than the claim rather than lose the substance of the state altogether.

Conclusion

To conclude, Quaid-i-Azam's strategy for the reorganisation of the Muslim League after 1940 rested on five connected moves: centralising the party into a disciplined hierarchy reaching down to primary branches; converting it into a mass organisation through cheap membership, provincial tours, a party press and volunteer corps; mobilising new social forces - students, ulema and pirs, women and business; using ministries, alliances and wartime negotiations to entrench the claim that the League alone represented the Muslims; and proving that claim in the elections of 1945-1946, which were fought as a plebiscite on Pakistan. The reorganisation was the indispensable bridge between the Lahore Resolution and its achievement: Pakistan was won not only by argument in conference rooms but by the machine that made the argument undeniable.

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Question 4: The Muslim League and the Cabinet Mission Plan (20 Marks)

Why did the Muslim League first agree and then reject the Cabinet Mission Plan? Discuss.

Introduction

The Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 was the last serious attempt to transfer power to a united India, and the Muslim League's changing attitude towards it - acceptance on 6 June 1946, withdrawal of acceptance on 29 July 1946 - decided the fate of that attempt. Three British ministers, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A. V. Alexander, arrived in Delhi on 24 March 1946, charged by the Labour government of Clement Attlee with finding a constitutional settlement acceptable to both Congress and the League, whose demands - a united India and a sovereign Pakistan - appeared irreconcilable. After weeks of negotiation the Mission published its own scheme on 16 May 1946. The League accepted it because, in Jinnah's reading, its compulsory grouping of provinces contained the basis of Pakistan within an Indian union; it rejected it seven weeks later because, as interpreted by the Congress leadership - above all in Jawaharlal Nehru's press statement of 10 July 1946 - the grouping that made the plan acceptable to Muslims was stripped away. The story is therefore one of a bargain whose central clause was disputed from the moment it was signed.

The Plan of 16 May 1946

The Mission rejected a sovereign Pakistan: a smaller Pakistan, it argued, would still contain large minorities, would divide India's defences and communications, and would not solve the communal problem. Instead it offered a three-tier structure. At the top would stand a Union of

India, embracing British India and the princely states, controlling only foreign affairs, defence and communications, with the power to raise the finances those subjects required. The provinces would hold all other powers, including the residuary powers - the essence of the Muslim demand since the Fourteen Points. Between union and provinces stood the plan's most original device: in the Constituent Assembly, the provinces would sit in three Sections to frame provincial constitutions and decide whether to form Groups with common executives and legislatures. Section A comprised the Hindu-majority provinces (Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces and Orissa); Section B comprised the Punjab, the NWFP, Sindh and Balochistan; and Section C comprised Bengal and Assam. Sections B and C were thus Muslim-majority groupings which could, in time, develop into something very like the western and eastern wings of Pakistan. The constitution could be reconsidered after ten years, and a province could opt out of its group after the first general elections under the new constitution. A companion statement of 16 June 1946 proposed an interim government of fourteen members in which Congress and the League would enjoy virtual parity.

Table 1: Chronology of the League, the Mission and the Plan, 1946

Date	Event
24 March 1946	Cabinet Mission arrives in Delhi
16 May 1946	Mission publishes its plan: union, sections and grouping
6 June 1946	Muslim League Council accepts the plan
25 June 1946	Congress accepts the plan with its own reservations, rejecting the interim-government proposals
10 July 1946	Nehru's press statement: the Constituent Assembly will be bound by nothing
29 July 1946	League Council withdraws acceptance and

	resolves on direct action
16 August 1946	Direct Action Day; great Calcutta killings follow

Why the League First Agreed

The League's acceptance, voted by its Council on 6 June 1946, was a genuine and statesmanlike compromise, for Jinnah thereby set aside - at least for the plan's trial period - the six-year-old demand for a fully sovereign Pakistan. Four considerations moved him. First, grouping was compulsory: the Mission had stated repeatedly, and repeated in clarifications, that the Sections would meet, frame the provincial and group constitutions, and that provinces could not opt out at the start; on that basis the Muslim-majority Sections B and C were, in Jinnah's words to the Council, the foundation of Pakistan embedded within the plan - the League's resolution itself recorded that the basis of Pakistan was inherent in the Mission's proposals by virtue of the compulsory grouping. Secondly, the centre was confined to three subjects and the residuary powers lay with the provinces and groups, exactly the weak-centre federation Muslims had demanded since 1929. Thirdly, the interim-government proposals of 16 June offered parity between Congress and League, institutional recognition that the League was an equal partner and sole spokesman of the Muslims. Fourthly, acceptance was tactically wise: it demonstrated the League's reasonableness before British and world opinion, placed the onus of wrecking the settlement upon Congress, and kept open the ten-year reconsideration clause, through which the groups might evolve towards full sovereignty. Jinnah recommended acceptance in these terms, and the Council, though many members doubted Congress's intentions, followed him.

How the Plan Broke Down

The settlement began to unravel within days, over precisely the clause on which Muslim acceptance depended. Congress accepted the 16 May plan on 25 June but in a resolution that interpreted grouping as effectively optional: it held that provinces - Assam, which dreaded submergence in Bengal-dominated Section C, and the Congress-ruled NWFP, which objected to Section B - should be free to refuse to enter the Sections from the outset. Congress simultaneously rejected the 16 June interim-government proposals, objecting to parity and to the League's claim to nominate all Muslim members. The Mission and the Viceroy insisted that grouping was essential and that their statement meant what it said, but they shrank from forcing Congress to an unambiguous acceptance, and the interim government negotiations collapsed. The final blow was struck by Jawaharlal Nehru, who had just become Congress president. At a press conference in Bombay on 10 July 1946 he declared that Congress was 'not bound by a single thing' in the plan, that the Constituent Assembly would be a sovereign body free to modify the scheme, and that in his view the Sections and groups would probably never come into existence at all, since the Assembly's large Congress majority would decide otherwise. For the League this was not loose talk: it was the incoming head of the Congress, and the prospective head of the interim government, announcing that the safeguard on whose faith the League had surrendered its Pakistan demand would be dismantled by majority vote the moment the Assembly met.

Why the League Then Rejected the Plan

The League Council met at Bombay on 29 July 1946 and withdrew its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, at the same time passing the fateful resolution for direct action to achieve

Pakistan. Its reasoning, set out by Jinnah, was coherent on its own terms. (1) The plan's value to Muslims consisted entirely in compulsory grouping; if, as Congress asserted and Nehru confirmed, the Constituent Assembly could unmake grouping, then the League had accepted not a Pakistan-in-embryo but a united India with a strong permanent majority, in which Sections B and C would be voted out of existence. A bargain whose central clause one party openly reserved the right to break was no bargain at all. (2) The interim-government episode showed the same pattern in miniature: parity was whittled away, the League's right to nominate Muslim members was denied, and the Viceroy proceeded to invite Nehru to form a government in August without the League - proof, to League eyes, that power was already passing to Congress on Congress's interpretation. (3) Jinnah argued that the League had exhausted constitutional methods: it had accepted a plan far short of its demand in good faith, and the acceptance had been met by repudiation; to enter the Constituent Assembly on Nehru's terms would be to sign away, irrevocably and from a minority position, the very rights the struggle existed to protect. The withdrawal was accompanied by the renunciation of titles by League leaders and the fixing of 16 August 1946 as Direct Action Day - a turn from negotiation to mass pressure whose first fruit was the Calcutta killing of August 1946. Later attempts to revive the plan, including the London conference of December 1946 and the British statement endorsing grouping, failed because the trust on which the June acceptance rested no longer existed; Attlee's statement of 20 February 1947 and the Mountbatten Plan for partition followed within months.

Historians continue to debate the apportionment of blame - whether Congress's reservations were a legitimate defence of provincial freedom (Assam's fears were real) or a wrecking device,

and whether Jinnah used Nehru's statement as a pretext to escape a settlement he had accepted under pressure from his own followers. What cannot be doubted is the sequence the question asks about: the League agreed because compulsory grouping made the plan, in substance, a road to Pakistan; it rejected because the Congress leadership publicly claimed the right to treat grouping as optional and the Constituent Assembly as sovereign, which removed that substance entirely. Acceptance and rejection were thus two applications of a single principle - that Muslims would not enter a union in which their position rested on the majority's goodwill.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Muslim League first agreed to the Cabinet Mission Plan because its three-tier structure, weak centre and, above all, compulsory grouping of the Muslim-majority provinces in Sections B and C gave Muslims effective self-government within an Indian union and a recognised path towards Pakistan, with parity in the interim government as a further guarantee. It rejected the plan because Congress accepted it only with interpretations that emptied grouping of compulsion, because the interim-government settlement collapsed, and because Nehru's statement of 10 July 1946 announced that the Constituent Assembly would be bound by nothing. The League's Council accordingly withdrew acceptance on 29 July 1946 and turned to direct action. The episode closed the last chapter of the search for a united-India settlement and opened the road, through violence and negotiation alike, to the partition of 1947.

Question 5: The Radcliffe Award - A Critical Examination (20 Marks)

Critically examine the Radcliffe Award.

Introduction

The Radcliffe Award was the boundary settlement that converted the partition of 1947 from a political decision into a line on the ground. Under the Mountbatten Plan of 3 June 1947, the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal were to be divided between India and Pakistan, and two Boundary Commissions, one for each province, were appointed to demarcate the frontier. Both commissions were chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a distinguished London lawyer who had never before visited India; he arrived on 8 July 1947, completed his awards by 12-13 August, and - after a delay that remains controversial - they were published on 17 August 1947, two days after Pakistan and India had become independent. The Award gave Lahore to Pakistan and Calcutta to India, but it also awarded Muslim-majority areas to India and non-Muslim-majority areas to Pakistan in ways that both countries have criticised ever since, and it was followed by the largest forced migration in history. A critical examination must consider Radcliffe's impossible mandate, the disputed decisions themselves, the charges of haste, inconsistency and political interference, the human consequences, and the defences that can fairly be made on his behalf.

Machinery, Terms of Reference and the Impossible Mandate

Each Boundary Commission consisted of Radcliffe as chairman and four judges, two nominated by Congress and two by the Muslim League; on every substantial question the judges divided two-two on communal lines, so that the effective decisions were Radcliffe's alone. His terms of

reference directed him to demarcate the boundaries 'on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims', while also taking into account 'other factors' - a phrase never defined, which could embrace irrigation systems, communications, ports and strategic needs, and which contradicted the majority principle whenever the two were applied together. Radcliffe had about five weeks; he worked from maps and the census of 1941, whose figures both sides distrusted; he never toured the areas he was dividing; and his awards were to be final and binding whatever they contained. The timetable was not of his making - the British government had advanced the transfer of power from June 1948 to August 1947 - but its consequence was that the fate of some ninety million people in the two provinces was settled, in secret, by one exhausted arbitrator sitting in Delhi in the height of summer. Leonard Mosley's verdict that the task was impossible for any man in the time is the starting point of any fair criticism: the defects of the Award are in part the defects of the mandate.

The Punjab Award and Its Controversies

In the Punjab, the broad division followed the religious map: the Muslim-majority west, including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan and the canal colonies, went to Pakistan, and the Hindu- and Sikh-majority east, including Amritsar, Jullundur and Ludhiana, went to India. The controversies lie in the exceptions. The district of Gurdaspur, which had a narrow Muslim majority (about 51 per cent in 1941), was divided so that only the Shakargarh tehsil came to Pakistan, while the tehsils of Gurdaspur, Batala and Pathankot went to India. The result was strategic and, many Pakistanis believe, deliberate: Pathankot gave India its only practicable road and rail link into Jammu and Kashmir, enabling Indian forces to enter Kashmir in October 1947 - so that the Radcliffe line arguably decided the Kashmir dispute before it began.

Secondly, the Muslim-majority tehsils of Ferozepur and Zira in the Ferozepur district were awarded to India, together with the Ferozepur headworks on the Sutlej, while the Madhopur headworks on the Ravi lay in the Indian share of Gurdaspur; Pakistan's canal colonies thus found the sources of their irrigation in Indian hands, seeding the canal-water dispute that was settled only by the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960. Radcliffe's own private secretary, Christopher Beaumont, later testified that the Ferozepur decision had originally run the other way and was altered at the last moment under pressure from Lord Mountbatten - an allegation Mountbatten denied and historians still debate, but which has permanently stained the Award's reputation for impartiality. Thirdly, the Sikh community was cut in two: its holiest city, Amritsar, lay in India while Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, and the rich canal-colony lands developed by Sikh colonists at Lyallpur and Montgomery went to Pakistan - a grievance that helps explain the ferocity of the violence in the Punjab that autumn.

The Bengal Award and Its Controversies

In Bengal the anomalies were mirror images of those in the Punjab. Calcutta, with its Hindu majority and its port - the outlet for the whole of eastern Bengal's jute - went to India, leaving East Pakistan dependent on the smaller port of Chittagong; Radcliffe justified this on the ground that Calcutta could not survive severance from its West Bengal hinterland, while its loss was East Bengal's single greatest economic wound. The Muslim-majority district of Murshidabad was awarded to India, largely to preserve the course of the Bhagirathi-Hooghly and Calcutta's water supply, while the Hindu-majority district of Khulna was given to Pakistan in what looked, and was criticised, as a crude territorial exchange. Most anomalous of all, the Chittagong Hill Tracts - whose population was about 97 per cent non-Muslim, mainly Buddhist

Chakmas - were awarded to Pakistan on grounds of contiguity and economic dependence on Chittagong and the Karnaphuli river, in plain contradiction of the majority principle; the award provoked protest and brief resistance there and remains a standing Pakistani and Indian debating point. Elsewhere the line split districts such as Malda, Nadia and Dinajpur tehsil by tehsil, left a patchwork of enclaves along the Cooch Behar frontier that took until 2015 to resolve, and separated East Bengal's jute fields from the Calcutta mills that processed them. Sylhet, it should be noted, was not Radcliffe's work: it joined Pakistan by referendum from Assam.

Table 1: The most disputed decisions of the Radcliffe Award

Area	Majority in 1941	Awarded to	Ground of controversy
Gurdaspur district (3 of 4 tehsils)	Muslim (narrow, about 51%)	India	Gave India the Pathankot corridor into Jammu and Kashmir
Ferozepur and Zira tehsils	Muslim	India	Alleged last-minute change; took the Sutlej headworks out of Pakistan
Murshidabad district	Muslim	India	Justified by the Hooghly river and Calcutta's needs
Khulna district	Hindu	Pakistan	Appeared to be an 'exchange' for Murshidabad
Chittagong Hill Tracts	Non-Muslim (about 97%)	Pakistan	Contradicted the majority principle; defended on contiguity and the Karnaphuli

Grounds of Criticism

The criticisms of the Award can be grouped under five heads. First, haste and ignorance: five weeks, no local knowledge, no field inspection and reliance on a disputed wartime census guaranteed errors, and Radcliffe himself - who burnt his papers and, it is reported, declined his fee - never returned to India. Secondly, inconsistency: the majority principle was the stated rule, yet it was breached in Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Murshidabad, Khulna and the Chittagong Hill Tracts, while the undefined 'other factors' were invoked selectively, so that neither country could see a coherent rule at work. Thirdly, the delay in publication: the awards were ready by 12-13 August but were not published until 17 August, after the independence celebrations; whatever Mountbatten's motive - he said he wished not to spoil the festivities and feared disorder - the result was that officials, troops and millions of villagers did not know which state they belonged to during the very days of the transfer of power, and the Punjab Boundary Force operated in the dark. Fourthly, the charge of political interference: Beaumont's account of Ferozepur, the documented lunch at which the Gurdaspur position was discussed at the Viceroy's house, and Nehru's and Mountbatten's known anxieties about Kashmir's communications together create, at the least, an appearance that the arbitrator did not work in the isolation his office required. Fifthly, the human consequences: the line ran through villages, fields, canals and railway systems, and its announcement was followed by the collapse of order in the Punjab - between ten and fifteen million people crossed the new frontiers in both directions in the two provinces, and several hundred thousand, by some estimates over a million, were killed. No boundary award in history has been followed by suffering on this scale.

The Other Side: Mitigating Considerations

A critical examination must also weigh the defence. The deadlock of the Indian judges left every decision to Radcliffe; had he resigned, there would have been no award at all and partition by fighting instead. Any line drawn through the Punjab and Bengal would have left crores of minorities on the wrong side and cut across canals, roads and economic systems, because the two communities were intermingled at every level below the district; the 'other factors' clause existed precisely because the politicians who drafted the terms knew that demography alone could not produce a workable frontier. Some individual decisions are defensible: the Chittagong Hill Tracts were accessible only through Chittagong; Calcutta without its hinterland, or East Bengal's jute without mills, posed genuine dilemmas either way. The timetable - and with it the refusal to delay independence until boundaries were known - was set by the British government and accepted by both Congress and the League, which had agreed in advance to accept the Award as final; neither leadership asked for the arbitration to be slowed. Radcliffe's personal integrity, his anguish at the result and his refusal of reward are not seriously doubted even by his critics. The deepest responsibility, on this view, lies with the decision to partition two great provinces in ten weeks, and only secondarily with the man asked to draw the line.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Radcliffe Award was a flawed settlement of an impossible problem. Judged by its own stated principle - contiguous majority areas - it failed repeatedly and conspicuously, at Gurdaspur and Ferozepur, at Murshidabad and Khulna and in the Chittagong Hill Tracts; judged by its procedure, it suffered from extreme haste, secrecy, delayed publication and at least the appearance of viceregal interference; and judged by its consequences, it stands condemned by

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the displacement and massacres that followed and by the Kashmir and water disputes it bequeathed to India and Pakistan. Yet the mitigating facts are real: deadlocked commissions, contradictory terms of reference and a timetable fixed by others left no clean solution available. The Award is therefore best characterised as an unjust and badly managed expedient produced by an unjust and badly managed timetable - an origin that explains why, nearly eight decades later, the Radcliffe line remains the most contested inheritance of 1947.

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