

Here the familiar bourgeois essence shows through the idealistic cover.

The immediate practical expression of this programme is found in the propagation of the Charkha or spinning-wheel, the Takli or distaff, the promotion of the use of Khadi or Indian hand-made cloth as a national symbol, and the development of village craft industries. . . .

The propaganda of a primitive economy as a solution for India's problems is reactionary, not only because it leads in the opposite direction to that in which the solution must be sought (for the existing evils of poverty and misery are rooted in primitive technique, which is itself rooted in the social system of exploitation under imperialism), but because it serves as a diversion from the basic social tasks confronting the peasantry and the masses of the people. Agricultural development is impossible without tackling the question of the land, of landlordism and the re-division of the land. But here the voice of the agricultural idealists and worshippers of the vanished village community becomes weak and falters, and disappears into a vague and shame-faced defence of landlordism. . . .

Herein lies the practical significance of this preaching from the standpoint of the big bourgeoisie, who tolerate and even encourage its Utopian yearnings and naive fantasies with a smile, because they know its business value for protecting their class interests and assisting to hold in the masses and maintain class peace. The social significance of Gandhi's historical role as the chosen representative and ablest leader of bourgeois nationalism in the critical transitions of the modern period has in practice coincided with his political role, despite the superficial contradiction between his social philosophy and the bourgeois outlook. The glaring contradictions and inadequacies in his many utterances and teaching, which can be easily picked out and exposed by the most elementary critic, are in fact the key to his unique significance and achievement. *No other leader could have bridged the gap, during this transitional period, between the actual bourgeois direction of the national movement and the awakening, but not yet conscious masses. Both for good and for evil Gandhi achieved this, and led the movement, even appearing to create it. This role only comes to an end in proportion as the masses begin to reach clear consciousness of their own interests, and the actual class forces and class relations begin to stand out clear in the Indian scene, without need of mythological concealments.*

[From R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, 3rd ed. (1940; Lahore: Book Traders, 1979), 353, 357–359, 365–371, 373–374, 622–624, 626, 628–629.]

## MUSLIM RESPONSES TO THE MAHATMA: MOHAMED AND SHAUKAT ALI—ALLIES THEN ADVERSARIES

Like Subhas and Sarat Chandra Bose, slightly younger contemporaries who appeared a little later on the scene, Mohamed Ali (1878–1931) and Shaukat Ali (1873–1938) were

brothers implacably opposed to the Raj; like the Boses, they initially allied themselves with Gandhi but finally became disillusioned with him and the Congress. A difference from the Bose brothers, though, was that the Alis were Muslim.

Shaukat and his younger brother Mohamed were born into a highly respected family in the Muslim-ruled principality of Rampur, about 100 miles east of Delhi. They were raised in a conservative social, cultural, and political world that was just beginning to be influenced by the Western ways of the British. Both brothers broke with family tradition by studying English at local schools, then absorbing the advanced amalgam of modern Western and Islamic learning offered by the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental School and College in Aligarh. Here Mohamed so excelled in his studies that Shaukat raised funds to send him to London, where he graduated with honors in history in 1902, having taken a special interest in early Muslim conquests and empires.

Eventually, however, these thoroughly Anglicized brothers found it increasingly difficult to remain faithful to Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's policy of loyal support to their rulers. This was because of the quickening spirit of nationalism in other parts of the Islamic world, as well as in India, that accompanied the progressive dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by European nations, and the consequent Ottoman decision in October 1914 to enter World War I on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Growing sympathy among Indian Muslims for the Ottoman sultan was based on a traditional idea that the head of the strongest Islamic state was also the head of Muslims everywhere. Thus, nascent national feeling among Muslims in India for a time took the form of looking abroad for their symbolic leader. In this period, which ended in 1924 when the new Turkish government abolished the institution of the caliphate, the most vigorous English-speaking defenders in India of the rights of the Ottoman caliph were the Ali brothers.

Indian political developments awakened the brothers' attention early: they joined the Muslim League on its founding in 1906, and helped in drawing up its constitution. The anguish felt by many Indian Muslims over the conquest of Ottoman territory in the Balkans prompted Mohamed to organize a medical mission for the beleaguered Turks. The news that the Ottoman Empire had joined Germany and Austria-Hungary, thus becoming Britain's enemy in World War I, drove the brothers to despair. The British, suspicious of their pan-Islamic sentiments, sent them to a small town in central India and interned them there until the war was over.

Even before World War I ended, Gandhi made efforts to secure the brothers' release from internment. But not until the Ottoman Empire surrendered were they set free—only to find the realms of the caliph further diminished by the loss of all non-Turkish territory. They soon became the leaders of the *Khilāfat* movement, which called for the preservation of the Ottoman caliph's sovereignty over the holy places of Islam—Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Motivated in part by a romantic attachment to the last great Islamic empire, in part by suspicion that the new Arab rulers of the homelands of Islam were puppets of the British, and above all by fears that Islam itself was in grave danger, many Indian Muslims quickly responded to the calls for action made by Mohamed and Shaukat Ali and other leaders. The Ali brothers accepted Gandhi's plan that they

join with the Congress in a non-violent movement of non-cooperation with British institutions in India. Hopes were high in 1920 and 1921 that this alliance would grow into a solid and permanent unity between Hindus and Muslims, but outbreaks of violence caused Gandhi to cancel the movement, and led to the breakdown of the alliance.

To the end, the Ali brothers wanted a united and independent India, but they could not find a practical way to reconcile the differences that divided Muslims and Hindus. Muslims were infuriated, for example, when Hindu religious processions with loudly beating drums passed mosques during the times of prayer, and Hindus were outraged at Muslim killings of cows. In the long history of conflict and (sometimes willing, sometimes reluctant) coexistence between the two communities, Mohamed and Shaikat Ali created with Gandhi a moment of heartfelt cooperation; but in the process religious passions were awakened that drove the wedge of division ever deeper.

### MOHAMED ALI: TO SELF-GOVERNMENT THROUGH HINDU–MUSLIM UNITY, NON-VIOLENCE, AND SACRIFICE

In his 1923 presidential address to the Indian National Congress, Mohamed Ali voiced the aspirations that had led him to join the Congress and work with Gandhi in the 1920–1922 non-cooperation movement.

I had long been convinced that here in this country of hundreds of millions of human beings, intensely attached to religions, and yet infinitely split up into communities, sects and denominations, Providence had created for us the mission of solving a unique problem and working out a new synthesis, which was nothing less than a Federation of Faiths. As early as 1904, when I had been only two years in India after my return from Oxford, I had given to this ideal a clear, if still somewhat hesitating expression, in an address delivered at Ahmedabad on the “Proposed Mohammedan University.” “Unless some new force”—this is what I had said on that occasion—“unless some new force, other than the misleading unity of opposition, unites this vast continent of India, it will either remain a geographical misnomer, or what I think it will ultimately do, become a Federation of Religions.” . . . For more than twenty years I have dreamed the dream of a federation, grander, nobler and infinitely more spiritual than the United States of America, and to-day when many a political Cassandra prophesies a return to the bad old days of Hindu–Muslim dissensions, I still dream that old dream of “United Faiths of India.” It was in order to translate this dream into reality that I had launched my weekly newspaper, and had significantly called it *The Comrade*—“comrade of all and partisan of none.” . . .

Jesus counselled the upholders of the *lex talionis* [law of retaliation] who claimed an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth that he who had been smitten on one cheek should turn the other cheek also to the smiter. So much for the



foreign tyrant. As for his own countryman, the Jew, who, falling a victim to his own weakness and a fear of the Gentile masters of Judea, had become a publican or tax-collector on behalf of the foreigner, he too could easily claim a share in the abounding love of Jesus. The idea of being all-powerful by suffering and resignation, and of triumphing over force by purity of heart, is as old as the days of Abel and Cain, the first progeny of Man. But since it so eminently suited the conditions of the times of Jesus, and the record of his ministry, however inadequate or defective, has still preserved for us this part of his teachings in some detail, it has come to be regarded by Christians, and even by many non-Christians as an idea peculiar to Jesus.

Be that as it may, it was just as peculiar to Mahatma Gandhi also; but it was reserved for a Christian government to treat as a felon the most Christ-like man of our times and to penalise as a disturber of the public peace the one man engaged in public affairs who comes nearest to the Prince of Peace. The political conditions of India just before the advent of the Mahatma resembled those of Judea [under foreign rule] on the eve of the advent of Jesus, and the prescription that he offered to those in search of a remedy for the ills of India was the same that Jesus had dispensed before in Judea. Self-purification through suffering; a moral preparation for the responsibilities of government; self-discipline as the condition precedent of Swaraj—this was the Mahatma's creed and conviction; and those of us who have been privileged to have lived in the glorious year that culminated in the Congress session at Ahmedabad [in 1921] have seen what a remarkable and what a rapid change he wrought in the thoughts, feelings and actions of such large masses of mankind. . . .

Friends, I have said all that I could say on the Hindu-Muslim question and if after all this lengthy dissertation I leave any Hindu or Muslim still unconvinced of the necessity of co-operation among ourselves and non-cooperation with our foreign masters, I can say no more and must acknowledge myself beaten. One thing is certain, and it is this that neither can the Hindus exterminate the Muslims to-day nor can the Muslims get rid of the Hindus. If the Hindus entertain any such designs they must know that they lost their opportunity when Mohammad bin Qasim landed on the soil of Sind twelve hundred years ago. Then the Muslims were few, and to-day they number more than seventy millions. And if the Muslims entertain similar notions, they too have lost their opportunity. They should have wiped out the whole breed of Hindus when they ruled from Kashmir to Cape Comorin and from Karachi to Chit-tagong. And as the Persian proverb says, the blow that is recalled after the fight must be struck on one's own jaw. If they cannot get rid of one another, the only thing to do is to settle down to co-operate with one another, and while the Muslims must remove all doubts from the Hindu minds about their desire for Swaraj for its own sake and their readiness to resist all foreign aggression [i.e., from Afghanistan], the Hindus must similarly remove from the Muslim minds all apprehensions that the Hindu majority is synonymous with Muslim servitude. . . .

Warfare, according to the Quran, is an evil; but persecution is a worse evil, and may be put down with the weapons of war. When persecution ceases, and every man is free to act with the sole motive of securing divine goodwill, warfare must cease. These are the limits of violence in Islam, as I understand it, and I cannot go beyond these limits without infringing the Law of God. But I have agreed to work with Mahatma Gandhi, and our compact is that as long as I am associated with him I shall not resort to the use of force even for purposes of self-defence. And I have willingly entered into this compact because I think we can achieve victory without violence; that the use of violence for a nation of three hundred and twenty millions of people should be a matter of reproach to it; and, finally, that victory achieved with violence must be not the victory of all sections of the nation, but mainly of the fighting classes, which are more sharply divided in India from the rest of the nation than perhaps anywhere else in the world. Our Swaraj [self-government] must be the Raj [government] of all, and, in order to be that, it must have been won through the willing sacrifice of all. If this is not so, we shall have to depend for its maintenance as well on the prowess of the fighting classes, and this we must do. Swaraj must be won by the minimum sacrifice of the maximum number and not by the maximum sacrifice of the minimum number.

[From *Select Writings and Speeches of Maulana Mohamed Ali*, ed. Afzal Iqbal (Lahore: M. Ashraf, 1944), 2:117–118, 141–142, 145, 188.]

### MOHANDAS GANDHI: RESPONSE TO THE ALI BROTHERS' CRITIQUE

By 1930 the communal split was apparent: both Ali brothers denounced Gandhi as a tool of the Hindu Mahasabha. At once suspicious of and disillusioned with the Mahatma, and convinced by the growing appeal of Muslim separatism, the Ali brothers departed irrevocably from a nationalist movement that they could no longer deem inclusive of their interests. When Gandhi came forth with his new call for mass civil disobedience, it no longer resonated with the Alis as it had ten years earlier. Mohamed condemned Gandhi as “fighting for the supremacy of Hinduism and the submergence of Muslims.”<sup>28</sup> Both brothers urged Muslims not to join the salt satyagraha.

Shortly before he died, Mohamed Ali championed the two causes closest to his heart: the “supernationalist” freedom of India, and the integrity of the world of Islam.

The one purpose for which I came [to speak] is this—that I want to go back to my country if I can go back with the substance of freedom in my hand. Otherwise I will not go back to a slave country. I would even prefer to die in a foreign country so long as it is a free country, and if you do not give us freedom in India you will have to give me a grave here. . . .

The real problem which is upsetting us all the time has been . . . the Hindu–Muslim problem; but that is no problem at all. The fact is that the Hindu–Muslim

difficulty . . . is of your own creation. But not altogether. It is the old maxim of "divide and rule." But there is a division of labour here. We divide and you rule. The moment we decide not to divide you will not be able to rule as you are doing to-day. . . .

I belong to two circles of equal size, but which are not concentric. One is India, and the other is the Muslim world. When I came to India in 1920 at the head of the Khilafat Delegation [to defend the traditional position of the Turkish caliph], my friends said: "You must have some sort of a crest for your stationery." I decided to have it with two circles on it. In one circle was the word "India"; in the other circle was Islam, with the word "Khilafat." We as Indian Muslims came in both circles. We belong to these two circles, each of more than 300 millions, and we can leave neither. We are not nationalists but supernationalists, and I as a Muslim say that "God made man and the Devil made the nation." Nationalism divides; our religion binds. No religious wars, no crusades, have seen such holocausts and have been so cruel as your last war [World War I], and that was a war of your nationalism.

[From Mohamed Ali, *Select Speeches and Writings*, 2:350, 355–357, 361.]

Gandhi replied to them on the eve of the march, on March 12, 1930.

Having lost caste with some Mussalmans, there are numerous misrepresentations about me to be seen in the Muslim Press. A friend has brought the latest to my notice. It is to the effect that I have prevented the Imam Saheb, an inmate of the Ashram and an honored life co-worker, from joining the Ashram group of civil resisters, on the plea that he could not subscribe to non-violence as an article of faith for achieving the national purpose. The fact is quite the reverse. Imam Saheb's name is on my list. He gave it after full deliberation. I personally never had any difficulty about reading the message of non-violence in the Koran. Imam Saheb is not joining the march as he is too weak to undertake the exertion. But it is quite likely that he may offer himself for arrest when the actual manufacture of contraband salt commences. Two Mussalmans are actually enlisted for the march, as they have no difficulty about subscribing to the creed of non-violence for the purpose of swaraj. Thus the insinuation referred to is baseless in two ways. But the moment there is suspicion about a person's motives, everything he does becomes tainted. The present plan of campaign is so designed as ultimately to dispel all suspicion. . . .

Maulana<sup>29</sup> Shaukat Ali is reported to have said that the independence movement is a movement not for swaraj but for Hindu Raj and against Mussalmans, that therefore the latter should leave it alone. On reading the report I wired to the Maulana inquiring whether he was correctly reported. He has kindly replied confirming the report. The Maulana has launched a grave charge against the movement. It needs to be repudiated once for all. Whatever the movement is, it certainly is not for Hindu Raj, nor is it against Mussalmans. It bears within



itself a complete answer to the charge. The Congress has taken the first step in final non-cooperation. No Congressman can enter the legislatures, much less accept employment under the Government. No Congressman can seek or receive favors from the Government. Does not the Hindu-Muslim question center round a division of political power—spoils of office? How can the movement be anti-Mussalman or for Hindu Raj when no one identified with it has the slightest notion, till independence is reached, of possessing any political power? . . . The only ground for the belief, in so far as I can fathom it, can be that those who are engaged in it must, by its very nature, become more self-reliant, more defiant and more capable of resisting any encroachment on their liberty than before, and that since the vast majority of them are Hindus, they will in course of time become more powerful than the Mussalmans. But such reasoning would be unworthy of the brave Maulana I have known him to be. He must therefore explain to the public what he means by his serious charge.

I grant that if till the end of the chapter only Hindus join the movement in the right spirit, they will become an irresistible force of the right, i.e. non-violent type. But the obvious deduction from this fact is that all those who are keeping aloof should join the movement at the earliest moment. And I prophesy that, if the movement keeps the chalked path, the Maulana and the other Mussalmans, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, Jews, etc., will join in.

Surely all are equally interested in securing repeal of the salt tax. Do not all need and use salt equally? That is the one tax which is no respecter of persons. . . .

As against this absolutely national method of gaining our end, put the unnatural, artificial and diplomatic method of a Round Table Conference in which conflicting interests will be represented by interested parties, and all the Indian groups together will be moved and dominated by the paramount and all-powerful British group. This conference without the power of the people behind it and composed of the powerful and the weak will bring anything but swaraj. In the existing circumstances therefore it can only result in further consolidating the British power.

Civil resisters can have nothing to do with such a conference. Their business is merely to generate and conserve national strength. They have nothing to do with communalism. But if they are compelled by force of circumstances to countenance a communal solution, they are pledged only to consider such as may be satisfactory to the parties concerned. How the Maulana can call such a movement anti-Muslim or one for obtaining Hindu Raj, passes comprehension.

The fact that those taking part in the movement are preponderatingly Hindus is unfortunately true. By proclaiming a boycott the Maulana is helping the process. Even so, there can be no harm, if the Hindu civil resisters are fighting not for themselves but for all—Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, and others who will make the nation of the future free India. . . .

As for the irritation felt by the Maulana against me personally, I need not say much. Since I have no counter-irritation in me, I prophesy that when his temper