
Sir Muhammad Shafi & Mainstream Muslim Politics, 1928-1932

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The communal problem remained the main hurdle in constitutional developments in India. The Simon Commission had come to help, but failed to deliver. The Nehru Report did not fare well either. It failed to satisfy the Muslims of both side, those who opposed the Simon Commission and those, like the one led by Shafi, cooperated with it. This research paper analyzes Shafi's perspective on the Nehru Report, and his efforts subsequently to salvage the Muslim position through the All-India Muslim Conference and the Round Table Conference in London are analyzed. In this context, his efforts at the re-unification of the All-India Muslim League and better understanding and rapprochement with Jinnah are also examined.

Key Words: Sir Shafi, Simon Commission, Nehru Report, Re-unification of League, Round Table Conferences

While the Simon Commission was making efforts to draft the future constitution of India, the leaders who stood for the boycott, the Congress and the Jinnah fraction of the All-India Muslim League, hastened to appoint a joint Committee to draw out their own alternative scheme, one that would be acceptable both to Muslims and Hindu.¹ The deliberations of this Committee, headed by the Pandit Motilal Nehru, took the form of what is popularly known as Nehru Report. The Nehru Report presented in July 1928, was confirmed at a conference held in Lucknow in September 1928 in which Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai took a leading part.² Shafi was not invited to the conference. He went on to report that 'the invitation letters were sent only to those persons who were expected to support the Conference.'³

Nehru Report and the Muslim Reaction

The Nehru Report accepted two major demands of the Muslims, that is, the separation of Sindh from Bombay and up gradation of the status of the NWFP and Balochistan to full-fledged provinces. But with regards to other two demands, that is, one-third representation in centre and the continuation of separate electorates, it had strong reservations. The Report even claimed that the separate electorates were bad for the growth of a national spirit.⁴ The Report refused to concede a separate identity and status to the Muslims. In addition, the Report recommended a highly centralized form of government for self-governing year India. The proposed constitution was in truth a triumph for the Hindu Mahasabha. It carried essentially their publicly stated position on these. No wonder, most of the Muslim organizations condemned the Report as soon as it was out.

The All-India Muslim League led by Jinnah, had agreed to joint electorates only in the hope that this will secure the Muslims five full-fledged Muslim-majority provinces, and, in addition, they will also have one-third representation in the central assembly. This was the minimum they required to be able to safeguard their interests. Jinnah, therefore, demanded that the Report should be amended accordingly. In particular, he demanded:

The Muslim should be given one-third representation in the central legislature; the Punjab and Bengal should have Muslim representation on the basis for ten years, subjects to provision of this principle after that period, and; the residuary powers should be vested in the Provincial Legislature and not in the Centre.⁵

The Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikh representatives opposed any change whatsoever to the Report. The Mahasabha distributed and extracts from Lala Lajpat's speech against any revision of the Report. In the light of this intense criticism, the Calcutta Convention was called in December 1928 to review the Report, rejected the proposed amendments and adopted the Report, as it was, without any modification.⁶ This uncompromising attitude of the Congress and the Mahasabha proved to be a turning point not only in Jinnah's political career but also in the fortunes of Muslim India.

The rejection of Jinnah's amendments gave a boost to the standing of the Muslim benefit of the situation and propagated that if the Muslims

had not compromised on their fundamental interests in the Delhi Proposals and in particular had no agreed to withdrawal of the separate electorates, the Congress would not have treated them in such a dismissive and humiliating manner.⁷

Shafi of course, claimed that his criticism of the Nehru Report was based on patriotic feelings and was meant to be constructive. He wanted to contribute to the peaceful solution of political and the constitutional problems like all other leaders. In this context, he appreciated the demand of Dominion Status for India, and argued that it would help advance the cause of all the people of India.⁸ He appreciated that a list of fundamental rights was included in the Report. But, he felt that there was no constitutional guarantee for the security of the regional languages and culture. It was necessary that such guarantee should be made in the constitution of the country.⁹

Shafi was also happy that the Nehru Report acknowledged that the India constitution would be federal in form like he had suggested in the Lahore session of the Muslim League in January 1928. However, he had pointed out that generally there were two types of federal constitutions. As he put it: "The powers of the constituent states are limited as they are mentioned in the constitution, the rest of the powers fall to the share of the centre. That constitution in which the powers of the centre are given and the rest of the powers to be enjoyed by the provinces."¹⁰

According to Shafi, Clause 13 of the Nehru Report had given power to legislate on all those items which did not fall within the purview of the provinces to the centre. This meant that the "centre would be very much strong as compared to the provinces, which is not at all suitable to the Indian political situation." Indeed, he insisted that: "Provincial autonomy is a must, it should not be nationalized any way."¹¹ Shafi in fact, charged that the centralization of powers in the centre was against the philosophy of the Congress itself, as declared by its founding fathers. In the past, the Congress had been agitating against centralization of all kinds. It was strange, therefore, he maintained that: "instead of introducing a really representative democratic Government in India was calculated to bring into existence an oligarchy in which the various Indian minorities would be at the complete mercy of the majority."¹²

Shafi's main criticism against the Nehru Report as already indicated above was confined to separate electorates for the Muslims and the demand

for statutory majority for the Muslims in the legislatures of both the Punjab and Bengal. Since these were the most important Muslim demands and were even supported by Jinnah who had cooperated with the Congress, Shafi's rejection of the Nehru Report enhanced his political status and standing with the Muslim masses in the Punjab and beyond. In fact, Shafi was so encouraged that he started planning for a larger platform to voice Muslim interests and demands. He wanted to organize an All-India Muslim Conference.

All-India Muslim Conference

The arrival of the Simon Commission in India caused a split in the Muslim League, with the Shafi group supporting, and Jinnah and his faction of the Muslim League opposing the Commission. In this situation, there were many prominent Muslim leaders who felt that a compromise should be made between the two factions of the League. On 23 October, 1928 Shafi wrote a letter to the Raja of Mahmoodabad and mooted the idea of an All-India Muslim Conference. He explained:

I only disagree with the Nehru Report because it does not mention separate electorates, for which we the Muslims stand from the very beginning. It is essential to have All parties Muslim Conference. I now request you and Sir Ali Imam to attend the Conference. Besides the two Muslim Leagues, the participation of the Central Khilafat Committee, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama and Central and the Provincial Constitutional Bodies in the Conference will be essential. If all the Muslims attend the Conference, I have no doubt that they will accept it.¹³

On 20 November 1928, Shafi even approached Jinnah, and asked him to think over the question of compromise between the two Leagues.¹⁴ He also requested that the League's meeting of Lucknow must be postponed and the representative of the two parties should think over that way to compromise.¹⁵ Sir Abdul Qadir, Allama Iqbal and Sardar Habib Ullah joined Shafi in asking Jinnah to postpone the Lucknow session of the League. It was also suggested that the Lahore session of the League should also be postponed as well till a decision was made about the resolution of Muslim problems in the All-India Muslim Conference. Aga Khan was invited to preside over the Conference.¹⁶

Jinnah not only did not agree with Shafi, but also condemned the move to hold the Muslim Conference in first place. In his opinion, this would encourage further grouping in the Muslim community. He argued that the Muslims should rely on the Muslim League alone to achieve the demands¹⁷. Therefore, he advised the Council of his League to go ahead and hold the Calcutta Session as planned. In that session, in order to reinforce Jinnah's position, a resolution was adopted against holding the Conference. It said:

...the league regrets that it cannot accept the invitation of the General Secretary of the All-India Muslim Conference to send representatives to it, as the League is strongly of the opinion that it would be disastrous to Muslim interests if rival and adhoc organizations of the nature of the Conference were set up at every crisis in the history of the community. The League feels that it was the duty of the patriotic Muslims to rally round League at this important juncture to decide what attitude the Muslmans should take about the impeding constitutional reforms.¹⁸

Shafi and his supporter also went ahead and finalized arrangement for holding the Conference. Presided by Aga Khan, the Conference commenced its session at Delhi on 31st December 1928. Apart from Shafi, a large number of prominent Muslim leaders attended the Conference. They were drawn from all parts of India, and included besides Shafi, Allma Iqbal, A.K Ghazanva, Mahmud Suhrawardy, Sir Zulfikar Ali Khan, Malik Feroz Khan Noon, Nawab Mohammad Yusaf, Shafee Daudee, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Maulvi Mohammad Yaqub and Maulana Muhammad Ali.¹⁹ He had also desired earnestly that Jinnah should have been there. He sent him many letters and telegrams in this regard. He sent himself private telegram too, but to no avail. Jinnah was not convinced.²⁰ Obviously, in Shafi's opinion, the Muslim Conference was a representative gathering of the Indian Muslims, and he wanted Jinnah and other prominent leaders to attend it. In fact, he warned that an effort to ignore the Conference or its decisions will have serious consequences.

The main resolution of the Conference was moved by Shafi which was passed unanimously. The resolution identified and articulated Muslim demands as follows:

...the only form of government suitable to Indian conditions is a federal system with complete autonomy and residuary powers vested in the constituent states;...no bill, resolution, motion, or amendment regarding inter-communal matters be moved, discussed or passed by any legislature, central or provincial, if the $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of the members of either the Hindu or the Muslims community effected thereby in that legislature oppose;...separate electorates is now the law of land and Muslims cannot be deprived of that right without their consent... representation in various legislature and other statutory self-governing bodies of the Muslim through their own separate electorates is essential; ... it is essential that Musalmans should have their due share in the central and provincial cabinets; ... the Muslim majority in those provinces where Musalmans constitute a majority of population shall in way be effected and in the provinces in which Musalmans constitute a minority shall have a representation in no case less than that enjoyed by them under the existing law; ... Musalmans should have the right of 33 percent representation in the Central Legislature' ... Sindh has no affinity whatever with the rest of Bombay Presidency and its unconditional constitution into a separate province, possessing its own separate legislative and administrative machinery on the same line as in other provinces of India; ... the introduction of constitutional reforms in the NWFP Province and Balochistan, along such lines as may be adopted in other provinces;... that provision should be made in the constitution giving Muslim their adequate share along with other India in all services; ... the Indian constitution should embody adequate safeguard for the protection and promotion of Muslim education, languages, religion, personal law and Muslim charitable institution, and for their view share in grants -in-aid; ... no Central Legislature except with the concurrence of all the states constituting the Indian federation; This Conference emphatically declares that no constitution, by whomsoever proposed or devised, will be accepted to Indian Musalmans unless it conforms with the principles embodied in this resolution.²¹

In this sense, it was a major milestone in the Muslim struggle for its rights and interests in India. It was also important in the sense that the impact of the Nehru Report as far as the Muslims were concerned. The Conference itself went on to emerge as a representative party of the Muslims. The Muslim League was badly divided and demoralized. It was much later that the League could emerge as the ‘sole representative body’ of Muslims of India. The Conference was eventually merged into the re-organized League.

As for Shafi himself, the Conference gave him an additional boost. He was no more confined to the Punjab. He was an All-India leader now, reorganized and respected by a wide range of Muslim leadership. Even leaders like Ali Brothers who had called him a British ‘stooge’ not too long stood by him now. In fact, the main resolution of the Conference referred to earlier was seconded by Maulana Mohamed Ali.²² Shafi could not ask for more. His opposition to the Congress and the Nehru Report and, more importantly, his abiding faith in the British Government had been vindicated to a large extent. But this did not mean that Shafi or his Conference had come to represent all the Muslims soon, it was back to Jinnah and his faction of the Muslim League, with Shafi joining efforts to bring about re-unification of the League itself.

Re-Unification of the All-India Muslim League

Indifference and slight to Muslim demands in the Nehru Report moved the Muslim leaders to join hands for the common good of the community. The wide spread opposition to the Report and above all the rejection of his own amendments and the success of All-India Muslim Conference, affected Jinnah too. In particular, he was disappointed with the Congress and its leadership. But, then Jinnah was still convinced that the way out for the Muslims was to re-unify and re-organize the Muslim League, the oldest Muslim political party in the field rather than depending on adhoc organization like All India Muslim Conference. Soon Shafi felt the same way and decided to help and cooperate.

Thus, when the adjourned meeting of the Council of Jinnah’s Muslim League was held in Delhi on 28 March 1929, with Jinnah in Chair, members of the Shafi group were also attendance. Interestingly, some prominent leaders associated with the Muslim Conference also attended. An hour before the Council meeting they meet at the house of Hakim Ajmal Khan, and after careful deliberations, decided to attend the meeting to lend

their support to Jinnah and his Muslim league. Among others, they included Ali Brothers, Shafee Deudee, Maulvi Mohammad Yaqub and Nawab Ismail Khan. All of them came to attend the League Council meeting.²³ In the discussions, Jinnah made it absolutely clear that Muslims could not accept the Nehru Report. It was against their vital rights and interests. He went on to present his now famous 'Fourteen Points' which were then described as Jinnah's draft resolution.²⁴

After that meeting, the members of Shafi League met under the presidentship of Sir Abdur Rahim and selected some delegates to meet the representative of the Jinnah's League. With Sir Abdul Qadir as their head, other important members of the delegation were Nawab Mohammad Yusuf and Malik Feroz Khan Noon. Shafi made it publically known that if Jinnah's draft resolution was accepted by the League; his group would readily join hands with Jinnah's League.²⁵ Although Jinnah's Fourteen Points were approved without any difficulty, the re-unification of the Muslim League took a while.²⁶ But there no defying that so far as their attitude towards Hindu-Muslim question was concerned, the two fractions of the League were practically united by March 1929. A broad-based committee comprising representatives of all shades of Muslim opinion, including those from Jinnah and Shafi' fractions, Muslim Conference and even some supporters of the Nehru Report were asked to review, critically Jinnah's draft resolution. They included Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Mohamed Ali, Malik Barkat Ali, Nawab Ismail Khan, Dr, Shafaat Ahmad Khan and Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchlew.²⁷ Indeed, a very representative gathering of Muslim leaders in India at that time. The committee approved Jinnah's resolution and the process of re-unification of the League was soon launched, which was eventually completed on 28 February 1930 at Delhi.²⁸

Shafi was showered with developments as his point of view was given importance and recognition in Jinnah's Fourteen Points. Jinnah himself readily acknowledged the contribution of Shafi wand other leaders when he declared that:

I want to make one thing quite clear. There is an impression that the draft resolution which I put before the Council of the League contains my personal ideas. That is not correct. I have only carried out the task entrusted to me by the Council on third of March to consult the various groups and schools of thought as far as possible and place before them a draft

which would command the support of a large body of people. I have therefore, taken the ideas from various persons in accordance with these instructions and to the best of my ability and judgment, I have tried to place a draft which in my opinion carries with it the majority's opinion.”²⁹

Jinnah of course, had re-asserted that his position as the main leader of the Muslims. In the process, he had also succeeded in bringing the Muslim League back to the centre of the Muslim politics. Shafi had agreed on his leadership, and for the first time also agreed to work for the Muslim share in the forthcoming constitution reforms with him, in cooperation rather than in opposition. This was a major transformation not only in the political life and career of Shafi but also in the fortunes of Jinnah and the All-India Muslim League. The extent of this transformation was clearly discernible in the Shafi's role in the Round Table Conference.

Contribution in the Round Table Conferences

The need for constitutional reforms was more than obvious now that both the Simon Commission and Nehru Report had failed to deliver. The Labour Government, therefore, announced in October 1929 its plan to hold Round Table Conference in London to solve the constitutional problem of India. In the first (10th November-19 January 1931) and second Conference (7 September- 1 December 1931), Shafi acted as Deputy Leader of the Muslim delegation participating in the Conference. In this capacity, he worked hard to promote the Muslim cause. He argued for separate electorates and a federal form of government, with provincial autonomy, with considerable success.

The Muslim delegation discussed the agenda for every meeting and planned their responses and speeches in their private meetings before expressing themselves on the Muslim issue in various committees constitute for the purpose, such as the Federal Structure Committee, Minority Committee or any other body of the Round Table Conference. Shafi worked in close concert with Jinnah. Such an understanding and co-ordination between the two Muslim leaders had not been witnessed before. In fact, it surprised both Hindus and the British. As Lord Sankey, the President of the Conference noted: “I had heard that the Muslims were born administrators but I have seen with my own eyes in the way that the Muslim delegation has worked as a team in Conference.”³⁰ Let us examine in some detail their

strategy, approach and the level of success with various issues and concerns before the participants of the Conference.

Shafi had been the most consistent and tireless advocate of separate electorates than anyone else in India. However, he was willing to concede that it was a necessary evil', and had to be retained for want of any other viable alternative. It had to continue, he wrote:

... only so long as the existing conditions continue, is not for all time. When all causes of mutual suspicion and, in some instance of unfortunate antagonism are removed, when the two communities have learnt to work together within our constitutional bodies in a spirit of mutual cooperation and good will for the good of our common motherland when they have realised the necessity of allowing each other that share in affairs of our country to which each is entitled by reason of the sake it holds, the time will arrive when proportional representation of the various communities in our legislatures through mixed electorates will be the next step in our constitutional advancement.³¹

It is clear that Shafi did not mind mixed joint electorates provided the conditions were suitable. But they were not. For instance, as he put it before the minority Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference, "in joint electorates only rich, influential would get the representation. I challenge my friend Sir Peroz Sethna to come to Allahbad to come to Lahore, to come to Calcutta and stand there as a Candidate in any joint electorate. There in spite of great position in the political field of India, he would not be elected in anyone of these constituencies."³² In this context, he referred to Chintamani's evidence before the Muddiman Committee which suggested that the introduction of the separate electorates in the United Provinces had given rise to satisfaction among the Muslim and the Hindus in that province. Thus, as a Minister, he had agreed to extend the system of electorates also to the Municipalities and District Boards.³³ It was precisely for these reasons that he went on the claim that even a person like Jinnah acknowledged that, "a large bulk of the Muslim population was with Sir Mohammad Shafi who is entirely opposed to joint electorates."³⁴ However, Shafi still expressed his willingness to agree to accept joint electorates provided: 'that the right at present enjoyed by the Musalmans in the

minority provinces should be continued to them; that they should have in Punjab and Bengal too joint electorates on population basis; and that there should be a principle of the reservation of seats in the Northwest Frontier Province.³⁵

Of course, all these proposals were promptly rejected by Moonjee, representing the Hindu Mahasabha. However, it was interesting to note that in this shift, Shafi was largely under the influence of Jinnah and not Fazli Husain, as was generally perceived.³⁶ But, perhaps, more importantly, Shafi had also come to realize that the common cause of India could not have been persuade without some measure of Hindu-Muslim unity (another sign of the influence of Jinnah). Thus, addressing the Hindu delegate in particular in the opening session of the Round Table Conference, he proclaimed:

Believe me without this Hindu-Muslim unity all your dreams of self-government are in vain. With the Hindu-Muhammadan unity can confront the representatives of the British Parties and say; Here is the united demand of India', and then I am perfectly certain they will see that India is now united and in a position to conduct the affairs of self-government as an equal member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and they will be more than ready to meet you half way. But if you do not recognize the legitimate claims of Musalmans, and if you do not therefore alienate the feelings and sympathies of this great and powerful community, all your dream of full responsible government will be in vain, for them to whom is the British Parliament to transfer responsibility? To you? The Muhammadan will object. To the Muhammadans? You will object. Therefore, the responsibility whether at the centre or in the Province, will become impossible unless Hindus and Mussalamans can be united, unless they are both satisfied in the condition of things, which is coming into existence, the right of both will be secure.³⁷

Thus, it could be safely argued that Shafi, while working closely with Jinnah, was willing to surrender separate electorates provided certain conditions were met by the Hindu and their representatives bodies in India. However, this could not happen because neither the Congress nor the

Mahasabha was prepared to meet these conditions. But more importantly it could not happen because Fazli Husain was not supportive of this development. He wanted to retain the separate electorates in the new scheme of constitutional reforms. As he confided in his *Diary* that Shafi along with Jinnah was prepared to opt for joint electorates, but he had to stop it. In his own words: "I had to take strong action and the situation had just been saved. We must keep our present weightage in six Provinces and Centre and separate electorates."³⁸ However, to be fair both to Shafi and Jinnah, it must be stressed that they were willing to barter the separate electorates on certain clear and tangible conditions. And then of course Shafi insisted that the 'Muhammadans ought not to be deprived of their rights of separated elections until they voluntarily surrendered it.

In spite of all the difficulties Shafi still continued to work to seek compromise with the Hindus. He was now even prepared to sacrifice Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal. He put an alternate to his earlier suggestions in this regard and suggested that if the basis of controversy between the Hindus and the Muslims was representation in the Punjab and Bengal, he was ready to make it more palatable to the Hindus. He offered to agree 49% representation in the Punjab and 46% in the Bengal, with separate electorates, provided the Muslims were given weightage in other majority provinces with separate electorates. But this offer was also not accepted.³⁹ The real obstacle in evolving a joint formula was attitude of the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha. They were not ready to concede anything significant to the Muslims. They already had turned down a proposal moved by 21 Hindu moderates and Muslim delegates including Shafi which called for 51% representation to the Muslims of the Punjab. Perhaps the Mahasabhis were not interested in any agreement with the Muslims.⁴⁰

M.K Gandhi the sole spokesman of the Congress did not help much. He was more keen to placate the Mahasabha than to represent a different Congress viewpoint. In the second Round Table Conference, the Muslims and some moderated Hindus again agreed on communal formula to solve the constitutional problem, but Gandhi failed to capitalize on this positive development. He kept on looking towards the Mahasabha for guidance. In the end, all he could say was: "I am sorry to report that I have failed in my efforts for settlement. The Sikhs and the Mahasabhis are not prepared to accept the terms devised by us."⁴¹ Shafi indeed urged him to state the Congress position in the matter, but Gandhi was not obliging.⁴² It appeared that Gandhi, perhaps with good reason was not prepared to say or do anything that would offend Mahasabha. Or maybe it was a careful ploy to

wreck the Round Table Conference. Whatever the true intent may have been the facet of the matter was that all the efforts of the Sub-Committee went in vain, and the matter had to be left to the British Government.

In the end, Shafi like Jinnah was thoroughly disappointed with the attitude of Gandhi, Congress and the Mahasabha. All he could insist at this critical juncture was that "whatever the constitution which may ultimately be framed for India Muslim interests, the interests of eighty millions of His Majesty's subjects, must be safeguarded; those safeguards must be included in the constitution."⁴³ This was a clear message conveyed by other Muslim leaders too including Jinnah and Aga Khan. They made it abundantly clear that they would not accept any constitutional reforms which did not protect and promote their interests and demands.⁴⁴

In the All-India Conference session at Delhi, referred to above, Shafi had suggested eleven provinces in India. Five were to be Muslim majority province that is Punjab, Bengal, NWFP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) Sindh and Balochistan. This kind of division of India, he had argued, will ensure a fair treatment of the minorities by the majorities in all the provinces. There will be a balance of power between the Muslims and the Hindus.⁴⁵ Shafi presented almost the same point of view at the Round Table Conference now.

During the meetings of the Federal Structure Committee Shafi insisted on a genuine federal system, with full provincial autonomy. He stressed again and again that this was the only solution for the Hindu-Muslim problem and will indeed provide basis for good relations between the communities in the future. In fact, he claimed that; 'only one form of government on basis of future constitution of India which alone will suit the circumstance of the case and that is the federal system.'⁴⁶ In explaining his concept of a federal system Shafi proposed that the federal legislature must be bicameral and election to the lower house should be direct as far as British India was concerned. The Federal Executive should responsible be to the legislature. However, both Shafi and Jinnah did not want a declaration on central responsibility, unless it was accompanied by assurance to safeguard Muslim interest first.⁴⁷

As for the dominion status Shafi wanted India to attain dominion status as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth. In fact, he not only insisted on this, but even warned that; "the situation if India is very grave. If a solution to satisfy the Indian people and thereby to strengthen the ties which binds England and the India together is not attained by the conference, I tremble to think what the situation will be."⁴⁸

Shafi declared himself as an unequivocal supporter of dominion status. He was not prepared for anything else and even did not hesitate to condemn Churchill's speech for which in his opinion was calculated to weaken the hands of those who sought dominion status for India. In fact, he charged that this speech would play into the hand of the Congress. Indeed, he advised all -well wishers of the British connection to help find the right solution of very difficult problems instead of indulging in language which could only arouse feelings of resentment and antagonism.⁴⁹ As far as his own position in the matter was concerned, he reiterated more than once that "we as sons of India, claim for our country dominion status as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth of nations... We hope soon to see India as an equal member along with the other dominions."⁵⁰

Shafi warned the Conference that if a solution calculated to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people was not attained, things would deteriorate further. In this context, he advised the British government that any settlement of India must also include a declaration with regard to safeguarding the interest of the minorities, particularly the Muslim community. Otherwise, he warned, it will not be acceptable and there will be many problems.⁵¹

Conclusion

There is no gainsaying that Shafi along with Jinnah did his best to safeguard Muslim rights and interest in India. In this context, he simply set aside his earlier difference with Jinnah on a host of issues and concerns. He exposed his willingness to compromise on separate electorates. Also he showed his readiness to give upon his provincial priorities. He tries to work on large concerns affecting the Muslim community as a whole. Indeed, inspired by Jinnah and Aga Khan, he acted more like a national leader at the Round Table Conference. He was no more a provincial leader of the Punjab.

Soon after the Second Round Table Conference in November 1931, however, Shafi could not continue with his newfound political role. Once again, he was appointed as a Member of in the Viceroy's Executive Council, in December 1931, to act for Fazli Husain, who was deputed to South Africa to revise the agreement concerning the rights of the Indians residing there. Unfortunately, however Shafi did not get much time to serve his community and even could not join the Viceroy's office because of a severe attack of pneumonia in the last week of December. He could not recover from the attack and died on 7 January, 1932 and was buried in Lahore.⁵² His death at that critical juncture was a great loss for the Muslims.

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- ³⁵ Prasad, *Pathway to India's Partition*, Vol. 2, p.319.
- ³⁶ Shahnawaz, *Father and Daughter*, p.111.
- ³⁷ Waheed Ahmad,, ed. *Diary and Notes of Mian Fazli Hussain*. (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, University of the Punjab, 1977), pp.54-55.
- ³⁸ Sharif-al-Majahid, ed., *Quaid-i-Azan and His Times: A Compendium*, Vol. I, 1876-1937(Karachi: Quaid-i-Azan Academy 1990), p.112.
- ³⁹ *Proceedings, Minorities Sub-Committee* Q/RTC/25,p.8.

⁴⁰ Majahid, *Quaid-i-Azan and His Times*, p.139.

⁴¹Shahnawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp.127-31.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³Riaz Ahmad, *Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah: Second Phase of His Freedom Struggle 1926-1934*, (Islamabad: Quaid-i-Azam University 1994), p.139.

⁴⁴ Majahid, *Quaid-i-Azan and His Times*, p.142.

⁴⁵*The Muslim Outlook*, 5 January 1928.

⁴⁶*Proceedings, Federal Structure Committee. Q/RTC/2*, p.41.

⁴⁷*Proceedings, Federal Structure Committee. L/PO/6/68*, p.57

⁴⁸*Proceedings, Federal Structure Committee. Q/RTC/2*, p.46.

⁴⁹*The Tribune*, 25 September 1930.

⁵⁰*Proceedings, Federal Structure Committee. Q/RTC/2*, p.48.

⁵¹ Majahid, *Quaid-i-Azan and His Times*, p.142.

⁵² Shahnawaz, *Father and Daughter*, pp.136-137.