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Confidential

9 1 Ball

Cotacamb

19th June 1888

D/O
forwarded

My dear Sir

Yours have observed
in the "Hind" newspaper
a communication ^{thought}
~~to have emanated from you~~
~~on the~~ subject of the "Congress".
~~that they will not~~
~~accept there is~~
any harm in your remarks,
they ~~are not~~ ^{ought} at the
same time must take
~~care not to~~ ^{cannot afford}
the same action in
the matter. As a
consequence of yours, you
had no business to
write to the public
press on such a
subject, & it was
desired to impress
on you the necessity
for using more discretion
in future. Yours truly

To Mr. Col. Ball & Mr. Shree
Ch. Khan

Done
19.6.88

W. S. 1888

MR. SHUJAT ALI ON THE NATIONAL CONGRESS.

I AM grieved to find that the agitation in favour and against the "Congress" is unnecessarily fanning the flames of class animosities. If the leaders of society, Hindu and Mahomedan alike, do not interfere and step up to this unsatisfactory state of things, I imagine where it may ultimately land communities. It requires no telling the bound to my own community by the strands of nationality, and nothing on earth can save me from it politically. And my Hindu friends, who are not a few, know this fact: that my sympathies for their community are quite as sincere and deep-rooted. Therefore when I have said that the present disruption has "grieved" me, I have not made use of a conventional term. I fully feel what I have said.

As I hold a Government appointment I did not like to give a public expression to my views regarding the Congress movement. But now I find that silence may produce worse results. True, it may be presuming too much, to fancy that anything that I may say can have any great influence on public thought and opinion; but those that know me personally know it that I am the last person to inflict my views on any body, unless such views are the result of long and deliberate thought, and unless I believe sincerely that an expression of them may tend, though remotely, to avert an impending evil. Without in the least expecting to convert anybody to my view of the question, I entertain a hope that my word may have, with the thinkers that are acquainted with me, so much weight—only that much as to induce them to think over the matter once again.

With the above preliminary remarks I at once begin the main question. I believe that those of my community that hold that the Congress is a movement beset with dangers and should therefore be nipped in the bud are greatly mistaken. They have in the first place misread the signs of the times and secondly they have over-estimated the practical and immediate results of the Congress. The movement is a natural outcome of upwards of half a century of liberal English education, of the study for 2 or 3 generations of English literature, political, scientific and philosophical, and of the free exercise of free thought engendered by that education and generously fostered by the British Government in India. The seed of liberal and enlightened education has been sown on our soil—to the credit of the British Government and undoubtedly to our benefit and now that it should germinate, grow into a plant, develop into a banian-like tree, and bear fruit is inevitable. The educated—I mean the English educated—native cannot help thinking for himself, cannot help thinking in English and cannot help thinking in English thoughts. Is it in human nature then to go on thinking and brooding on a subject and be content for ever with mere thought? Certainly not. So let the "advanced Native," whether he be Musalman or Hindu, meet his fellow thinkers, exchange their thoughts, discuss whatever questions may be gratifying to them and take any constitutional and orderly measures to give effect to their resolutions. Such a movement is quite a legitimate one and is equally harmless so long as we have a firm-minded and strong-bested Government. The Indian Government has its eyes wide-open and is not a novice in the art of Government. It is not, as a rule, slow to mark dangers and pitfalls. Whatever may be the aspirations of the "advanced native," they cannot, of course, be had for the mere asking. Nor is the Government so short sighted as to fail to see that when a natural and legitimate outlet is closed, liberated thought will ultimately find an unnatural and illegitimate vent. A wise Government will assume a most friendly and encouraging attitude towards a wholesome and healthy institution, such as the Congress is, and will always maintain a spirit of "masterly inactivity" in regard to it.

AY, JUNE 1, 1888.

And therefore my advice to my Musalman brethren is "the Congress does not mean any harm to you; nor does it do you any harm. At the same time neither have you any power to blow it up, nor is the Government so foolish as to listen to you, if you seek its aid. So cease to condemn the movement. Let it alone and let all such Musalmans as consider themselves to be equally "advanced" with the educated Hindu join the Congress. Cease, my friends, to agitate against the Congress. But unhesitatingly criticize the "advanced" aspirations where you think they clash with your interests. This you must do; it is your bounden duty. The Government must know your fears and wants. While there was no systematic and organised agitation of the "advanced" party you very properly remained silent, and yours was then a very intelligent silence. And now that the "advanced" population has organised a movement for systematic agitation, silence on your part will prove suicidal. It is now become incumbent on you that you should equally systematically formulate your fears and wants. You are conservative to the core. Welcome all conservative thinkers whether Musalman, Hindu or Anglo-Indian."

Now, my dear and esteemed Hindu brethren, remember the Congress is but of three years' growth. Remember there was no Congress when liberal education was introduced, when the Universities were founded, when the Civil Service was thrown open to Natives, when permission was given for enrolment of Natives as Volunteers in the existing corps, when Natives were appointed to the High Court Benches, when local self-Government was inaugurated, when Legislative Councils were formed and lots of other reforms were begun and wrought. Whatever may be the faults of the British Government in India it is as just and equitable as any human institution, similarly situated, can possibly be. Remember that Rome was not built in a day. Remember that political life of a nation is not matured by one or two generations. Remember that there is no royal road to political greatness. Have patience: "Try, try, try again." But try all fair means. Avoid all excess. Do not be over-anxious about immediate results. Above all avoid over-zeal. Remember your distinctive character. You oppose the existing order of things and seek reform. You desire to push your way onward. Your cry is "onward ho!" But bear in mind that all races cannot soar equally high in thought and imagination. They naturally desire to keep back. They refuse to join in your cry. Do not be over-zealous to carry the less "advanced" with you. You would then carry a heavy weight in your race. You would be heavily handicapped. It is but idle to speculate to unite India in one unanimous voice. No country is so united. When there is an advanced party seeking to run fast, there must be conservative party to slacken the speed, lest, unopposed, cautious speed may become precipitated and precipitation may lead to dangers. Recognize the existence of an opposition, and gladly and openly acknowledge it. It will stimulate your own activity and interest. I have friends and correspondents all over India. I believe I have accurately gauged the public opinion among my own community. Except among the coast communities of the Bombay side the chief leaders of Moslem thought are united in the opinion that their community cannot go with the advanced party. They have, therefore, each thinking independently for himself, decided, each for himself, that he must seek to prevent the shew of the identification of the interests of Musalman community with those of the advanced party. It is time now that you should not suffer yourself to be deceived by the delusion that the chief leaders of Musalman thought will ever come over to your side. They may possibly, thirty or fifty years hence, come to adopt a great many of the views which you now hold, but they will not consent to run with you. You may be sorry for it. But you cannot help it. It is as impossible for you to gain them over to your side as it is for them to convert you. So let them alone, and welcome only such of them as come over to you willingly. This will avoid friction and will take away all temptations from your way.

MIR. SHUJAT ALI.

DEMI-OFFICIAL.

DEMI-OFFICIAL DATED 19.6.00
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[Despatch Abstract.]

Mir Shujat Ali Khan
and the National Congress.

D/O

for answer

My dear Sir,

The Government have
observed in the 'Hindu'
newspaper of ^{the} 18th inst. ^{and their} communication

on the subject of
the Congress, purporting
to be written by
you, in which

the fact that an officer
in your position has
been drawn into a

contradictory emphasis
what I have already
(in my note of the

19th) told you - that
you ought never to
have written to the
newspapers.

Yours sincerely

K. M.

To Mr. C. C. L.
Mir Shujat Ali Khan
19/6/00

19/6

MIR SHUJAT ALI KHAN BAHADUR
AGAIN ON THE CONGRESS.

THE *Hindu*, in a leader, in which my letter about the Congress is criticized in a most friendly spirit, invites me to be more explicit and takes exception in one place to what seemed to the writer as inaccurate and in another place as inconsistent. When I wrote my first paper on the Congress, I had no intention of writing again on that subject for any Newspaper, but my friendly critic's demand which has an apparently sincere ring in it has irresistibly drawn me into a compliance. In his opinion the expression "the chief leaders of muslim thought" is a "vague phraseology." I am sorry I cannot find a plainer expression, but I shall try to explain my meaning by indicating what it is not meant to include. I did not use it to include shop-keepers, farmers, pilots, village school-masters, and the like, who, in consequence of their want of modern education, know no more of the outside world, than a frog in a well does (to borrow a Sanscrit expression), and who, any capacity for leading apart, can hardly think for themselves beyond their respective trades. As regards the Mussalman co-operation with the Congress movement, I do not attempt to conceal from myself the fact that a few Mussalman leaders have taken part in it whether in their individual or representative capacity. But I know equally well (if I may claim to know my community) that an overwhelming majority of thinking Mussalmans in India have not joined it. My critic calls upon me to refer to the names of the delegates published in the Report and "say whether I do not include them in my vague phraseology of leaders of Muslim thought." All I can say to this call is that my critic is very ungenerous to ask me to deal with personalities. The critic discovers a "luck-ing" "inconsistency in the method of my argument." He writes: "He holds that the Congress can do no harm and still wishes his Mahomedan brethren to formulate their wants and fears in their own way and as opposed to the Congress. If the Congress can do no harm where is the *raison d'être* for fears and how could the advanced aspirations clash with the interests of the minority?" I tried to make my argument and language as clear as I could. I shall quote from my first paper: "Such a movement (meaning the Congress) is quite a legitimate one and equally harmless so long as we have a firm-minded and strong fisted Government" etc. The Congress can do no harm because we have "a firm-minded and strong fisted Government"; but that Government is foreign, and hence it is that we should formulate our wants and fears for its information, lest our silence may be construed into our acquiescence in "the advanced aspirations." The fear of Mussalman leaders (or to avoid "vagueness") of conservative Mussalman leaders is that the ultimate aim of the Congress movement is to introduce into India of diverse races and creeds, the political institutions of England of one nationality and religion, because they

Still then is no harm, but the fact that an opinion in his paper has been given with a contradictory endorsement that we have no authority to give that in any manner or form within a line of this effect will be proven by the paper.

cannot shut their eyes to the "colored" carriage and numerous other race inflictions imposed by law on the Negro minority of certain states of the great Republic of the United States. A Negro be he even so well educated, so thoroughly gentleman-like and so faultlessly dressed cannot, because of legal restrictions, travel with the whites in a Railway carriage, cannot send his children to schools where white children are educated, cannot sit with the whites in a public theatre and cannot find a lodging in a habit resorted to, by the whites. Such are the practical "liberty, equality and fraternity" of a representative Government in a country inhabited by different races!

The "conservative dissenters," I regret, do not find their way to their joining the Congress, because they are convinced that being the minority they cannot effectively "arrest the speed of the Congress" from within its ranks; because unlike political parties in England, where the differences of such parties, arising merely from political convictions regarding particular theories, make it possible for a numerically small party to gain strength by winning seceders from the opposite party, the Hindus and the Mahomedans are divided not merely by their political convictions but also in race, religion and language under circumstances that render a suggestion of coalescence of the two races into one, repulsive to the religious instincts of the Aryan with his traditional high notions of his *dwija* caste and not less humiliating to the unbending Muslim with the pride of sovereignty still ringing in his head because the conservative Muslims are anxious to prevent all possibility of a *show*—a show which their presence at the Congress would impart to its proceedings—of the identification of Muslim interests with the aspirations of the advanced party, believing as they do that such an identification is not in the nature of things as they now exist; and finally because the idea of uniting all India in one voice in respect to its politics is altogether utopian and has no precedent in the political history of the world. The circumstances which hold out no prospect of a racial union, that is of the obliteration of the landmarks of racial distinctions, and which consequently make a political combination between the two races aiming at a representative Government a perilous venture in the case of the numerically weaker race, are by no means inimical to the growth and maintenance of intercommunal intercourse and friendly relations between the two races socially and in pursuit of science and arts as also in the advancement of a just and equitable Government otherwise than upon democratic principles. It is such mutual relations of friendship and cordiality that it has been and will ever be my aim to strengthen and consolidate. These relations are in danger of being disturbed unless both sides make up their minds to "give and take." Each party ought to consent to allow itself to be awakened from its cherished dream. The Mussalmans should cease to proclaim imaginary dangers arising from the Congress movement and the Hindus should cease to parade conservative Mussalman sympathy which does not exist.

SHUJAT ALI.

DEMI-OFFICIAL.

DEMI-OFFICIAL DATED 29. 6. 88

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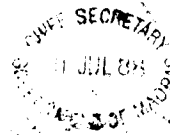
149

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[Despatch Abstract.]

Mir Syed Ali Khan
and the National Congress

Thimrapur
4th July 88



My dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge
the receipt of your
two demurest and
letter regarding my
communication published
in the "Hindu". I am
very sorry indeed
& find that I have
done something which
has merited it.

disappointed
I beg you will do
me the kindness
to convey my
Sincere Regret, &c.

I remain
Yours faithfully
A. H. H. H.

A. H. H. H.

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[Despatch Abstract.]

Mir Shagat Ali
Khan and the National
Congress.