

JAMAL MAHOMED.

(A picture taken in London in November 1932).

JAMAL MAHOMED

A BIOGRAPHICAL RECORD

BY

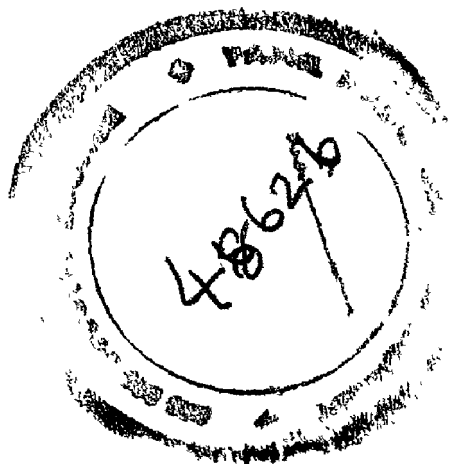
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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN I came to know Mr. Jamal Mahomed by name, the one question I asked myself was whether he is a true servant of the people. To find out an answer I had to first of all talk about him with several people's leaders in South India. Every one was enthusiastic in telling me that he was really a *People's Man* and that his services to India were purely based on his unselfish devotion to the country. Some however expressed the opinion that Jamal would be popular still if he prominently came under the stamp of a particular political party instead of being Independent in his political views.

Having sought informations that way, I went after whatever printed materials I could get hold of about him. Then only I came to the thorough conviction that Jamal is indeed a public leader of much significance and a person whose life and career is eminently worthy of being recorded. With this firm conviction only I began writing this little book.

INTRODUCTION

This is not an authorized biography. But I must mention here that this attempt of mine has the support of several important people in Madras, who have known him for quite a number of years and followed his public activities with keen interest.

Not a line of what I have written in this book has been seen through by Mr. Jamal Mahomed. Much of the material I have used here have been gathered from casual conversations I had with some of his intimate friends and those who have known the Jamal family for quite a number of years. I had of course access to many printed materials relating to his speeches on various occasions and his writings, the latter coming to very little indeed.

I must acknowledge here my thanks to Mr. A. Hameed Hassan, B.A., LL.B. (Alig.), who kindly saw through the proofs and gave me one or two worthy suggestions.

MADRAS, }
26th March 1936. } NILKAN PERUMAL.

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JAMAL MAHOMED

A BIOGRAPHICAL RECORD

A FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE MAN.

It was a rather cold evening in Madras in January 1934. A chill wind from the Bay was blowing. The Sun had not yet gone down the horizon and the beautiful marina was crowded with people. The Beach road had become a busy thoroughfare. Fashionably dressed men and women paraded on the side-walks and powerful motor cars carrying people swiftly moved on hither and thither on the well cut tar road. Hawkers of fruits and magazines called out at the top of their voices announcing the articles in hand and a radio near the Aquarium building blared some melodious musical piece in Tamil.

Alongside the pavement and just opposite to the Senate House stood a car in

which I had taken my seat with a friend. We were chatting. Just then, a dignified looking man of slight dark complexion, medium height and build passed by. He was attired in a very simple dress, for he wore only a striped *lungi*, a close white coat, and upper cloth hung around his neck and a clean white turban on the head. He had small eyes, prominent nose and a thin moustache and beard which had grown grey. Holding an ordinary walking stick by the right hand he moved on at moderate speed. His head was not held upright, for he was facing the ground as he walked. He appeared to mind nothing that was around him and looked as if he was immersed in some deep thought. Now and then, a man who passed by him raised his hand in salutation and the Thinker returned it with a little smile. He walked on. He struck my mind as some one who was remarkable, for his face alone gave me that impression. So out of sheer curiosity I asked my friend who that 'passer-by' was. And then the answer came that it was "Mr. Jamal Mahomed, a Merchant Prince in the

A FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE MAN

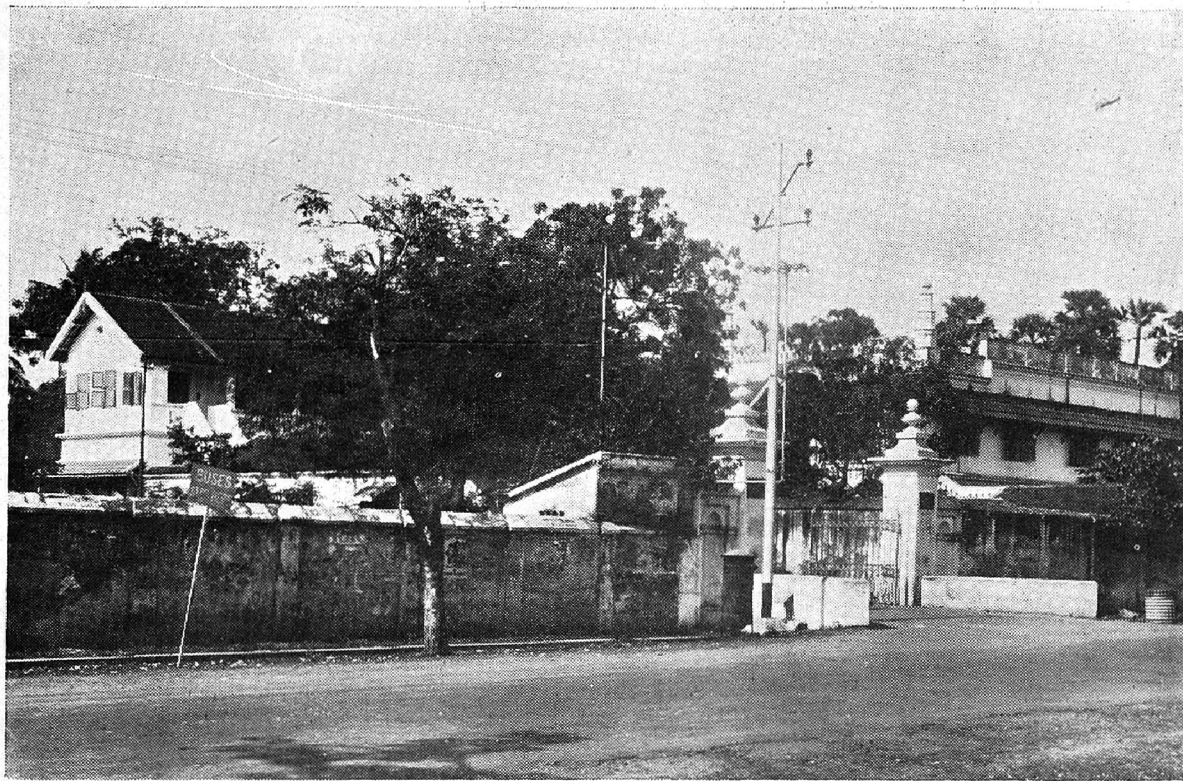
City and an Authority on Currency and Exchange questions." I was interested.

My passion in life being the study of human beings, it was only natural that I became anxious to meet Mr. Jamal Mahomed and have a talk with him. But then I realized the utter impossibility of time at my disposal to arrange a visit then. Therefore, I sought information about him from my friend, who however did not know anything much about Jamal.

For another year, I never had an opportunity of meeting Jamal Mahomed. Then one day I went to see him at his office in Thambu Chetty Street. It was a modest building where the firm of Jamal Moideen and Co. had been in existence for over half a century. On the ground floor I saw a godown like place where skins and hides were stored and a string of labourers at work. I walked up the stairs where the office room is situated in a big hall. I noticed clerks hurrying up here and there doing this and that and the executives attending to customers and telephone calls which frequently came.

And in the southern end of this hall was a room partitioned by a wooden screen. There, Mr. Jamal Mahomed had his seat. This room was decently furnished on a simple scale. And under a whirling fan sat Jamal himself, bare-headed and wearing a loose shirt of delicate texture. And when I went before him, he received me warmly by a shake of the hand and bade me sit down in a chair opposite to him. He shot questions at me straight enquiring of the purpose of my visit and details about my work. Then he mentioned a time and day for me to meet him at his residence in Perambur, a suburb of the city of Madras. With that I took my departure from his presence.

A few days later, one sunny morning I caught a bus for Perambur to see Jamal at his residence. By ten o'clock I was at the gates of his huge mansion *Jamalia*. I walked in straight, crossing the row of plants in the front garden. And on my reaching the portico of the main structure in which Jamal lived, I was



“ The gates of his huge mansion *Jamaila* ”.

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A FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE MAN

received by a manservant who after pointing to me a chair on the verandha, did me the courtesy of taking my card in. I waited for a few minutes and then Jamal arrived. We exchanged greetings and sat down to talk. I was interested in knowing all about his life and career from his own lips but then he was shy and preferred not to talk anything about himself. Whereupon, I turned the train of conversation to different channels. We discussed India's politics and economics, philosophy and finance. Of course he dominated the conversation for the most part and I found myself now and then asking him for explanations on certain views he put before me on men and matters. He was rather free in conversation. He made no efforts to restrict thoughts or ideas while talking, nor did he hesitate to give replies when he was questioned. He made the talk lively and interesting with many original views of his he brought forward. Then I suddenly turned round and looked at the dial of a wall clock nearby and realized that we had been

conversing together for over three hours. The lunch hour had by then arrived and so I took leave of Jamal and left. When I did so, I came away with the feeling that I had learned many things from Jamal, for he struck me as a Philosopher and Thinker more than any thing else, although the people generally knew him only as a Merchant Prince and public man. A well spent three hours were to my gain that day and never will I forget the pleasure I derived from the conversation I had with Jamal.

For his fifty-four years Jamal looks a bit older I should say, and that is because he had been keeping indifferent health for a good many number of years. But then he is active in life. He has to attend to many public duties daily besides his business affairs, in which he still takes a very deep interest. Every letter, every telegram and several customers are attended to by him as far as possible. In fact, he governs the affairs of his business with the thoroughness of a Dictator.

He rises up early each morning and

A FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE MAN

spends a good deal of time in the garden looking at the plants and flowers, birds and tiny creatures, wondering about their beauties and activities. Nine o'clock found him at the dining table breakfasting. Then he sat amidst his numerous grandchildren and spent some time chatting and playing, as if he was one among them! He likes children and the children love him. Every day he spends a part of his leisure at home to be with the kiddies and enjoy the fun.

By one in the afternoon Jamal has his lunch which consists of mostly vegetarian dishes, bread and rice. That over, he leaves for office in Thambu Chetty Street where he remained till evening signing papers and receiving visitors. And as the sun goes down he leaves the office to attend some tea party or social gathering, mass meeting or lecture. With the coming of night fall he reaches the marina to take his daily walk if he found himself free from other engagements by that time. Then he is back home, dines early, and spends some time in conversation with the members of his

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family before retiring to bed by ten or even later at times. Such is an average day in his life. He cares for no amusements or entertainments. But when there is a good motion picture in town, he would drop in to see it. Otherwise, he prefers to be all alone in the garden of his home and devote his time in meditation and thought.

HIS ILLUSTRIOUS FATHER.

WE do not know many details about the ancestors of Jamal. However, to start with, we have a story of his brave and illustrious father Jamal Moideen. As a boy, he was a very independent sort of lad. He lived in the district of Ramnad and the village was Vembankudi. It was a place of peasants who toiled in corn fields all the year round. Education was not popular in those days but many families did educate their children to read and write Tamil and recite the Quoran. So Moideen also was sent to a school which was conducted by a Pundit in a village called Narikudi, which was three miles away from Vembankudi. The lad, clad in his colourful *lungi* and small cap over a clean-shaven head, attended school every morning and returned home by sun set. He read and wrote his lessons on a sheaf of palmyra leaves because paper or slate was not used in South Indian schools in those days. For his mid-day meal

Moideen used to take with him a ball of rice neatly tied in a piece of handkerchief but once when he was asked to dine at his sister's home in Narikudi, he flatly refused to do so saying that he would rather starve than eat at another's place! Such was the spirit of independence Jamal Moideen had even as a boy of nine.

Moideen was not in school for long. He was a lad of dreaming and planning type. His mind was always at work in various directions. He was ambitious to do great things in life and this ambition for a mere village lad was something born with him. There was nothing to influence him to a higher plane of life if he looked around in his own little village. However, he at times listened to his family folks when they used to talk about the career of one of his maternal uncles, Muthu Meera Rowther by name. He was a prosperous merchant in the city of Madras, Moideen heard. In subsequent days we find Moideen leaving Vembankudi for Madras. After a monotonous slow travel which took him a fortnight to complete, we see him

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arriving in Madras. The city seemed strange to him and the bustle of it, compared to the freshness and quietness of his village, simply astounded him. But clever youth as he then was, Moideen knew only too well how to adjust his manners and ways even in a strange place.

Muthu Meera Rowther was at that time aged about forty. He was a pioneer in the tanning industry in Madras. With a tannery in Kodambakam, a suburb of the city, and another at Coimbatore, he was the first among the Madrasees to export skin and hides to England. Money he had enough in hand and trade was prosperous to him. He was a married man with a happy family of grown up children. And when young Moideen arrived at his door steps Muthu Meera Rowther gave him a warm welcome. He saw great possibilities in Moideen. A wave of confidence in the youth swept through the merchant's mind. A few days later, Moideen was married to his eldest daughter. He was then sixteen.

Muthu Meera Rowther advised Moideen

to work in his tannery for a while but the youngman declined the offer emphatically. He did not want it to be said that he was helped by his father-in-law when he started his career in life. It was a matter of prestige to him. He wanted to get out into the city and do something all by himself. The Rowther was surprised at the attitude of his son-in-law. At times they argued serious matters, and these finally led to Moideen leaving the merchant's home. He had of course plans of his own to do something and he did not very much care for the sort of work he had to do for a living.

Within a few months, we find Moideen appearing at Periamet (the leather trade area in Madras) as a commission agent. He managed to take small lots of leather from merchants and sell them with a little profit for himself. The next step he took was to become a supplier in the leather market. He purchased stocks from the merchants and sold them to shippers. That brought him more money in course of time. In this manner, Moideen learned much about the tanning industry from sheer

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experience and without any guide. He was successful no doubt but then the industry in those days was not a stabilized one. Therefore at times he lost heavily in the business just as he made good money at other times.

Years rolled by in his life. From his twenty-fifth year he had become steady in business. He was now leading a normal life without many ups and downs in his trade. By this time Moideen had earned a reputation as a successful business man. He had gone up in life all by himself and without the assistance of any one else. All these days he would not go into any partnership for trading purposes because he did not want it to be said that his success in business life was due to the brains of his partners also. Now that he had attained first rank in his chosen field of occupation, he began to take in partners from time to time to increase the volume of his business.

It was not always profits that he saw. There were times when he lost heavily. Once he found that his debts had risen

high and they had to be cleared immediately. He became restless and worried at this time. Therefore he suddenly decided to sell everything he possessed on the face of the earth so that he could pay off his creditors. The jewelleries of his family folks, the stocks of leather he had in store, his furniture and in fact everything he had as his own, was disposed of in no time. Even a pair of weighing scales which is so sacred to every merchant, Moideen sold away to wipe off his dues in full. Such was the integrity and scrupulousness of the man, such was his sense of independence and duty to others as he felt it.

In private life Jamal Moideen was pious. He said his prayers at home as many times as the Islamic religious commands demanded and took a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1904. And in the prime of his manhood, he always got up by three in the night for prayers and slept seldom after that, till the day broke. By the dawn he went to the tannery in his horse-drawn carriage. He used to return home by nine of the clock, breakfast and then go to his

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office in town. Till sun set he remained at work there and then went home straight. He was an early diner and went to bed daily by nine in the evening. He was not a social figure in the city in those days, and indeed he never was at any time during his life. He believed in a quiet life, work and home. Amusements he never liked. Dramas or other kinds of entertainments, he did not at all favour.

Though he built up a business and a fortune in life through self-help, Jamal Moideen was not a strict individualist. He was aware of the troubles of others in the world. He felt for the needs and necessities of those around him. Often he came across merchants in distress and when they turned up to him for assistance, he did give them the necessary helping hand. For religious causes and charities he subscribed liberally. He also helped penniless people who longed to have a pilgrimage to Mecca with passage and expenses money. Further, he gave a hundred thousand rupees to the Smyrna Relief Fund, and Mustapha Kemal, the

Turkish Dictator personally acknowledged this princely donation in grateful terms. But one thing that he has done in Madras is a work that will always be remembered. It was his founding of the school which is to-day known as the Jamalia Arabic College for which he left a few lakhs of rupees. When he had forty thousand rupees in hand, Jamal Moideen started this school with some students for whom he found all the expenses during the course of their stay at the school. This is an institution which gives religious training to Muslim pupils and in the beginning, nothing but religion was taught here. To-day this is a very successful College catering knowledge and it has become famous throughout India and even elsewhere.

Until 1924 Jamal Moideen kept up his health satisfactorily. That year, he was sixty-nine years of age. Signs of heart trouble were suddenly noticed in him. He began to feel the growing weakness in him rather acutely. So, he decided to avail himself of any expert medical treatment



"The school which is to-day known as the Jamalia Arabic College".

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that could be had. The name of the famous Hakeem Ajamal Khan of Delhi was suggested to him and Jamal Moideen decided to consult him. Delhi was reached, and the Hakeem was asked to attend upon Moideen. For a time there was some relief as the result of the treatment, but he got an attack of paralysis too at this time. This made him feel the illness all the more.

Moideen on his return from Delhi found the climate of Madras trying since the summer had come. It was also the month of April then. So, seeking a fresh and cooling atmosphere, the aged merchant went away to Courtallum for rest. There he remained till August. With him was his eldest son Jamal Mahomed, also several other members of the family. Even while confined to bed, Moideen never ceased giving advice to his children on business problems. He also carried on conversations daily on family affairs and was regular in his prayers and religious duties.

Then came the month of July. It was rainy and windy at Courtallum. The

whole of South India was then suffering from a disastrous flood too. At this time Jamal Moideen lay on his death bed. By his side was Jamal Mahomed and to him, he tried to say something but the voice failed. Then the eyes suddenly closed and that was the end.

Information of his passing away was immediately flashed to Madras and a party of friends and relatives soon left the city to pay their last homage to the departed Merchant Prince. His body was embalmed and was taken to Dindigul where he had a home and a tannery and in which place he used to spend several months in a year when he lived. In the yard of his home, the body was buried. The ceremonies connected with the funeral were duly performed. And the scene was a very touching one, with the whole populace of Dindigul turning up. Thus came the end of a rich and colourful career, the career of a self made man who became a great business magnate and a pioneer in South India's Tanning Industry.

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH.

JAMAL Mahomed was born in 1882 as the eldest son of Jamal Moideen who was then twenty-six years of age. The month was January. There is nothing much we know about his boyhood. The father was very keenly interested in the boy and they often spent hours together chatting. Education had become fashionable in those days and Jamal Moideen thought it necessary to give the boy a sound schooling, but as is the custom with the Muslims, the first thing that the young Jamal had to learn was to read the Quoran. At home, every one talked in Tamil which was their mother tongue. But the Quoran was in Arabic and it was not possible then for Jamal to learn it. So he merely learned to recite the Book when he was a boy of six. Afterwards he was sent to an Islamic religious school for two years. Here, he learned Arabic scripts and mastered the art of reading the Holy Book. In those days Jamal

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Moideen was living in town and the nearest school to which he could send his son was the Muthialpet High School. So we see him attending classes there in his eighth year. He was fond of study, and also playful. And whenever he had time outside the school and study hours at home, Jamal went to his father's office and saw everything that was being done there. He used to ask questions at times and the father answered them, gravely and seriously. Sometimes, they got into discussions at home on questions relating to religion.

At Muthialpet High School Jamal made his mark as a student. He shone brightly within the class room. In English, mathematics and geography, he scored good marks. In the first year he secured a double promotion and a special prize. Soon after, he left Muthialpet School to join the Christian College High School. When he went there, he found the students often having hot discussions on religious matters. Whenever there was some time at his disposal during the school hours, he

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too talked with his fellow students on this and that, for he was keenly interested in arguing matters out. And in fact, he became so interested in arguments that in course of time, he began to pay less interest to the school lessons. He took into his head philosophical questions of great magnitude which no student of his age, for he was then fourteen, should take in. By the next year he was failing a bit in health and the doctors said that he should take rest for a time. In that way he left school and that was the end of his scholastic career.

Jamal was all through learning the business in which his father was engaged. From his thirteenth year he was assisting Dad in deciphering English codes at the office and now that he had left his studies, he joined the business. Each morning the youthful businessman dressed in his *lungi*, loose *jubba*, close coat and white turban, accompanied Jamal Moideen to the market and then to the office and spent the day there working. In the evenings he returned home, said his

prayers and entered into discussions of all kinds. The father and son every day conversed on the various aspects of the tanning industry. They agreed on many points and differed in some. And for the views of youthful Jamal the father had much regard, but at times, the elderly businessman firmly stuck to his view and refused to agree with the son.

Though he left school early, Jamal had all along a passion for learning. He often met learned people in his own town and talked with them matters of importance and exchanged views. Ever fond of knowing things, he had a special love for reading. With this idea alone, he soon got himself admitted as a member of the Madras United Club where many English and Indian magazines could be had. The issues of such great British publications like the *Nineteenth Century Review* and the *Spectator* appealed to the tastes of young Jamal and he spent a few hours every evening in scanning through their pages. Besides, he purchased books on History, Biography and other subjects from time

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

to time, to read through. And every book he had scanned through had his marginal notes and pencil marks. In this way, he taught himself many things. Even to this day he is a voracious reader.

Jamal also picked up by this time the language of Urdu. His mother tongue is Tamil in which he acquired a certain mastery and this helped him much in office where the account books were kept in that language. English which he studied at the high school and the improvement of which he secured by extensive reading of British periodicals and books enabled him to tackle the correspondence he had to handle as far as his business connections with merchants in America, Europe and Japan were concerned. And a little knowledge of Arabic he had acquired while young as we have noted, in a religious school, helped him to go ahead with his religious studies. Thus, we see him even as a youngman in his 'teens thirsting for knowledge in diverse fields.

Soon after his joining Jamal Moideen's business as a partner in his sixteenth

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year, marriage was proposed to him. And it came on. So, we see him entering a wedded life that year.

A TRIP TO EUROPE.

AN active life as a businessman began for Jamal since then. He also soon became the father of many children as years rolled by. In 1910 the firm of Jamal Moideen and Co. was in a very prosperous state. He had a good export business with merchants in the United States, England and the Continent of Europe. At this time he thought over the possibilities of extending his trading connections. A trip to Europe was quite useful, he imagined. There was yet another question which he had in mind while contemplating such a trip. It was the question concerning the Jamalia College for religious instruction at Perambur. Here nothing except religious matters were taught to the students then, in accordance with the advice of the *Maulvies*. But Jamal thought that there was nothing wrong if the students of that school were also taught general subjects like history, geography, arithmetic and other sciences. The difference

of opinion on this issue became a matter of discussion between Jamal, his father and the *Maulvies* very frequently. Finally the youngman said that he would go to the *Sheikul Islam* (the High Priest) in Constantinople and other Muslim Divines in many places to consult with them what should be done. He also wanted to see how religious and educational institutions were run in Egypt and other Islamic countries, so that he could introduce new schemes in the Jamalia College at Perambur. With these two ideas in mind, Jamal decided to leave for Europe in the early part of the year 1910. He was then twenty-eight.

It was the month of April in which he took his departure from Madras by a British India liner to Colombo, where he landed and remained for three hours before resuming voyage. At Aden, he disembarked and saw the place. At Suez, he left the steamer and took an inland trip for sight seeing purposes. He saw the pyramids and met many Egyptians with whom he carried on conversations on questions of

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mutual interest. He left Egypt by an Italian vessel and reached Venice towards the end of May. Thereafter, four days in Vienna and yet another two days in Trieste and somedays in Budapest, he visited Munich, Zurich, and finally reached Paris. From the French capital he left for London where he arrived on the fourth of June. In this trip, he had an Indian valet to attend on him.

In London, he was met by a South Indian Muslim who had been in residence there for some years then. He was Mr. Mursaleen Rowther, a merchant who had married and settled down in England itself at that time. It was with him Jamal chose to stay while in Britain. Together they took walks and enjoyed sight seeing. At this time, Jamal's dress was very characteristic. He wore a long black coat, black pants and a white turban. He had also a small dark beard and everything made him look a strange figure in the London Streets as he went about. Passers-by stared at him time and again. They questioned the Rowther

who the strangely dressed person was, whereupon he used to jocularly say that Jamal was an "Indian *Sanyasin*"!

There were many places in London which drew his interest. He was deeply interested in looking up the British Museum, some cathedrals and churches of renown, parks and botanical gardens. A visit to Madame Tussad's wax works where the images of the great men of the world were to be seen, was paid. Among the other places he saw, the National Portrait Gallery and the Houses of Parliament, should not be missed mentioning here. He also called at the London Auction room of leather merchants and discussed business with a few of his customers in the city.

When in London, Jamal once became the attraction of the people in streets because he was wearing a pair of red shoes in the morning with a black suit! People smiled at him and this struck the youthful businessman from Madras as something strange. The Rowther, his companion, pointed out then the error in

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Jamal wearing the wrong shoes. Whereupon, he turned round and surprisingly asked "why should they be looking at my shoes rather than at other things?" To which his companion replied that in England the wearing of the correct shoes counted really important.

After spending nearly a month, he left London to tour the Continent once again. He at first arrived in Paris where he had a fall by the leg. This accident detained him there for a week. When he found himself fit enough to move he left for Brussels. There in that ancient city, he attended a gigantic Exhibition and was much pleased to see all that he saw.

From Brussels we see him reaching Marseilles and then Rome. Afterwards he went up the Vesuvius. He was very much interested in looking into the volcano for a long time. Such is the interest Jamal has had in the creations of nature of which he is a keen student. Back from the Vesuvius he again travelled to Germany because he had some business to be transacted with a trader at Frankfort-

on-Maine. A week in Berlin was spent before he left for Vienna, Budapest and Constantinople.

Jamal was thrilled to arrive at this ancient city of the *Khalifa* and he went round the place looking at the palaces and mosques and the people. This was one of the places he wanted to visit at all costs, because he had to see the *Sheikul Islam* (Grand Mufti) whose opinions he sought on the question whether an Islamic religious school could also give instruction to its students on other general subjects. So he met the Man and had a prolonged talk about India and Islam, also about his tours in Europe so far. Finally, the *Sheikul Islam* agreed that in a religious school students must be taught other subjects too. This opinion of his was given in writing and Jamal moved on further after obtaining it.

Smyrna, Alexandria and Cairo were the next cities he wanted to visit because he had a longing to see the huge Arabic colleges there. Even then he found that the course of instruction was not so

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narrowly restricted to religion and religion alone. This fact too gave him support for his conviction that the teaching curriculum at the Jamalia School should also include instruction in subjects other than religion.

From Cario Jamal moved on to Arabia, for he wanted to pay a visit to Holy Mecca and Medina and perform Haj pilgrimage. This journey he had partly to undertake on camel back and partly by the railway. In those days the trip to Mecca was not easily accomplished. There were many discomforts to be faced. But nothing discouraged Jamal in his determination to make the pilgrimage. One day, while he was on camel back still heading towards the Holy City, he found on the sands a corpse with its throat cut. He came to the conviction that the murder should have been committed just an hour or before, for he could see the fresh blood flowing. This rather made a bad impression in his mind on the general life then led in Arabia.

After a prolonged and extensive trip, which took him about ten months Jamal

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returned to Madras in January 1911. In all his travels, he kept with him a small note book in which he jotted down some of his impressions about the places and peoples he had seen. These remarks are very brief but they are interesting enough to see through, because the remarks of a South Indian going to Europe in those years and forming certain views must necessarily be of interesting reading. Arriving in London he wrote about that metropolis thus: "London is a big city with a heavy traffic, full of movements and business but not so fresh as Berlin"; And of Brussels, he said that "it is a fine bright city." He has further made many remarks about the beauties of the French vineyards which impressed him very much. The visitor was all admiration for the British people whose average honesty of purpose, genuine courtesy and uprightness in life touched his heart. He has also written a few lines admiring the lives of the Germans. These notes were written in Jamal's own hand with pen and ink, and much of what he had then written could

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be clearly read by any one who looked into them even to-day.

CHAMPION OF TANNING INTERESTS.

UPON his return from the trip to Europe, Jamal Mahomed once again entered the busy life at his office and now concentrated much further to improve the exports of skin and hides to foreign countries. India soon plunged into a fresh enthusiasm for it was the year of the Delhi Durbar. It was also the year in which the Indian capital was changed to Delhi from Calcutta.

Days passed by. Now in 1914 the great war had commenced in Europe, and the outbreak of it had its effect on the Indian tanning industry. The Government imposed a control over the export of skin and hides. The merchants had to sell their produce to the Government who purchased it at a very low price it fixed up. The merchants of course found this as a check on the progress of their business but they recognized that they had to submit to such a check and help the Government. This they willingly did then.

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And it continued throughout the war years.

Jamal who had already learned many things in business, partly through his careful study of things and partly due to the experience he had gained from his wide travels in Europe, now thought that the skin and hides merchants should get together and organize themselves. He talked over this plan first with his father who was agreeing to it. Then he influenced other members in the trade to come in, and they found no objection to such a worthy object. So in 1917 we find Jamal Mahomed organizing the Southern India Skin and Hides Merchants' Association. He himself became its first Secretary, but two years later he was President, an office which he held for several years.

In 1918 the war was over but not the control which the Government exercised over the Indian tanning industry. The merchants appealed to the Government but no immediate satisfactory result was forthcoming. Therefore, it was decided to send a deputation of merchants to Delhi to

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see the Authorities to present their case before him. It was composed of several leading members of the tanning industry in Madras including Jamal Mahomed. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the able lawyer, who was at that time in Delhi joined the Deputation as Legal Adviser.

The Deputation saw Sir Thomas Holland, the President of the Munition Board, Sir Charles Barnes and Sir Arthur McWatters. Jamal Mahomed was the chief spokesman for the Tanners. With his practical experience in the business, he gave fuller details to the officials. This trip to Delhi resulted in the Deputation's case being decided upon favourably a little later after a Conference at the Fort St. George. In the succeeding months, the control of the Government was relaxed over the tanning industry, and merchants began to resume their trade with foreign countries with absolute freedom as ever before.

Besides pleading for the ban to be lifted Jamal also pressed hard before the authorities the desirability of imposing an export duty on Indian raw skins and hides.

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The skins and hides that were superfluous for the country's own requirements had to be exported. But he wanted this surplus to be sent out in the tanned state so that the Indian tanning industry might expand and the country be benefited thereby in the shape of increased employment for Indian workmen and additional wealth to the country. For this reason, he did not want to encourage the export of the surplus skins and hides in the raw state. For that purpose only he pressed for a duty on the export of the raw stocks.

In the years following Armistice, Jamal Mahomed began to figure in public life in the city of Madras. He was already then a member of the Southern India Chamber of Commerce. Besides his work for the Skin and Hides Merchants' Association he occasionally presented himself as a platform speaker too in the gatherings of merchants and social groups. His importance as an influential merchant in the city was now felt by the people. He was invited to attend parties and functions, and in many he himself presided.

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In 1920, the Government by an administrative act raised the exchange ratio to 2/- gold. This forced up the Rupee exchange sometimes upto even 2/11 per rupee and the Government was forced to sell Reverse Councils very heavily to keep up the exchange at that high level. This meant heavy losses not only to the Gold resources of the Government of India but also untold losses to the producers of the country. Naturally there was a great outcry throughout the land against this action of the Government. The agitation was led by many leading economists of Bombay, Calcutta and other places. Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdass took a leading part in it at Bombay and Jamal Mahomed led the agitation in Madras. At this time we find Jamal organising meetings of protest, writing to papers and sending long and trenchant protests to the Government of India. Ultimately the Government realised its mistake and dropped the measure after involving the Government and the people of the country in heavy and regrettable

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losses. During this period only, this silent man of sound judgment emerged from his private life as a merchant into an active public man endowed with a great deal of spirit of service for the country which claims him. He then revealed himself as an Economist of first rate brains and as an authority on the question of currency and exchange.

PART IN THE RUPEE RATIO AGITATION.

TOWARDS the beginning of the year 1927 there were two great questions which became prominent in India. One was the blunder of Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, in appointing a Royal Commission on Reforms with only Britishers on its personnel, and the other was the baneful measure of Sir Basil Blackett, the Finance Member of the Government of India, in altering the ratio of the rupee from 16*d.* to 18 according to the recommendations of the Hilton Young Commission. Against both these measures the Indians protested. While the Congressmen and the Liberals carried on a vehement campaign against the Reforms Commission headed by Sir John Simon, the British legal luminary, the leaders of Indian commerce and industry ran an agitation against Sir Basil's currency policy. I was in Bombay during that period and could therefore understand fully the bitter feelings with which several meetings were

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organized in that city to protest against the alteration proposed in the rupee ratio. In South India, it was Jamal Mahomed who immediately came forward to take up the cudgels against the measure. He organized several protest meetings, prepared memoranda with sound arguments, and launched a regular propaganda among the masses. His speeches in those days on these questions received tremendous praises from even those pundits who hold professorship in Economics in our great universities. A product of no London School of Economics, nor a friend of Keynes, Cole, Stuart Chase or Seigfred, Jamal could yet state his country's case on financial and economic matters with ease and mastery. This was how a man given to self study devoted himself to champion the cause of the masses during the agitation against the 18d. ratio in 1927.

Inspite of all the protests from the masses the increased ratio finally came to stay. This eventuality did not weaken the hopes of Jamal and he continues to

maintain his spirit of optimism about it even to this day. Whenever he had to address a gathering of commercial people he drew pointed attention of his hearers to this great tragedy from which the country suffers. But all his utterances in this matter did not receive sufficient support from the other powerful quarters. However, Jamal did not leave matters there alone. He continues to fight on this issue.

“When England went off the gold standard the Government of India acting in the best interests of the country issued an ordinance suspending the obligation to sell gold on sterling against the rupee, evidently with a mind to let the rupee find its own level. But within a few hours of its decision, and even when the Legislative Assembly was in session, the Secretary of State for India reversed their policy and linked the rupee to the sterling”. When such a situation arose in 1931, Jamal once again drew the attention of the country to the increased ratio and pointed out how its continuance would ruin the best

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interests of India. Shortly after all these occurrences, he sailed for England. While there, he did his best to make the British statesmen understand something about this question and how it affected the Indian masses in general and the commerce and industry in particular. Even after his return from England in the early part of 1932 no speech of his on economic, financial or political matters ever missed mention of this vital question. In the course of his presidential address to the Southern India Chamber of Commerce on the 19th March that year referring to the exchange question he spoke as follows :

“I am very sorry to say ” he commenced “that our grievance as regards the exchange has not been redressed, though in this case also the country has expressed its desire in an unmistakable manner....
.....I would appeal to the Government not to delay any further to put an end to this serious and widespread grievance of having linked the rupee with the sterling and at the artificial rate of 18½.”

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Even to-day, the Government has not thought it fit to repair the ruin that has been done to our trade and industry by the top ratio of the rupee, but then we hope the time will come when the people themselves will realize the magnitude of it and clamour, only to win in the end this so very important factor in our economic life.

AT THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE.

JAMAL who had been to Europe in 1910 sailed for England once again in 1931. In that year he was invited by the British Prime Minister to attend the Second Round Table Conference. He went as a Representative of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry of which he was President that year, his colleagues from the same body being Sir Purshotam Das Thakurdas and Mr. G. D. Birla. The news of his going to London was warmly welcomed by the people of South India. Soon we see him entertained in dinners and tea parties, in each of them Jamal making a speech. He was also given an enthusiastic send-off as he left Madras.

The Muslim leader from the South went to London, this time taking his second son Jamaluddin. He arrived there on the 31st of October and took up residence in Savoy Hotel. All through, he had a busy time during his sojourn in England. He attend-

ed the Plenary session and was not in any sub-committees or other sections which functioned in connection with the Conference. About his work at the Conference the report issued by the Federation of Chambers of Commerce on the activities of its representatives in London contains the following:

“Mr. Jamal Mahomed” says the report “was not on any of the Committees of the Conference. The only formal proceedings which he could attend were the short Plenary sessions at the end of November. Moreover, during most of the time he was in London he was in an informal manner taken up mainly by the important communal question, the settlement of which was necessary for facilitating the tackling and solving of other vital questions. So he could not take part in most of the discussions and conversations” on commercial and financial matters concerning India.

At the Plenary session of the Round Table Conference several Indian and British delegates present made important speeches, giving expression to their views

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on the future constitution of India. And Jamal in his turn spoke rather at length. He started by saying that many Indian delegates had gone to the Conference with a new faith in the Government of the United Kingdom and its Parliament. Even those who were not inclined to attend the first Conference in 1930 had felt a certain enthusiasm to be present at the second session, said Jamal. He submitted to the meeting that "India and its people—the agricultural, commercial, industrial and the labour classes—will not be satisfied with anything less than the granting of responsibility at the centre, simultaneously with Provincial autonomy." After stressing that view, he went on to say:

"When you thus satisfy the infinite desire and aspirations of a great people in the inculcating of which your own people played no mean part you will at the same time also be putting once for all an end to the deplorable but widespread discontent and unrest in the country."

Then he spoke about the natural resources of India and told the British

people that it was worth their while to develop them with their "mental and material" assistance. In these ways, the British could earn the good will of the India of the future.

Speaking further, Jamal protested against the reserve powers which the British people sought in commercial matters for he believed that the Indians would never use their power to injure the legitimate trade interests of the Britishers. The increasing national debt of India to Britain was next referred to; and such an eventuality, Jamal said, was the outcome of the wrong way in which the country's currency and exchange were maintained.

The Communal quarrels in India, said the Muslim leader, were mere tiffs between brothers and to-day's quarrel between them for all that one knew, may not exist at all to-morrow. Only in recent years such troubles are to be seen more and more in British India, while they are "rather uncommon" in Indian states. And these disturbances are after all

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merely the creations of "mischief-mongers and notoriety-seekers " Jamal stated.

The speaker finished his speech by referring to India's revenues and the taxation problem. The taxation remained high he pointed out, because of the heavy military expenditure of the government and although the Legislative Assembly often voted down for retrenchment and cuts in the heavy military budget, all the same it was maintained by a mere certification.

In South India no Muslim leader has perhaps done more for bringing together the various communities on a united plane than Jamal Mahomed. Now that he was in London, here too he interested himself in bringing about communal unity than taking up a very active part on behalf of commercial interests. Frequently he consulted Mahatma Gandhi and other important leaders on the communal question. The whole time he was behind the scenes working actively to make unity possible between the leaders and present a united demand to the British Govern-

ment. In this work of his, Mr. Gandhi had complete confidence in him. The same confidence in Jamal was reposed by several other thoughtful and eminent Indian statesmen present at the Conference. His room in the Savoy hotel was the scene of several gatherings from day to day during the Conference sessions and all these gatherings discussed principally the question of communal unity. Finally some kind of an agreement was in sight and Jamal was happy to see that his labours nearing success. At this stage some unexpected situations arose towards wrecking the success of the Conference. They also demolished the building of unity which Jamal was slowly bringing up. The result was the failure of the Conference. In all that he did Jamal was quiet and away from the gaze of publicity. Seldom did his name appear in London papers. He wrote no letters to the *Times* as some other delegates to the Conference frequently did, nor did he address any public meetings in London. Indeed the whole time he had been straining his nerves

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inspite of ill-health to achieve the most important thing that was needed, namely communal unity.

Besides working for unity Jamal seized fitting opportunities to do his bit to impress upon the British statesmen the necessity of India altering the rupee ratio in its relation to the pound sterling, a question in which he took a leading part ever since it was raised when Sir Basil Blackett was Finance Member.

During the Round Table Conference period the Nawab of Chattari one day gave a luncheon party at which several Indian and British statesmen were present. Jamal was also there. Before the party broke up, Mr. Wedgewood Benn who was for a time Secretary of State for India told Jamal that he desired to discuss with him the ratio question. At that moment the Muslim leader and the ex-Labourite Cabinet Minister had a little exchange of views. "You should have come for the first Conference" said Benn to Jamal before they parted that afternoon. Subsequently they met at Benn's

residence one evening and talked about India's currency and exchange and other problems. In this conversation, Jamal with his usual mastery argued the case so well that even Benn could not for certain say whether the attitude of the Government of India and that of the United Kingdom in raising the rupee ratio, was after all the correct thing to do.

Earlier to this he had called on Sir Henry Strakosch, the Financial Adviser to the India Office and well known as an Economist. The meeting took place in Sir Henry's private office. In that conversation the British Financial Expert appeared to think conditions in India as more or less similar to those in England, where as they are so different. Jamal did his best to convince Sir Henry that the 18*d.* ratio was not at all in the best interests of India. However, finally they parted without reaching an agreement in views on the question.

Before he left London, Jamal met the Prime Minister and other statesmen who interested themselves in Indian questions

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and attended the King's garden party at the Buckingham Palace given to the Conference delegates. Leaving England he went to Paris and visited Spain which he had not seen during his previous trip and finally reached Gibraltar. From there he crossed over to Northern Africa, visited Algeria, Morocco and Tunis. Then proceeding to Port Said *via* Rome and Naples he took steamer for India. He arrived in Bombay in January 1932 and reached Madras by train, to be warmly received by a huge gathering of friends.

RETURN FROM LONDON AND AFTER

THE India to which he returned in January 1932 from the Round Table Conference was an India in the throes of a great agitation once again since the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin pact the previous year. Jails were full with Civil Disobedience prisoners, arrests were being made in hundreds each day and a regime of repression was the order in the country. Jamal was surprised to see the turn of events so soon. He felt very much that any attempt to bring a friendly feeling between the Government and the governed would not bear fruit. For that reason he refrained from making any open declaration on the political situation in the country. But he was not happy to see the repressive policies of the Government either.

On the 19th March he presided over the annual general meeting of the Southern India Chamber of Commerce in Madras

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and spoke. It was a speech which was mainly devoted to the commercial problems then existing in India generally and in the South particularly. The only reference he made to politics was briefly about the Round Table Conference and how it progressed in London. He also deplored deeply the absence of conciliatory feelings among the different communities of India.

We see him yet making another speech, this time at Delhi a week later. It was his presidential address to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce. I should think that this is one of the most important speeches he ever delivered on the economic and financial problems of India.

He began the speech with a small survey of important events in 1931, including the conciliatory pact which Lord Irwin and Mahatma Gandhi concluded. Then he referred to his activities at the Round Table Conference along with his colleagues Sir P. Thakurdas and Mr. Birla. He described the existing political situation in the country in some weighty words like

these. "The Government's adoption of a repressive policy," he went on "rapid promulgation of ordinances, one upon another and the rigorous enforcement of same have tended to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and tension in the country. It is not possible for any one to expect trade and commerce to fare normally in such a surcharged atmosphere. I do not understand how the British expect to create a closer bond of friendship between India and Great Britain by following a policy and method which are condemned by the people including the commercial community and the Liberal leaders in the country."

He proceeded to suggest that "friendship and trade between the two countries can only prosper if there is sufficient good will between them and one cannot see how the good will is being helped by the present method. I fervently hope that the government will recognize the necessity of adopting a policy of reconciliation and help in the creation of an atmosphere suitable for the concentration and

calm consideration of the great questions before the country ”

Then he gave a survey of the attempts made by the Federation representatives in London during the R.T.C. period to get the ratio of the rupee altered to 16*d*. He pointed out to the Delhi meeting how Great Britain had been trying to safeguard her own financial interests at the expense of India during the financial crisis which befell England in 1931 and proceeded to say that the “history of our currency policy will show how the British nation has been using its power of control and superintendence to the promotion of the interests of the United Kingdom and it is no wonder with such a history before them, those representing India who were competent to express any opinion on these matters were very nervous from the very beginning about the proposals of the British Government as regards financial safeguards.”

Commercial discrimination, the proposal to make the Railway Board a statutory body, export of gold from India, all these

points were neatly discussed by Jamal in his admirable speech. Further, he devoted a portion of it to the increasing agricultural indebtedness of the masses. It "is estimated to be in the neighbourhood of 800 crores" he pointed out while detailing the difficulties of the peasant. As a remedy to this he suggested that the farmer's lands be so "assessed as to leave him a sufficient margin to enable him to meet the daily requirements of his family." He also pleaded for reduced railway rates to make possible speedier movement of agricultural products and for a favourable land revenue legislation.

The rest of the speech on this occasion was devoted to a criticism of that year's Budget proposals which contained a deficit of about thirteen crores. For this glaring figure, he held the huge expenditure incurred by the army as responsible. He therefore suggested that the government should either reduce the army expenditure or make some adjustments with the Government of the United Kingdom since the Indian army is also

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used for purposes of defence of such British possessions as Australia, New Zealand, South and East Africa, and the Mandated Territories.

This speech of Jamal Mahomed was favourably received and commented upon by the Indian people and newspapers. A reading of it will show the mastery he possesses in the art of making a survey of affairs in a very presentable and pleasing form.

The following months saw him once again actively taking up the question of the rupee ratio and focussing public opinion on it. But then he did not gather around his hands the needed strength to make this a problem of great interest to the country. The politicians being very much interested in the new Constitution of the country, they did not take up the ratio question very seriously. But Jamal seized any and every opportunity to push forward his views and tell the people what their duty was in this matter. "It is a pity that the politicians in this country do not fully realize all the harm done by the ratio of the rupee

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remaining so high" he told me and continued "we should have won. Indeed, we should have won the ratio issue if Indian politics had given the due attention to it in time"

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WEALTHY people have not been indifferent to the game of politics in India. They reach the front rank in no time, on the strength of their money. But Jamal the man of wealth is not a hundred per cent politician. He has an interest in politics no doubt, as he has an interest in Philosophy or Finance, Economics or Science. That is all. He identifies himself with no party prominently, but he does so with certain political ideals. But if my recollection is correct he did join the National Liberal Party two years ago when an invitation was extended to him. It is sometimes said that he is a full-fledged Congressman. I do not think that this definition of the man is correct, because he has never signed the pledges usually taken by a Congressman. The Congress stands for the freedom of India and Jamal would like to see his nation free. "The credit of a nation depends upon elevating a subject nation and not in dominating it for ever" he remarked to me in the course of a talk, and this view clearly shows that he is no blind hench-

man of the British Rulers. At the same time, like the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Jamal is a great believer in the continuance of the British Empire, which he thinks, is a gift of Providence to the world. For that reason, he would like to have Swaraj within the Empire.

The differences he has with the Congress come in where the line of action that body pursues. For instance, the Congress would not do anything to welcome the fresh instalment of reforms given by White Hall but Jamal believes that what comes in must be first taken and then we should fight for more.

I have referred to Jamal again and again as a firm believer in communal unity in India. He thinks that the troubles that are now going on between the various people inhabiting this country, are all quite unnecessary if only a correct understanding of the issues that divide them is reached. Addressing the Southern India Chamber of Commerce as its President in March 1932 he said that he earnestly hoped that "the different communities

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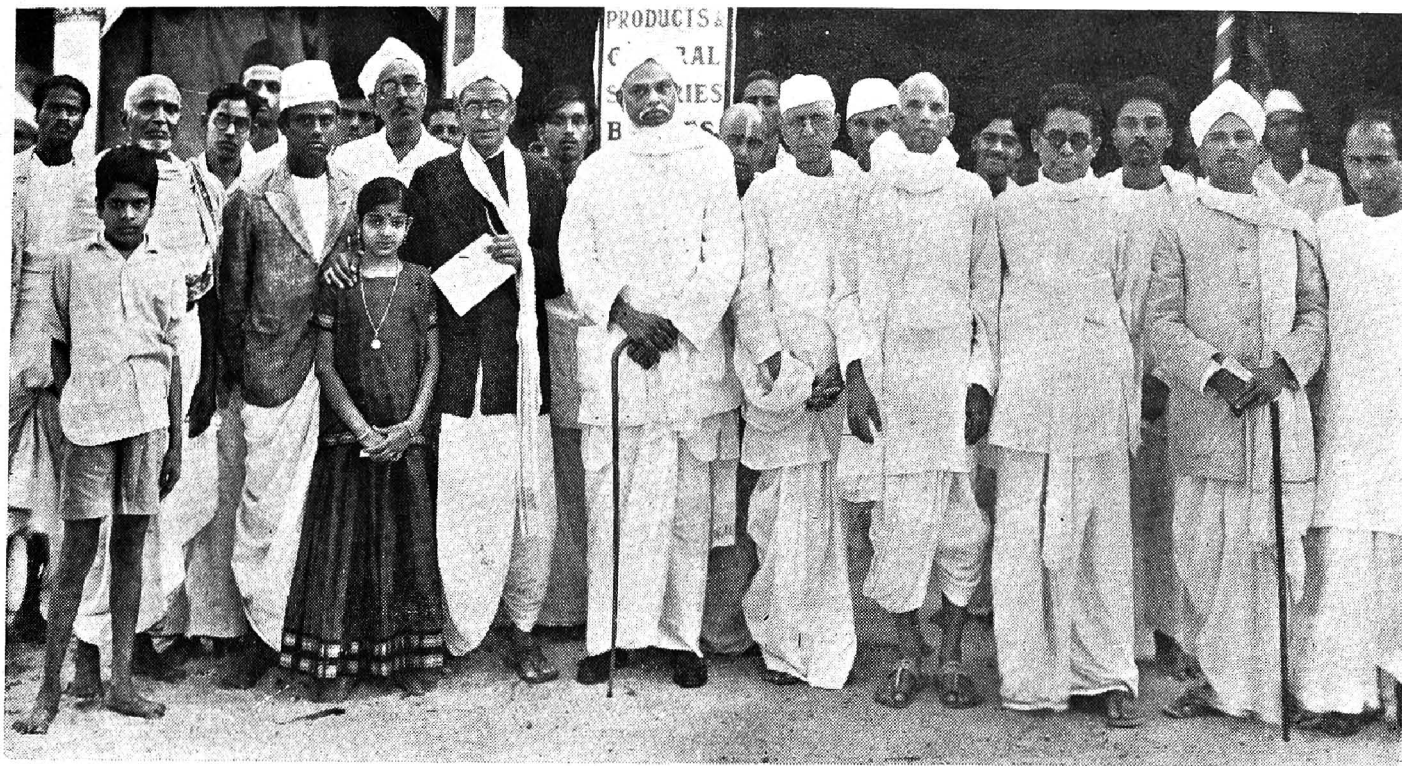
may find agreement and cordiality amongst themselves as behoves citizens of the same country, adopting a policy of give and take which policy is indispensable in achieving great objects." He proceeded, "While other countries of the world are, each with a united voice, engaged in grappling with vital issues and trying to forge ahead on the road of rapid advancement and progress in all spheres, is it not a great pity that we should find it difficult even to achieve unity amongst ourselves which is the basis of all national progress?"

This is but one place where he has been voicing similar sentiments and in fact not a speech of his on any important occasion is without an appeal to the people to get together by sinking their petty differences. Time and again I was told that communal quarrels in Southern India which might have developed into seriousness, were averted by the timely intervention of this noble peace maker with the help and assistance of other Hindu and Muslim leaders. Whenever he was told of such troubles he got busy and somehow saw an

amicable settlement was reached between the parties. Several such troubles were calmly hushed up in this way.

With Mahatma Gandhi Jamal does not see eye to eye on anything and everything. True, they are friends for a long time, and each has respect for the other's views, but it cannot be said that Jamal is completely a follower of the Mahatma. "Gandhi's ways are not fully practical," the famous Muslim leader once told me, "but then he has his own difficulties and has many forces to control in the country."

Some important sides in the Congress programme receive full support from Jamal. Untouchability is a curse, he believes, and he is doing his bit to infuse a "buy Indian" spirit among the people. From the very beginning, he has been using Indian made goods as far as possible. He is sympathetic towards the *Khadder* movement. However, he thinks that in India's attempt to encourage her own goods, she should not cultivate a hatred for foreign things. Giving expression to that view in the course of a neat little speech he delivered while opening the



"Opening the Swadeshi Exhibition in Madras during Christmas week in 1935".

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Swadeshi Exhibition in Madras during the Christmas week in 1935 he said:

“You will agree with me when I say that the Swadeshi spirit is to be fostered on the basis of the economic necessity of the country, and it should never have anything to do with hatred of things foreign.”

Well, that is a correct view in the matter, many would agree, and that shows that though Jamal is a Nationalist of a very broad type, he is no less an Internationalist.

Jamal Mahomed is up-to-date with information on all subjects concerning Indian affairs. He is equally in touch with the latest happenings and moves in foreign countries as well. He is a Nationalist, it is true, but then, like the American poet Whittier, he is one who gives his love for the whole world. He would like to see a better, peaceful and righteous world, but where is the scope before him to do anything much in that direction? He is feeling the troubles of the world as if they are his personal ones. “Quite unnecessary” you might say, perhaps, but then

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Jamal is made that way ; and a close study of the man would reveal that he had been troubling his mind with a thousand and one problems in the realm of science, philosophy and politics, far beyond his reach, even from his childhood days. Though he does not write in magazines very much, sometimes he does send a piece for publication under his name. One such article he wrote was entitled the "International Tangles and a Possible Remedy", contributed to a London publication in 1935. This was written shortly before the outbreak of the Italo-Abyssinian differences. In the course of that article he blames the narrow and selfish national spirit of every nation on earth for all the absence of peace today. Each nation wants to dominate the other and profit by it, he tells you. This is the real trouble, he thinks. On the other hand, he questions, "What are different nationalities but different cultures, races or languages, of which every nation is equally and naturally proud of, just as any family group is and ought to be proud of its own

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particular virtues without in any way looking down upon others ?”

In brief, he believes that international tangles would end if the nations realized the necessity to cultivate a spirit of *Earth Nationality*, as he calls it, rather than having a prejudiced outlook on others. He also pleads here that the mightier nations should shed their sympathy for the weaker and down-trodden ones, if peace on earth should reign.

Besides the business organizations and social bodies, he had not been doing anything much in a legislative capacity in his public career, except, in one instance, where he sought election to the Legislative Assembly. That was in 1930. He was unanimously elected by the Madras Commerce Constituency. I have studied his career in the Assembly with all care, and my study reveals that he was no creator of sensations in Delhi. He was a quiet sort of legislator throughout. He made no glaring speeches, never levelled unreasonable red hot accusations against the Government on political

questions nor did he find himself on the front pages of Indian newspapers as a head-line darling. He spoke rarely in the Assembly, and even then he spoke only on very weighty questions. And when he did speak, he never made his speeches unnecessarily lengthy or dull. Time and again he brought before the Assembly the question of the exchange ratio in its relation to the pound sterling. He spoke brilliantly on taxation, tariffs, and other economic and financial measures which the Assembly sought to introduce.

I have been reading through a pretty long speech of his delivered in the Legislative Assembly on the 18th March in 1931. He spoke on the Indian Finance Bill that day. It must have taken about two hours for him to finish it. He began the speech by saying that he opposed all new taxation and particularly the increased taxes on income and the increased duties on kerosine. He went on: "I do not think that the country can bear any more taxation nor is there any necessity for it. It is all due to, I think, the Government

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not having retrenched as they should have done."

Speaking further on the Bill he said that the Governments both central and provincial were not effecting proper retrenchment in the salaries of officials. He talked about the heavy military expenditure, and traced out that item, in the budget of the Government of India, from year to year for the one preceding decade. Next he pointed out how the Government, by proposing to increase the income tax, sought to levy a tax on the capital, and how such a move would affect the business community in the country. In the same speech he devoted about half an hour to plead for the imposition of a reasonable increased export duty on skin and hides leaving India. And this, he pointed out, would yield a fresh source of income to the Government while giving protection to the tanning industry. Still another important issue on which he based a portion of that speech was the currency and exchange ratio. He went on with all the strength of words at his command

when he swore how ruinous was the 18*d.* ratio to India, and pleaded that the Government would see its way to change it as early as possible to the original level of 16*d.* While dealing with this subject he drew the attention of the House to the declaration of the Government that it was prepared to maintain the 18*d.* ratio at any cost by mobilizing all its resources! That mobilization campaign, Jamal humourously enough remarked here, would not also include the "formidable military sources"!

Then he talked about the gold standard, a subject about which Sir George Schuster, the Finance Member of the Government of India at that time often waxed eloquent and enthusiastic. Answering Sir George's concern for a gold standard in India Jamal said: "What the country really wants is not so much the gold standard but a gold currency, because a gold standard without a gold currency is simply useless as it is now."

This was perhaps his longest speech in the Assembly during the two years he was

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there, and it is remarkable for the variety of topics he dealt with, mostly those relating to economics and finance. Indeed he was a great champion of the people in these two subjects.

Jamal was a slow speaker in the Assembly as he is elsewhere. He is a victim to stomach troubles for quite a number of years now and this has an effect in making his speeches rather slow. He has a frail voice which could not often reach the far ends while he spoke in public. Within the Legislative Assembly his colleagues often used to plead with him that he should speak in a higher tone.

He is not an orator on the platform. What he spoke contained substance, sound judgment, reasonable criticism and sane suggestions. With great pains he collects a lot of statistics and a wealth of details to make his case sufficiently strong when he spoke. "No speech that has not been first written out is really a good speech" said Lord Hewart, the Lord Chief Justice of England once and in the case of Jamal, he is a believer in that, I

suppose. He prepared all his speeches in advance, if the occasion was sufficiently important, and delivered them with care. He spoke extempore in casual gatherings when requested to say a few words. And all his speeches were remarkable in their construction and read well. It is said of the late Pundit Motilal Nehru that his speeches when read in print created a better impression in the reader than when you heard them from the Pundit's lips. That is what I think of the speeches of Jamal Mahomed too.

"Have you been a writer?" I asked in one of my conversations with him. "No never," he answered. He had not found the time to circulate articles to Indian newspapers, but since 1920, he has been often a writer of "letters to the editor". He wrote on the tanning industry at first, and later, on the currency and exchange questions. Whenever he came across newspaper discussions on economics and finance he did not leave them carelessly. He came forward to state his own case then by writing to the papers concerned.

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Only to that much his writings have been confined to up till now.

THINKER AND PHILOSOPHER

JAMAL MAHOMED is known as a merchant of great influence. He is also known as a politician with independent views. In economic and financial questions he is being taken by the Indians as an authority. People regard him as a Philanthropist and Educationalist. But, as the Jestling Pilate would ask "What then is the truth?" Is he all that the masses think about him as above? Well, the answer is they all may be the man. But behind all these, there is Jamal the thinker and philosopher. It was with him that I had my conversations upon meeting him. In fact, throughout his life he had been in communion with God and nature. His chief interest in life has been philosophy from his very boyhood. As a very youngman he was confronted with philosophic doubts. Everything began with an incident which occurred while he was at school. It began this way. In the 1890s he was studying in the fourth form at the Christian College High School.

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Being a missionary institution, the students were taught religious knowledge from the scriptures. Thus, those who were obliged to study it naturally enough began to interest themselves in religious questions. But all the students there were not Christians. There were Hindus and some Mahommedans too. Discussions cropped up among them as to whether everything that was said in the Bible was true and whether the Christian religion itself was superior to all the rest. Jamal at this time maintained a strict neutral attitude in such discussions, carried on between Hindu and Christian students. And at times he was asked to say which one was correct by those who argued their respective points of view. Then, he merely took to the view which occurred to his mind as absolutely correct. For him there were only two sides for a question namely, the right and the wrong. In one of these discussions a fellow student of his asked whether Jamal after all believed in God? What a question to ask!

“Believed in God?” retorted the young Muslim pupil with evident astonishment because he had been told by his teachers and parents that there was a God who directed the universe. All along he did believe in that God. He had learned about Him from the Holy Books and he had prayed to Him, morning and evening, but then was there any God after all? This was a new wonder to him. And this doubt about the existence of God went too deep into the cells of his little brain. He spent hours and days in contemplation to find out for himself if he was right in continuing to believe in God. No use. Months passed by. He did not come to any definite decision. Food and drink was not taken by him in those days at the proper hour. His daily habits were sometimes forgotten fully. Only his brain was working in a terrific manner to solve this great problem. This kind of worry naturally enough affected young Jamal’s health and he became sick. Doctors who saw him could not diagnose the disease but then they found

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that he was being affected by general weakness of the body. For this reason he was advised to leave school, and he left it once and for all.

For several years Jamal used all his free moments from business activities to think about this old question. But then a solution finally came. He learned from certain personal experiences that the existence of God was true, and today he is a firm believer in Him who is above everything else.

Having come to a belief about God Jamal turned up to know what was true religion. He studied the Quoran and other works on Islam again and again. He went through the Bible and the Bagavad Gita. Books on several other religions too were gone into. Such studies increased his knowledge to understand the essentials in each religion. He put them all together and took stock of their worth. The result was that he found the fundamentals of all religions as the same. They are all mainly intended for one purpose, namely clean life. "Real religion is good conduct in

life and every religion guides you to that," he told me. Such being his views, Jamal has the broadest religious tolerance. He feels no animosity against a particular religion or creed nor is religious fanaticism in his line.

Jamal believes that, though one should not be governed in life by any narrow religious spirit, the people should cultivate a taste for studying their respective religion. To begin with, he would like all the children taking religious instructions in class rooms. Why not a Hindu know all about Hinduism and a Muslim all about Islam? And naturally when religious instruction is imparted to school children, only the best in each religion should be given. Such a measure would help to increase a feeling of concord among the various communities inhabiting this country he thinks. Though he has attempted to bring forward this question, prominently before South Indians, he was not given an adequate hearing because the country is faced with graver questions, but we can only hope, at this

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time, that this valuable suggestion of Jamal would not be entirely forgotten in the days ahead.

Throughout his life Jamal had been a Thinker. Why the earth is round? What is the power of gravity? Newton has said about it, but then was he correct in his conclusions? Questions of this nature have been engaging his mind always. He used to sit for hours together thinking about them. And on each of these, he arrived at certain conclusions for himself, and still on others he continues to think over even till this day. For instance I had the privilege of going through a certain paper he had written on the *Modern Conception of the Universe*. The whole thing is interesting and for that reason I reproduce it here fully.

“The Universe is considered to have started with Electrons and Protons and to be composed of them” he writes “Whatever the origin be, the Electrons, Protons and Photons or radiation and energy or ether, the question naturally arises, what could have caused their first appearance

at all. Of course it could not be reasonably contended that they came into being from non-existence all by themselves at first and that too all in a sudden. On the other hand, if we grant even for the sake of argument—though modern science does not say so, that these fundamentals are eternal, other more troublesome questions will have to be answered. For instance, if these are eternal it has to be considered that their evolution should have begun only at a certain particular time of their existence as otherwise, they being eternal there could be no scope now for further progress (evolution). In that case the question to be answered will be, “How is it that all on a sudden they began to evolve—what, which or who caused it?”

“Furthermore, evolution must either be inherent in matter or be an outside Agency acting upon it. If an Outside Agency, it must have either existed long before matter came into being, or should have manifested itself long after matter had come into existence. The difficulty in

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the latter alternative we have seen above. The former is no less puzzling. In the first place, there should have been Evolution, whatever you may understand by it, without anything to evolve. Secondly it will also be seen that matter began to appear long after evolution had been in existence without the *How* and *Why* of it being capable of a satisfactory answer or explanation.

“There is also the other difficulty that, according to the generally accepted maxim, nothing could be considered as eternal which is not complete and full by itself, *i.e.*, if dependent on another or requires something else to make it complete and full. This will apply equally both to matter and to the law of evolution, if either of them were considered eternal and the other not, and the difficulty in accepting both as eternal and inherent in each other, while there is scope for progress and there is actually progress going on through evolution, has already been referred to above.

“In view of these considerations, it would

be much safer to assume that, although apparently and logically matter should have preceded evolution, both matter and evolution appeared and came into being simultaneously at certain particular *time*. But the question *how* and *why* will yet remain unanswered unless we call in the aid of the Eternal something to solve these unsolvable riddles. Call it a creative force, mind or God, it does not matter but without providing an indispensable place for any such mysterious Agency the gap could not be filled up, nor a reasonable and acceptable explanation be found."

Again Jamal has poetic instincts in him, and that makes him a lover of beauty and nature. For hours together he could be seen at times, in the lovely garden of his home in Perambur admiring the flowering plants. He would not pluck a flower, for he is worried to think that a flower plucked meant a wound inflicted on a living thing. His thoughts wandered near and far on so many things at such times, and he was in complete meditation then, and cared for

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nothing else around him. None in the family would go near him and disturb, while he was found in such a mood. Sometimes a member of the family might dare to go with a good deal of hesitation on his part in order to attract attention and remind him of the hour on the clock or to say that his presence was needed elsewhere. Whereupon he used quietly to leave the garden with reluctance.

A great believer in *Ahimsa*, Jamal would feel very much if he saw even a worm in distress. Killing is sin, even if the creature killed was an ant, he believes. He would rather bear a mosquito bite him than destroying the fly and prevent the bite. A friend of Jamal once told me a story. Once while the Thinker was in his garden he noticed a fading plant in a corner. Quite anxious about it, he went near and had a look at it. He called out for a pail of water and it was there soon. But before he could pour it on the plant he saw a small army of ants. Jamal became sad. He was anxious to water

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the plant and at the same time see that no harm was caused to the tiny creatures moving about its leaves. He waited for a while and then had a look at the plant once again but to his utter surprise he found that not a single ant was there in a few minutes' time. Then he poured out the water and moved away.

"See, when you are anxious to do good though there may be obstacles on the way at first, they clear off soon," Jamal said taking this as an example.

A PEEP AT DAYS AHEAD.

WITH the coming of the new reforms, India will enter into a new phase of her history. Its politics, economics, finance and in fact, the whole life of the nation will go through a new line. When such a period dawns over the country, Jamal the public servant may yet have a very useful and important role to play in the country's affairs. Perhaps he may enter the legislature in Madras, since he is a believer in work through the legislatures instead of turning away from them. In that case, he may be even persuaded to accept office, and if he does so, what portfolio is suitable for him more than the Ministry of Commerce or Finance? Well, among our present day politicians, he is eminently fitted for such positions, for he has mastery, skill and administrative capacity. Apart from these, even taking a communal point of view, which I do not like to bring in here however, who else could be a more popular Muslim leader in all

South India today than Jamal Mahomed? To this view I came, after I have seen the enthusiasm with which he was elected to the Presidentship of the Southern India Mahommedan Educational Association, a few months ago. That office was held for a number of years consecutively by Sir Mahomed Usman, the Justice Party politician, who for nine years served the Government of Madras as its Home Member and later retired after acting for three months as Governor of the Province. In the last election to the Presidentship of the Educational Association, Sir Mohamed did not enter his candidature. Jamal was elected instead unanimously. When the news of his election was announced, he was the recipient of hundreds of congratulatory telegrams, letters and resolutions from innumerable Muslim organizations throughout South India. In the city itself, he was entertained in several evening parties and dinners, on that count. Well, all these unmistakably establish his supreme leadership of the South Indian Mahomme-



In the city itself he was entertained in several evening parties.

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dan Community. For that reason, the people are bound to make use of his services by seeing him given the honour of administering the Province's commercial or financial affairs when the new Constitution comes into working.

If he assumes office, then we will have a man of independence, shrewdness and capability as our Commerce or Finance Minister. In his hands the interests of the country are perfectly safe, for he cannot be influenced in his public career by anything else except a pure and devoted service of the country for which he has strived to do his best on strict constitutional lines all these years.

