

THE SPIRIT AND STRUGGLE OF ISLAM

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The spirit and struggle of Islam by T. L. Vaswani

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T. L. VASWANI

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BY

PROF. T. L. VASWANI



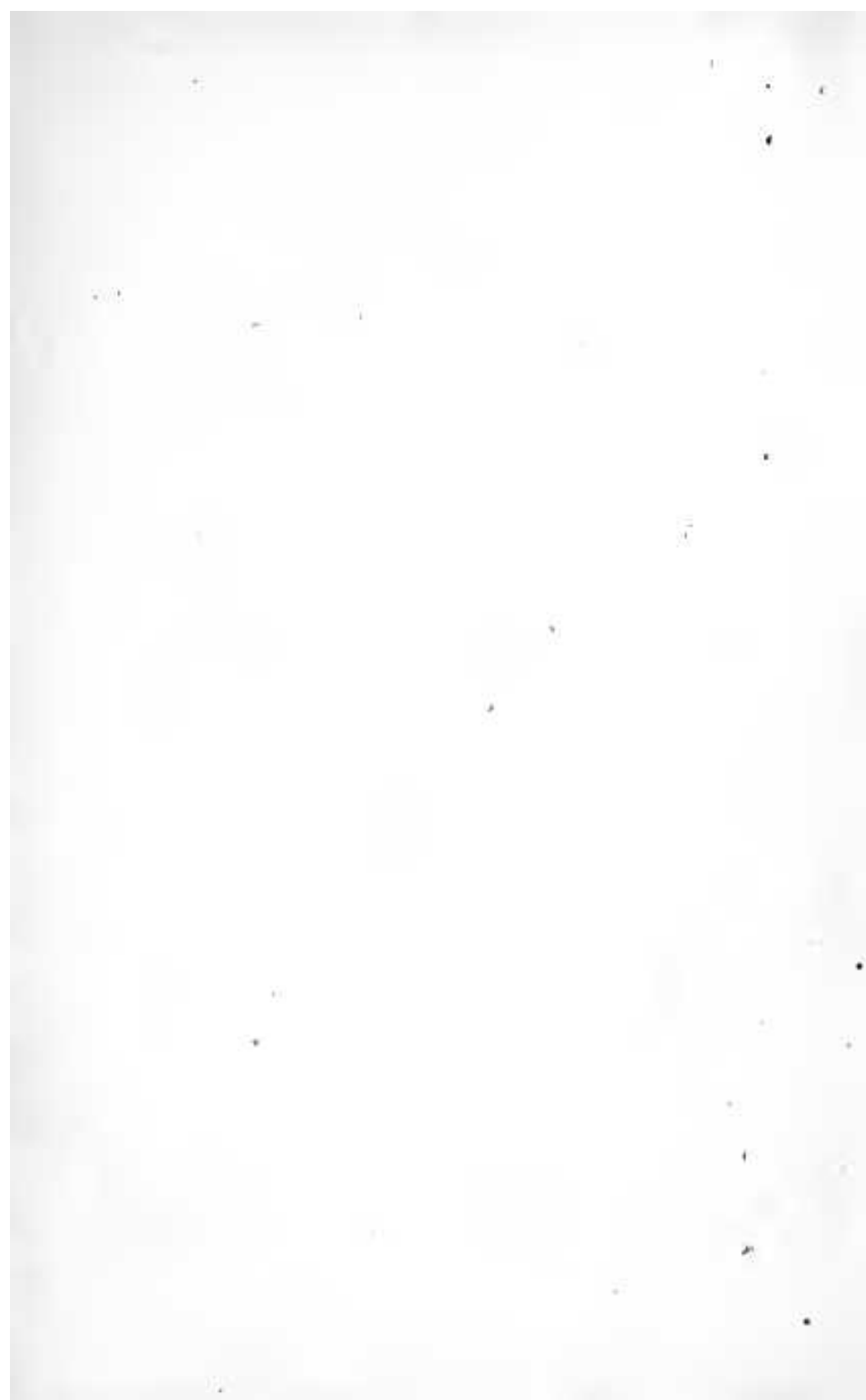
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Majumdar

FOREWORD

I AM not a politician. I am not a Muslim. I am not a Pan-Islamist. But I regard patriotism as a sacred thing, and defence of national dignity as our *dharma*. I believe profoundly in the value of Hindu-Muslim unity for achieving national freedom. I am not frightened by Pan-Islamism. Once Hindu-Muslim unity is secure, Pan-Islam will rather act as a powerful ally of India in protecting her against western imperialisms.

The essays and addresses which the publishers have brought together in this volume indicate my appreciation of the deeper values of Islam and my anxiety at the present situation created by the greed and diplomacy of the 'Great Powers'. To wrong Islam is to wrong India and the East. And as long as Islam lies wounded, as it does to-day, the Orient will be in the grip of aggressive, exploiting imperialisms of the West. To help the Khilafat by all non-violent methods is, I believe, to help the East to guard her cultures and civilisations against Europe's materialism and *real politic*. In a sense, indeed, the Khilafat movement is a protest

of Asia against Europe, and the movement will succeed or fail according as it is or is not loyal to the Spirit of Asia. That spirit, as I understand it, is *spiritual idealism*.

In the light of that spirit have I sought to interpret some aspects of Islam and the Khilafat issue in India. Had circumstances permitted I should have added two chapters, one on "Sufism," the other on "The Message of Mahomed". I am hoping to be able to devote a separate volume to these and some other aspects of Islam. It is time to abandon crude conceptions of the Islamic ideal—an ideal which has been a shaping power in East and West. Guizot and Draper had the frankness to admit that Islam freed Europe from feudalism. And did not Islam exert an uplifting influence on mediæval Europe? Long before the French Revolution, Islam gave to the nations a message of liberty, equality and fraternity. It is customary to run down the Moghuls and the Moghul rule in India; an English critic thinks the Moghuls were no better than 'a plague in the course of human progress'. And how silent are our 'text books' concerning the virtues of the Moghuls and the services they rendered to

art and architecture, to literature and the life of India! Two of the papers in this collection, "A Moghul Empire-BUILDER" and "India and Islam," suggest a thought or two in this direction. In my paper on "Vital Values of Islam" and "The Genius of Islam" I have indicated a few things bearing upon the services of Islam to Europe and the message of Islamic culture to the modern world. That the Islamic ideal has a value for us to-day is what I have learnt to understand more and more as I have studied the subject. Again and again has Islam produced men and women of profound knowledge—men who, having reached a stage of illumination and ecstasy, have sung songs and lived lives which have, I believe, an "eternal" meaning for the human race. What a profound philosophy of life is in the lyrics they have left—the lyrics which sing of the nightingale and the rose, the moth and the candle, the camel and the desert, the lover and the lake—lyrics of Laila and Majanu, Sasui and Punuh, Umer and Marui, Yusuf and Zulaika; lyrics of the soul's longing for the Love that makes the world, for all its struggles and sufferings, a wonder and a vision of mystery.

I have tried to study the Khilafat controversy with as little prejudice against Europe as possible. And I am constrained to say that the Allies have not played an open game. The whole world spoke straight to Germany when she invaded Belgium. But the West is silent when the "Big Powers" invade the Muslim East. Indeed, there are Christians in Europe who regard the partition of Turkey (an act of international burglary in the East) as "a kind of crusade or holy war, the final struggle of Christian civilisation against Asiatic barbarism"! I have wished to show that Islam represents *not* barbarism but that spiritual idealism which is the very heart of Asia. The Orient, alas! is become, to-day, a battleground of the "Big Powers" for "zones of influence"—for imperialisms of exploitation and commerce which are, I think, more cruel than were the imperialisms of Alexander and Rome. If Islam becomes an agent of Destiny to overthrow imperialism, it will have done much for India and the East. Thinkers like Lord Haldane may speak of the 'Empire' becoming "a living combination of independent Commonwealths". But the East knows that