

## Rise and Growth of Communalism up to the Second World War

Maintaining unity of its people is a prerequisite for any nation, particularly so when it is fighting against imperialist forces. This unity of the Indian people was put to a severe test by the growth of communalism that divided India along religious lines. In fact, 19th century India saw the emergence of nationalism and communalism simultaneously. Communalism in India was born due to the presence of a number of factors such as the peculiar socio-economic factors, role played by the British policies and the activities of communal organisations such as the All India Muslim League and the All India Hindu Mahasabha.

### MEANING OF COMMUNALISM

Communalism means different things to different people. It may be seen as a belief, an ideology or even an instrument of politics. It is therefore important to understand the meaning of communalism first.

In general, communalism or communal ideology refers to **allegiance to one's own ethnic group or religious community rather than to society as a whole**. In the Indian context, it refers to the belief that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians form different religious communities and that India comprises not one nation but many nations—Hindu nation, Muslim nation and so on. India can therefore, only be a mere confederation of religious communities. In other words, it refers to the advocacy of religious identity and attempts to incite strife between people belonging to different religious communities, particularly Hindus and Muslims. Accordingly, for a communalist, a person's religious identity is the most important and he will emphasise it out of proportions. At its base, the communal problem in India was more politically driven rather than religiously driven. The communal problem or rather the **communal triangle** had the British as the base and Hindus and Muslims as the other two arms, the strongest arm being the base.

### Levels of Communalism

Broadly, three levels of communalism have been defined. These are as follows:

1. Belief that interests of people belonging to one religious community are the same. In other words, all those who belong to a common religion also have common political, socio-economic and cultural interests.

2. **Liberal Communalism (upto 1937)**: Belief that the interests of different religious communities are different. In other words, the interests of Hindus are different from that of Muslims and vice versa. Most of the communalist forces before 1937 belonged to this stage and included the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, Ali Brothers, MA Jinnah, and NC Kelkar.
3. **Extreme Communalism (after 1937)**: Belief that not only these interests are different but also **incompatible** or even **hostile** to one another. In other words, it implies that Hindus and Muslims cannot co-exist peacefully due to conflicting interests. Extreme communalism is based on fear and hatred and has a tendency to use violent language or behaviour. After 1937, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha increasingly tilted towards extreme communalism.

It is noteworthy that the above beliefs are not rooted in reality and are based on wrong understanding of interests. Indian society was not always communal. Throughout the medieval period, Hindus and Muslims lived harmoniously and religious identity was seen as merely one among different identities of an individual (identity based on gender, caste, occupation, region, etc). Communalism in India is a product of peculiar circumstances and it intensified along with the intensification of the freedom struggle.

### Myths Regarding Communalism

There are many myths surrounding communalism, it being a widely misunderstood phenomenon. To have a clear understanding of communalism, it is important to know what communalism is not:

- Communalism is **not** merely the entry of religion into politics. For instance, even Mahatma Gandhi and Abul Kalam Azad defined their politics in religious terms yet this did not communalise politics.
- Communalism is **not** caused by religious differences. This is clear from the fact that religious differences between Hindus and Muslims had always existed and yet medieval Indian society was not communalised.
- Communalism did **not** always exist in Indian society. It is a product of a combination of forces in modern India.

### FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RISE AND GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM IN INDIA

Most historians are of the view that communalism was not a remnant of the medieval period. Though religion did constitute a significant part of peoples' life, and they did fight over religion at times, there was hardly any communal ideology before 1857, when Hindus and Muslims fought shoulder to shoulder against the British Raj. Communalism is really a **modern phenomenon** and its roots can be found in the modern colonial socio-economic and political structure of colonial India.

The rise of communalism, as per most historians, should be traced from the British conquest of India which had a tremendous impact on every aspect of Indian life—its polity, society and



economy. It led to the emergence of a combination of factors favourable for the rise and growth of communalism. These factors included the following:

### Role of Socio-Economic factors in 19th-century India

The rise of the British power in 18th-century India was accompanied with the decline of the later Mughals and the upper-class Muslims in general. The upper-class Muslims were deprived of their land holdings and employment in upper posts of army, administration and judiciary. As a result, for the first seven decades of the 19th century, the upper-class Muslims remained very anti-British and hostile to modern education, while the Hindus responded more positively to the modernising forces that came along with the British. The Hindus adapted, faster than Muslims, to English education, new posts in administration, and culture, giving rise to the Hindu Middle class.

Consequently, the socio-cultural awakening among Hindus came earlier than Muslims. Thus, there emerged a **time 'lag'** between Ram Mohan Roy and Syed Ahmad Khan that gave birth to the feelings of insecurity among the Muslims. This explains, to a large extent, the alienation of Muslims from the national mainstream and the early phase of the national movement, the foundations of which were laid by the Hindu Middle Class.

About a generation later, the Muslims also took to English education (with the efforts of Sayed Ahmad Khan, Abdul Latif and Badruddin Tayabji and others) and sought employment in state services. According to Jawaharlal Nehru, **a conflict arose between the Hindu and Muslim middle classes for state services** and this was the beginning of communal problem in modern phase. Yet, a large number of middle class individuals remained free from this tendency even in the 1930s and 40s, and tended to be both secular and broadly left-wing.

**Bipan Chandra:** Communalism was an expression of the interests and aspirations of the middle classes in a social situation in which opportunities for them were grossly inadequate. The communal question was, therefore a middle-class question par excellence.

### Role of the British Policy

The British policy of **'divide and rule'** played a very significant role in the growth of communalism in India. At the same time, it must be remembered that the British did not create communalism. They only took advantage of the conditions ripe for the use and growth of communalism in India.

The genesis of the policy of divide and rule can be traced back to the Revolt of 1857. The unity showed by Hindus and Muslims during the revolt disturbed the colonial rulers and they got determined to break this unity and the policy of divide and rule was introduced among the masses. The policy of divide and rule is also understood as the policy of concession, counterpoise and coercion because what was conceded was always counterpoised by utilising the rivalries of various classes and interests.

For instance, immediately after the revolt, the Muslims were repressed and 27,000 Muslims were hanged in Delhi alone (Since Bahadur Shah II was appealed to head the revolt, the British believed the Revolt to be a Muslim plot). Later, in the 1870s, this policy was reversed in the wake of the rise of the national movement and policy of appeasement of Muslims was introduced. Muslims were given concessions at the cost of Hindus, thus counterpoising one sectional interest against the other. In other words, communal and separatist tendencies in Indian politics were encouraged.

In this way, communal ideology was used by the British to serve their political ends in several ways.

- To gain support base in Indian society by making some friends.
- To prevent the Indian people from uniting as one nation. If all sections of Indian society united against the British, they could threaten the British Empire. Thus, the British made all attempts to keep the Muslims away from the Congress and then they also dismissed all claims of the Congress on the pretext that it did not represent all sections of Indian society (first encouraging communalism and then using it to further their own political ends).
- Communal deadlock thus created was used as a justification for the continuation of the colonial rule. The British stressed on the lack of consensus among the major political parties, i.e. the Congress, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha and argued that the Indian people were deeply divided among themselves and were thus incapable of governing themselves.

Here it may be stated that religion was not the only division that was used under the policy of divide and rule. In fact, every existing division of Indian society was encouraged to prevent the emerging unity of Indian people. It was of course the communal division that proved to be most profitable.

In addition to the above, other ways in which British encouraged communalism were as follows:

- By treating Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as separate communities.
- By extending official patronage to communalists and readily accepting communal leaders as the real spokespersons for their communities, while the nationalist leaders were treated as representing only a 'microscopic minority'.
- By showing extraordinary tolerance towards, communal press and agitations.
- By readily conceding to communal demands, for e.g. while none of the Congress demands were accepted during the period 1885–1905, the communal demands of Muslim League were readily accepted in 1906 itself.
- By giving the communalists a complete veto on any political advance.

### Unscientific View of Indian History

British writers on Indian history also presented a communal and distorted view of Indian history to spread communal consciousness. A beginning was made in the early 19th century by the **British historian James Mill** who described the ancient period of Indian history as the Hindu period and the medieval period as the Muslim period. The Hindu communalists readily adopted



this distorted view and glorified India's ancient past at the cost of the medieval period which was projected as an age of barbaric invaders. Similarly, the Muslims looked to the history of Arabs for pride and glory.

This added a historical angle to the already existing socio-cultural and economic differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. So much so that, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, while propounding his two-nation theory asserted that Hindus and Muslims were two nations also because each had a separate historical past and often **the hero of one was the villain of the other**.

### Communal side-effects of 19th-Century Revivalism

The world over, revivalism was a common phenomenon in societies under colonial rule. It was an attempt at restoration of self-respect deeply injured by political subjugation. Even in India, socio-cultural reform and revivalism helped in restoring pride in India's glorious past but at the same time, it created certain unintended negative consequences as well. The Wahabis crusaded against all non-Muslims with the aim of establishing Dar-ul-Islam (the world of Islam). Dayanand aimed at 'shuddhi' (conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism) and Aryanisation of India. Even Vivekanand's references to ancient Indian achievements as constituting the real glorious Indian past created a reaction in the Muslim mind who turned to Western Asian history for pride and glory.

### Role of Change in the Outlook of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

The early activities of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan were free from any communal bias. He took the lead in introducing reforms among the Muslims. In 1875, he founded the Aligarh College or the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh (which received financial support from many Hindus and later grew into Aligarh Muslim University) with the aim of introducing modern education among Muslims and securing for them British patronage, thus laying the **foundation of the Aligarh Movement** (the Pakistan Movement is believed to be an indirect consequence of the Aligarh Movement). He also preached harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims and described them as 'two eyes of a beautiful bride, i.e. India'.

However, his outlook changed after the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. He found the anti-imperialist and nationalist program of the Congress to be in complete contrast with his own loyalty to the British government and his aim of securing more and more government jobs for the Muslims. He further voiced his disapproval by terming **Congress as a Hindu body** that would promote Hindu interests at the cost of the Muslim interests. He also stressed that **India was a Hindu majority state** where the Hindus would dominate the Muslims once transfer of power takes place. He therefore opposed the establishment of modern democracy or democratic institutions in India.

Syed Ahmad Khan decided to oppose the Congress by organising a movement of loyalty to the British rule along with **Raja Shiv Prasad of Banaras**. In 1888, he set up the **United Indian Patriotic Association** with the avowed objective of countering the Congress and keep people away

from joining the Congress. In this way, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's ideology provided the three main themes of communalism:

- Opposition to unifying, nationalist forces
- Opposition to democratic processes
- Loyalty to the British government

Please note that the above ideology was entirely faulty. Even though there were several Hindus in the Congress, it could certainly not be termed as a Hindu organisation, by any stretch of imagination. Several prominent members of the Congress were Muslims such as **Badraddin Tayabji, Mir Musharraf A. Bhimji and Hamid Ali Khan** and there was nothing Hindu about its demands and program. In 1887, the Congress session was presided over by Badruddin Tayabji, a Muslim. Moreover, democratic institutions pose no threat to the Muslims; they only pose a threat to feudal elements in society, to which Syed Ahmad himself belonged.

### Hindu Overtone of National Movement

In the 20th century, the nationalist movement acquired a Hindu overtone which also contributed to the growth of communalism. For instance, many of the extremists introduced strong Hindu elements in nationalist propaganda. They identified Indian nation and culture with Hindus. Tilak used the Ganesh and Shivaji festivals to ignite national sentiments. Aurobindo put forth the concept of India as a mother and nationalism as a religion. The revolutionary terrorists took oath before goddess Kali. The Anti-partition movement began with dips in the Ganga. Such actions could hardly appeal to the Muslims and they could not be expected to respond with full enthusiasm to the national movement. Even Gandhi's slogan of Ram Rajya had a religious tinge and was unpalatable to the Muslims.

The above does not mean that the militant nationalists were anti-Muslim or wholly communal. The unintended Hindu overtone was taken advantage of and misused by clever British elements to poison the minds of the Muslims. Thus, the Hindu overtone to the national movement not only alienated the Muslims from the national movement but also provided ideological openings for Hindu communalism. It also helped the spread of a Muslim tinge among Muslim nationalists.

### Role of Communal Organisations

Communal organisations played an important role in further development of communalism. Two such leading organisations were **All India Muslim League** (formed in 1906) and **All India Hindu Mahasabha** (formed in 1915). They resorted to communal propaganda and aired the feelings of mistrust between Hindus and Muslims. Communal organisations, in addition to promoting the interests of a particular community, also indirectly promoted British imperial interests and the personal ambitions of opportunistic leaders.

**Jawaharlal Nehru:** One communalism does not end the other, each feeds on the other and both fatten.



## Weakness of Nationalist Forces

The growth of communalism in the 19th century could have been checked by strong nationalist forces and ideology. But the nationalist forces, including the Congress, failed in this regard. Even though fully committed to secularism and nationalism, the Congress ultimately lost the battle against communal forces due to certain weaknesses. It failed to fully comprehend the nature of communalism. It also failed to shed off the Hindu revivalist tendencies that had crept in and that had no appeal to the Muslim masses (such as use of Hindu symbols and festivals as in the case of Swadeshi movement).

The Congress also stands guilty of making some wrong choices—while dealing with the Muslim League it offered concessions and made compromises which only added to the strength of communal ideology.

The nationalist leaders failed to see that it was not possible to conciliate the communalists. During 1937–39, several efforts were made to appease Jinnah who would agree to negotiate only if the Congress accepted itself as a Hindu party. This was an impossible demand for the Congress, as it meant giving up its nationalist and secular character. Hence, what was required was not appeasement but a frontal attack on communalism.

However, it cannot be denied that the communal problem in India had become extremely complicated, particularly so with the attitude of the British government. No matter what the Congress offered, the government always offered more rendering all attempts at unification, futile.

## GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

### Partition of Bengal and Anti-Partition Movement (1905)

Viceroy Curzon and his men had played the communal card during the partition of Bengal and had tried to divide the Hindus and the Muslims along class lines (the Hindus being the zamindars and the Muslims being the peasantry). They wanted to use the Muslims as counterweights against the rising nationalist powers, and planned the partition such that it created a new Muslim majority province. Here they encouraged the educated Muslims to think in terms of a Muslim Political Power.

Muslim separatist tendencies, during this period, were also encouraged by the Hindu overtone acquired by the Anti-partition movement which began with dips in the Ganga. Hindu symbols and myths were readily used. Writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and others also referred to the Muslims as foreigners in their writings which produced resentment among the Muslims and alienated them from the national movement.

### Simla Deputation (1st October 1906)

A deputation headed by Aga Khan met Lord Minto at Simla on 1st October 1906. The deputationists expressed loyalty to the British Crown but also expressed apprehension that if the principle of

'election' was introduced without conceding reservation for Muslims it would prove detrimental to their interests. Thus, the deputationists demanded reservation of seats for Muslim Community not only on the basis of their population but also on the basis of their **political importance** and their services in the defence of the British Empire. The British saw in these demands a promising counterpoise to the increasing demands of the Congress. Hence, these demands were readily accepted by Lord Minto and separate electorates and weightage for Muslims was introduced under the Act of 1909.

The nationalist leaders criticised the deputation as stage managed by the British (Maulana Ali called it '**a command performance**'). However, the followers of the Muslim League asserted that the demand for nomination of Muslims for safeguarding Muslim interests had been made since 1880s ever since the time of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and when the prospect of elections emerged, a demand for separate electorates fell in the logic of events. However, it cannot be denied that the British encouraged communalism to foster their imperial interests in India. This explains why the League achieved its aims as soon as it was formed, while the Congress was unable to do so despite being much older and despite adopting the same methods of prayer and petition.

### Formation of the Muslim League (30th December 1906)

Following the Simla Deputation, the Muslim leaders put forth the idea of a central Muhammadan association. Accordingly, on 30th December 1906, their efforts culminated in the formation of the **All India Muslim League**, under the leadership of **Nawab Salimullah of Dacca** and with government patronage, as a political organisation dedicated to advance Muslim political interests. Salimullah was also given a loan of ₹14 lakh by the government and he supported the creation of a Muslim Majority province in Bengal. The League comprised of upper class Muslims like Nawab Salimullah, Aga Khan and Nawab Mosin-ul-Malik.

The main aims and objectives of the League were as follows:

- To promote among Indian Muslims feelings of loyalty towards the British government and to remove any misconceptions that may arise, as to the intentions of the government with regard to any of its measures.
- To protect the political and other rights of Indian Muslims, and to place their needs and aspirations before the government in temperate language.
- So far as possible, without prejudice to the objectives mentioned above, to promote friendly relations between Muslims and other communities of India.

In this way, the Muslim League was a communal body from its very inception, formed to safeguard the interests of Muslim community alone. Its main motive was to keep the Muslim intelligentsia from joining the Congress and the national movement. The League was formed as purely a loyalist body which constantly looked upto the government for favour and patronage, and it was never disappointed.

**The League under the nationalists (1913-1923)**— From 1913 to 1923, the League came under the influence of progressive Muslim leaders who overshadowed the loyalists. There was a section of patriotic Muslims who recognised the weakness of the League and founded the



militantly nationalist **Ahrar movement** (1910) which included leaders like **Maulana Mohammad Ali**, **Maulana Mazhr ul Haq**, **Hussain Imam** and **Hakim Ajmal Khan**. These patriotic Muslims disliked the loyalist politics of the Aligarh School and the nawabs and zamindars. They were driven by the modern ideas of self-government and actively participated in the militant national movement.

Similarly, there was a section of the traditional Muslim scholars led by the **Deoband School** who were moved by the nationalist sentiments. The most well-known among these scholars was the young **Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad**. He propagated his nationalist ideas in his newspaper **Al Hilal** (1912).

In 1911, war broke out between Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and Italy and during 1912–13, Turkey fought the Balkan Wars (the British policy during the Balkan Wars was not sympathetic to Turkey). The Turkish ruler at this time was also the Caliph or religious head of all Muslims. Also, nearly all Muslim holy places were located within Turkey. Naturally, the sympathy of Indian Muslims went with Turkey and their stand became pro-Turkey/Caliph and anti-imperialist. A medical mission, headed by Dr. M.A. Ansari was sent to help Turkey. Further, during 1920–23, the League's activities remained suspended on account of Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement. In this way, during the period 1913–23, the League was completely overshadowed by the nationalists.

Following the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement, the communal elements in the League resurfaced. In 1927, the appointment of Simon Commission again brought the League into action and by 1934, MA Jinnah (once a progressive Muslim leader, now a communalist) emerged as its undisputed leader.

### Introduction of Separate Electorates (1909)

The introduction of separate electorates under the Morley-Minto Reforms was a major landmark in the development of communalism in India. Separate Electorates meant electorates comprising of Muslims only (separate electorates were later extended for Sikhs and others as well). In practical terms, it meant introducing Muslim constituencies, Muslim voters and Muslim candidates. Thus, this system turned elections and legislatures into arenas of communal tussles.

In addition to this, non-Muslim voter could vote for a Muslim candidate. Muslims were also given **weightage**, i.e. more seats were given to them than the number warranted by their proportion in the local population. Under the principle of weightage, Muslims were assured representation in the councils, not merely according to their 'numerical strength' but also according to their 'political importance' and 'their service in defence of the empire'. They were also allowed to compete for seats to be elected by general electorates.

These provisions were severely criticised as they were brought about not with the aim of correcting any imbalance in Indian society but to appease some Muslim leaders, win them over as allies and at the same time bind them to the government in 'silken chains of gratitude'. They also created institutional structures containing separatism and ensured the impossibility of consensus among Indian political groups.

### Formation of the Hindu Mahasabha (1915)

The formation of All India Muslim League (1906) and introduction of separate electorates (1909) made the Hindu leaders think in terms of a Hindu organisation to safeguard Hindu interests.

- In 1909, Arya Samaj leaders Lala Lajpat Rai, Lal Chand and Shadi Lal established the **Punjab Hindu Sabha** and its first session at Lahore was presided by Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya (who founded the Banaras Hindu University). Over the next few years, several Hindu sabhas were established outside Punjab.
- In 1910, some prominent Hindus of Allahabad took some steps in organising themselves into an All India Hindu Mahasabha.
- In April 1915, the first session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha was held during the Kumbh Mela at Hardwar under the presidentship of the **Maharaj of Kasim Bazar**.

Explaining the rationale of the Mahasabha, Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya stated that the Muslims and Christians have been proselytising in India for centuries, with the effect that the majority of Indian Muslims were converts from Hindu religion. Further, the Muslim League has been putting forward exaggerated claims for representation in elected bodies. To check these processes, he explained, it was necessary for Hindus to organise themselves. Thus, **Shuddhi** and **Sangathan** became the objectives of the Sabha in the initial years. It also gave the slogan of **Akhand Hindustan**, against the League's demand for Pakistan.

In 1938, **VD Savarkar** became the President of the Hindu Mahasabha and was re-elected again and again. Under him, the sabha developed a political program. Savarkar popularised the concept of **Hindu Rashtra** maintaining that India comprised of one nation, only the Hindu nation and the Muslims must accept their position as a minority. After the death of Savarkar, the Mahasabha was led by **Dr. SP Mookerji** who had a more nationalist outlook.

The Hindu Mahasabha's propaganda of a Hindu Rashtra only hardened the League's attitude further. True, Muslim League was the first communal organisation, but the communal poison proved infectious and the Hindu Mahasabha, Akali Dal and others came into existence as counterpoises to one another.

### Lucknow Pact (1916)

The Congress-League Pact, also known as the Lucknow Pact was signed between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League during the joint session of both the parties held in 1916 at Lucknow. While a step forward in many ways, it was also a step back. The **Congress accepted separate electorates in order to obtain League's support**, thus formally recognising communal politics. The following facts must also be remembered:

- The Pact was an arrangement between leaders and not the people.
- The pact was wrongly equated with Hindu-Muslim settlement, based on the assumption that the Muslim League was the sole representative of all classes of Muslims.
- Soon the Lucknow Pact became redundant as the Government of India Act 1919 granted much more to the Muslims than the Lucknow Pact.



### Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–23)

During the Khilafat Movement, Muslims were eager to gain the support of Hindus in India to pressurise the British to adopt liberal attitude towards Turkey. Seeing in this an excellent opportunity to forge Hindu-Muslim unity in India, Gandhi extended full support to the Khilafat movement. The Non-Cooperation program of Gandhi was soon adopted first by the Khilafat Committee and then by the Congress. Consequently, the period 1920–22 witnessed unprecedented participation of Muslims in the national movement.

Unfortunately, with the exception of a few Muslims like Azad, the outlook of most Muslim leaders was not fully secular or even free from communal bias. This is clear from the fact that the most important issue they took up was not national freedom but protection of holy places and the rights of Caliph. Religious sentiments formed the vortex of their political appeal. This encouraged the wrong habit of looking at political questions from the religious point of view.

### Revival of Communalism after the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement (1922–1927)

Once the Non-cooperation Movement was withdrawn, the Hindu-Muslim unity soon petered out and communalism began to raise its ugly head. The period between 1922 and 1927 saw the following symptoms of communalism:

- **Communal riots** occurred at unprecedented scale. UP alone saw as many as 91 incidents of riots. Issues of cow slaughter and music before mosques were raised.
- The period saw the revival of main communal organisations- the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha (formed in 1915 but lying dormant since then), as they found favourable climate for revival.
- Swarajist got divided along communal lines and some responsivists joined the Hindu Mahasabha. The Congress failed to evolve a suitable strategy to deal with communalism.
- **Tabligh** (propaganda) and **Tanzim** (organisation) movements arose among the Muslims, partly as response to Shuddhi and Sangathan among the Hindus. These were again partly in response to forced conversions made during Moplah rebellion. Such developments embittered the whole atmosphere.
- **RSS** (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) was founded in 1925.

Various factors contributed to the above. Firstly, the Khilafat movement had brought Muslim religious heads into politics and they never went back even after the movement was withdrawn. This brought certain religious elements into politics. Secondly, system of separate electorates inherently contained seeds of communalism. This system was further enlarged by the Act of 1919 and provided space for political alignments along communal lines. Finally, lack of employment opportunities forced the youth to look upto religion for favours and jobs. In this way, the political situation in 1927 looked grim and the nationalist forces were divided and communal feelings soared high. At this point, an opportunity for unity was presented in the form of the **Simon Commission**.

### Simon Commission (1927), Delhi Proposals, Nehru Report and Jinnah's Fourteen Points

In 1927, Simon Commission (an all-white commission to frame a constitution for India) was announced which was unanimously boycotted by all nationalists and once again provided an opportunity for unity.

#### Delhi Proposals (December 1927)

With the aim of bridging the gulf between the Congress and the Muslim League and to enable them to present a common set of demands before the British, a group of prominent Muslim leaders met at Delhi in December 1927 with MA Jinnah presiding over the session. In a dramatic move, the leaders agreed to forego separate electorates, the first and the last time the League agreed to do so, if their four proposals were met. The proposals came to be known as Delhi proposals (mentioned in detail in chapter 16).

In December 1927, Madras Congress Session, the Congress passed a resolution accepting most of the demands of Delhi Proposals. However, the Muslim League split over the issue and a separate annual session of the League was held at Lahore under the presidency of **Sir Mian Muhammad Shafi**, worsening the communal situation in India. The demands were also rejected by the Hindu Mahasabha at All Parties Conference (December 1928, at Calcutta). The incompatibility between the League and the Mahasabha complicated matters and frustrated all attempts at unity.

Further, the Nehru Report (prepared by Motilal Nehru and Tej Bhadur Sapru) was rejected by the Muslim League as it did not incorporate all their demands and had the following consequences-

- Jinnah rejected the Nehru Report calling it '**Parting of the Ways**' with the Congress and once the 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity' was now convinced that the Hindu mindset in India was bent upon pushing the Muslim minority to the wall.
- He went back to separate electorates, formulated his **Fourteen Points** which became the text of communal demands and included-separate electorates, reservation for Muslims in legislatures, reservation of Jobs for Muslims, creation of new Muslim majority provinces, etc.
- It led to the estrangement of Jinnah and pushed him towards communalism.
- It led to the hostility of most Muslim leaders towards Civil Disobedience Movement.

### Communalism Transforms into a Mass Force

The events of 1928–29 triggered an irreversible drifting apart of communal forces and marked the starting point of communalism transforming into a mass force. By 1940, all communal demands faded into insignificance in front of the ultimate communal demand-the demand for Pakistan, as a separate nation for Muslims.

#### Estrangement of Muslims from the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–34)

With the exception of Muslim groups (**Jamaat-e-ulema-i-Hind**, **Khudai Khidmatgars** and the **State of Kashmir**), Muslims in general remained aloof from the movement. While the Congress



boycotted two out of three Round Table Conferences held in London, the communalists attended all three.

### Communal Award (or MacDonald Award, 1932)

The Communal Award was a proposal on minority representation made by the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald on 16 August 1932. The Award granted separate electorates for the Muslims, Sikhs, Depressed Classes, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, Buddhists and even Marathas (some seats in Bombay were given to the Marathas). The principle of weightage was also applied.

### Extreme Communalism (after 1937)

The Muslim League performed badly in the 1937 provincial elections and decided to resort to extreme communalism. Demand for a separate state for Muslims now gained rapid momentum.

The Government of India Act 1935 provided for provincial autonomy and a wider franchise. When elections were held in early 1937 under separate electorates, results were quite revealing:

- In general constituencies, the Congress swept the polls. But in the Muslim constituencies, its performance was disappointing.
- Even the Muslim League, that claimed to be a representative of the Muslims, performed very badly—it did not get a single seat in North-West Frontier Provinces, got only 2 out of 84 in Punjab and 3 out of 33 in Sind. It was not in a position to form a ministry anywhere.
- The landlord and money lender parties too fared badly in the elections.

Thus, the message was loud and clear:

- The Congress needed to reach out to the Muslim masses and bring them into its fold. It could also ignore the Muslim League completely as the election results had manifested its unrepresentative character.
- Muslim League needed to shed its elite character (dominated by princes and zamindars) and create a base among the Muslim masses.
- The landlords and money lenders now decided to shift their support to the communal parties since Congress had adopted a radical agrarian programme and was mobilising the peasants. Henceforth, the communal parties began to gather unprecedented strength.

In order to achieve its aim, the league led by Jinnah launched a massive campaign for popularisation of the League and hoped to form coalition ministries with the Congress in provinces like Bengal, Assam and Punjab. The Congress advised the League members to sign the Congress pledge and become its members, if they wished to accept responsibilities of office. Angered, Jinnah dubbed the Congress a Hindu organisation out to crush all minorities. The league now began to spread the cry that Muslim minority was in danger of being engulfed by the Hindu majority. It also put forth the unhistorical theory that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations which could never hope to live together.

In 1938, the League appointed a committee under the chairmanship of the Raja of Pirpur, to report on the oppression of the Muslims under Congress Ministries. **The Pirpur Report** fabricated cases of alleged horrible atrocities on Muslims by the Hindus. In October 1939, when

the Congress ministries resigned over the Second World War issue, the League observed it as a 'Day of Deliverance and Thanks giving'.

Finally, in 1940, at the Lahore Session of the Muslim League, Jinnah propounded his two-nation theory that India comprised of two nations—a Hindu nation and a Muslim nation, who were different economically, politically, socially, culturally and historically. That Muslims were not a minority but a nation, and therefore they were rightfully entitled to a nation of their own (the press was quick to describe the resolution as demand for Pakistan, some also began to call it the Pakistan Resolution). The Muslim communal ideas were echoed by the Hindu communalists who declared that Hindus too were a distinct nation and that India was the land of the Hindus, thus reinforcing the two-nation theory.

Thus, 1940 onwards, the above activities of the Muslim League headed by Jinnah transformed communalism into a mass force ultimately leading to the partition of India and formation of the separate state of Pakistan.

### The Pakistan Movement:

- In 1930, at the Allahabad Session of the Muslim League, **Mohammad Iqbal**, poet and political thinker, first put forth the idea of a separate Muslim state.
- In 1933, the idea was further consolidated and the word Pakistan was coined by a young undergraduate at Cambridge, **Rahamat Ali**. He visualised Punjab, Afghan Province (or NWFP), Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan as the national home of Indian Muslims and coined the term Pakistan taking the initials of the first four and last of the fifth.
- In March 1940, at the Lahore Session of the League, MA Jinnah made the most unequivocal declaration of the Hindus and Muslims as separate nationalities. The League passed a resolution (**Pakistan Resolution**) demanding the partition of India. Henceforth, the demand for Pakistan became as much an article of faith for the Indian Muslims as their holy book Quran.

- **Maulana Mohammad Ali**—'We divide and they rule'.
- **Mahatma Gandhi**—"The Question of majority and minority community is a creation of the British Government and would disappear with their withdrawal".



### Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

- Which of the following are associated with communalism?
  - 1 only
  - 1 and 2
  - 2 and 3
  - 1 and 3
1. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan
  2. Formation of the Indian National Congress
  3. Militant nationalism

Choose the correct answer from the following options:

1. In the beginning, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a communalist but with exposure to modern education, his outlook changed and he began to emphasise on Hindu-Muslim unity.



2. He founded the Aligarh College to educate the Muslims about the evils of colonialism.

Which of the above statements is/are true regarding Sir Syed Ahmad Khan? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) both (d) neither

3. What out of the following did Jinnah use the term 'Parting of the Ways' for?

- (a) Fourteen Points  
(b) Communal Award  
(c) Formation of Hindu Mahasabha  
(d) Nehru Report

4. Which of the following factors were responsible for the growth of communalism in modern India?

1. Socio-economic conditions in 19th-century India.
2. 19th-century socio-cultural reform movements.
3. Unscientific view of Indian history.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2  
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

5. Which of the following was the the nationalist movement founded by progressive Muslims?

- (a) Deoband Movement  
(b) Ahrar Movement  
(c) Aligarh Movement  
(d) Ahmadiya Movement

6. 1. Communalism or communal ideology refers to allegiance to one's own ethnic group.

2. Accordingly, for a communalist, a person's regional identity is the most important and he will emphasise it out of proportions.

With regard to communalism in India, which of the above statements is/are incorrect? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) both (d) neither

7. Tabligh and Tanzim movements arose among the Muslims as responses to what?

- (a) Moplah rebellion  
(b) British suppression  
(c) Shuddhi and Sangathan  
(d) Socio-cultural reform among Hindus

8. Which of the following are myths regarding communalism?

1. Mere entry of religion into politics causes communalism.
2. Communalism is caused by religious differences.
3. Communalism always existed in Indian society.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3  
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

9. Which of the following statement/s is/are true?

- (a) In the 19th century, the socio-cultural awakening among Hindus came earlier than Muslims.  
(b) The Simla deputation comprised of representatives from various minority communities to demand for separate electorates.  
(c) The formation of All India Muslim League under the leadership of Nawab Salimullah was criticised by the government.  
(d) Administrative convenience was the chief motive behind Bengal partition.

10. Which of the following statement/s is/are false with regard to the Muslim League?

1. The Muslim League was conceptualised as a secular body but later developed communal ideology.
2. The main objective of the League was to spread political education among the masses.
3. Promoting friendly relations between Muslims and other communities of India was one of the objectives of the League.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3  
(c) 2 only (d) 3 only

11. Consider the following statements with regard to Badruddin Tayabji.

1. He was the first Muslim to preside the annual session of the Congress.

2. Later in his career, he left the Congress and joined the Muslim League.

Which of the above statements is/are true? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) both (d) neither



## Previous Years' Questions – Main Exam

1. How did Communalism manifest in the Indian political scene? Explain

the background of the passing of the momentous Pakistan Resolution.

[UPSC 1999]



## Practice Questions – Main Exam

1. Discuss the meaning of the term 'communalism'. When and how did it first emerge in India?
2. Discuss the role of British policy in the growth of communalism in India.
3. Write short notes on the following:  
(a) The lag theory

- (b) Simla Deputation
4. Critically evaluate the following-  
(a) Lucknow Pact  
(b) Separate Electorates
  5. What were the factors that contributed in the growth of communalism in modern India? Discuss.

## Answers

### Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

- |         |        |        |        |         |
|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. (d)  | 2. (d) | 3. (d) | 4. (d) | 5. (b)  |
| 6. (b)  | 7. (c) | 8. (d) | 9. (a) | 10. (a) |
| 11. (a) |        |        |        |         |