

## Simon Commission and Simon Boycott Movement (1927–29)

**Flashback:** Following the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement, various national as well as anti-national forces emerged. The prominent among them were (covered in the previous chapters):

- The Swarajists and their program of council entry (1922–29)
- The No-changers and their Constructive work (after 1922)
- Communalism and revival of Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha (1922–37)
- Revolutionary Movement with a turn towards socialism (after 1922)
- Growth of the Left Movement and spread of Socialist and communist ideas (1920s–1930s)
- Peasants' and Workers' Movements (1920s–1930s)
- States People's Movement (1920s–30s)
- Caste Movements (like Self-Respect movement), 1920s–1930s

In May 1927, the situation in the country appeared grim, the Swarajists were declining, communalism was raising its ugly head and Gandhi wrote, "My only hope lies in prayer and answer to prayer". But it seems the forces of national upsurge were silently growing behind the scenes—when the country united once again against the Simon Commission.

### SIMON COMMISSION (8<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 1927)

As per a provision of the Government of India Act 1919, an Indian Statutory Commission (or a Royal Commission) was to be appointed at the end of 10 years (i.e. in 1929) after the passing of the Act, to enquire into the working of the Government of India under the Act of 1919 and suggest fresh reforms.

In other words, the commission was appointed to consider, under the terms of the Government of India Act of 1919, whether India was fit to receive a further instalment of constitutional government. The principal idea behind this was that the constitutional progress should be achieved gradually. However, this approach had certain drawbacks—a temporary constitution provided little incentive to people to make it successful. Moreover, ten years was too short a period to conclude about the workability of a constitution and those who were dissatisfied with it tried to prove that it was unworkable.



### Why was Simon Commission appointed before time?

The Commission was appointed on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1927, two years in advance of the prescribed time. Why was it so? The British government had declared that it was doing so on account of its liberal attitude towards India. In reality, the reasons lay elsewhere:

1. Firstly, the political situation in Britain compelled the conservative Tory government to appoint the commission earlier. In 1927, the Tory Government of Britain was facing the prospect of electoral defeat at the hands of the Labor Party (as elections were due in 1929) and suddenly decided that it could not leave an important issue as the issue of India, Britain's most important colony, in the hands of an inexperienced Labor Party.
2. Secondly, the Tory government also wanted to send the delegation at a time when communal situation had deteriorated so that the Commission sees India unfit for fresh instalment of constitutional government.
3. Thirdly, the nationalist opinion in India also resented the method of periodic enquiry and had been demanding a complete revision of the constitutional system. The Indian nationalists had already declared the constitutional reforms of 1919 as inadequate and had been demanding an early reconsideration of the constitutional question. British government also wanted to divert the attention of nationalist Indians from a widespread agitation that was gathering momentum.
4. It is also believed that the early appointment of the commission was a result of the pressure created by the Swaraj Party and the youth activities led by Nehru and Bose. Yet another opinion is that the Commission was used as a bargaining counter to divide the Swaraj Party.

Thus, the British government appointed the statutory commission (better known as Simon Commission after the name of its Chairman) before time, virtually recognising the failure of the Act of 1919.

### Composition of Simon Commission

On 8<sup>th</sup> November 1927, Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, announced the appointment of an Indian Statutory Commission comprising seven members (all British and all members of the British Parliament) under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon assisted by Clement Attlee. The Commission was appointed by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin.

### Mandate of the Commission

The Simon Commission was to enquire "into the working of the system of government, the growth of education and the development of representative institutions in British India and matters connected therewith" and to report "as to whether and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible government or to extend, modify or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing, including the question whether the establishment of Second Chambers of the local legislatures is or is not desirable." During the enquiry of the commission, the subject of relations between British India and Indian states was also added to the purview of the commission.

### Members

Clement Attlee, Edward Cadogan, George Lane-Fox, Vernon Hartshorn, Donald Howard, Harry Levy-Lawson, Sir John Allsebrook Simon.

All the seven members of the Commission were Englishmen who were members of British Parliament. The British government gave two arguments for excluding the Indians from the Commission:

1. The British government argued that since the committee had to report to the British Parliament so it was justified to appoint British members only. This argument did not hold good as there were two Indian Members of British Parliament at the time—Lord Sinha and Mr. Saklatwala.
2. They also declared that it was not possible to appoint any Indian as member of the commission as there was no unanimity among Indians over the constitutional question. In reality, Birkenhead feared that in a mixed commission, Indians would ally with Labour Party representatives.

Further, Viceroy Irwin declared that the Indians had not been able to give an accurate picture of their capacity to govern themselves. However, taking cognizance of Baldwin's earlier statement, "In the fullness of time we look forward to seeking India in equal partnership with the Dominions", Irwin made provisions for expression of Indian opinion. Joint committees comprising non-official members from centre and provinces were to express their opinion to the commission. Indian Legislature could also send delegations to discuss the Commission's Report with the Joint Parliamentary Committee in Britain.

### Who Opposed Simon Commission?

The all-white commission, consisting solely of British Members of Parliament, was unanimously rejected by all nationalists. In the appointment of this Commission, the British government had not only marginalised the Indian opinion on a subject which concerned them the most, it was also guilty of insulting the Indians who were by implication viewed as unfit to make a constitution for themselves.

The Simon commission united different groups and parties in the country, at least temporarily. The call for boycott of the commission was endorsed by the following:

1. The Congress,
2. A section of the Muslim League
3. Liberal Federation led by Tej Bahadur Sapru
4. The Indian Industrial and Commercial Congress
5. The Hindu Mahasabha

The Muslim League was divided on the issue but MA Jinnah succeeded in rallying the majority section in favour of the boycott. This section of the Muslim League, led by Jinnah, was even willing to forego separate electorates if certain conditions were met (Delhi proposals).

Thus, the Indian opinion was united on the issue of Indian representation. Congress tried to revive the Non-cooperation spirit through the boycott. Revolutionaries such as Bhagat Singh also



opposed the Simon Commission and were of the view that only Indians should decide the kind of constitution they should have.

However, there were certain political groups who did not oppose the commission. These included, Muslim League led by Muhammad Shafi, Justice Party in Madras, Central Sikh Sangh, and All India Achut Federation.

### SIMON BOYCOTT MOVEMENT

The boycott was turned into a popular movement by the Indian National Congress. During the 1927 **Madras Congress Session** (presided by **Dr. Ansari**), the Congress decided to boycott the commission "at every stage and in every form". Jawaharlal Nehru even got a quick resolution passed, declaring complete independence as a goal of the Congress, instead of the mirage of Dominion Status. The Working Committee was authorised to prepare a constitution for India in consultation with other organizations.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1928, the Simon Commission landed at Bombay and was greeted with the slogan of "Go back, Simon". All the major cities and town remained closed, people took to the streets taking out mass rallies and processions carrying black flags. The scenes of Non-cooperation days were revived. The crowds could not be held back even by lathis and bullets.

In fact, everywhere the commission went—Poona, Vijaywada, Lucknow, Calcutta, Lahore it was greeted with a sea of black flags. In Lucknow, where a reception was organised for the members of the commission, Khaliqzaman floated black kites and balloons with the slogan 'Simon go Back' printed on them. In Madras, T. Prakasham bravely rose in protest.

### Rise of Young Leaders



Subhas Chandra Bose

It was the Simon Commission that provided the first experience of political action to a new crop of nationalists. **Jawaharlal Nehru** and **Subhas Chandra Bose** were the two most prominent youth leaders who emerged during the Simon Boycott Movement. The movement also saw the formation of a large number of youth leagues and associations all over the country. As the youth and students of the country were being drawn into the national movement, they were also simultaneously being influenced by the ideas of socialism.

In 1927, Jawaharlal Nehru had represented INC at Brussels Congress organised by the League Against Imperialism. He had also visited the young Soviet Union, and returned deeply influenced by socialist ideas and played the most important role in popularisation of socialism in the country. In this regard, Subhas Bose, Naujawan Bharat Sabha and Workers' and Peasants' Parties organised by a group of communists had also played prominent role.



Jawaharlal Nehru

### Police Repression and death of Lala Lajpat Rai

The police took to angry repression and lathi-charges became frequent. In Lucknow, **Jawaharlal Nehru** and **Govind Ballabh Pant** were lathi charged up by the police. The worst incident took place at Lahore where **Lala Lajpat Rai**, the veteran Extremist and Sher-e-Punjab, was fatally hit during a lathi-charge while leading an anti-Simon agitation. He succumbed to his injuries on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1928. (Bhagat Singh vowed to avenge his death and decided to kill James Scott, the police officer who had ordered the lathi charge. He plotted the revenge along with other revolutionaries Rajguru, Sukhdev and Chandrasekhar Azad, but mistakenly killed another police official, John Saunders.)

The commission visited India twice (February–March 1928 and October 1928–April 1929). It was boycotted each time. It toured the country extensively and prepared a report which was published in May 1930.



Lala Lajpat Rai  
(died during  
anti-Simon movement)

### LORD BIRKENHEAD CHALLENGES THE INDIANS

Lord Birkenhead, the then Secretary of State, justified the exclusion of Indians from Simon Commission on the plea that there were vital differences among various Indian political parties and then threw a challenge to Indians to produce a constitution acceptable to all sections of Indian society.

### 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 and included the following points:

1. Sind should be separated from Bombay presidency as a separate province (Muslim majority province).
2. In NWFP and Baluchistan, reforms were to be carried out on the same lines as in other provinces, i.e. they should be treated constitutionally on the same footing as other provinces.
3. Muslim representation in Central legislature should be either one-third of the total or more than that.
4. Representation in Punjab and Bengal should be made on the basis of population (to ensure Muslim majority in the legislature) and in other provinces, where Muslims were a minority, the existing reservation of seats for Muslims should continue.



During the Madras Congress Session of December 1927, 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 Congress proposals came next in the form of Nehru Report.

### ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE, NEHRU REPORT AND JINNAH'S FOURTEEN POINTS

#### All Parties Conference (presided by Dr. MA Ansari, February 1928)

The Indians accepted the challenge and the representatives of the Congress as well as other organizations such as Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, etc., met at a conference in February 1928 which came to be known as the All Parties Conference. In the conference, it was decided that while framing the constitution, the principle of **full Dominion responsible government** should be kept in mind. The Madras Congress had earlier adopted the goal of complete independence, yet at the All Parties Conference 'fully responsible government based on the model of self-governing Dominions' was accepted as the desired aim. This was done to gain support of all those organizations which aimed at Dominion status and rally them behind a common plan.

#### Nehru Report (1928)

In May 1928, the All Parties Conference (Bombay, presided by Dr. MA Ansari) appointed a sub-committee headed by Motilal Nehru to draft a constitution. Thus, the Nehru Committee was the Indian response to the appointment of Simon Commission and to the challenge of Birkenhead.

#### Members of the Nehru Committee

Motilal Nehru (Chairman), Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ali Iman, MS Aney, Mangal Singh, Shuab Quereshi, GR Pradhan and Subhas Chandra Bose.

In August 1928, the committee's report, famously known as Nehru Report or Nehru Committee Report, was finalised and adopted. The Nehru Report firmly laid down that full responsible government was not to be considered as a remote step but as an immediate step, as opposed to the principle of gradual advancement envisaged by the Act of 1919.

#### Main Recommendations

The Nehru Report confined itself to British India, as it envisioned that in future there shall be a linkup between British India and Indian states on federal basis. The main recommendations of the Nehru Report were as follows:

- **Dominion Status:** India should have the same constitutional status in the British Empire as other Dominions with Parliament having powers to make laws and should be known as the Commonwealth of India.

#### ● Safeguards and Guarantees for Minority:

- It recommended that the proposed constitution should provide for **liberty of conscience and religion**.
- **New provinces on linguistic basis** to be created.
- On the principle of self-determination, the **Muslim majority provinces** should be given distinct politico-cultural identity, i.e. Sind was to be separated from Bombay Presidency and NWFP was to be given full provincial status.
- It rejected separate communal electorates and recommended that elections should be held on the basis of **joint electorates subject to reservations of seats for Muslims** in centre and in those provinces where they were in a minority (and not where they were in a numerical majority), and for non-Muslims in NWFP.
- Later the committee added two additional recommendations—communal representation was to be reconsidered after 10 years and **Baluchistan was to be given full provincial status**.

- **Fundamental Rights:** The constitution should define citizenship and declare fundamental rights. The Report recommended 19 Fundamental Rights including universal adult suffrage, equal rights for women, freedom to form unions and dissociation of the state from religion in any form.

- **Responsible Government:** It recommended responsible government at centre and in provinces.

- **Bicameral Parliament:** The legislative powers should invest with the King and bicameral parliament, and executive powers with the King exercisable by the Governor General. Same provisions should be made for the establishment of responsible governments in provinces in respect of governors and executive councils. It suggested that Indian Parliament should consist of a) The Senate elected for 7 years, containing 200 members elected by the Provincial Councils, and b) the House of Representatives consisting of 500 members for 5 years through adult franchise. The Governor General (to be appointed by the British Government but paid out of Indian revenues) was to act on the advice of the Executive Council which was to be collectively responsible to the Parliament. Similarly, Provincial Councils were to be elected on the basis of adult franchise for 5 years and the Governor was to act on the advice of the Provincial Executive Council.

- **Hierarchy of Courts:** Hierarchy of courts with Supreme Court at its apex should be established.

- **Federal Government:** It recommended, **for the first time**, that India should be a federation on the basis of linguistic provinces and provincial autonomy but residual powers with the centre. That's why some scholars consider the Nehru Report proposal as unitary rather than federal.

The Nehru Report contained virtually no federal features. Though federal principle was introduced in the composition of the senate, the provinces were not equally represented in it. Decentralisation was carried to the same extent as in the Act of 1919. Residuary powers were vested in the centre. The position of princely states with relation to centre was also not made clear.



### Status of Princely States

The Nehru Committee faced a complex problem with regard to the status of princely states. In 1927, the subjects of Princely states had formed the **State Peoples Conference** with the objective of introducing self-governing institutions. The Princes felt threatened and sought the help of the British who appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Harcourt Butler to look into the issue. The **Butler Committee** laid stress on the preservation of Princely states through British Paramountcy.

The appointment of Butler Committee was criticised by the Nehru Committee which advocated that all rights and obligations of the Paramountcy should be transferred to the government of Commonwealth of India and that conflicts between the Commonwealth of India and Indian states should be resolved by the Supreme Court.

A number of leading princes now supported the formation of a federation. They detested the doctrine that 'Paramountcy was paramount'. They aimed to be completely free from every external influence so far as the internal affairs of the State were concerned. This they thought would be facilitated by an 'All India Federation'.

### Concessions to Hindu Communalists in Nehru Report

These included the following features:

- Joint electorates everywhere but reservation of seats for Muslims only where in minority.
- Sind to be separated from Bombay presidency only after the grant of dominion status and subject to weightage to Hindu minority in Sind.
- Political structure proposed was broadly unitary as residual powers were vested with the centre.

### Significance of Nehru Report

The committee drafted an admirable constitution. Its approach was truly national; it had considered the country as an organic whole and not as one composed of heterogeneous elements such as the Princes, linguistic or religious minorities and other vested interests. The Nehru Report was in fact one of the most constructive efforts made by any organization in India. 'Its proposals were conceived in a spirit at once of idealism and accommodation, and there was width, warmth and largeness'.

Its most significant contribution was that it was the first and frankest attempt by Indians to face the problem of communalism and express an organised opinion of majority of Indian leadership on the communal problem. It clearly stated that the only way of giving a feeling of security to the minority was by providing for safeguards and guarantees (safeguards for Muslims have been mentioned above).

### All Parties Conference Fails to pass the Nehru Report

In December 1928, All Parties Conference was held at Calcutta. The Conference failed to pass the Report as objections were raised by the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikh League. The incompatibility between the League and the Mahasabha complicated matters and

frustrated all attempts at unity. A section of League and Khilafatists were willing to accept the Nehru Report provided three amendments, proposed by Jinnah, were accepted. Two of these were the same as the third and fourth demands in the Delhi proposals (as the first two demands had been accepted by the Nehru Report). The third and fresh demand was that the residuary powers be vested in the provinces-

### Amendments Proposed by Jinnah (Calcutta Amendments)

- Muslim representation in Central legislature should be either one-third of the total or more than that.
- Representation in Punjab and Bengal should be made on the basis of population (to ensure Muslim majority in the legislature) and in other provinces, where Muslims were a minority, the existing reservation of seats for Muslims should continue.
- Residuary powers should be vested with the provinces.

### Muslim League Rejects Nehru Report

Main objections of the Muslim League were:

- While the 1916 Congress: Muslim League agreement provided separate electorates and weightage to the Muslim community, they were rejected by the Nehru Report.
- The Muslims realised that while they would be a majority in the provinces of the North-East and North-West of India, and hence would control their provincial legislatures, they would always be a minority at the Centre. Thus, they demanded, in contrary to the Nehru Report, that residuary powers go to the provinces.

As the abovementioned demands of Jinnah were not accepted at the All Parties Conference, he parted ways and joined the groups led by Aga Khan and Muhammed Shafi.

Thus, the Nehru Report was rejected by Jinnah, and had the following consequences:

1. 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.
2. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1929, an All India Muslim Conference was held in Delhi and it passed a resolution emphasising two principles. Firstly, it said that since India was a vast country with substantial diversity, it required a federal system of government in which the states would have complete autonomy and residuary powers. Secondly, the system of separate electorates for Muslims should continue as long as their rights and interests were not safeguarded in the constitution.
3. In March 1929, Jinnah formulated his **Fourteen Points** which became the text of communal demands and included-federal government, separate electorates, reservation for Muslims in legislatures, reservation of Jobs for Muslims, creation of new Muslim majority provinces, etc.).
4. It led to the estrangement of Jinnah and pushed him towards communalism.
5. It led to the hostility of most Muslim leaders towards Civil Disobedience Movement.



### Jinnah's Fourteen Points (March 1929)

Jinnah formulated the "Fourteen Points" for safeguarding the rights and interests of the Muslims in any future constitution of the country. He further clarified that no constitution would be acceptable to the Muslims, unless it conformed to those fourteen points (which were basically a reiteration of Jinnah's objections to the Nehru Report). These were:

1. **Federal constitution:** The form of the future constitution should be Federal, with the residuary power vested in the provinces.
2. **Provincial Autonomy:** A Uniform measure of the autonomy shall be granted to all provinces.
3. **Effective representation of minorities:** All legislatures in the country and other elected bodies shall be constituted on the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of minorities in every province without reducing the majority in any province to minority or even equality.
4. **Muslim Representation in the Central legislature:** In the Central legislature, Muslim representation shall not be less than one-third.
5. **Separate Electorates:** Representation of the communal groups shall continue to be by separate electorates provided that it shall be open to any community at any time to abandon its separate electorate in favour of the joint electorates.
6. **Protection of Muslim majority in provinces:** Any terrestrial redistribution that might at any time be necessary shall not in any way affect the Muslim majority in Punjab, Bengal and NWFP.
7. **Religious Liberty:** Full religious liberty that is liberty of belief, worship and observance, propaganda, association and education shall be guaranteed to all communities.
8. **Communal Veto:** No bill or resolution or any part thereof shall be passed in any legislature or any other elected body if three-fourth of the members of any community in that particular body oppose it as being injurious to that of the community.
9. **Separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency:** Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency.
10. **Reforms in NWFP and Baluchistan:** Reforms should be made in the NWFP and Baluchistan.
11. **Representation of Muslims in the Services:** Provision should be made in the Constitution giving Muslims an adequate share along with the other Indians in all the services of the State and Local self-governing bodies having due regard to the requirements of efficiency.
12. **Constitutional safeguards for Muslims:** The Constitution should embody adequate safeguards to the protection of the Muslim Culture, education, language, religion, personal laws, and Muslim charitable institutions. They should get their due share in grant-in-aid.
13. **Muslim representation in Cabinet:** No cabinet, either central or provincial, should be formed without there being at least one-third of the Muslim Ministers.



Muhammad Ali Jinnah

14. No change shall be made in the constitution by the Central legislature except with the concurrence of the states constituting the Indian Federation.

**Nehru and Bose also criticized the Nehru Report:** Within the Congress itself, young nationalists led by J. Nehru and SC Bose also objected to the Nehru Report because of its acceptance of Dominion Status. Their slogan was 'Complete Independence or Purna Swaraj' and even the Congress had earlier (in Madras session 1927) adopted the goal of complete independence but later it made a compromise and accepted Dominion status as its goal in order to rally all parties behind a common plan.

In August 1928, the '**Independence of India League**' was launched by J. Nehru with the support of Subhas Bose (Nehru and Bose as secretaries and S. Srinivas Iyengar as President), as a pressure group within the Congress with the aim of-

- Countering the concept of Dominion Status
- Pleading for complete independence of India from the British, and
- Working for establishment of an Indian Republic on Socialist lines

### CONGRESS GIVES ULTIMATUM TO GOVERNMENT

#### Calcutta Congress Session (1928)

During the Congress Session at Calcutta, December 1928 (presided by Motilal Nehru), a large number of delegates led by **Jawaharal Nehru, Subhas Bose and Satyamurthy** pressed for Poorna Swaraj as the goal of the Congress. The older leaders such as Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru felt that unity over dominion status had been arrived at with great difficulty and could not be given away in haste and that the government should be given a grace period to accept the Nehru Report.

Finally, the Congress resolved in one voice that in case the government did not accept the Nehru Report by **31<sup>st</sup> December 1929**, the Congress would declare **complete independence as its goal** and would also launch a civil disobedience movement to achieve that goal.

Preparations now began for a second round of mass action to achieve complete independence-

- With this, the council entry program of the Swaraj Party faded into irrelevance and it now merged with the Congress.
- Gandhi, now in his sixties, cancelled his Europe tour and instead decided to continue with his **mass contact tours** within India and prepare them for direct political action (Ever since his release from jail, Gandhi had been touring the country incessantly).
- At Gandhiji's insistence, the CWC formed a **Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee** to carry out an aggressive program of boycott of foreign cloth and its public burning.

Some other events also kept the political environment of the country stirred. Such as:

- On 20<sup>th</sup> March 1929, the government arrested 31 labour leaders and took them to Meerut for trial.
- On 8<sup>th</sup> April 1929, Bhagat Singh and BK Dutt of HSRA threw harmless bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly and were arrested. While in jail, Jatin Das, a member of HSRA died fasting, throwing the whole country into a fit of mourning and turmoil.



### LABOUR GOVERNMENT COMES TO POWER IN BRITAIN (MAY 1929)

In May 1929, Labour Party headed by **Ramsay MacDonald** came to power in Britain. The effective boycott of the Simon Commission had opened many eyes and Viceroy Irwin was called to London for deliberations. Upon his return to India, Irwin famously declared on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1929 that as per the new government, natural progression to Dominion Status is implicit in Montagu Declaration of 1917. He also gave assurance of **Round Table Conference** to enlist the concurrence of all sections in India, as soon as the Simon Commission submitted its report.

### DELHI MANIFESTO (2<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER 1929)

Two days later, major national leaders met and issued the Delhi manifesto, demanding that the **purpose of Round Table Conference** should not be to discuss when Dominion Status would be granted, but to draft a scheme for its implementation. Even though the Viceregal statement was welcomed all round, it soon became a subject of much controversy in the British Parliament. The trend of discussion in the House of Commons showed that the British were against giving Dominion Status to India.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1929, Irwin, reversing his previous stand, himself told Gandhiji and other leaders that he was unable to give any such assurance. With this, the grace period of one year for the government was over. The stage was now set for another round of confrontation and mass action.

### CONGRESS ADOPTS PURNA SWARAJ AS GOAL

#### Lahore Congress Session (31<sup>st</sup> December 1929, presided by J. Nehru)

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 1929, the annual session of the Congress was held at Lahore, the capital city of Punjab. It was presided over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (son had now succeeded the father, marking a unique family triumph). Nehru gave a stirring speech, declaring **Purna Swaraj as the goal for India** and calling upon all his countrymen and countrywomen to join the non-violent mass struggle against the foreign rule. In this way, the session also announced the launching of a **civil disobedience** movement, though the program of struggle was not drawn and was left to Gandhiji (later the Working Committee Meeting at Sabarmati Ashram and invested Gandhiji with all powers to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement at a time and place of his choice).

At midnight on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1929, on the banks of the **River Ravi**, Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the newly adopted tricolour amidst mixed feelings of jubilation and grim resolve.

**Note:** Nehru became the president of the Lahore session on the insistence of Gandhiji, despite only 3 of the 18 Provincial Congress Committees supporting him. He insisted that, "the battle of the future has to be fought by younger men and women. Responsibility will sober and mellow the

youth and prepare them for the burden they must discharge. Pandit Jawaharlal has everything to recommend him."

### Independence Pledge (26<sup>th</sup> January 1930)

The Congress decided to celebrate **26<sup>th</sup> January 1930** as the first Independence Day or Purna Swaraj Day, holding public meetings all over the country and taking Independence Pledge, drafted by Gandhiji. This program of the Congress met with great success. In towns and villages, small and big, the pledge was read out in local language and national flag hoisted.

#### Excerpts from the Independence Pledge

"We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth... The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually..."

Village industries such as hand spinning have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in a year, and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts, and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the crafts thus destroyed... The British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports...

Politically, India's status has never been so reduced, as under the British regime... All administrative talent is killed, and the masses have to satisfy with petty village offices and clerkships.

Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings...

Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly, and the presence of an alien army of occupation has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves...

We hold it to be a crime against man and god to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country..We will prepare ourselves by withdrawing so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes. We hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj."

### REPORT OF THE SIMON COMMISSION (7<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1930)

The Report of the unrepresentative all white commission, made the following suggestions on constitutional reforms in India. It recommended the following:

- The establishment of responsible government at the centre was to wait indefinitely i.e. it was to be established sometime in the future.
- Retention of separate electorates.
- Reservation of seats for depressed classes.
- Federal government in India in order to cope with the diversity of the country. However, the all-India federation was not considered practical idea for immediate execution.
- Abolition of Dyarchy in the provinces and establishment of responsible unitary government in the provinces.



- Retention of the special powers of the Governors for the safety and tranquility of the provinces and for the protection of the minorities. They would also have full powers of intervention in the event of breakdown of the constitution.
- Extension of franchise and expansion of legislatures.
- Separation of Burma from British India.

In this way, the commission recommended provincial autonomy in India but rejected Parliamentary responsibility at the centre, ignoring the national demand for a responsible government at the Centre. Overall, it was not a constitutional scheme which deserved any detailed examination and was rejected by almost all Indian parties and the Indian people enthusiastically participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

### Prelim Capsule

Event	Important Details
Simon Commission (1927)	<p>It was an <b>Indian Statutory Commission</b> comprising seven members (all members were British and were members of the British Parliament).</p> <p>Appointed by- Prime Minister <b>Stanley Baldwin</b> on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 1927.</p> <p>Chairman- Sir John Simon assisted by Clement Attlee.</p> <p>Aim- to enquire into the working of the Government of India under the Act of 1919 and suggest fresh reforms.</p> <p>The Congress decided to boycott the commission during the Madras Congress Session (presided by Dr. Ansari, Dec 1927).</p> <p>Unanimously rejected by all nationalists, since it consisted solely of British members; thus also called "<b>White Commission</b>."</p> <p>Landed at Bombay on 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1928 and was greeted with the slogan "<b>Go back, Simon</b>".</p> <p><b>Lala Lajpat Rai</b> (Sher-e-Punjab) faced lathi-charge while leading an anti-Simon agitation at Lahore and later succumbed to his injuries (17<sup>th</sup> Nov 1928).</p> <p>The Commission toured the country extensively and prepared a report which was published on 7<sup>th</sup> Jun 1930.</p> <p>It recommended abolition of Dyarchy in the provinces and establishment of responsible unitary government in the provinces, among other things.</p>

### Nehru Report (1928)

Lord Birkenhead had thrown a challenge to Indians to produce a constitution acceptable to all sections of Indian society.

The Indians accepted the challenge and an **All Parties Conference (Feb 1928)** was called which was attended by the Congress, Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and others.

Conference was presided over by **Dr. MA Ansari**.

In May 1928, the All Parties Conference appointed a sub-committee headed by **Motilal Nehru** to draft a constitution.

The Nehru Report confined itself to British India and recommended Dominion status as the desired form of government in India.

It rejected separate communal electorates and recommended that elections should be held on the basis of **joint electorates**.

It recommended 19 Fundamental Rights.

It recommended, for the first time, a federation.

It recommended responsible government at Centre and in provinces.

In December 1928, **All Parties Conference was held at Calcutta** and the Conference failed to pass the Report as objections were raised by the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikh League.

Jinnah rejected the Nehru Report calling it "**Parting of the Ways**" with the Congress. He went back to separate electorates, formulated his **Fourteen Points** which became the text of communal demands.

Nehru and Bose opposed the Nehru Report, founded **Independence for India League** and demanded the adoption of complete independence as the immediate goal.

Congress resolved in one voice that in case the government did not accept the Nehru Report by 31<sup>st</sup> December 1929, the Congress would declare **complete independence** as its goal and would also launch a Civil Disobedience Movement to achieve that goal.

### Lahore Congress Session (1929)

On 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 1929, the annual session of the Congress was held at Lahore.

At midnight on the banks of the **River Ravi**, President Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the newly adopted tricolour and declared **Purna Swaraj** as the goal for India.

Launching of a civil disobedience movement was announced. Congress decided to celebrate 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1930 as the **first Independence Day**, holding public meetings all over the country and taking Independence Pledge collectively.





## Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

- The radical wing of the Congress party with Jawaharlal Nehru as one of its main leaders, founded the Independence for India League in opposition to which one of the following?  
[UPSC 1995]  
(a) The Gandhi Irwin Pact  
(b) The Home Rule movement  
(c) The Nehru Report  
(d) The Montford Reforms
- Why was the Simon Commission of 1927 boycotted?  
[UPSC 1998]  
(a) There was no Indian member in the Commission  
(b) It supported the Muslim League  
(c) Congress felt that the people of India are entitled to Swaraj  
(d) There were differences among the members
- Under whose Presidency was the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress held in the year 1929 wherein a resolution was adopted to gain complete Independence from the British?  
[UPSC 2006]  
(a) Bal Gangadhar Tilak  
(b) Gopal Krishna Gokhale  
(c) Jawaharlal Nehru  
(d) Motilal Nehru
- With reference to Simon Commission's recommendations, which one of the following statements is correct?  
[UPSC 2010]  
(a) It recommends the replacement of Dyarchy with responsible government in the provinces.  
(b) It proposed the setting up of inter provincial council under the Home Department  
(c) It suggested the abolition of bicameral Legislature at the centre.  
(d) It recommended the creation of Indian Police Service with the provision for increased pay and allowances for British recruits as compared to Indian recruits
- With reference to the period of Indian freedom struggle, which of the following was/were recommended by the Nehru report?  
[UPSC 2011]  
1. Complete Independence for India  
2. Joint electorates for reservation of seats for minorities  
3. Provision of fundamental rights for the people of India in the constitution.  
Choose the correct answer from the following options.  
(a) 1 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only  
(d) 1, 2 and 3
- The Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress (1929) is very important in history, because  
[UPSC 2012]  
1. The Congress passed a resolution demanding complete Independence  
2. The rift between the extremists and moderates was resolved in that session  
3. A resolution was passed rejecting the two Nation theory in that session  
Which of the statements given above is/are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.  
(a) 1 only  
(b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 and 3  
(d) None of the above
- The people of India agitated against the arrival of Simon Commission because  
[UPSC 2013]  
(a) Indians never wanted the review of the working of the Act of 1919  
(b) Simon Commission recommended the abolition of Dyarchy in the province  
(c) There was no Indian member in the Simon Commission  
(d) The Simon Commission suggested the partition of the country

- Why is the 1929 session of Indian National Congress of significance in the history of the freedom movement?  
[UPSC 2014]  
(a) Attainment of Self-Government was declared as the objective of the Congress  
(b) Attainment of Purna Swaraj was adopted as the goal of the Congress  
(c) Non-Cooperation movement was launched  
(d) Decision to participate in the Round Table Conference in London was taken

- The object of the Butler Committee of 1927 was to  
[UPSC 2017]  
(a) Define the jurisdiction of the Central and Provincial governments  
(b) Define the powers of the Secretary of State for India  
(c) Improve censorship on national press  
(d) Improve the relationship between the Government of India and the Indian states



## Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

- Which of the following was/were true regarding Simon Commission?  
1. It was a statutory commission  
2. Sir John Simon and Clement Attlee were its members  
3. It was appointed by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin  
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
1. The Simon Commission was appointed 2 years in advance of the prescribed time.  
2. It was constituted to enquire into the working of the Government of India under the Act of 1909.

With regard to the Simon Commission, which of the above statements is/are true? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) both  
(d) neither
- Which of the following was not recommended by the Simon Report?  
(a) extension of franchise  
(b) abolition of diarchy in the provinces  
(c) separation of Burma from British India  
(d) formation of an All India Federation

1. Calcutta Congress- Dr. Ansari  
2. Lahore Congress-Jawaharlal Nehru  
3. Madras Congress- Motilal Nehru  
With regard to Congress sessions and its presidents, which of the above is/are incorrectly matched? Choose the correct answer from the following options.  
(a) 1 only  
(b) 1 and 2  
(c) 1 and 3  
(d) 3 only
1. The All Parties Conference (1928) passed the Nehru Report but the League rejected it.  
2. The Nehru Report recommended Dominion status as the desired form of government in India.

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

- 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) both  
(d) neither
- Which of the following was not a recommendation of the Nehru Report?  
(a) Complete transfer of political power to Indian hands.  
(b) Reservation of seats for Muslims  
(c) equal rights for women  
(d) separate communal electorates
- Delhi Manifesto, issued by major national leaders, demanded that-



- (a) The purpose of Round Table Conference should be to discuss when Dominion Status would be granted.  
 (b) The Round Table Conference be held in India.  
 (c) The representation to the Round Table Conference should be on the basis of indirect election.  
 (d) The purpose of Round Table Conference should be to draft a scheme for the implementation of Dominion Status.
8. Which of the following statements is/are not true with regard to the Lahore session of the Congress?
1. It was presided by Motilal Nehru.
  2. Nehru hoisted the national flag on the banks of River Beas.
  3. Complete independence was declared as the goal of the Congress.
- Choose the correct answer from the following options.
- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2  
 (c) 2 only (d) 2 and 3
9. 1. Boycott of Simon Commission-Madras Session  
 2. Ultimatum to the government-Delhi Session  
 3. Civil Disobedience-Lahore Congress  
 With regard to Congress sessions and resolutions passed, which of the above pairs is/are incorrectly matched? Choose the correct answer from the following options.  
 (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2  
 (c) 2 only (d) 1 and 3
10. Ramsay MacDonald was the leader of \_\_\_\_\_ party in England.  
 (a) Liberal Party  
 (b) Conservative Party  
 (c) Labour Party  
 (d) Nationalist Party



### Previous Years' Questions – Main Exam

1. Examine the significance of the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress (held in 1929) in the history of the Indian National Movement.
2. Certain developments during the period 1927–29 reflect the beginning of a new phase of anti-imperialist struggle in India. Critically analyse.
3. Lord Birkenhead threw a challenge to Indians to produce a constitution acceptable to all sections of Indian society. How did the Indians respond to the challenge? Examine.
4. Write short notes on:  
 (a) The Simon Boycott Movement  
 (b) Delhi Manifesto
5. What do you understand by Nehru Report? What were its main recommendations? Critically evaluate.

### Answers

#### Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

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

#### Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

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