

## Topic 12

### The Lucknow Pact -1916--joint demands to the British

#### What was the Lucknow pact?

Lucknow Pact refers to an agreement between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. In 1916, **Muhammed Ali Jinnah**, a member of the Muslim League, negotiated with the Indian National Congress to reach an agreement to pressure the British government to adopt a more liberal approach to India and give Indians more authority to run their country. This was a considerable change of policy for the Muslim League (not to loyal British), as its position had been that to preserve Muslim interests in India. After the unpopular partition of Bengal, the Muslim League was confused about its stand and it was at this time that Jinnah approached the League. Jinnah was the mastermind and architect of the pact and signed it with Congress led by **Mahajan**. The agreement was confirmed by the annual sessions of the Congress and the League in their annual sessions held at Lucknow on December 29 and December 31, 1916 respectively. **Sarojini Naidu** gave Jinnah, the chief architect of the Lucknow Pact, the title of "*the Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity*".

#### Why was the Lucknow pact made?

##### **[Muslims' New Strategy after reversal of partition of Bengal**

] When Bengal was partitioned in 1905, Hindus reacted against the decision and they went on violent protests and boycotts of British goods. On the other hand, the Muslims remained loyal to the British rule. The British could not sustain the pressure of demonstrations and reversed the decision of partition in 1911. This was a betrayal to the Muslims' loyalty. They realized the British rulers could no longer be trusted. Now they had to devise a new strategy for achieving their goals. They wanted to turn towards the demand of **self-rule** but they needed constitutional protection – separate electorate and provincial autonomy – from Hindus after the British would leave India. Muslim League, therefore, signed the Lucknow Pact in 1916 in which Congress agreed on granting the Muslims 1/3 reserved seats in the central legislative council.

##### **[Jinnah's Role and liberal leadership]**

At the time of the pact, Muhammad Ali Jinnah was an *idealist* who believed that Hindus and Muslims could work together. He wanted that all religious groups should live together in harmony. He was a strong supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity. He believed that **joint demands** would put more pressure on the British. Therefore he persuaded the Congress and the Muslim League for the Lucknow Pact in 1916. He believed that this pact would lead to united Indian nation.  
(Note: Mr. Jinnah became realist after Nehru Report in 1929 who then believed in the two-nation theory).

**[Joint Demand]** Congress was keen to gain the support of Muslim League for its demand of **self-rule** in India. It hoped that it would be difficult for the British to reject the joint demand

of self-rule for longer time. Therefore, it was ready to give concessions to Muslim League for its own objective of home-rule. That is why Congress went into Lucknow Pact with Muslim League in 1916.

### Main clauses of the Lucknow Pact

1. There shall be **self-government** in India.
2. Muslims should be given **one-third** representation in the central government.
3. There should be **separate electorates** for all the communities until a community demanded joint electorates.
4. A system of **weightage** should be adopted.
5. The number of the members of Central Legislative Council should be increased to 150.
6. The size of provincial legislatures should not be extended.
7. **Voting** rights for all
8. No bill concerning a community should be passed if the bill is opposed by three-fourth of the members of that community in the Legislative Council.
9. The term of the Legislative Council should be five years.
10. Half of the members of Imperial Legislative Council should be Indians.
11. The Executive should be separated from the Judiciary.

Although this Hindu Muslim Unity did not last more than eight years, and collapsed after the development of differences between the two communities after the Khilafat Movement, yet it was an important event in the history of the Muslims of South Asia. It was the first time that the Congress recognized the Muslim League as the political party representing the Muslims of the region.

#### **Importance of the Pact:**

- Movements towards self rule.
- Hindus & Muslims together made demand to British for the first time.
- Hindus accepted partition for self governing India.
- Muslims could protect their rights if they worked with congress.
- Self government was possible.
- In 1917, two Home Rule leagues campaigned in India, one by Tilak & other by Annie Basant.
- The pact marked the high water mark of Hindu Muslim unity.

**Jinnah** said that the pact had come about because, '*cooperation in the cause of our motherland should be our guiding principle. India's real progress can only be achieved by a true understanding & harmonious relations between the two great sister communities*'.

**Expected Questions & answers:**

**Question No. 1:** Explain why the Lucknow pact of 1916 was made? 7  
November 2000 Q. 3 b

**Question No. 2:** which of the following had the most important effect on Hindu Muslim relationship between 1914 & 1928.

(i) Lucknow Pact (ii) Montague Chelmsford Reforms 1919 (iii) Nehru Report?  
Explain your answer with reference to all three of the above. 14  
June 2001 Q.3 c

**Question No. 3:** The Lucknow pact of 1916 was the only beacon of hope of Hindu Muslim unity between 1914 & 1930. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer. 14  
November 2004 Q. 2 c

**Question No. 4:** Explain why the Lucknow Pact of 1916 came about. 7  
June 2006 Q.2 b

**Question No. 5:** During the First World War, Congress and the Muslim League had moved closer together, partly due to the failure of the British to grant more rights to the Indians before 1914. During the war, the British realised that concessions had to be made and let it be known that they were proposing a number of these. The Muslim League and Congress then met together at Lucknow.

(a) What was the Lucknow Pact? 4  
June 2012 Q. 2 a

**Question No. 6:** 'The Lucknow Pact of 1916 was the most important attempt by the Muslims, Hindus or the British government in seeking a solution to the problems in the sub-continent between 1909 and 1919.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer. 14  
November 2012 Q.2 c

**Question No. 7:** Explain why the Lucknow Pact of 1916 came about. 7  
June 2013 Q.3 b

**Answer to question No.3:**

Lucknow pact was the only hope for the Hindu-Muslim unity between 1914 & 1930. A firm foundation was laid for the political advance of Muslims & the way was also opened for joint efforts by Hindus & Muslims for the attainment of the goal of self government. That was the first & last pact concluded between the two parties on the question of separate electorates & modalities of form of government in India. It created a conducive environment for the launching of joint anti imperialist movement & carried great constitutional significance in future.

The Hindus agreed to the right of separate electorate for the Muslims for the first & the last time. The Hindus conceded that the Muslims would have 1/3 representation in the imperial Legislative council. A weightage formula was proposed under which the Muslim would get less representation than their population in the legislative council in those provinces where they were in majority but more in those provinces where they were in minority. Similarly Hindus would be given more seats in Punjab & Bengal where Hindus were in minority. Provincial autonomy was also agreed upon.

Thus both parties gave concession to each other & a spirit of cooperation prevailed. All these measures were such that had the Congress adhered to the pact & had given proper adequate share to Muslims in political power; the history of the sub continent would have been different. Perhaps independence could have been achieved much earlier & even the partition of the country could have been avoided.

But unfortunately the congress leaders didn't stick to the Lucknow pact & started showing their resentment to separate electorate after a few years. Thus we find that in Nehru report (1928) the system of joint electorate was suggested replacing separate electorate. Unitary form of government was suggested for the country with powers with majority power. Reservation of seats for Muslims in Central assembly & the concept of weightage were abolished. All these steps made the gulf between Muslims & Hindus much wider & unbridgeable.

Mr. Jinnah suggested three reasonable amendments in the Nehru report in order to safeguard Muslims interests but these were rejected by the congress. Muslims become cautious & lost all trust with congress leadership. The Nehru report shattered all hopes of Hindu Muslim unity & Mr. Jinnah remarked that "*it was parting of ways*". Thus it correct to say that Lucknow pact was the only opportunity & hope for Hindu Muslim unity.