



QUICK REVISION MODULE

(UPSC PRELIMS 2024) MODERN INDIAN HISTORY

# CONGRESS-2: FREEDOM MOVEMENT (1919-1938)

## TIMELINE: INDIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT FROM 1919 TO 1938

**1919**

Emergence of  
Khilafat Issue



**FEB 1922**

Chauri Chaura Incident



**DEC 1920**

Nagpur Session  
of INC



**DEC 1922** C.R. Das and

Motilal Nehru resigned  
from their post in INC  
and announced  
the formation of Congress-  
Khilafat Swarajya Party



**NOV 1927**  
Simon Commission  
was Setup



**OCT 1929**  
Irwin's Declaration



**AUG 1928**  
Nehru Report Finalized



**NOV 1929**  
Delhi Manifesto



**AUG 1932**  
Communal Award



**MAR 1930**  
Dandi March &  
launch of CDM



**MAR 1931**  
Gandhi-Irwin Pact & Karachi  
Session of INC



**DEC 1929**  
Lahore Session  
of INC



**AUG 1935**  
Government of India  
Act, 1935



**SEP 1932**  
Poona Pact



**1937**  
Provincial Elections-Congress  
Government formed in certain Provinces



## NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT AND KHILAFAT AANDOLAN

### BACKGROUND:

#### "Background of Non-Cooperation Movement"

##### Economic hardships post first world war

- Rise in Inflation.
- Increased burden of taxes.



## Discontentment against colonial rule

**Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh Massacre** exposed brutal face of foreign rule.

**Montagu- Chelmsford Reforms:** Failed to satisfy the rising demand for self-government.



## Lucknow Pact (1916)

Fostered Congress-Muslim League cooperation.

## Emergence of the Khilafat issue

- ▶ Muslims angered by the British actions in Turkey after the First World War; Demanded the Khalifa's control over Muslim sacred places be retained
- ▶ **Khilafat Committee (1919)** formed under the leadership of the Ali brothers (Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Ali), Maulana Azad, Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani.









## Khalifat-Non-Cooperation Programme

- ▶ All India Khilafat Conference (1919)- call for the boycott of British goods.
- ▶ Gandhi, as the President of the All India Khilafat Committee, felt a mass and united noncooperation could be declared against the Government.
- ▶ Gandhi secured Congress support on the Khilafat question. Muslim League decided to support the Congress on political questions



# TIMELINE: SERIES OF EVENTS LEADING TO DEVELOPMENT OF NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

					
<b>Feb 1920</b>	<b>May 1920</b>	<b>June 1920</b>	<b>August 1920</b>	<b>September 1920</b>	<b>December 1920</b>
Gandhi announced he would soon lead a movement of non-cooperation if the terms of the peace treaty failed to satisfy the Indian Muslims.	The Treaty of Sevres completely dismembered Turkey.	An all-party conference at Allahabad approved a programme of boycott of schools, colleges and law courts, and asked Gandhi to lead it.	The Khilafat Committee started a campaign of non-cooperation and the movement was formally launched.	At a special session in Calcutta, the Congress approved a non-cooperation programme till the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were removed and swaraj was established.	At the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress, the programme of non-cooperation was endorsed.

## Calcutta Session of INC (Sep 1920)

► The Non-cooperation Program was finalized. It was to include:



▷ Boycott of government schools and colleges;



▷ Boycott of law courts and dispensation of justice through panchayats instead;



▷ Boycott of legislative councils; boycott of foreign cloth and use of khadi instead;



▷ Renunciation of government honours and titles;



▷ The second phase could include mass civil disobedience including resignation from government service, and non-payment of taxes.

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► The programme of non-cooperation was endorsed.



► Instead of having the attainment of self-government through constitutional means as its goal, the Congress decided to have the attainment of swaraj through peaceful and legitimate means, thus **committing itself to an extra-constitutional mass struggle**.



► Some important organisational changes were made: a congress working committee (CWC) of 15 members was set up to lead the Congress from now onwards; provincial congress committees on linguistic basis were organised; ward committees were organised; and entry fee was reduced to four annas.

**Note:** Some leaders like M.A.Jinnah, Annie Beasant, G.S.Kharpade and B.C.Pal left congress.

### Spread of the Movement



- Thousands of students left government schools and colleges.
- Many lawyers gave up their practice like C.R.Das, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal nehru, C.R. Rajgopalachari, etc.
- Heaps of foreign cloth were burnt publicly and their imports fell by half.
- Picketing of shops selling foreign liquor and of toddy shops was undertaken at many places.
- Tilak Swaraj Fund was oversubscribed and one crore rupees collected.
- In July 1921, the Ali brothers gave a call to the Muslims to resign from the Army as it was unreligious. Gandhi echoed their call and asked local Congress committees to pass similar resolutions to that effect.
- It gave rise to many local struggles such as Awadh Kisan Movement (UP), Eka Movement (UP), Mappila Revolt (Malabar) and the Sikh agitation for the removal of mahants in Punjab.

### People's Response



- **Middle Class:** People from the middle classes led the movement at the beginning but later they showed a lot of reservations about Gandhi's programme.
- **Business Class:** The economic boycott received support from the Indian business group because they had benefited from the nationalists' emphasis on the use of swadeshi. But a section of the big business seemed to be afraid of labour unrest in their factories.



- ▶ **Peasants:** The movement gave an opportunity to the peasants to express their real feelings against the British as well as against their Indian masters and oppressors (landlords and traders).
- ▶ **Students:** Students became active volunteers of the movement and thousands of them left government schools and colleges and joined national schools and colleges (like Jamia Millia Islamia, Kashi Vidyapeeth).
- ▶ **Women:** Women gave up purdah and offered their ornaments for the Tilak Fund. They joined the movement in large numbers and took active part in picketing before the shops selling foreign cloth and liquor.
- ▶ **Hindu-Muslim Unity:** Maintenance of communal unity, despite the events like Mopilla Uprisings, were great achievements.

### Movement Withdrawn



- ▶ Chauri Chaura Incident (Feb 1922).
- ▶ The CWC met at Bardoli in Feb 1922 and resolved to stop all activity that led to breaking of the law and to get down to constructive work, instead.
- ▶ Most of the nationalist leaders including C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Subhash Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, however, expressed their bewilderment at Gandhi's decision to withdraw the movement.

## SWARAJISTS AND NO-CHANGERS

After Gandhi's arrest (March 1922), debate started about future Congress strategy.

### No-Changers

- ▶ Led by C. Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and M.A. Ansari.
- ▶ Opposed council entry, advocated concentration on constructive work, and continuation of boycott and non-cooperation programme.

### Swarajists

- ▶ Led by C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Ajmal Khan.
- ▶ Advocated entry into legislative councils to expose weakness of these assemblies and use them as arenas to arouse popular struggle.
- ▶ Defeat of the Swarajists' proposal of 'ending or mending' the councils at the Gaya session of the Congress (December 1922). C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru resigned from the presidency and secretaryship respectively of the Congress and announced the **formation of Congress-Khilafat Swarajya** Party, with C.R. Das as the president and Motilal Nehru as one of the secretaries.

## Rapprochement

- ▶ Both sides wanted to avoid a 1907-type split and accepted the necessity of Gandhi's leadership of a united nationalist front.
- ▶ A compromise was reached at a meeting in Delhi in September 1923.
- ▶ Swarajists were allowed to contest elections as a group within the Congress.
- ▶ With coalition partners, they out-voted the government several times, even on matters relating to budgetary grants, and passed adjournment motions.
- ▶ A note worthy achievement was the **defeat of the Public Safety Bill in 1928** which was aimed at empowering the Government to deport undesirable and subversive foreigners (because the Government was alarmed by the spread of socialist and communist ideas).

## Split and decline of Swarajists



- ▶ Widespread communal riots and split among Swarajists themselves on communal and Responsivist-Non-Responsivist lines.



- ▶ Responsivists among Swarajists—**Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya and N.C. Kelkar**—advocated cooperation with the government and holding of office wherever possible. Besides they also wanted to protect the so-called Hindu interests.



- ▶ Main leadership of the Swarajist Party reiterated faith in mass civil disobedience and withdrew from legislatures in March 1926, while another section of Swarajists went into the 1926 elections as a party in disarray.

Note: In 1930, the

- ▶ Swarajists finally walked out as a result of the Lahore Congress resolution on purna swaraj and the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

# SIMON COMMISSION AND THE NEHRU REPORT

## Simon Commission:



### Background

- The Government of India Act, 1919 had a provision that a commission would be appointed ten years from date to study the progress of the governance scheme and suggest new steps.
- An all-white, seven-member Indian Statutory Commission, (Simon Commission) was set up by the British government on November 8, 1927.

### Indian Response

- Exclusion of Indians from the commission was seen as a violation of the principle of self-determination.
- The Congress session in Madras (December 1927) under the presidency of M.A. Ansari decided to boycott the commission "at every stage and in every form".
- The liberals of the Hindu Maha Sabha and the majority faction of the Muslim League under Jinnah decided to support the Congress call of boycott.
- The Unionists in Punjab and the Justice Party in the south decided **not to boycott the commission.**

### Recommendations

- Abolition of dyarchy and the establishment of representative government in the provinces which should be given autonomy.
- Governor should have discretionary power in relation to internal security and administrative powers to protect the different communities.
- Rejected parliamentary responsibility at the centre. The governor-general was to have complete power to appoint the members of the cabinet.
- The Government of India to have complete control over the high court.
- Separate communal electorates be retained.
- It recommended Sindh should be separated from Bombay and Burma should be separated from India.
- Indian army should be Indianised though British forces must be retained.

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## Background

- As an answer to **Lord Birkenhead's challenge**, an All Parties Conference met in February 1928 and appointed a subcommittee under the **chairmanship of Motilal Nehru** to draft a constitution.
- This was the **first major attempt** by the Indians to draft a constitutional framework for the country.
- The committee included Tej Bahadur Sapru, Subhash Bose, M.S. Aney, Mangal Singh, Ali Imam, Shuab Qureshi and G.R. Pradhan as its members.
- The report was finalised by August 1928.
- The report confined itself to British India, as it envisaged the future link-up of British India with the princely states on a federal basis.
- The recommendations of the Nehru Committee were unanimous except in one respect—while the majority favoured the “dominion status” as the basis of the Constitution, a section of it wanted “complete independence” as the basis.

## Main Recommendations

- **Dominion status** on lines of self-governing dominions as the form of government desired by Indians.
- **Rejection of separate electorates** which had been the basis of constitutional reforms so far; instead, a demand for joint electorates with reservation of seats for Muslims at the Centre and in provinces where they were in minority.
- Linguistic provinces.
- **Nineteen fundamental rights** including equal rights for women, right to form unions, and universal adult suffrage.
- **Responsible government at the Centre and in provinces**— (a) The Indian Parliament at the Centre to consist of a 500-member House of Representatives elected on the basis of adult suffrage, a 200-member Senate to be elected by provincial councils; the House of Representatives to have a tenure of 5 years and the Senate, one of 7 years; the central government to be headed by a governor-general, appointed by the British government but paid out of Indian revenues, who would act on the advice of the central executive council responsible to the Parliament. (b) Provincial councils to have a 5-year tenure, headed by a governor acting on the advice of the provincial executive council.
- Full protection to cultural and religious interests of Muslims.
- Complete dissociation of State from religion.

**Note:** Nehru and Subhash Bose rejected the Congress' modified goal and jointly set up the Independence for India League

## CHANGES SUGGESTED IN THE NEHRU REPORT:



### Delhi Proposals of Muslim League (1927)

- ▶ These proposals were accepted by the Madras session of the Congress (December 1927).
- ▶ These were:
  - ▷ joint electorates in place of separate electorates with reserved seats for Muslims
  - ▷ one-third representation to Muslims in Central Legislative Assembly;
  - ▷ representation to Muslims in Punjab and Bengal in proportion to their population
  - ▷ formation of three new Muslim majority provinces— Sindh, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province.

### Hindu Mahasabha Demands



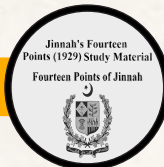
- ▶ Vehemently opposed to the proposals for creating new Muslim-majority provinces and reservation of seats for Muslims majorities in Punjab and Bengal (which would ensure Muslim control over legislatures in both).
- ▶ It demanded a strictly unitary structure.



### Amendments Proposed by Jinnah (1928)

- ▶ One-third representation to Muslims in the central legislature;
- ▶ Reservation to Muslims in Bengal and Punjab legislatures proportionate to their population, till adult suffrage was established; and
- ▶ Residual powers to provinces.
- ▶ These demands were not accommodated.

### Jinnah's Fourteen Points (1929)



1. Federal Constitution with residual powers to provinces.
2. Provincial autonomy.
3. No constitutional amendment by the centre without the concurrence of the states.
4. All legislatures and elected bodies to have adequate representation of Muslims in every province.
5. Adequate representation to Muslims in the services and in self-governing bodies.

6. One-third Muslim representation in the central legislature.
7. In any cabinet at the centre or in the provinces, one-third to be Muslims.
8. Separate electorates.
9. No bill or resolution in any legislature to be passed if three-fourths of a minority community consider such a bill or resolution to be against their interests.
10. Any territorial redistribution not to affect the Muslim majority in Punjab, Bengal and NWFP.
11. Separation of Sindh from Bombay.
12. Constitutional reforms in the NWFP and Baluchistan.
13. Full religious freedom to all communities.
14. Protection of Muslim rights in religion, culture, education and language.

## CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT AND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCES

### BACKGROUND:

#### Calcutta Session of Congress (Dec 1928)



- Nehru Report was approved.
- If the government did not accept a constitution based on dominion status by the end of the year, the Congress would demand complete independence.

#### Irwin's Declaration (Oct 1929)



- Before the Simon Commission report came out, the declaration by Lord Irwin was made.
- Stated that in their judgement it is implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the "natural issue of India's constitutional progress as they contemplated is the attainment of Dominion status".
- He also promised a Round Table conference after Simon Commission submitted its report.

#### Delhi Manifesto (1929)



- Put forward certain conditions for attending the Round Table Conference:

- ▷ That the purpose of the Round Table Conference should be not to determine whether or when dominion status was to be reached but to formulate a constitution for implementation of the dominion status
- ▷ That the Congress should have majority representation at the conference
- ▷ There should be a general amnesty for political prisoners and a policy of conciliation

## Lahore Congress (Dec 1929) and Purna Swaraj



- Jawaharlal Nehru was nominated the president for the Lahore session of the Congress. The following major decisions were taken at the Lahore session.
  - ▷ The Round Table Conference was to be boycotted.
  - ▷ **Complete independence** was declared as the aim of the Congress.
  - ▷ **Congress Working Committee was authorised to launch a programme of civil disobedience** including non-payment of taxes and all members of legislatures were asked to resign their seats.
  - ▷ January 26, 1930 was fixed as the first Independence (Swarajya) Day, to be celebrated everywhere.

## Gandhi's 11 demands



- To carry forward the mandate given by the Lahore Congress, Gandhi presented eleven demands to the government and gave an ultimatum of January 31, 1930 to accept or reject these demands. The demands were as follows:
  - **(a) Issues of General Interest:**
    - ▷ Reduce expenditure on Army and civil services by 50 per cent.
    - ▷ Introduce total prohibition.
    - ▷ Carry out reforms in Criminal Investigation Department (CID).
    - ▷ Change Arms Act allowing popular control of issue of firearms licences.
    - ▷ Release political prisoners.
    - ▷ Accept Postal Reservation Bill.
  - **(b) Specific Bourgeois Demands:**
    - ▷ Reduce rupee-sterling exchange ratio
    - ▷ Introduce textile protection.
    - ▷ Reserve coastal shipping for Indians.
  - **(c) Specific Peasant Demands:**
    - ▷ Reduce land revenue by 50 per cent.
    - ▷ Abolish salt tax and government's salt monopoly.

**Note:** With no positive response forthcoming from the government on these demands, the Congress Working Committee invested Gandhi with full powers to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement at a time and place of his choice.

## THE MOVEMENT:

### Launch of CDM



- ▶ Dandi March (Mar 2, 1930): Gandhi gave the following directions for future action:
  - ▷ Wherever possible civil disobedience of the salt law should be started.
  - ▷ Foreign liquor and cloth shops can be picketed.
  - ▷ We can refuse to pay taxes if we have the requisite strength.
  - ▷ Lawyers can give up practice.
  - ▷ Public can boycott law courts by refraining from litigation.
  - ▷ Government servants can resign from their posts.
  - ▷ All these should be subject to one condition—truth and non-violence as means to attain swaraj should be faithfully adhered to.
  - ▷ Local leaders should be obeyed after Gandhi's arrest.
- ▶ Gandhi's arrest came on May 4, 1930 when he had announced that he would lead a raid on Dharasana Salt Works on the west. After Gandhi's arrest, the CWC sanctioned:
  - ▷ Non-payment of revenue in ryotwari areas;
  - ▷ No-chowkidara-tax campaign in zamindari areas; and
  - ▷ Violation of forest laws in the Central Provinces.



## Satyagraha at Different Places



**Bihar:** A powerful no-chaukidari tax agitation replaced the salt satyagraha (owing to physical constraints in making salt).

**Peshawar: Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan** organised a volunteer brigade "Khudai Khidmatgars" or Red shirt movement.

**Assam:** A student strike against the Cunningham Circular, which banned students' participation in politics, was seen in May 1930.

**Gujarat:** A determined no-tax movement was organised here which included refusal to pay land revenue.

**Dharasana:** On May 21, 1930, Sarojini Naidu, Imam Sahib and Manilal took up the unfinished task of leading a raid on the Dharasana Salt Works.

**Malabar: K. Kelappan,** a Nair Congress leader famed for the Vaikom Satyagraha, organised salt marches.

**Tamil Nadu: C. Rajagopalachari** organised a march from Thiruchirapalli to Vedaranniyam on the Tanjore (or Thanjavur) coast to break the salt law.

### Manipur and Nagaland:

These areas took a brave part in the movement.

At the young age of thirteen, Rani Gaidinliu, a Naga spiritual leader, raised the banner of revolt against foreign rule.

**Assam:** A student strike against the Cunningham Circular, which banned students' participation in politics, was seen in May 1930.

**United Provinces** A no-revenue campaign was organised; a call was given to zamindars to refuse to pay revenue to the government. Under a no-rent campaign, a call was given to tenants against zamindars.

**Orissa:** Under Gopalbandhu Chaudhuri, a Gandhian leader, salt satyagraha proved effective in the coastal regions of Balasore, Cuttack and Puri districts.

**Andhra Region:** District salt marches were organised in east and west Godavari, Krishna and Guntur.

## Extent of Mass Participation



**Women:** Gandhi had specially asked women to play a leading part in the movement. Soon, they became a familiar sight, picketing outside liquor shops, opium dens and shops selling foreign cloth.



**Students:** Along with women, students and youth played the most prominent part in the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor.



**Muslims:** The Muslim participation was nowhere near the 1920-22 level because of appeals by Muslim leaders to stay away from the movement and because of active government encouragement to communal dissension. Still, some areas such as the NWFP saw an overwhelming participation.



**Tribals** Tribals were active participants in Central Provinces, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Workers participated in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Sholapur, etc. Peasants were active in the United Provinces, Bihar and Gujarat.

**Note:** July 1930: The viceroy, Lord Irwin, suggested a round table conference and reiterated the goal of dominion status.

## ROUND TABLE CONFERENCES:

### 1st RTC (Nov 1930 and Jan 1931)

- ▶ The Congress and some prominent business leaders refused to attend, but many other groups of Indians were represented at the conference.
  - ▷ Indian princely states were represented by the Maharajas of various princely states.
  - ▷ Muslim League sent Aga Khan III (leader of British-Indian delegation), Muhammad Ali Jinnah among others.
  - ▷ Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz and Radhabai Subbarayan represented Women.
  - ▷ The Depressed Classes were represented by B.R. Ambedkar and Rettama Srinivasan.
  - ▷ Labour was represented by N.M. Joshi and B. Shiva Rao.
- ▶ Nothing much was achieved at the conference.

### 2nd RTC (Sep 1931 to Dec 1931)

- ▶ Before the 2nd RTC, the **Gandhi-Irwin** Pact was signed in Mar 1931.
- ▶ In March 1931, a special session of the Congress was held at **Karachi to endorse the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.**
- ▶ INC nominated Gandhi as its sole representative for the 2nd RTC.
- ▶ A. Rangaswami Iyengar and Madan Mohan Malaviya were also there.
- ▶ Indian princely states were represented by Maharajas of various princely states
- ▶ The Muslims were represented by Aga Khan III, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, among others.

- Hindu groups were represented by M.R. Jayakar, B.S. Moonje and Diwan Bahadur Raja Narendra Nath.
- The Depressed Classes were represented by B.R. Ambedkar and Rettamalai Srinivasan.
- Industry was represented by Ghanshyam Das Birla, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas and Maneckji Dadabhoy.
- Labour was represented by N. M. Joshi, B. Shiva Rao and V. V. Giri.
- The representatives for Indian women were Sarojini Naidu, Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz and Radhabai Subbarayan.
- No substantial result regarding India's constitutional future came out of it.

### 3rd RTC (Nov 1932 to Dec 1932)

- It was not attended by the Indian National Congress and Gandhi.
- It was ignored by most other Indian leaders.
- Indian princely states were represented by Maharajas of various princely states
- Again, like in the two previous conferences, little was achieved.



### Gandhi-Irwin Pact (Mar 1931): Irwin on behalf of the government agreed on—

- Immediate release of all political prisoners not convicted of violence;
- Remission of all fines not yet collected;
- Return of all lands not yet sold to third parties;
- Lenient treatment to those government servants who had resigned;
- Right to make salt in coastal villages for personal consumption (not for sale);
- Right to peaceful and non-aggressive picketing; and
- Withdrawal of emergency ordinances.

### The viceroy, however, turned down two of Gandhi's demands—

- Public inquiry into police excesses, and
- Commutation of Bhagat Singh and his comrades' death sentence to life sentence.

### Gandhi on behalf of the Congress agreed—

- To suspend the civil disobedience movement, and
- To participate in the next RTC.

**Note:** In Karachi session(1931), two resolutions were adopted—one on Fundamental Rights and the other on National Economic Programme.

### Withdrawal of CDM

- On the failure of the 2nd RTC, the CWC decided on Dec 29, 1931 to resume the CDM.
- On Jan 4, 1932, Gandhi was arrested.

- ▶ Repressive ordinances were issued; Congress organisations at all levels were banned.
- ▶ In April 1934, Gandhi withdrew the CDM.

## COMMUNAL AWARD

(Announced by the British prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald, on August 16, 1932)

### Main Provisions:

- ▶ Muslims, Europeans, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, depressed classes, women, and even the Marathas were to get separate electorates. Such an arrangement for the depressed classes was to be made for a period of 20 years.
- ▶ In the provincial legislatures, the seats were to be distributed on communal basis.
- ▶ The existing seats of the provincial legislatures were to be doubled.
- ▶ The Muslims, wherever they were in minority, were to be granted a weightage.
- ▶ Except in the North West Frontier Province, 3 per cent seats were to be reserved for women in all provinces.
- ▶ The depressed classes to be declared/accorded the status of minority.
- ▶ The depressed classes were to get 'double vote', one to be used through separate electorates and the other to be used in the general electorates.
- ▶ Allocation of seats were to be made for labourers, landlords, traders and industrialists.
- ▶ In the province of Bombay, 7 seats were to be allocated for the Marathas.

### Congress Stand:

Though opposed to separate electorates, the Congress was not in favour of changing the Communal Award without the consent of the minorities. Thus the Congress decided neither to accept it nor to reject it.

### Gandhi's Response

Gandhi saw the Communal Award as an attack on Indian unity and nationalism. He demanded that the depressed classes be elected through joint and if possible a wider electorate through universal franchise. And to press his demands, he went on an indefinite fast on September 20, 1932.

### Poona Pact

Signed by B.R. Ambedkar on behalf of the depressed classes on September 24, 1932, the Poona Pact abandoned the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes. But the seats reserved for the depressed classes were increased from 71 to 147 in provincial legislatures and to 18 per cent of the total in the Central Legislature. The Poona Pact was accepted by the government as an amendment to the Communal Award.

**Note:** Gandhi set up All India Anti-Untouchability League in 1932 and started weekly Harijan in 1933.

## DEBATES ON THE FUTURE STRATEGY AFTER CDM (2-STAGE DEBATE)

### First Stage debate:

On the course the national movement should take in the immediate future, i.e., during the phase of non-mass struggle (1934-35). Three perspectives:

1. Constructive work on Gandhian lines.
2. A constitutional struggle and participation in elections to the Central Legislature (due in 1934).
3. A strong leftist trend within the Congress, represented by Nehru, was critical of both constructive work and council entry. Instead, it favoured resumption and continuation of non-constitutional mass struggle.

Gandhi conciliated the proponents of council entry by acceding to their basic demand of permission to enter the legislatures. In the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly held in November 1934, the Congress captured 45 out of 75 seats reserved for Indians.

Government of India Act, 1935: It was unanimously rejected by the Congress. The Hindu Mahasabha and the National Liberal Foundation, however, declared themselves in favour of the working of the 1935 Act in the central as well as at the provincial level.

### Second stage Debate:

In early 1937, elections to provincial assemblies were announced and once again the debate on the future strategy to be adopted by the nationalists began.

There was full agreement that the Congress should fight these elections on the basis of a detailed political and economic programme.

**Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Bose, and Congress socialists and communists were opposed to office acceptance** and thereby in the working of the 1935 Act because they argued that it would negate the rejection of the Act by the nationalists.

The proponents of office acceptance argued that they were equally committed to combating the 1935 Act, but work in legislatures was to be only a short-term tactic since option of a mass movement was not available at the time. The administrative field should not be left open to pro-government reactionary forces.

In its sessions at Lucknow in early 1936 and Faizpur in late 1937, the Congress decided to fight elections and postpone the decision on office acceptance to the postelection phase.

The Congress won 716 out of 1,161 seats it contested. It got a majority in all provinces, except in Bengal, Assam, Punjab, Sindh and the NWFP, and emerged as the largest party in Bengal, Assam and the NWFP.

# CONGRESS RULE IN PROVINCES

Congress ministries were formed in Bombay, Madras, Central Provinces, Orissa, United Provinces, Bihar and later in the NWFP and Assam also. In the 28 months of Congress rule in the provinces, there were some efforts made for people's welfare.

## Reforms related to Civil Liberties

- Laws giving emergency powers were repealed.
- Ban on illegal organisations, such as the Hindustan Seva Dal and Youth Leagues, and on certain books and journals was lifted.
- Press restrictions were lifted.
- Newspapers were taken out of black lists.
- Confiscated arms and arms licences were restored.
- Police powers were curbed and the CID stopped shadowing politicians.
- Political prisoners and revolutionaries were released, and deportation and internment orders were revoked.
- In Bombay lands confiscated by the government during the Civil Disobedience Movement were restored.
- Pensions of officials associated with the Civil Disobedience Movement were restored.



## Social Welfare Reforms

- Prohibition imposed in certain areas. Measures for welfare of Harijans taken—temple entry, use of public facilities, scholarships, an increase in their numbers in government service and police, etc.
- Attention given to primary, technical and higher education and to public health and sanitation.
- Encouragement given to khadi through subsidies and other measures.
- Prison reforms undertaken.
- Encouragement given to indigenous enterprises.
- Efforts taken to develop planning through National Planning Committee set up under Congress president Subhash Bose in 1938.



**Note:** The Congress ministries resigned in October 1939 after the outbreak of the Second World War.

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