

NCERT Notes: The Lucknow Pact, 1916

The Lucknow Pact is an agreement between the Indian National Congress (INC) and the All India Muslim League reached at a joint session of both the parties held at Lucknow in 1916. The pact was important in that it enhanced the League's power in Indian politics and established communalism as an unavoidable part of Indian politics despite the apparent bonhomie between the two communities at the session.

Background to Lucknow Pact

- When the Muslim League was formed in 1906, it was a relatively moderate organisation with a pro-British stance.
- After the First World War, the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford had solicited reform suggestions from Indians in return for the Indian support to the British war effort.
- The Muslim League led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah wanted to use this opportunity to press for constitutional reforms through a joint Hindu-Muslim platform.
- Jinnah was then a member of both the parties and he was largely responsible for the Pact.
- In December 1915, the extremists led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the moderates led by Gopal Krishna Gokhale met the leaders of the League at Bombay.
- This was the first time that leaders of both the INC and the Muslim League were meeting for a joint session.
- At the meeting, the leaders consulted with each other and drafted a set of demands for constitutional reforms.
- In October 1916, 19 elected Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council addressed a memorandum to the Viceroy seeking reforms.
- In November 1916, leaders from both the parties met again in Calcutta and discussed and amended the suggestions.
- Finally, at their respective annual sessions held at Lucknow in December 1916, the INC and the League confirmed the agreement. This came to be known as the Lucknow Pact.
- For his efforts, Sarojini Naidu gave Jinnah the title 'the Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity.'

Reforms suggested in the Lucknow Pact

- Self-government in India.
- Abolition of the Indian Council.
- Separation of the executive from the judiciary.
- Salaries of the Secretary of State for Indian Affairs to be paid from British coffers and not the Indian funds.
- 1/3rd representation to be given to Muslims in the Central Government.
- The number of Muslims in the provincial legislatures to be laid down for each province.
- Separate electorates for all communities until a joint electorate is demanded by all.

- Introduction of a system of weightage for minority representation (it implied giving minorities more representation than their share in the population).
- Increasing the term of the Legislative Council to 5 years.
- Half the members of the Imperial Legislative Council to be Indians.
- All elected members to be elected directly on the basis of adult franchise. 4/5th of the members of the provincial legislatures to be elected and 1/5th to be nominated.
- Members of the Legislative Council to elect their President themselves.

Results of Lucknow Pact

- The Lucknow Pact gave the impression of a Hindu-Muslim unity in the national political scene. But it was only an impression and short-lived.
- The agreement between the parties on a separate communal electorate formally established communal politics in India.
- Through this pact, the INC also tacitly accepted that India consisted of two different communities with different interests.
- This pact pushed the hitherto less relevant Muslim League into the forefront of Indian politics along with the Congress Party.