**Simla Conference (1906)**

**Background:**

In 1892, the Indian Council Act was introduced, which made the Indian Muslims dissatisfied as the Act did not represent the Muslims in a fair manner or a good light. Hence, the Muslims from the subcontinent were prepared and willing to strive for more power.

In 1905, the elections were held in Britain, in which the liberal party won. Because the political pressure was growing and social unrest was increasing, the government announced that they would introduce new political reforms in India.

In the year 1906, John Morley of Britain, who was working for the Indian affairs, made an announcement that the British government would be increasing the number of seats for the local parties of India in the councils (central and provincial) and, consequently, their authority would also increase. This would also give more representation to the local people in the government of India because of their elections.

The announcement made by John Morley increased the distress of Muslims, and the Muslims grew anxious because if these new reforms were going to be executed, which was what the Congress wanted, then this would result in increased suppression and crushing of the Muslims under the rulership of the Hindu community, and already the Hindu-Muslim hostility was on its verge. The leaders of the Muslim community recognized that they needed to have a number of reserved seats in all the councils (main level and provincial level) to ensure the protection and representation of the Muslim community.

Many Muslims highlighted this announcement of John Morley to Nawab Mohsin ul-Malik, who was a well-known personality and was currently working in Mohammadan Anglo Oriental College, Aligarh. Nawab Sahib then sent word to the principal of Aligarh College in which he tried to convey his concerns about these new developments that would be made in the reforms. He viewed that if combined elections were to be held, this would result in Hindus filling up all the seats of the legislature due to their majority, and Muslims would not get a single seat and suffer at the hands of the Hindus.

He asked the principal to further his request to the new viceroy of India, Lord Minto, whose station at the time was based in Simla, to meet a Muslim delegation to discuss the forthcoming constitutional reforms. The principal contacted the viceroy and sent word back to Nawab Sahib that the viceroy responded positively and was willing to get together with the delegation and speak to them about the new reforms.

After this encounter with the principal, Nawab Mohsin ul-Malik went ahead and worked hard, held meetings within the Muslim community to set up a well-presented delegation to meet the viceroy. At last, a delegation made up of 35 prominent and well-respected leaders of the Muslims of the subcontinent, led by Sir Aga Khan and Nawab Mohsin ul-Malik, who served as a secretary, set out to meet the viceroy in Simla in the year 1906. The delegation included members from all over India, from all the central provinces, including Sindh, Punjab, Bengal, Deccan etc. These personalities were considered to be from the elite class of the Muslim community, but majority of them had been previously associated with the Aligarh movement. This delegation was the most representative Muslim delegation ever made.

**Main Demands:**

The deputation demanded the following:

* Muslim seats in the legislatures should be more than their population due to their importance
* Muslims should have more representation in the army
* Muslims should have reserved seats (quota system) in government jobs
* There should be seats reserved for Muslims in courts
* Representation in Viceroy Executive Council
* The primary demand was that a separate electorate system is introduced for the Muslims; this would mean that Hindus would vote for a Hindu candidate and Muslims would vote for a Muslim candidate because, during this time, the Muslims were in the minority.
* They also emphasized to the British that they should not view Muslims just in numerical terms but should consider their history and the contributions Muslims had made to the British.

**Result:**

Lord Minto wanted to support the Muslims, and he also wanted support from the Muslims due to their improved relations, so he assured the Muslim delegation that as long as he was the viceroy of India, he would ensure that the national rights of Muslims would be preserved, and so he accepted most of the demands of the Muslims, and this Simla deputation proved to be a great victory for the Muslims and an important turning point for the Muslim's political state.

But after learning of the Simla Deputation, the Congress became furious, and so in response to the Muslim deputation, Congress also sent out their delegation, which was led by Feroz Shah Mehta, who rejected all of the proposals presented by the Muslims, and due to this, the Hindu-Muslim hostility increased as this entirely and for the final time revealed to the Muslims just how dishonest and untrustworthy the Hindus were with them because this deputation did not take any rights away from the Hindus but only increased the rights of Muslims and only concerned the Muslims, but Hindus had a problem with that as well. This showed that the Hindus had a general problem with the Muslims, and this action by Congress exposed the true intentions of the Hindus.

**Importance:**

Simla conference turned out to be a significant landmark for the Muslims because this was the first systematic attempt by the Muslims to talk about their rights and present their demands to the British government and seek their acceptance. This conference also improved the relations of Muslims with the British and to forget about their previous bad feelings towards each other since the war on independence in 1857, in which the Hindus blamed the Muslims. The credit also goes to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, whose efforts helped clear the disagreements among the Muslim community and the British government.

This conference further led to a separate electorate for Muslims, which would ensure that Muslims would not be poorly treated by the Hindus. This gave them a separate identity, and recognition from the British government in all electoral bodies. It also laid the foundations for future demands from the Muslims about their separate country.

It also proved to be the foundation for the making of an exclusive party, the All-Indian Muslim League in the same year after this conference. Muslims realized that Congress was not representing the Muslims of the subcontinents. They would realize to form their political party to protect the rights of Indian Muslims. The British government did not object to it, which further proved their better relations with them.

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