



BHARATHIDASAN UNIVERSITY

Tiruchirappalli- 620024,

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Programme: FIVE-YEAR INTEGRATED M.A HISTORY

- Course Title: COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM IN MODERN INDIA
- Course Code: CO02

UNIT - IV

Nationalist Advances: 1928-1939

Simon Commission and Nehru Report

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Simon Commission (1928)

- The Indian Statutory Commission also known as 'Simon Commission', was a group of seven Members of Parliament under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon.
- The commission arrived in British India in 1928 to study constitutional reform in Britain's largest and most important possession.
- Diarchy was introduced in India by the Government of India Act 1919. The Act also promised that a commission would be appointed after 10 years to review the working and progress made on the measures taken through the Act.

- The Indian people and leaders wanted a reform of the diarchy form of government.
- The Conservative Party-led government in the UK feared a defeat at the hands of the Labour Party in the elections due, and so hastened the appointment of a commission in 1928, even though it was due only in 1929 as per the 1919 Act.
- The Commission was composed entirely of British members with not a single Indian member being included in it. This was considered as an insult to Indians.

Indian reactions to Simon Commission

- Indians were outraged at their exclusion from the Commission.
- The Congress Party decided to boycott the Commission at their session at Madras.
- The Muslim League led by M A Jinnah also boycotted it.
- The Justice Party in the South decided to side with the government on this issue.

- When the Commission landed in February 1928, there were mass protests, hartals and black flag demonstrations all over the country.
- People were chanting the slogan, 'Simon, Go Back.'
- The police resorted to lathi charges to suppress the movement.

- In Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai, who was leading the demonstration against the Simon Commission, was brutally lathi-charged.
- He died later that year due to injuries sustained then.
- Bhagat Singh and Rajguru fired bullets and killed an officer named Saunders in order to avenge the death of Lala Lajpat Rai.

Nehru Report (1928)

Background

- When the Simon Commission came to India in 1928, it was vehemently opposed by Indians especially the Congress Party for the lack of a single Indian in the Commission.
- So, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead challenged the Indian leaders to draft a constitution for India, implying that Indians were not capable of drafting a constitution.
- The political leaders accepted this challenge and a committee was appointed with the task of drafting a constitution.

- This committee was headed by Motilal Nehru with Jawaharlal Nehru as the Secretary.
- Other members were Ali Imam, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mangal Singh, M S Aney, Subhas Chandra Bose, Shuaib Qureshi and G R Pradhan.
- The draft constitution prepared by the committee was called the Nehru Committee Report or Nehru Report. The report was submitted at the Lucknow session of the all-party conference on August 28, 1928.
- This was the first major attempt by Indians to draft a constitution for themselves.

Recommendations of the Nehru Report

- Dominion status for India within the British Commonwealth.
- Nineteen fundamental rights including the right to vote for men and women above 21 years of age, unless disqualified.
- Equal rights for men and women as citizens.
- No state religion.
- No separate electorates for any community. It did provide for the reservation of minority seats. It provided for reservations for seats for Muslims at the centre and in provinces where they were in a minority and not in Bengal and Punjab. Similarly, it provided for reservations for non-Muslims in the NWFP.

- A federal form of government with residual powers with the centre.
- Governor-General to be the constitutional head of India. He would be appointed by the British monarch.
- A proposal for the creation of a Supreme Court.
- The provinces would be created along linguistic lines.
- The language of the country would be Indian, written either in Devanagari (Sanskrit/Hindi), Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali, Marathi or Gujarati in character. Usage of English to be permitted.