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# The 106-Year-Old Paradox, Lucknow Pact, A Compromise Of Disparity In Unity?

Authored By- Dibya Prakash Lahiri

## Abstract

*One of the final hits which showed the path of unity between two of the most fiery and active communities of the Indian Peninsula who have been friendly enemies over the period of time displayed one of their most co-incidental unity which became known to be one of the most incredible secession to both the British regime as well as the Moderates back in the day, the mighty agreement which came to be called the Pact signed in Lucknow in 1916 aka the Lucknow Pact. The pact was signed between the two of the most active political movements which existed during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, The Muslim League and The Indian National Congress who came together to vitiate the attitude of the British regime towards the natives of the land(living before the arrival of the Saxons) as well as provide a way through which they could represent and enact in their Government. The Pact in itself is considered to be the revival of the movement for the modern day "Grand Old Party" as well as a significant change that was entrenched post the annulment of the partition of Bengal along with the serving of the strategic needs of the British Regime to find reliance in the ongoing First World War. The article looks into the premises that were culminating factors resulting in such a pact along with the examination of the actions taken by both the parties to ensure actions for their futuristic plans. The paper also looks into the consequences which came in handy for both the parties as well as if there were any benefits that were actually helping the people.*

## **Introduction:**

The British rule of over two-centuries was a place full of commotion which held a brand which commenced from the different aides of conquering to the place of cultural rejig which was constant to giving a different identity which acts as an area which intends to provide for the ways that mean to provide various communities a sense of demean to finally introducing a different society which was the amalgamation of the Western identity fitting with the Medieval India which itself was a furthered amalgamation. The British rule held its own position which was giving a significant change to the two major living populations of the Sub-continent. Widening its range from the Quetta to Mandalay, the sub-continent in itself held a very high-hand which was contributed through the seven centuries long rule of Turks in India and the constant battles fought which was mainly inclined towards providing the idea of not bowing before anyone. The constant battles between Hindus and Mohammedans, with the vicious tactics of the British Elite rulers led to the perfect subservience by the two against the backdrop of validating each other's sovereignty in the past. The subservience came in with a price which was the sufferings of millions of commoners, who were hampered with their daily bread and butter, a huge economical drainage which dragged the country to poverty at the time of independence, incoming of laws which were based on the western culture but meant too fit in the Indians in accordance to the laws i.e. draconian laws as well as deaths of millions of Indians in a struggle to bring in the change and feel the fresh breathe of freedom which they dreamt of for over centuries.

## **Situation Before The Pact:**

Historically speaking, the tensed situation between the members of Hindus and Mohammedans existed for a long time which were subliming with not much of an active aggression. However, the late nineteenth century turned out to be an impactful game changer in terms of a downfall in the relationship between the Hindus and Mohammedans with the evolution and constant efforts being persuaded by Sir Saiyid Ahmed Khan and Saiyid Ameer Ali to discourage the Indian Mohammedans from attending and actively taking part in the newly formed movement called the Indian National Congress. The constant effort was made in terms of providing the Mohammedans a way with which they could hold on to their separate identity which would give them the

existence sought by Khan and Ali. To enable such thought process, there was a dire need to imply and enunciate support from the masters i.e. the British regime. The supportive action was given in by the British Government for associations which will be independent to the identity of oneness of Hindus and Mohammedans. Thus, for the professional, working and land holding Mohammedans, the institutions such as Mohammedan Education Conference and Central National Muhammadan Association.<sup>1</sup>

## **Formation Of The All India Muslim League**

The idea of holding out such ideas as well as providing for a thorough Islamic Unity, cutting to two decades later, with the coming of the liberal British Government and accessing to the partition of the province of Bengal based on demography, this resulted in fiery actions by the Congress which sought to find way that will provide functioning in the legislatures and provincial councils where the native Indians could directly take part in the day-to-day decision making. Cut to a year later in 1906, in the annual conference of the Mohammedan Educational Conference in Dhaka led to the formation of the All-India-Muslim League which was formed to protect the Rights of the Indian Muslims as they were “inadequately represented by the Indian National Congress and were in dire need of a proper representation.” With the establishment of Muslim League, in 1908 at the Dhaka Conference, the Nawab of Dhaka, Aga Khan became the leader of the Muslim League and established a 40 member-committee at the Aligarh Session. The league was successfully thwarting towards its target of pacifying the underlying tension wherein Post the Partition, the effect and actions of Congress which will result in special action of separate electorates as well as more involvement in the day to day activities of the Government.

The turning point in the life of the Mohammedans in the sub-continent as well as for the Muslim league came in with the annulment of the Partition of Bengal in 1911 wherein the dream of the Mohammedans ended with a unification of Bengal. The unification of Bengal made them lose hope in the British Regime as they were always expected to provide for them which was passed on by the legacy of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. The Muslim League as well as other bodies who were appalled by such actions wanted to find a common point which would help them in keeping the regime under the check as well as get support from the Indian Mohammedans.

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh F. Owen, The Negotiations of Lucknow Pact, The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 31 No.3, (May 1972), pp. 562.

## **The Lucknow Pact:**

### **Premises to the Pact:**

As much as the Muslim League was affected along with the Mohammedans of the Sub-continent due to the annulment of the Partition as well as the action which was intending to move towards the Ottoman Empire by the Regime and the behaviour towards the Caliphate was causing an alleged choking of the environment and they needed a moment or a validation that would fit their existence. The Balkan war which commenced hindered the mighty Ottomans to continue and remain in existence as the war liberated the regions of Albania, Bosnia and Serbia from the realms of the Sultans and Pashas, it is suggested that the British were the frontrunners for the need to liberate the Balkans and sought for a power structure which gave importance for the Mohammedans as a threat to their legacy. Apart from the Balkan warfare, there was another movement which was brewing and preparing to go for a massive outreach, the Pan-Islam movement. The Pan-Islam movement commenced in Turkey under the leadership of Sultan Mehmed VI wherein the Mohammedans of the world were expected to provide and follow the lead of the Sultan. This was influential on the Indian Mohammedans as they were inspired by the regime of Ottomans in Turkey along with seeing an opportunity to rebel and find a comfort against the English Government.<sup>2</sup> For the Muslim League, being less than a decade old, was to garner as much position to cut out the support of Muslims from the Congress as well as provide a way wherein they will be able to cut the influential leaders of the Congress such as Muhammad Ali- Jinnah. The cut short loss as well as the annulment of the Partition became a bigger sham as well as providing for the best way out.

Not only did the League suffer from the action, there was also an action which was decimating the inner structure of the Congress which was due to the harsh and hostile movements that existed between the Moderates and the Extremists. This is also known to be one of the key factors that entailed the downfall of the Congress and a much-needed revival was on the cards. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, one of the flagbearers of the Extremists in Congress realised the importance of holding an important position in terms of presenting a united Congress with both the factions take cognitive action. However, what was not recognised is the fact that the Unity was not only needed to provide a revival to the congress for its own good but also to pave way for a structure that

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<sup>2</sup> Pan-Islamic Movement, 1914.

could capture the attention of the Indian population and retain the support which was being provided. The coming in of the First World War presented itself as the opportunity for the Indians to seek for more involvement in the Government for the betterment was acting out better due to the reasoning of the act that the British received a huge amount of appreciation and support from the Indians in the war.

To present a stronger case, the leaders of both the movement-turned parties realised to necessitate the involvement and a united front which will give a strong message to both the Government as well as to the people of India. This, would garner the public supporter as well as providing the way out which will be benefitting the overall intention of the people.

## The Pact

During the peak time of the First World War, the time came forward for the two of the sworn enemies, who presented nothing but hostilities between each other moved forward to present an idea which holds on to unity and take active participation in the regime of a colonial master so as to help the people and get adequate representation. The negotiations between the two parties commenced with the idea of holding the sessions in 1915 wherein both the parties held plenary sessions for the purpose of making a united proposition as to how the process will be carried out. The unification, however required a bigger approach as a majority was required by the Seculars of Muslim League who intended to create a better rapporteur with the Congress. Jinnah and Wazir Hasan were provided the support of Aga Khan, the leader of the Muslim League to ensure that there remains no stone unturned to work under such circumstances wherein the unity is outright and not filled with any discrepancies.

The negotiations began in October 1915 with both parties holding a joint session together in December 1915 wherein they commenced on the decision to make a joint statement which would be further put to the Government which was being run by the British Regime. The negotiation came down to the points which included several discussions and providing a way with which they are able to give their demands into several articulating points which are as follows:

- ➔ Supporting the idea of Self-Government in India.
- ➔ Demand for the Abolition of the Indian Council.
- ➔ The division and separation of Judiciary from Executive.
- ➔ Secretary of State for Indian Affairs and his salary was to be paid from the British treasury and not the Indian treasury.

- Mohammedans to be provided with 1/3<sup>rd</sup> Representation in the functions of Central Government.
- Number of Muslims in each of the provincial legislatures were to be specifically mentioned.
- Separate electorates are necessitated to be formed which will be on a temporary basis until and unless there is a joint election conducted.
- Increasing the term of Legislative Council to five years.
- The four-fifth of the members in the council were to be elected and one-fifth were to be nominated.

The pact was signed upon these agreements in December 1916 which were meant to be provided for the purpose of providing for a good quality of structuring that would enable them to enter any such agreements. The question was not only involving in creating a unity but also to ensure the right purpose for which such a pact has been signed and the outreach is vast.

### **Signing Of The Pact:**

One of the most effective functioning of the Lucknow pact was of the fact that it endured the best possible system and bargain for the Mohammedans and the bane of leaders who endured the best possible action in terms of uniting a country and showing that there exists a single structure that ensures and secures the unity in the nation with a common struggle which was a matter of heated discussion amongst the critics of the pact. Following are the gains which were received by the signing of the pacts:

- The Mohammedans got fixed proportions of seats that ranged from 15% in the Legislative Council seats in Madras and Central Province to half of the total representation in the state of Punjab.
- In Bengal, despite having a considerable population, the League could only receive for 40% of the total representation for Mohammedans.
- Mohammedans could have one-third of the total seats in the Imperial Legislative Council.
- The Mohammedans could elect their representatives through separate electorates and thus did not have the power or permission to vote in the non-Mohammedan constituencies.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Lucknow Pact, Muslim League and Indian National Congress, December 1916.

The pact, in a way went ahead with the concept of providing the idea which was to secure the condition of the Mohammedans as well as provide a way out which will help them in earning a strategic role as well as provide for the adequate representation which was known to be “repenting” for the inadequacy of representation in the Indian society they were provided with as well as structure that was laid to enunciate the best possible actions which will put them on the same level. The pact, however wasn’t just meant for the purpose of giving representation to the Mohammedans but also to bring a unity amongst the two communities through their representatives.

### **Consequences Of The Pact:**

The pact was considered to be first of its kind wherein it played an important role in terms of providing a unity and mainly give out a way which would display the strength between the Hindus and Mohammedans. This can also be considered of importance and understanding the circumstances which prevailed while the drafting the pact. However, after a year long deliberation, the pact turned out to be a success. However, the quantum of success cannot be determined by the greatness or the benefits that were to be reaped.

The Lucknow pact, by many is considered to be a break agreement, as the Muslim League kept its identity different from the Congress. As mentioned, the Muslim League kept its identity distinctive and advocated just for the rights of Mohammedans and not Hindus which showed the outright disparity it kept for itself.

One can say, that the ideal expectation of the people could be laid down as the native Indians were granted powers to make and unmake ministers. The leaders now could easily form coalitions and actively take part in the Government of the Provincial council as well as make decision make an essential habit which is considered to be the ideal case and condition for the development of the land.

However, the realisation of the consequences of the pact commenced with the realisation once made during the Southborough Committee which was established after the pact.<sup>4</sup>

The committee consisted of three members, Surendranath Bannerjea, V S Srinivasa Sastri and Sahibzada Aftab Ahmed Khan who did the touring of the country post the pact and the

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<sup>4</sup> Southborough Franchise Committee, 1918.

agreements made along with the interactions that existed with the idea of keeping a check on the progress made due to commencement of newer reforms. The observations which were made during the committee created a lot of disagreements amongst the Congressman, who sought and laid different opinions which would be keeping an eye out for the overall purpose and existence. Many laid the importance of removing the concept of separate electorate such as the leaders of United Province of Congress lead by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya as well as Pandit Motilal Nehru. They suggested to keep the pact intact but remove the concept of Separate electorate as it would sow the seeds for a division amongst the communities and hinder the concept of United Indians.<sup>5</sup>

The other leaders suggested for a complete eradication of the pact and opposing the actions of the league. The emphasis was clearly being made for an establishment which would hold joint electorate with reservation but completely removing the idea of separate electorate. The concept of Separate electorate was made by the leaders who held power control as well as created an understanding of what one can constitute to be an electoral reformation and then proceed to destroy the structure of a United Country.

The consequence which one can always understand and see with a broader perspective as to why the pact should not have taken place as the creation of two-nations was sown here at this pact which distinctively was apprised by the concept of Separate electorate. The separate electorate acted as a guiding light for the establishment of what can be called the modern-day Pakistan.

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<sup>5</sup> The Reforms Committee, 1919, Page 111.

## Conclusion

The idea of considering a pact which would entice and bring about a drastic change in the structure and the freedom movement of the country. The pact supposedly looked at a better outlook which in itself would be gifting bigger and better benefits and thus reducing the potential outreach of the leaders who could bat for a unified country. The pact seemed to have benefited only a few in hands which includes only the selective members of the Muslim League as well as went ahead to cause greater harm than good. The process of understanding and creating structure that is more inclined towards harming the people ended up in destroying the unity. The idea was to divide the country on communal lines with an officiating factor through this fact which legitimised the British Government to take necessary actions which necessitated no good but rather more harm. Post the dissolution of the pact, there were several leaders who sought to provide a way which shall help and endure such circumstances that will help the leaders of the future to fight for a greater good. Modern-day times must endure and understand such circumstances which produce a tactical understanding of such moves which provide a way which is a two-way road and benefits rather than one person or a community. Being the enemies or sworn hostile opposition shall not be a big factor but the idea of providing benefits must be recognised. The idea is not only to provide a structure which is concrete but also which has selflessness than selfishness. The deeper prospectus must be seen and observed for a longer period of time, otherwise the damage which will take place is going to be much more stronger and harmful that goes on to show that there remains a lot of opening which benefits all the sides and is meant to provide a better future.