

Delhi Muslim Proposals

Considering separate electorates to be the main hindrance in improving Hindu-Muslim relations, Quaid-i-Azam proposed that if the Hindus agreed to provide certain safeguards, the Muslims would give up this demand. Consequently, the proposals were formally approved at a conference held by the Muslims in 1927 at Delhi, and are now called “The Delhi-Muslim Proposals”.

Following are the safeguards that were proposed:

- The formation of a separate province of Sindh.
- Introduction of reforms in the North West Frontier Province and in Baluchistan on the same footing as in other provinces.
- Unless and until the above proposals were implemented, the Muslims would never surrender the right of their representation through separate electorates. Muslims would be willing to abandon separate electorates in favor of joint electorates with the reservation of seats fixed in proportion to the population of different communities, if the above two proposals were implemented to the full satisfaction of Muslims and also if the following proposals were accepted.
- Hindu minorities in Sindh, Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province be accorded the same concessions in the form of reservation of seats over and above the proportion of their population as Muslims would get in Hindu majority provinces.
- Muslim representation in the Central Legislature would not be less than one-third.
- In addition to provisions like religious freedom, there was to be a further guarantee in the constitution that on communal matters no bill or resolution would be considered or passed if three-fourth of the members of the community concerned were opposed to it.

These proposals were to be accepted or rejected in toto. So, in effect, the Muslims agreed to give up the separate electorates in form of the reservation of seats. Unfortunately, the Congress first accepted but later rejected the proposals.

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In order to break the ice and to bridge the gulf between the Muslims League and Congress so that they could present common demands before the British for the legislation of the new Act, a group of prominent Muslims, mostly members of the two chambers of the central met at Delhi on March 20, 1927. M.A. Jinnah presided over the session. The proceedings were held in camera and lasted for almost seven hours. They knew that the greatest constitutional contention between Muslim League and Congress was the matter of electorate. Congress propagated joint electorates as to them separate electorates would have weakened the foundations of the Indian nationalism. Whereas Muslim League out of their insecurity of undermined representation were not ready to let go of their demand for separate electorate. Jinnah and team realized that they could only convince the Congress to accept a common agenda if they withdrew the League's demand of Separate electorate. They discussed and tried to chalk out the conditions following which the system of Joint Electorates could be accepted. After a prolonged discussion it was unanimously resolved that League should accept a settlement with the Congress on the basis of certain proposals; the concluded agreement came to be known as Delhi Proposals. Jinnah and company declared that they would withdraw the demand of Separate Electorates provided the following demands will be accepted by the Congress:

- Sind should be separated from Bombay and should be constituted into an independent province.
- Reforms should be introduced in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan on the same footing as in any other province of India.
- Reservation of seats according to the population for different communities in the Punjab and Bengal.
- Muslims should be given 1/3rd representation in the Central Legislature.

The relinquishment of the right to separate electorate was an unprecedented concession by the Muslims and it was a major achievement of Jinnah to have convinced his colleagues to concede this. It was the first time that the Muslim League had agreed to joint electorates and would not do so ever again. The Muslim League was, however, divided because of these proposals and

prominent Muslim League leaders, mainly from the Punjab, under the leadership of Sir Muhammad Shafi, decided to part away for the Jinnah Group.