

Q: Examine those provisions of Nehru report which affected Muslims. What was Muslim response to these provisions.

## 1) Introduction

The Nehru Report is an important document in the constitutional history of the sub-continent which helps in understanding the nature of Hindu Nationalism. It was the report, which demanded that India be given dominion status, was discussed by Congress. In order to provide India dominion status inside the British Commonwealth, the Nehru Report's main objective was to achieve. Despite many hurdles, the Nehru Committee completed its task and its report commonly known as Nehru Report was presented in the fourth session of All Parties Conference held in August 1928.

## 2) Nehru Report History

Under the act of 1919, new reforms were to be introduced in India by the British Government after every 10 years. For this purpose Simon Commission was sent to India in 1927. Most of the Indian Political parties decided to boycott the Commission on the plea that it lacked Indian representation. Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for Indian Affairs, challenged the Indians, "If they have any political capability and competence then



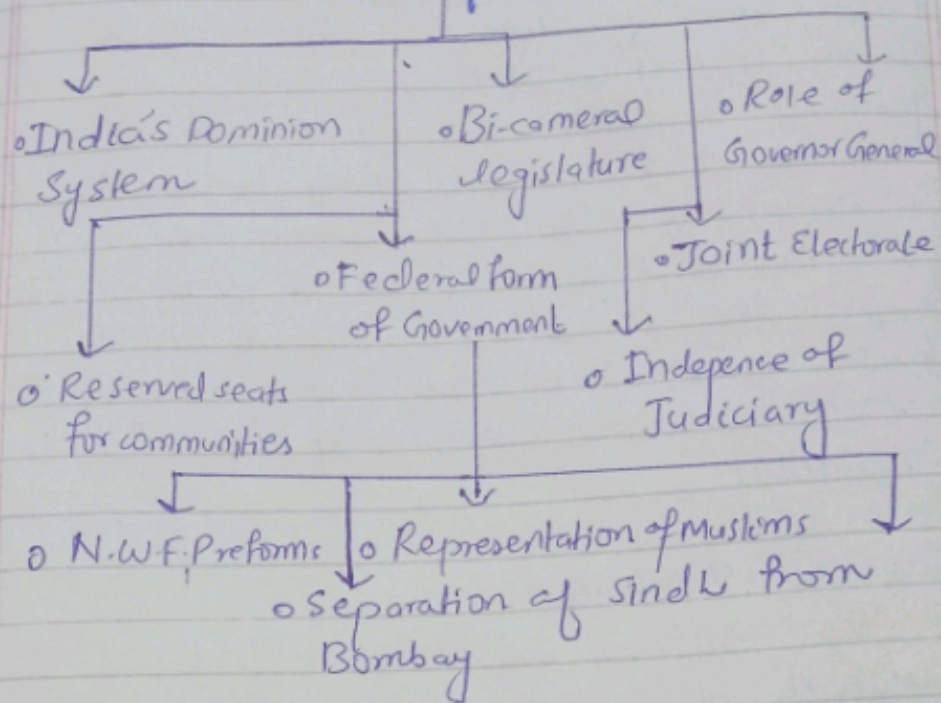
they should form a unanimous constitution and present it to us and we will implement it." Indian political parties accepted the challenge and called an all parties conference at Delhi in January 1928. The conference was attended by around hundred delegates from all parties including Indian National Congress, All India Muslim League, National Liberal Federation, Hindu Mahasabha, Central Sikh League etc. The conference failed to reach a conclusion on the issue of the rights of minorities. The second round of all parties conference was held in March the same year. Two sub-committees were formed but the end result was not different from the first session. It was during the third session of all parties conference held at Bombay in May 1928 that a seven members committee including Sayyid Ali Imam, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.S. Aney, Mangal Singh, Shuaib Qureshi, Subhas Chandra Bose and G.R. Pradhan as members. Under the Chairmanship of Motilal Nehru these members determine the basic features of constitution of India.

### 3) Nehru Report Recommendations

Nehru report recommendations are discussed as follow:



## Demands of Nehru Report



### 1- Bicameral legislature:

A Parliamentary system of Governance with a bi-cameral legislature made up of Senate and a House of representatives should be granted to India. The house of representative will elect 500 members while the senate will elect 200 members for seven years.

### 2- Complete Independence or Dominion Status

Another demand is that India should be given dominion status with the parliamentary form of Government. The proposal was criticised harshly by Moulana Hasrat Mohani condemning it as a total betrayal.



### 3- Safeguards

Muslims demanded certain safeguards as they had genuine reservations about Hindu Mentality. Nehru Report rejected demands of safeguards. Muslims were in dominant majority in Punjab, Sindh, the N.W.F.P and Balochistan and were so powerful that they could defend themselves. Besides, the report declared that only those communities needed special protections which were only 10% of the population.

### 4- Separate Electorate

The political existence of Indian Muslims depended totally on the mode of elections. Quaid-e-Azam had consented to drop this demand in view of the Delhi Proposals but Hindus rejected this offer. The Nehru report also declared that the separate electorate is injurious for minorities. It claimed "Since separate electorate awakens communal sentiments, therefore, it should be scrapped and joint electorate should be introduced."

### 5- Reservations of seats in the Punjab and Bengal

The Nehru Committee had ignored the Muslim demand that they should be given representation in the Punjab and Bengal in proportion with their population and their seats should be reserved. The



Committee remarked. "It is impossible to voice support in favour of reservations of seats for the majority because all nationalities in Punjab and Bengal would protect their interests."

#### 6. Separation of Sindh from Bombay

Nehru Committee decided that a comprehensive investigation into financial and administrative matters should be carried out before separating Sindh from Bombay. The committee proposed that Sindh could be separated and given a provincial status on following conditions:

- a) Sindh would attain financial autonomy
- b) A vast majority of Sindh should accept to bear financial responsibilities
- c) Sindh would have the same system of government as would be guaranteed under constitution for other provinces.
- d) Non-muslim minorities in Sindh would have same rights and privileges as muslim-minority in other provinces.

#### 7) Rejection of $\frac{1}{3}$ Representation of the Muslims

The muslims had demanded that they should be given  $\frac{1}{3}$  representation in the central Legislature. The Nehru Committee rejected this demand on the plea that the muslims formed less than one-fourth representation of the total population of British India and therefore would not be given one-third representation.



## Muslim's response to Provisions of Nehru report:

The Quaid-i-Azam proposed a few amendments in the Nehru Report during a meeting of All Parties Convention, held on December 22, 1928. The Quaid-e-Azam in this session proposed

- a) One third representation in the central legislature
- b) Reservation of seats in Punjab and Bengal proportionate to muslim population
- c) Investment of all the residuary powers in the provincial Governments.
- d) Separation of Sindh from Bombay is vital

All these proposals were opposed and rejected by Hindu Mahasabha.

The Quaid-e-Azam, by now, had adopted a definitive mode of thinking. He said: "So far as the basic precept of the Nehru Report is concerned, I am totally opposed to it. I am against this Report. I consider it prejudicial to the interests of the Muslims."

The Agha Khan also rejected the report saying, "No serious-minded person can even imagine Muslims accepting such degrading proposals"

Dr K. K. Aziz, a scholar and renowned historian, assessing the situation has expressed his views most aptly, "With the end of Khilafat movement, the short honeymoon of Hindu-Muslim unity



also came to an end and hostilities re-emerged but this time with a greater intensity and the prospects of unity between the nations ceased to exist. The Nehru report put a seal on this conflict and peace disappeared from India for good.

The Muslim print-media in the Punjab had launched a campaign against the Nehru Report. All the Muslim newspapers of the Punjab including the daily Inqilab, Siyasat, Paisa Akhbar, The Anjuman-i-Islamiya Amritsar - refused to accept the report without the justifiable amendments proposed by the Muslims.

### Conclusion

In a conclusion, Nehru report rejected demands of separate electorate of Muslims, their reservation of seats, safeguards and separation of Sindh. The Nehru report is not at all acceptable to the Muslims and neither they wish to vest the power to control their destiny in a constitution which is infested with the feelings of Hinduism and of communalism. One good aspect of Nehru report was the reawakening and growing awareness amongst Muslims to protect and safeguard their genuine rights and interests.