

## **Lucknow Pact (1916)**

### **Background:**

Before 1916, **Hindus and Muslims were politically divided**, and this division made it easier for the **British to follow their “divide and rule” policy**. The **Indian National Congress** mainly represented Hindu interests, while the **All-India Muslim League** was created in 1906 to protect Muslim rights.

When the **Partition of Bengal (1905)** was reversed in 1911, many Muslims felt betrayed because the earlier partition had given them some administrative advantages. Meanwhile, Hindus were struggling to make the independence movement stronger. Both groups slowly realized that **if they continued to act separately, they could never challenge British power effectively**. So, they needed to cooperate to demand political reforms together.

### **Reasons for the Lucknow Pact:**

There were several key reasons why the **Congress and Muslim League** decided to come together in **Lucknow in 1916**:

- Muslims wanted **protection of their political rights** and fair representation in government institutions.
- Hindus believed that **unity would make the nationalist movement stronger** and more respected.
- Both sides had grown **disappointed with the British government**, which had not fulfilled earlier promises of self-rule.
- The ongoing **World War I (1914–1918)** had weakened the British Empire, and Indian leaders saw this as a **good time to push for reforms**.  
In short, both groups agreed that **a united front** would increase their bargaining power against the British.

### **Main Provisions of the Pact:**

The **Lucknow Pact** contained several important agreements between the **Muslim League and Congress**:

1. **Congress accepted the Muslim demand for separate electorates** — meaning Muslims would elect their own representatives.
2. Muslims were to get **one-third representation** in the **Central Legislative Council**.
3. In the **provincial legislatures**, Muslim seats would be based on their population ratio.
4. Both parties **demand self-government** and greater Indian control in administration.
5. Indians should hold the **majority of seats** in both central and provincial councils.

6. The **executive and judiciary** should be separated to ensure fairness.
7. The pact also promised **protection for minority rights**.  
For the first time, Congress recognized that Muslims had legitimate political concerns that needed to be addressed.

### **Importance and Outcomes:**

The Lucknow Pact was **a major turning point in Indian politics**.

It was the **first time Hindus and Muslims came together** on a common political platform to challenge British rule. The pact gave strength to the **nationalist movement** because it showed that Indians could unite despite religious differences.

It also made the **British government take Indian demands more seriously**, as they now faced a united opposition.

Later, this unity helped bring about constitutional changes, such as the **Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms (1919)**.

However, this unity was **short-lived**, and differences reappeared later due to rising communal tensions — but the moment of cooperation remained historically important.

### **Significance for Hindu–Muslim Relations:**

The Lucknow Pact was considered a “**golden period**” of Hindu–Muslim unity.

- Muslims felt respected because Congress accepted their demand for **separate electorates**.
- Hindus felt hopeful that cooperation would **strengthen the national independence movement**.

Both sides **reduced their mistrust** and realized that **national freedom required joint effort**.

Although later political events — like the Khilafat Movement and separate politics in the 1930s — weakened this unity, **the Lucknow Pact is still remembered as the first genuine attempt to bridge communal gaps** and work together for India’s self-rule.