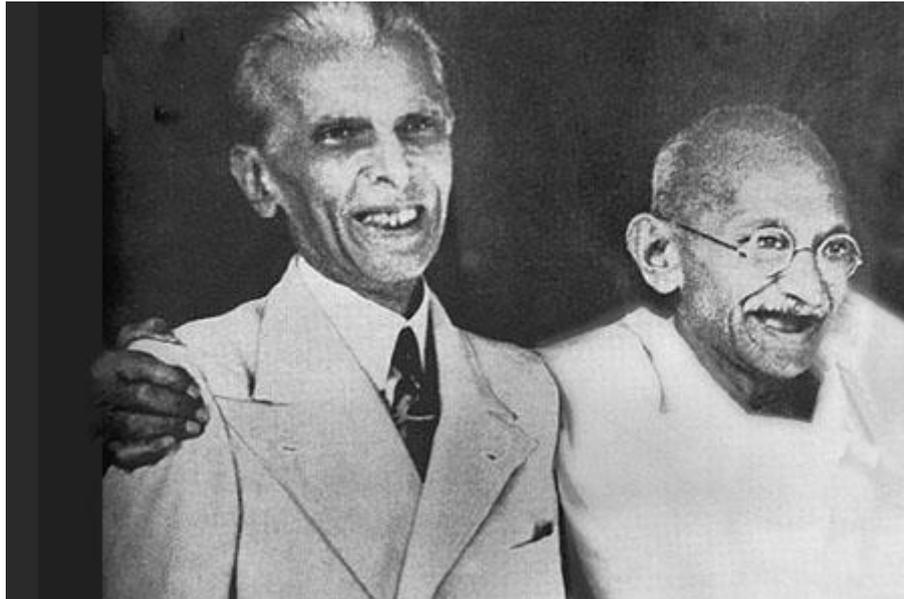


## UNIT 10 – UPSC -Congress gains Majority in Provincial Autonomy

**India's History : Modern India : Inauguration of Provincial Autonomy; Congress ministries formed in a majority of Indian provinces : 1937**

### The Elections



For five years, the Congress and government were locked in conflict and negotiations until what became the Government of India Act of 1935 could be hammered out. But by then, the rift between the Congress and the Muslim League had become unbridgeable as each pointed the finger at the other acrimoniously. The Muslim League disputed the claim by the Congress to represent all people of India, while the Congress disputed the Muslim League's claim to voice the aspirations of all Muslims.



The Government of India Act of 1935 was practically implemented in 1937. The provincial elections were held in the winter of 1936-37. There were two major political parties in the Sub-continent at that time, the Congress and the Muslim League. Both parties did their best to persuade the masses before these elections and put before them their manifesto. The political manifestos of both parties were almost identical, although there were two major differences. Congress stood for joint electorate and the League for separate electorates; Congress wanted Hindi as official language with Deva Nagri script of writing while the League wanted Urdu with Persian script.



According to the results of the elections, Congress, as the oldest, richest and best-organized political party, emerged as the single largest representative in the Legislative Assemblies. Yet it failed to secure even 40 percent of the total number of seats. Out of the 1,771 total seats in the 11 provinces, Congress was only able to win slightly more than 750. Thus the results clearly disapproved Gandhi's claim that Congress party represented 95 percent of the population of India. Its success, moreover, was mainly confined to the Hindu constituencies. Out of the 491 Muslim seats, Congress captured 26. Muslim Leagues' condition was bad as it could only win 106 Muslim seats. The party only managed to win two seats from the Muslim majority province of Punjab.

## The Congress majority

The final results of the elections were declared in February 1937. The Indian National Congress had a clear majority in Madras, Uttar Province, Central Province, Bihar and Orrisa. It was also able to form a coalition government in Bombay and Frontier Province. Congress was also able to secure political importance in Sindh and Assam, where they joined the ruling coalition. Thus directly or indirectly, Congress was in power in nine out of eleven provinces. The Unionist Party of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain and Praja Krishak Party of Maulvi Fazl-i-Haq were able to form governments in Punjab and Bengal respectively, without the interference of Congress. Muslim League failed to form government in any province. Quaid-i-Azam offered Congress to form a coalition government with the League but the Congress rejected his offer.

The Congress refused to set up its government until the British agreed to their demand that the Governor would not use his powers in legislative affairs. Many discussions took place between the Congress and the British Government and at last the British Government consented, although it was only a verbal commitment and no

amendment was made in the Act of 1935. Eventually, after a four-month delay, Congress formed their ministries in July 1937.

The Congress declared Hindi as the national language and Deva Nagri as the official script. The Congress flag was given the status of national flag, slaughtering of cows was prohibited and it was made compulsory for the children to worship the picture of Gandhi at school. Vande-Mataram, from Bankim Chandra Chatterji's novel Ananda Math, was made the national anthem of the country.

To investigate Muslim grievances, the Muslim League formulated the "Pirpur Report" under the chairmanship of Raja Syed Muhammad Mehdi of Pirpur. Other reports concerning Muslim grievances in Congress run provinces were A. K. Fazl-ul-Haq's "Muslim Sufferings Under Congress Rule", and "The Sharif Report".

The allegation that Congress was representing Hindus only was voiced also by eminent British personalities. The Marquess of Lothian in April 1938 termed the Congress rule as a "rising tide of Hindu rule". Sir William Barton writing in the "National Review" in June 1939 also termed the Congress rule as "the rising tide of political Hinduism".

At the outbreak of the World War II, the Viceroy proclaimed India's involvement without prior consultations with the main political parties. When Congress demanded an immediate transfer of power in return for cooperation of the war efforts, the British government refused. As a result Congress resigned from power.