

## UNIT 16 – UPSC - Simon Commission Boycott

**India's History : Modern India : Simon Commission comes to India: Boycott by all parties; All Parties Conference : 1928**

### Simon Commission Boycott

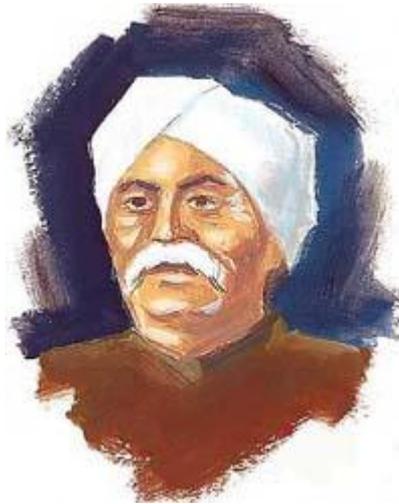
In 1927, however, the Conservative Government of Britain, faced with the prospect of electoral defeat at the hands of the Labour Party, suddenly decided that it could not leave an issue which concerned the future of the British Empire in the irresponsible hands of an inexperienced Labour Government; and it was thus that the Indian Statutory Commission, popularly known as the Simon Commission after its Chairman, was appointed.

The response in India was immediate and unanimous. That no Indian should be thought fit to serve on a body that claimed the right to decide the political future of India was an insult that no Indian of even the most moderate political opinion was willing to swallow. The call for a boycott of the Commission was endorsed by the Liberal Federation led by Tej Bahadur Sapru, by the Indian Industrial and Commercial Congress, and by the Hindu Mahasabha; the Muslim League even split on the issue, Mohammed Ali Jinnah carrying the majority with him in favour of boycott.



It was the Indian National Congress, however, that turned the boycott into a popular movement. The Congress had resolved on the boycott at its annual session in December 1927 at Madras, and in the prevailing excitable atmosphere, Jawaharlal Nehru had even succeeded in getting passed a snap resolution declaring complete independence as the goal of the Congress. The action began as soon as Simon and his friends landed at Bombay on 3 February 1928. That day, all the major cities and towns observed a complete hartal, and people were out on the streets participating in mass rallies, processions and black-flag demonstration. Everywhere that Simon went - Calcutta,

Lahore, Lucknow, Vijayawada, Poona - he was greeted by a sea of black-flags carried by thousands of people. And ever new ways of defiance were being constantly invented.



But the worst incident happened in Lahore where Lala Lajpat Rai, the hero of the extremist days and the most revered leader of Punjab, was hit on the chest by lathis on 30 October and succumbed to the injuries on 17 November 1928. It was his death that Bhagat Singh and his comrades avenged by killing Saunders, in December 1928. The Simon boycott movement provided the first taste of political action to a new generation of youth. Subhash Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru merged as the leaders of this new wave of youth and students, and they traveled from one province to another addressing and presiding over innumerable youth conferences.