

Simon Commission, Purpose, Impacts, UPSC Notes

August 6, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination



SIMON COMMISSION

The Simon Commission (Indian Statutory Commission), formed by the British in 1927 to review the **Government of India Act 1919**, sparked widespread protests due to its all-British composition. Arriving in India in 1928, it was met with protests, including the iconic "**Simon Go Back**" demonstrations. The commission aimed to evaluate the Act, recommend reforms and address communal representation and law and order.

However, its lack of Indian representation led to its boycott, driving nationalist sentiment. The protests influenced key developments like the **Nehru Report**, and intensified demands for Indian self-governance, fostering new leaders and strengthening the independence movement.

What was the Simon Commission?

The **Simon Commission**, officially known as the **Indian Statutory Commission**, was established by the British government in **1927** to review the **Government of India Act 1919** and recommend constitutional reforms. The commission was chaired by **Sir John Simon** and included Seven British members, sparking controversy and anger in India due to the lack of Indian representation.

Simon Commission Arrival

The Simon Commission arrived in Bombay, India, on **3rd February 1928**, triggering widespread protests and public outrage. Demonstrations were organised by various political factions, including the **Indian National Congress** and a faction of the **Muslim League** led by **Mohammed Ali Jinnah**, both of which decided to boycott the commission. Reception in India took place with:

- **Nationwide Protests:** The commission's arrival was met with massive protests across India, with Indians expressing their opposition through strikes and demonstrations.
- **Black Flag Demonstrations:** Protesters carried black flags and shouted "**Simon Go Back**," symbolising their rejection of the commission and its exclusionary practices.
 - Students and youth were at the forefront of the protests, demonstrating their commitment to the cause of Indian independence.

Simon Commission Purpose

The objective of the Simon Commission was to evaluate the Government of India Act 1919, recommend constitutional reforms, address communal representation, and assess law and order amidst rising nationalist movements.

- **Evaluate the Government of India Act 1919:** The commission aimed to assess the functioning of the **diarchy**, where certain provincial responsibilities were divided between Indian ministers and British officials.
- **Recommend Constitutional Reforms:** It sought to propose constitutional changes that could address governance issues and Indian demands while maintaining British control.
- **Address Communal Representation:** The commission aimed to evaluate and propose solutions for communal representation, a contentious issue in British India.
- **Assess Law and Order:** The commission was tasked with reviewing the law and order situation in light of growing nationalist movements.

Simon Commission Criticism

The Simon Commission faced criticism for lacking Indian representation, leading to a limited understanding of India's needs, and for prioritising colonial authority over genuine reforms. The absence of Indian members meant the commission lacked a genuine understanding of India's political climate and needs. Critics argued that the commission's purpose was more about preserving colonial authority than offering meaningful reforms.

Simon Commission Boycott

The boycott of the Simon Commission was driven by several factors such as the absence of Indian representation, lack of genuine reforms, and a boycott call by leaders, including the INC, at the 1927 Madras session chaired by M.A. Ansari.

- **Absence of Indian Representation:** The commission did not include any Indian members, which was perceived as a clear disregard for Indian political aspirations and a sign of British indifference to Indian demands for self-governance.

- **Lack of Genuine Reforms:** Many Indians viewed the commission as a tactic to delay substantial constitutional reforms and maintain British control over India, especially after the limited changes introduced by the **Government of India Act 1919**.
- **Call for Boycott by Leaders:** Indian political leaders, including members of the **Indian National Congress (INC)**, called for a nationwide boycott, mobilizing the public to protest against the commission. The decision was made in 1927 during the **Madras session**, which was chaired by **M.A. Ansari**.

Major Protest Events

The Lahore Protest, led by Lala Lajpat Rai, saw brutal police action and his death, intensifying resistance and nationalist sentiment among students and youth.

- **Lahore Protest (30th October 1928):** In Lahore, a significant protest led by Lala Lajpat Rai resulted in brutal police action, leading to Rai's death on **17th November 1928** and intensifying resistance against the commission.
- **Student and Youth Protests:** The involvement of students and youth highlighted the growing nationalist sentiment and the widespread demand for change.

Simon Commission Impact

The Simon Commission significantly impacted India's independence movement, leading to the Nehru Report advocating dominion status and secular democracy, influencing the Government of India Act 1935, uniting the opposition, fostering new leaders, and intensifying demands for self-governance.

- **Nehru Report:** The Nehru Report (1928), formulated in response to the Simon Commission, proposed a new constitutional framework emphasising self-governance and democratic principles.
 - The report called for dominion status within the British Commonwealth, marking a shift in political demands.
 - It advocated for a secular and democratic framework, rejecting communal representation.
- **Influence on Future Reforms:** The Simon Commission's impact extended to future constitutional reforms, including the **Government of India Act 1935**.
 - **Provincial Autonomy:** The act of 1935 abolished diarchy, introduced provincial autonomy, and instituted bicameralism in six of the eleven provinces, granting more powers to Indian ministers and legislatures.
 - **Criticism:** Despite reforms, the act was criticised for not granting full self-governance, leading to continued demands for independence.
- **The emergence of New Leaders:** The opposition to the Simon Commission provided a platform for new leaders and movements to emerge, contributing to the broader struggle for independence.
 - **Prominent Leaders:** Figures like **Bhagat Singh** gained prominence for their activism and resistance against colonial rule.
 - **Legacy of Resistance:** The opposition inspired a new generation of leaders and activists to continue the fight for independence.

- **Strengthening of the Independence Movement:** The Simon Commission played a crucial role in strengthening the Indian independence movement, uniting diverse groups in their demand for self-rule.
 - **Unified Opposition:** The boycott united various Indian political parties, including the **Indian National Congress** and the **All India Muslim League**, fostering a sense of national solidarity against colonial rule.
 - **Catalyst for Change:** The commission acted as a catalyst for change, intensifying demands for independence and self-governance.

Other Related Posts	
Home Rule Movement	Swaraj Party
Annie Besant	Swarajists vs No Changers
Lucknow Pact	Simon Commission
Non Cooperation Movement	Nehru Report
Khilafat Movement	Jinnah's 14 Points
Rowlatt Act	Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/upsc-exam/simon-commission/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.