

## **PROVINCIAL AND GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1945**

With the failure of the Simla Conference, Lord Wavell announced that the Central and Provincial Legislature elections would be held in the winter of 1945. After which a constitution-making body would be set up. He also announced that after the elections, the Viceroy would set up an Executive Council that would have the support of the main Indian political parties. Both the Muslim League and the Congress opposed the proposal.

While Jinnah declared that the Muslims were not ready to accept any settlement less than a separate homeland, the All India Congress Committee characterised the proposal as vague, inadequate and unsatisfactory because it had not addressed the issue of independence. Despite this, the two parties launched huge election campaigns. They knew that the elections would be crucial for the future of India, as the results were to play an important role in determining their stand. The League wanted to sweep the Muslim constituencies so as to prove that they were the sole representatives of the Muslims of India, while Congress wanted to prove that, irrespective of religion represented all the Indians.

Both the Muslim League and the Congress promulgated opposite slogans during their campaign. Muslim League presented a one-point manifesto 'want Pakistan, vote for the Muslim League'. Jinnah toured the length and breadth of India and tried to unite the Muslim

community under the banner of the Muslim League.

The Congress, on the other hand, stood for a united India. To counter the Muslim League; the Congress press, termed Jinnah's demand for Pakistan as the 'vivisection of Mother India', 'reactionary primitivism' and 'religious barbarism'. The Congress tried to brand the Muslim League as an ultra-conservative clique of knights, Khan, Bahadurs, toadies and government pensioners. The Congress also tried to get support of all the provincial and central Muslim parties who had some differences with the League, and backed them in the elections. Elections for the Central Legislature were held in December 1945. Though the franchise was limited, the turnover was extraordinary.

The Congress was able to sweep the polls for the non-Muslim seats. They managed to win more than 80 per cent of the general seats and about 91.3 per cent of the total general votes'. The League's performance, however, was even more impressive: it managed to win all the 30 seats reserved for the Muslims. The results of the provincial elections held in early 1946 were not different. The Congress won most of the non-Muslim seats while the Muslim League captured approximately 95 per cent of the Muslim seats.

In a bulletin issued on 6 January 1946, the Central Election Board of the Congress claimed that the election results had vindicated the party as the biggest, strongest and the most representative

organization in the country. On the other hand, the League celebrated 11 January 1946, as the Day of Victory and declared that the election results were enough to prove that the Muslim League, under the leadership of Jinnah, was the sole representative of the Muslims of the region.

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