

The Poona Pact, also known as the Yerwada Pact, was an important agreement reached between leaders of the scheduled castes (formerly known as untouchables) and the upper-caste leaders within the Indian National Congress in September 1932. The pact was a response to the separate electorate provisions proposed for the scheduled castes by the British government as part of the Communal Award of 1932. Here are the key features and consequences of the Poona Pact:

Background:

- Communal Award:** The Communal Award was a proposal by the British government in India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, that sought to grant separate electorates for various communities, including the scheduled castes. The proposal aimed to protect the political interests of minority groups.
- Gandhi's Fast:** Mahatma Gandhi was deeply concerned about the Communal Award's provision for separate electorates for the scheduled castes. In protest, he embarked on a hunger strike in the Yerwada Central Jail in Pune in September 1932.

Key Features:

- Negotiations:** The Poona Pact was the result of negotiations between leaders of the scheduled castes, led by B. R. Ambedkar, and upper-caste leaders, primarily represented by Madan Mohan Malaviya and other Congress leaders. The talks were held under the shadow of Mahatma Gandhi's fast, which generated significant public attention and pressure.
- Joint Electorates with Reserved Seats:** Under the Poona Pact, it was agreed that instead of separate electorates for the scheduled castes, they would have joint electorates with reserved seats. In joint electorates, all members of a community would vote together, but reserved seats were allocated for the scheduled castes to ensure their representation.

Consequences and Impact:

- Resolution of the Fast:** The signing of the Poona Pact helped bring an end to Mahatma Gandhi's fast. Gandhi was concerned about the deep divisions that the separate electorates would create between communities, and the Poona Pact addressed some of his concerns.

2. **Greater Political Inclusion:** The Poona Pact marked a significant step toward greater political inclusion and representation for the scheduled castes. While they would vote in joint electorates, the reserved seats would ensure that they had a fair share of representation.
3. **Unification of Congress:** The Poona Pact contributed to the unity of the Indian National Congress, as leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya and others reached an agreement with B. R. Ambedkar and the scheduled caste leaders.
4. **Amendment to the Communal Award:** Following the Poona Pact, the British government amended the Communal Award to incorporate the agreed-upon changes, including joint electorates with reserved seats for the scheduled castes.
5. **Political Empowerment:** The Poona Pact was a significant moment in the empowerment of the scheduled castes in India, as it allowed them to participate more fully in the political process and have a say in the governance of the country.

The Poona Pact is remembered as a pivotal moment in India's struggle for social justice and the fight against untouchability. It resolved a contentious issue and paved the way for greater political representation and inclusion for the scheduled castes within the framework of a united India.

