

# Round Table Conference

Round table conference is actually a series of conferences held between the British government and Indian political personalities to maintain peace in the country and bring out constitutional reforms in India. In Indian history, the British administration convened the Round table conference in three sessions between 1930 and 1932 to discuss the potential future of the Indian Constitution. The meeting was a product of the Simon commission's assessment of the Government of India Act 1919, which was started in 1927 and whose report was released in 1930. The meeting took place in London.

## Round Table Conference Dates

The round table conference dates for the first, second, and third meetings are as follows:

- The first Round table conference was held between November 12, 1930, to January 19, 1931.
- The 2nd round table was held between September to December 1931.
- And the 3rd round table conference was held between November 17 to December 24, 1932.

## First Round Table Conference

The British administration held three round table conferences to consider constitutional changes in India between 1930 to 1932, the first of which was held in 1930. The 1930 report of the Simon Commission was followed during these conferences.

The first Round table conference was formally launched by British king George V on 12th November 1930 in London at the House of Lords under the leadership of Ramsay McDonald, who was the prime minister of the country at that time.

## History of First Round Table Conference

A total of three round table conferences have been held altogether. The Indian National Council did not attend the first and last conferences. In fact, during the conference, there was a movement going on in India named Civil Disobedience Movement.

- Demands for India to be given Dominion status were growing in some sectors of the British political system.
- The flamboyant Mahatma Gandhi was super-heading the fight for Purna Swaraj while the Liberation Movement in India was in full swing.
- The foundation of the discussions was the advice given by Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Simon Commission report to Lord Irwin, who was the viceroy of India at that time and Ramsay McDonald who was the British prime minister at that time.
- For the very first time, the Indians and British interacted as equals. The inaugural round table conference started on 12th November 1930. Although Congress and other notable business figures declined to attend the meeting, numerous other Indian organizations were present at it.

## Features of First Round Table Conference

The British government and prominent Indian politicians convened the three Round Table Conferences in 1930–1932, a series of peace conferences, to propose constitutional changes in India. These lasted from November 30, 1930, until December 31, 1932.

- The inaugural Round table conference, which was held in London from November 1930 to 1931 December, was presided over by Ramsay McDonald.
- The British and Indians finally met on equal footing at this point.
- Congress and a few well-known corporate figures declined to participate in the conference.
- Other members like Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League, Justice Party, and the Princely States were present at the first Round table conference.
- Although the first meeting was held, nothing was achieved.
- The British administration acknowledged that any debate regarding the Governance of the future constitution of India would definitely require the presence of the Indian National Congress.

## Participants of First Round Table Conference

During the period when the first Round table conference was being organised, there was an ongoing civil disobedience movement in India because of which the Indian National Congress and many other eminent political leaders did not turn up for the Round Table Conference.

- However Indian National Congress was not part of the first Round table conference. Still, many delegates marked their presence.
- There were 16 delegates as representatives from three British political parties, 74 delegates from India, of which 58 delegates belonged to some Indian political parties, and the rest 16 delegates were the rulers of Indian princely states.
- Additionally, there were representatives from Burma, Sindh, Bihar, Orissa, and other United provinces.
- Because most of the members of the Indian National Congress or any other notable political party leader worked behind bars for their participation in the civil disobedience movement, none of the eminent political leaders from India participated in the conference.

## Issues Discussed in First Round Table Conference

Although the Congress was not a member of the first Round table conference, other participants, along with the British government, had discussed some issues. Several issues were discussed in the first round table conference, some of them are as follows:

- The Framework for Central Government.
- The constitution of the province was examined.
- Minorities Defence Services in Sindh and the Northwest Frontier provinces.
- Legislative oversight of the executive branch.
- Separate electoral votes for untouchables were pushed for by Dr BR Ambedkar.
- The all-India Federation was proposed by Tej Bahadur Sapru, with which the Muslim League agreed.
- As long as their internal autonomy was upheld, the princely states agreed.

## Effects of First Round Table Conference

No solid conclusion or effects of the first Round table conference would be drawn because of the absence of the Indian National Congress and the ongoing civil disobedience movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in India.

- The first Round table conference was in session until 19th January 1931. Although numerous reform concept work was agreed upon, very little of them was put into practice, and Indian National Congress continued its civil disobedience.
- It was thought that the conference was a flop. The British government recognized the necessity and significance of the Congress Party making any decision on the country's political destiny.

## Outcomes of First Round Table Conference

The first Round table conference had only a few outcomes India would become a republic defence, financial protections would be negotiated, and other departments would be transferred.

- The first round table took place between 1930 and 1931.
- Although the amendments made at the round table conference were approved, they were never put into practice.
- The civil disobedience movement was continued by Indian National Congress leaders during the first conference. This proves that the first meeting was seen as a failure.
- The British government expressed hope for Indian National Congress leaders' attendance at the second round table conference and acknowledged the significance of the presence of the Congress Party for successful plan execution.
- The Gandhi-Irwin pact, which put a stop to the civil disobedience movement and decided to participate in the 2nd conference was signed by Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin in March 1931.

## Second Round Table Conference

The Congress abstained from the first Round table conference, which was not successful at all. The Gandhi-Irwin pact which was reached between Viceroy Lord Irwin and Mahatma Gandhi in response to some requests, led the Congress to the second round table conference. The meeting of the 2nd round table commenced on 7th September 1931. During this period, McDonald was heading a coalition political alliance with a majority and appointing Samuel Hoare as the Secretary Head of India.

On November 7, 1931, Mahatma Gandhi and McDonald had a meeting in which the Government of India Act 1935 was enacted as a result. There were many differences between the first and second round table conference on the grounds of representation of the Indian National Congress, the Government of Britain, the finances, etc.

## Participants of Second Round Table Conference

As compared to the first conference, the second round table conference was attended by some intellectual and political leaders along with Indian National Congress.

- The British Prime Minister Ramsay McDonald along with other heads of other political parties, joined the conference.
- Maharajas and rulers of many princely states were part of the second round table conference.
- There were many representatives of the British Indian group. However, the Indian National Congress was completely represented by Mahatma Gandhi.

- Many specific community representatives also joined the conference, like Muhammad Ali Jinnah Mohammed Iqbal Mohammad zafarullah Khan was the Muslim representative at the 2nd Round Table Conference.
- Deewan Bahadur Raja Narendra Nath, B.S. Moonje per Hindu representatives.
- Bhim Rao Ambedkar was the representative of the depressed classes.
- Sarojini Naidu and Radhabai Subramanian were the women representatives, and many Indian Christian justice parties and Anglo-Indian Sindh industries were the liberal representatives at the second round table conference.

## Outcome of Second Round Table Conference

The second round table conference could not produce any meaningful conclusions about the constitution of India because there was no consensus between the diverse delegate groups. The administration also refused to give into the fundamental demand for freedom made by Indians.

- The second round table conference got underway on 7 September 1931. The Indian National Congress was present at the conference, which significantly differed from the first.
- Another distinction was that, Unlike the last conference, the British Prime Minister McDonald was in charge of our national administration rather than a labour one. In Britain, the labour party had been overthrown to weights earlier than the conference was held.
- By creating distinct electorates for the minority population, the British decided to provide a communal prize for representing minorities in India which was highly opposed by Mahatma Gandhi.
- On the contrary, Bhimrao Ambedkar was quite in favour of this decision therefore, Bhimrao Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi had two different opinions on the need for separate electorates for the underprivileged section of the concept of separating untouchables from the Hindu society.

## Third Round Table Conference

The third round table conference was the final one. It took place on November 17, 1932. The Indian National Congress chose to skip the convention due to their dissatisfaction. The British Labour Party and INC both declined to attend the summit.

Only 46 persons from the summit remained, and several prominent political figures were absent. From September 1931 through March 1933, it took place. This suggested several changes to the 1935 Government of India Act. Sir Samuel Hoare oversaw the completion of all of these tasks.

## Participants of Third Round Table Conference

The number of participants in the third round table conference was comparatively lower than in the 2nd conference.

- Only 46 delegates attended the third round table conference since the majority of political leaders could not turn up for the meeting.
- The British labour party declined to participate in the conference, and this time Indian National Congress was not invited to the conference.
- The representative of British Indians in the 3rd conference was Aga Khan 3.

- Again, the depressed class was represented by Bhimrao Ambedkar, and this time Begum Jahanara was the representative of women, whereas the representatives of liberal delegates were the same as in the second conference.

### Outcome of Third Round Table Conference

The outcome of the 3rd round table conference was also not game-changing. Some of the recommendations were made in the third conference, which was published in a white paper in 1933, on the basis of which the government of India Act 1935 was passed.

- Nothing significant was addressed at the round table meeting because most of the Important political leaders and rulers of princely states were not present in the third round table conference.
- The suggestions and recommendations made at this conference were written down and considered by the British Parliament.
- After deeply analysing the report submitted in the white paper, the Government of Britain decided to pass the Government of India Act 1935.

