

Epoch of Transformation: Unraveling India's Journey to Independence (1911-1940)

General

- Sub-continental history is always very fascinating for the fact that it not only encompasses many issues of compelling and interlocking themes but also connects the roots of so many people in so many different ways.
- In the last class, we saw, **how the cumulative impact of Western policies, education & culture gave rise to Indian nationalism.**
- We also saw how INC was set up to perform as an avowedly loyalist organization but was gradually transforming as a Pan-Indian organization towards the start of the 20th century.
- Owing to the Calcutta-based rising middle class, the political awakening of the Bengali people, and memories of Hindu-Muslim unity under the old and frail Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar always haunted them with undying danger.
- That's how the province was partitioned.
- By the time, it was annulled, WW I broke out and much has taken shape in terms of nature of the political movement, British divisive policies and the consequential impact on the political trajectory of the Hindus represented by the Congress & the Muslims represented by the AIML merit mention.
- While the WWI was ongoing, Gandhi returned from South Africa.
- His arrival marked a huge transformation in Indian politics and he revolutionized the way Indians should fight against the British to achieve independence.

Aim

To unravel the twists & turns of Indian politics starting from post-WWI until 1940 when the Lahore Resolution was passed by AIML in Lahore.

Bengal Partition 1905

- The partition of Bengal in 1905 was officially presented by the British as an administrative measure to improve governance and promote efficiency.
- According to the official version, the province of Bengal was vast and populous, and it was believed that dividing it would make it more manageable.
- The British cited administrative difficulties, overpopulation, and the need for better governance as reasons for the partition.
- However, there were underlying political motives behind the decision.
- The real reasons for the partition were largely rooted in the British strategy of "divide and rule."
- By dividing **Bengal along religious lines, with the eastern part having a Hindu majority and the western part having a Muslim majority, the British sought to create religious and communal divisions among the population.**
- This was seen as a tactic to weaken the nationalist movement that was gaining momentum, as it would divide the unity among Hindus and Muslims who had been working together for independence.

Shimla Delegation & Formation of Muslim League in 1906

- When the Lieutenant Governor Fuller of Eastern Bengal Province resigned on account of some disagreement with the Central Government, the people of this region felt unsecured and thought of going to Lord Minto.
- Therefore, the Shimla Delegation refers to a meeting held in Shimla (now in India) in 1906 between Viceroy Lord Minto and a delegation of Muslim leaders led by Aga Khan.
- The primary purpose of the delegation was to discuss the **political representation of Muslims in British India.**
- The delegation expressed concerns about the **potential impact of political reforms on Muslim representation and rights.**
- They were particularly **worried about the majority Hindu representation in the upcoming councils.**
- The leaders sought separate electorates for Muslims, which would ensure that Muslims could vote for Muslim candidates, **and thus have a say in their own political representation.**
- It also paved the way for setting up of AIML which was formed on 30 December, 1906.
- The significance of the Shimla Delegation lies in the fact that it marked the beginning of separate electorates for Muslims in British India.
- Lord Minto assured to reserve the Muslim right by undertaking some administrative measures.

Surat Session - 1907

- The Surat Session took place in December 1907 in Surat, Gujarat, India.
- Leadership Disputes: The session witnessed a severe split between the two prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress: the moderates led by Gopal Krishna Gokhale and the extremists led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal.
- Ideological Differences: The split was primarily over ideological differences. The moderates advocated for a more gradual and constitutional approach towards achieving self-rule, while the extremists favored a more assertive and direct approach, including the use of mass movements and civil disobedience.
- The session marked a crucial phase in the evolution of the Congress and, indirectly, in India's path towards independence.
- Year & Location: Surat Session of the Indian National Congress (1907).
- Main Event: Split between Moderates and Extremists due to leadership conflict.
- Moderate Leader: Gopal Krishna Gokhale.
- Extremist Leaders: Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal.
- Cause of Split: Disagreement over the presidency – Moderates supported Rash Behari Ghosh, while Extremists backed Tilak.

Outcome:

- Congress formally split; Extremists were expelled.
- British exploited the division, suppressing Extremists and favoring Moderates.
- Weakened the national movement but strengthened revolutionary nationalism.

The Morley-Minto Reforms 1909

(INC being weak & frail)

- *Moderates being in control and extremists out of the ring*, the government found it right to come up with Officially known as the Indian Councils Act of 1909.
- The reforms were named after the then Secretary of State for India, John Morley, and the Viceroy of India, Lord Minto.
- The Morley-Minto Reforms, incorporated the demand for separate electorates, granting Muslims a distinct political identity within the British Indian political structure.
- This move, however, also contributed to the communalization of politics by fostering separate political identities for different religious communities, which had long-lasting implications for the region.
- *Introduction of Separate Electorates*: One significant feature of the Morley-Minto Reforms was the introduction of separate electorates for Muslims. This allowed Muslims to vote for their own representatives, distinct from those elected by other communities.
- *Expansion of Legislative Councils*: The reforms expanded the size of the legislative councils at both the central and provincial levels. It increased the number of elected members and allowed for more indirect election of members by various interest groups.
- *Limited Representation*: Although the reforms increased representation to some extent, it still maintained a system where the majority of the seats were filled through indirect election and nomination, rather than direct election by the public.
- *Reaction and Criticism*: The reforms faced criticism from various quarters. Some Indian leaders felt that the measures were insufficient in addressing the demands for self-government and greater representation. The introduction of separate electorates also fueled communal tensions between different religious communities.
- In summary, the Morley-Minto Reforms marked a step towards political *representation in British India, but they fell short of meeting the aspirations of many Indians who sought more significant self-governance and a greater role in decision-making.*

Morley-Minto Returned to London 1910

- Since the partition plan didn't work out well, Lord Morley was replaced by Lord Crewe in 1910 as the Secretary of State for India, and Minto was replaced by Lord Hardinge.
- Secretary of State Lord Crewe's responsibility included the oversight of British India's governance and policies.
- So, on their arrival, a review was carried out on the overall situation following the Morley-Minto reform & they recommended to annul the partition.

Bengal Reunited in 1911 & Formal Declaration

- During their visit to India, King George V and Queen Mary attended the Delhi Durbar held on December 12, 1911.
- The Durbar was a grand ceremony to commemorate their coronation and also marked the announcement of the shifting of the capital of British India from Calcutta to Delhi.
- This event was significant in the context of the formal announcement of the decision to transfer the capital, which was made during the visit and had far-reaching consequences for the administrative and political landscape of India.
- **Event:** Delhi Durbar (December 12, 1911).
- **Attendees:** King George V and Queen Mary.
- **Purpose:** Commemorate their coronation.
- **Major Announcements:**

- o Shift of British India's capital from Calcutta to Delhi.
 - o Assurance to set up Dhaka University to appease Muslims of Eastern Bengal.
- Significance: Had a lasting administrative, political, and educational impact on India.

WW 1 Broke out 1914(1914-1918)

World War I had several significant impacts on the Indian region:

1. **Economic Impact:** India played a crucial role in providing resources, troops, and finances to support the British war effort. This led to economic strains on the Indian population, with increased taxes and inflation affecting the common people.
2. **Defence of India Act, 1915** introduced during World War I to maintain control. Granted sweeping powers to the British government, including:
 1. Arrest without warrant.
 2. Military trials for civilians.
 3. Censorship of press and public gatherings.
 4. Preventive detention without trial.
3. **Political Consequences:** The war created political unrest in India. The British government's failure to fulfill promises of self-governance after the war and the repressive measures taken during the conflict fueled nationalist sentiments.

Overall, World War I had a transformative impact on India, accelerating the momentum toward independence and shaping the course of the Indian freedom struggle.

Gandhi returned from south Africa 1915

- This situation, indirectly contributed to the rise of Mahatma Gandhi as a prominent leader of the Indian independence movement.
- His nonviolent resistance gained traction as a powerful tool against British rule. Mahatma Gandhi's return to India in 1915 marked a crucial turning point in the Indian independence movement.
- Several significant aspects make this event historically significant:
 1. **Formation of Satyagraha:** Gandhi had developed and practiced the concept of Satyagraha (truth-force) during his time in South Africa. This philosophy emphasized nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience as powerful tools for social and political change. Gandhi brought this ideology back to India, where it became a cornerstone of the Indian independence movement.
 2. **Leadership in Indian National Congress:** Gandhi joined the Indian National Congress and quickly rose to prominence. He played a key role in shaping the Congress's agenda, advocating for nonviolent methods and emphasizing the importance of self-reliance, simplicity, and communal harmony.
 3. **Championing the Poor and Marginalized:** Gandhi focused on the issues faced by the rural poor, peasants, and the marginalized sections of society. He initiated campaigns for the

improvement of their living conditions, which resonated with a broad spectrum of the Indian population.

4. **Non-Cooperation Movement: In 1920,** Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement, a mass protest against British rule that called for Indians to nonviolently resist colonial authority. This movement significantly expanded the scope and intensity of the Indian independence struggle.
5. **Promotion of Khadi and Swadeshi:** Gandhi encouraged the use of Khadi (hand-spun and handwoven cloth) as a symbol of self-reliance and independence. He promoted the Swadeshi movement, urging Indians to boycott British goods and support locally made products.
6. **Bridge Between Communities:** Gandhi worked towards building bridges between different religious and ethnic communities. His commitment to communal harmony and unity was evident in his efforts during times of communal tension, working to diffuse conflicts and promote understanding.

Gandhi's return to India in 1915 marked the beginning of his influential leadership in the Indian independence movement. His philosophy, tactics, and principles left an enduring impact on the country's struggle for freedom, shaping the course of events that eventually led to India gaining independence in 1947.

Lucknow Session of the Congress (1916):

- The Lucknow Session marked the reunification of the Congress, which had split into two factions, the Extremists and the Moderates, in 1907.
- The reunion was a significant step towards presenting a united front against British rule, emphasizing constitutional methods for political progress.
- It also paved the way to Hindu-Muslim unity wherein the Muslims agreed to support INC in their demand of Indian independence in exchange for Congress's support for a separate electorate.

Home Rule Movement -1916

- The Home Rule Movement in India was a campaign for self-governance and constitutional reform within the British Empire.
- It was initiated by Annie Besant, Jinnah & Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1916.
- They were prominent leaders in the Indian Nationalist movement and sought to mobilize public opinion for increased Indian representation in the governance of the country.
- The movement aimed to achieve self-rule for India within the British Empire.
- It advocated for the introduction of responsible government in India, with greater participation of Indians in the legislative process.
- The leaders of the Home Rule Movement sought to unite Indians across religious and regional lines for a common cause.
- As Gandhi dominated it and also because of its way of dealing with Muslim issues, Jinnah distanced from it.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919) **(post war dispensation)**

- Time was ripe for the British to come up with this reform. Also known as the Government of India Act 1919, was introduced by the British colonial government *in response to the political and constitutional demands arising from World War I.*
- The reforms were named after Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy of India.

✓ **Increased Representation:** The report recommended an expansion of representative government at both the central and provincial levels. **It proposed the introduction of elected Indian members in the legislative councils, with the goal of gradually increasing Indian representation in governance.**

✓ **Devolution of Power:** The report suggested transferring some legislative and executive powers to the provinces, allowing for more localized governance. This was intended to meet the demands for autonomy and self-rule by different regions within India.

✓ **Separation of Functions:** The report proposed a separation of the executive and legislative functions in the central and provincial governments. This separation aimed to create a more balanced and accountable system.

✓ **Introduction of Responsible Government:** The concept of responsible government was introduced, meaning that the **executive branch would be accountable to the legislative branch.**

- While it increased Indian representation in legislative councils, it fell short of expectations for self-governance, leading to discontent and a demand for more substantial reforms.

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (1919):

- Following WWI, there has been a lot of activities in politically active Punjab & the problems increased as its great sons returned from the war with much pride.
- When the people of Punjab gathered in Jallianwala Bagh to celebrate Pohela Boishakh on 13 April 1919, & chanting slogans for the release of two politicians named Dr. Kishlu & Dr. Satya Pal.
- When the programme was going on, the forces of Brigadier General Dyer fired on a large crowd of unarmed Indians in an open space known as the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in the Punjab region (now in Punjab state) of India, killing several hundred people and wounding many hundreds more.
- Analysis: This event intensified the demand for independence and fueled anti-British sentiments, becoming a turning point in India's struggle for freedom.

Rowlatt Act - 1919

- Defence of India Act 1915 was extended beyond WWI.
- The Rowlatt Act (Black Act) was passed on March 10, 1919, authorizing the government to imprison or confine, without a trial, any person associated with seditious activities.
- The act was deeply unpopular in India and was met with widespread protests.
- The discontent over the Rowlatt Act played a role in shaping the political atmosphere leading up to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar in 1919.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah resigned from INC (1920)

- Muhammad Ali Jinnah resigned from the INC in December 1920.

- His resignation was primarily driven by his dissatisfaction with INC's approach toward safeguarding the political rights and representation of Muslims in British India.
- Jinnah felt that the Congress was not adequately addressing the concerns of the Muslim minority, leading him to part ways and later become a prominent leader of the All India Muslim League, advocating for the creation of a separate nation for Muslims, which eventually resulted in the formation of Pakistan in 1947.

Khilafat Movement (1920-1922)

(Jinnah stayed away)

- It aimed to protest against British policies towards Turkey and the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire after World War I.
- The movement sought to address the grievances of Turkey and promote Hindu-Muslim unity.
- Indian Muslims protested against the disintegration of the Ottoman Caliphate.
- In this movement, Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, popularly known as the Ali brothers took leadership.
- But, Jinnah had a very different view. He believed the Khilafat movement had no practical implications for South Asia and it would turn into chaos. Jinnah therefore remained himself aloof from this development.
- The Khilafat Movement marked a unique instance of Hindu-Muslim unity by joining hands with Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and showcasing the growing political consciousness among various communities in India.

Non-Cooperation Movement & Chauri Chaura incident (1920-1922):

- Mahatma Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement in India in 1920 as a response to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and other incidents that fueled widespread discontent against British colonial rule.
- The Jallianwala Bagh massacre, which occurred in 1919, involved the killing of hundreds of unarmed Indian civilians by British troops in Amritsar.
- This event deeply angered and shocked many Indians, leading to increased calls for independence.
- The Non-Cooperation Movement was a nonviolent protest strategy aimed at resisting British rule through non-cooperation with the government and its institutions.
- Gandhi believed that if Indians refused to cooperate with the British authorities, the colonial administration would be crippled and forced to acknowledge the demands for self-governance.
- The movement involved boycotting British goods, institutions, schools, and the legal system. Indians were encouraged to withdraw support for the British government and instead promote self-reliance and independence.
- The Non-Cooperation Movement marked a significant shift in India's struggle for independence, as it mobilized millions of people across the country and brought attention to the injustices of colonial rule.
- However, it was eventually called off by Gandhi in 1922 after the Chauri Chaura incident, where protesters turned violent, contradicting the principles of nonviolence that Gandhi advocated.
- On March 10, 1922, he was arrested by the British authorities on charges of sedition.

- He was subsequently tried and sentenced to six years of imprisonment.
- During his time in prison, Gandhi used the opportunity for self-reflection, writing, and continuing his advocacy for nonviolence and social reform.
- He was released from prison in 1924, after serving about two years of his sentence, due to health concerns and underwent an appendectomy shortly after his release.

Simon Commission (1927):

(To review the Government of India Act of 1919, also known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms)

- The primary task of the Simon Commission was to assess the working of the Government of India Act 1919 and propose changes or amendments to the constitutional structure.
- The Simon Commission consisted of seven members, all of whom were British, and it did not include any Indian representation.
- This lack of Indian representation led to widespread protests and opposition in India, as it was seen as a denial of the right of Indians to determine their own constitutional future.
- The commission's recommendations, known as the Simon Report, were published in 1930.
- The report suggested the continuation of separate electorates for different communities and maintained certain reservations for minorities.
- However, it did not propose any immediate political reforms or a significant expansion of self-governance.
- The rejection of the Simon Commission and its recommendations fueled the demand for Indian participation in framing constitutional reforms.
- It contributed to the intensification of the Indian independence movement and the demand for a more representative and democratic form of government in India.

The Nehru Report 1928

(in response to the alleged negative role of all white committee)

- Since INC wasn't happy, they prepared a document prepared by a committee headed by Motilal Nehru, the father of Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1928.
- The committee was appointed by the All Parties Conference to draft a constitution for India.
- The primary objective of the Nehru Report was to propose constitutional reforms that would satisfy the demands of various political groups in India and serve as a basis for negotiations with the British government.

Key features are:

- **Dominion Status:** The report recommended the establishment of a dominion status for India within the British Commonwealth, which would grant India considerable autonomy in internal affairs.
- **Fundamental Rights:** It proposed a Bill of Rights, outlining fundamental rights and freedoms for the citizens of India.
- **Federal Structure:** The Nehru Report recommended a federal structure for India with a strong centre, where the provinces would have substantial autonomy.
- **Religious Minorities:** It suggested separate electorates for religious minorities but did not propose reserved seats for them, as had been the case under the separate electorate system.

- ✓ However, the Nehru Report faced criticism, particularly from AIML led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.
- ✓ Jinnah and other Muslim leaders were dissatisfied with the report's provisions for minority representation and rights.
- ✓ This dissatisfaction eventually led to the demand for a separate nation for Muslims.
- ✓ Jinnah came up with 14 points demands around which Indian Muslim politics revolved.

Jinnah's complete Isolation from Politics (his wife dies in 1929)

- Muhammad Ali Jinnah's wife was Rattanbai "Ruttie" Petit.
- She passed away on February 20, 1929. The couple had a complex personal life, and Ruttie Jinnah's untimely death had a profound impact on Muhammad Ali Jinnah.
- After her death, Jinnah did not remarry.

Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934):

- The Salt Act of 1882 gave the British government a monopoly on the collection and manufacture of salt, and they imposed a tax on its production and sale.
- Several factors contributed to the initiation of the Civil Disobedience Movement of whom the Salt tax monopoly was one of the central issues that triggered the movement.
- The Civil Disobedience Movement, also known as the Salt Satyagraha, was launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930.
- This movement was a part of the broader Indian independence struggle against British colonial rule.
- It was about the British monopoly on salt and the imposition of a salt tax.
- Gandhi saw this as a symbol of British economic exploitation and oppression.
- **Analysis:** The movement showcased the potential of mass participation and civil disobedience as powerful tools in the struggle for independence.

Round Table Conferences (1930-1932) (in response to Simon Commission):

- The idea of the Round Table Conferences in London was proposed by the British government.
- The first Round Table Conference was held in 1930, and two more were convened in 1931 and 1932.
- The purpose of these conferences was to discuss constitutional reforms for India and to find a common ground between various Indian political parties and communities.
- The Round Table Conferences were seen as a response to the widespread opposition to the Simon Commission and the demand for Indian participation in framing constitutional reforms.
- The British government hoped that by bringing together representatives from various Indian political groups, including the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, and others, they could reach a consensus on the future constitutional setup of India.
- However, the Round Table Conferences did not lead to a broad agreement among the Indian leaders, and the discussions were marked by disagreements on issues such as the representation of different communities, safeguards for minorities, and the form of the future government.
- The failure to achieve a consensus during these conferences contributed to the continued political tensions in India.

- Despite the challenges, the Round Table Conferences played a role in shaping the discussions that eventually led to the Government of India Act 1935 offered by British Prime Minister Ramsey Macdonald, which introduced significant constitutional reforms in British India.

Government of India Act (1935):

(Communal award)

- Introduced provincial autonomy and increased Indian representation but retained British control over defence and finance.
- The Act was a step towards self-governance, but the limited powers granted to Indians led to dissatisfaction and a continued demand for complete independence.

Election of 1936-1937

- As a result of elections held under the 1935 Act, INC formed a government in 08 out of 11 provinces with a coalition.
- During Congress's rule from 1937-1939, its "High Command's iron control over its own provinces clearly hinted at what lay ahead for the Muslim majority provinces once it came to dominate the Centre.
- Much of the League's propaganda at this stage was directed against the Congress ministries and their alleged attacks on Muslim culture; the heightened activity of Hindu Mahasabha, the hoisting of Congress tricolour, the singing of Bande Mataram, the Vidya Mandir scheme in the Central Provinces and the Wardha scheme of education, all were interpreted as proof of 'Congress discrimination and favouritism'.
- So, the Congress was clearly incapable of representing Muslim interests.

Shere-Bangla Becoming Chief minister of Bengal (1936-1937 Election)

(His reform, Lahore resolution & domination of the Muslim including Lower caste MPs)

By 1938-1939, the idea of Muslim Separation was gaining momentum

- The Sindh Provincial Muslim League in its meeting in Karachi in October 1938, adopted a resolution which recommended to the AIML to devise a scheme of constitution under which Muslims may attain full independence.
- The premier of the Bengal provinces, A. K. Fazal-ul-Haque, who was not in AIML, was quite convinced in favour of separation.
- The idea was vividly expressed by Jinnah in an article in London weekly Time & Tide on 9 March 1940 where he wrote: *"Democratic systems based on the concept of homogeneous nation such as England are very definitely not applicable to heterogeneous countries such as India, and this simple fact is the root cause of all of India's constitutional ill."*
- If, therefore, it is accepted that there is in India a major and a minor nation, it follows that a parliamentary system based on the majority principle must inevitably mean the rule of a major nation.
- Experience has proved that, whatever the economic and political programme of any political Party, the Hindu, as a general rule, will vote for his caste fellow, the Muslim for his coreligionists.

Tripuri Session of the Congress (1939)

- The Tripuri Congress Session of 1939 was a part of INC 's annual session.

- During this session that Subhas Chandra Bose *was elected as the President of INC*, defeating Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who was supported by Mahatma Gandhi.
- This event marked a crucial moment in the internal dynamics of the Indian National Congress.
- The session took place against the backdrop of *ideological differences within the Congress, particularly between Bose and Gandhi*.
- Subhas Chandra Bose had a more radical approach and *advocated for direct action to achieve independence*, while Gandhi followed a more non-violent and negotiation-based approach.
- The election of Bose as the Congress President reflected a shift towards a more assertive and militant stance within the party.
- However, due to the growing differences between Bose and other Congress leaders, especially Gandhi, Bose resigned from the presidency in 1939.
- **This event eventually led to the formation of the Forward Bloc by Subhas Chandra Bose, where he continued to pursue his vision for an independent India.**
- This marked a shift from the earlier demand for dominion status, indicating the growing impatience and determination for complete self-rule.

Lahore Resolution - 1940

- From 22-24 March 1940, the AIML held its annual session at Minto Park and Quaid arrived in Lahore on 21 March.
- The resolution was moved by A. K. Fazlul Huq, the CM of undivided Bengal, and was seconded by Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman from the UP, Zafar Ali Khan from Punjab, Sardar Aurangzeb Khan from NWFP, and Sir Abdullah Haroon from Sindh.
- Qazi Muhammad Essa from Baluchistan and other leaders announced their support.
- The resolution, translated into English by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan:
- “the areas in which the Muslims were numerically in the majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent states in which constituent units should be autonomous and sovereign.”
- In his speech, Jinnah recounted the contemporary situation, stressing that the problem of India was no more of an inter-communal nature, but manifestly an international one.
- He criticized Congress & nationalist Muslims, & espoused the 2-Nation Theory & the reasons for the demand for separate Muslim homelands.
- During his speech, Jinnah also quoted the letter written by Lala Lajpat Rai in 1924 to C.R. Das, in which he clearly mentioned that Hindus and Muslims were two separate and distinct nations that could never be merged into a single one.
- Alongside British policy, as a minority in the overall demographic construct of India, the Muslims had reasons to suffer from insecurity.
- Despite Congress's assertions of its secular values, many Muslims were sceptical and feared that the Hindu majority would seek to marginalize them.

Conclusions