

Indian independence movement

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Indian Independence movement

A 1912 map of Northern India, showing the centres of the rebellion.

Date	1857-1947
Location	India , Pakistan and Bangladesh
Result	Rebel victory
Territorial changes	Independence to the subcontinent granted after World war II in 1947 with following countries of India , Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1971.

Belligerents

- [Sepoy mutineers](#)
- [Mughal Empire](#)
- [Oudh](#)
- Forces of [Rani Lakshmibai](#) of [Jhansi](#)
- Forces of [Nana Sahib](#) Peshwa II
- [Jagdishpur](#)
- [Gwalior](#) factions
- [Jodhpur](#) factions
- [Banda](#)
- Various other [Rajas](#), [Nawabs](#), [Zamindars](#), [Thakurs](#), [Chaudharys](#), [Taluqdars](#), [Sardars](#), and chieftains
- [The Muslim league](#)
- [Indian national Congress](#)
- [Azad Hind](#)

- [Unit of G and](#)
- [East Com](#)
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- [King Nep](#)

Commanders and leaders

[Bahadur Shah II \(POW\)](#)
[Nana Sahib](#)
[Rani Lakshmibai †](#)
[Tatya Tope Executed](#)
[Bakht Khan †](#)
[Begum Hazrat Mahal](#)
[Kunwar Singh \(DOW\)](#)
[Mahatma Gandhi](#)
[Jawahar Lal Nehru](#)
[Subhash Chandra Bose](#)

[The Earl](#)
[George A](#)
[Sir Patric](#)
[Sir Colin](#)

- [Sir F](#)

[Sir Henry](#)

- [Sir J](#)
[Outr](#)

- [Sir F Law](#)
- [Sir J Neill](#)
- [John Nich](#)

[Dhir Shan](#)
[Rana^{\[1\]}](#)
[Randhir S](#)
[Surendra](#)
[Shah](#)

[Sir Yusef](#)

The **Indian independence movement** was a movement from 1858 until 14-15 August 1947, when [India](#) and [Pakistan](#) got its independence from the [British Raj](#).^[2]

European Rule

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[Vasco da Gama](#) of [Portugal](#) had discovered a sea route to India. He had reached [Kozhikode](#) ([Calicut, Kerala](#)) in 1498. After this, many Europeans started coming to India for trading. They made their offices and forts in various parts of India. The British East India Company became the major force in India. The company's troops led by [Robert Clive](#) defeated the rulers of Bengal in 1757. This battle became famous as the [Battle of Plassey](#). That was the beginning of British rule, known as the [British Raj](#), in India. In 1764, the [Battle of Buxar](#) was won by the English forces.^[3] After *this*, the British got control over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

The Parliament of the [United Kingdom](#) passed many laws to help the British East India Company. The [Regulating Act of 1773](#), [the India Act of 1784](#), and the Charter Act of 1813 were designed to help trade with India.

Before the First War of Independence (1857), Indians in different parts of India had revolted against the British. Many such of the revolts and armed struggles had taken place in this Some examples include:

- Revolts by many local rulers of [Tamil people](#) in southern India like [Dheeran Chinnamalai](#), [Veerapandiya Kattabomman](#) ...etc.
- In 1825 in Karnataka [kittur Chennamma](#) rejected Doctrine of Lapsi and refused British rulers any royalty. She defeated British in the war. Kittur was defeated by British army in the second war. Her lieutenant [Sangolli Rayanna](#) continued the revolt until he was killed.
- A revolt in 1787 took place in Goa against the rule of Portugal. The histo call this revolt as the [Conspiracy of the Pintos](#).
- A rebellion by tribes of Jharkhand in India. Historians call this [Santhal Rebellion](#)

- Rebellion under the leadership of [Titumir](#) in [Bengal](#).

Revolt of 1857

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See the main article: [Indian Rebellion of 1857](#)

Bahadur Shah II (portrait painted about 1854)

India's First War of Independence (by this name later a book was published by V.D Savarkar) was a revolt of Indian soldiers and people (rulers and peasants) against British rule. Historians had used the terms like the Indian Mutiny or the Sepoy Mutiny to describe this event. The rebellion by Indian troops of the British Raj started in May 1857 and continued until December 1858. Many reasons had combined to result in this rebellion.

The British rulers continued to forcibly take regions ruled by Indians and made these regions part of the British Raj. They did not give any respect to old royal houses of India like the Mughals and the Peshwa. They also made the Indian soldiers of their army use a special type of cartridge (immediate cause of the rebel). The soldiers had to open the cartridges with their teeth before loading them into their guns. The cartridges supposedly used cow and pig fat. For [Hindus](#) the cow is a sacred animal and they do not eat beef. Similarly, [Muslims](#) do not eat pork. Thus, the use of these cartridges made soldiers of both the religions turn against the British.^[4] Although the British tried to replace the cartridges, the feelings against them stayed.

Rebellion broke out when a soldier called Mangal Pandey attacked a British sergeant and wounded an adjutant. General Hearsey ordered another Indian soldier to arrest Mangal Pandey but he refused. Later the British arrested Mangal Pandey and the other Indian soldier. The British killed both by hanging them.

At the beginning the British were slow to respond. Then they took very quick action with heavy forces. They brought their regiments from the [Crimean War](#) to India. They also redirected many regiments that were going to China from India. The British forces reached Delhi, and they surrounded the city from 1st July 1857 until 31st August 1857. Street-to-street fights broke out between the British troops and the Indians. Ultimately, they took control of Delhi. The massacre at Kanpur (July 1857) and the siege of Lucknow (June to November 1857) were also important. The last important battle was at [Gwalior](#) in June 1858 in which the Rani of Jhansi was killed. With this, the British had practically suppressed the rebellion. However, some guerrilla fighting in many places continued until early in 1859 and Tantia Tope was captured and executed until April 1859.

The Results

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India's First War of Independence was a major event in the history of modern India. The Parliament of the United Kingdom withdrew the right of the British East India Company to rule India in November 1858. The United Kingdom started ruling India directly through its representative called the [Viceroy of India](#) (earlier governor-general of India). It made India a part of the British Empire. They promised "the Princes, Chiefs, and People of India," equal treatment under the British law.

The British sent [Bahadur Shah II](#), the last Mughal Emperor, out of India, and kept him in [Rangoon \(now called Yangon in Burmese\)](#), [Burma](#) where he died in 1862. The Mughal dynasty, which had ruled India for about four hundred years, ended with his death.

The British also took many steps to employ Indian higher castes and rulers into the government. They stopped taking the lands of the remaining princes and rulers of India. They stopped interference in religious matters. They started employing Indians in the civil services but at lower levels. They increased the number of British soldiers, and allowed only British soldiers to handle artillery.

Organised movements

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The period following India's First War of Independence was an important period in the Indian independence movement. Many leaders emerged at the national and provincial levels, and the Indians became more aware of their rights. Social movements also helped in shaping people's outlook, tried for social changes, and tried to remove bad social practices and evils like illiteracy and caste system. During this period, many social and religious leaders worked to inspire the Indian society. They included men like [Swami Vivekananda](#), [Ramakrishna](#), [Sri Aurobindo](#), [Subramanya Bharathy](#), [Bankim Chandra Chatterjee](#), Sir [Syed Ahmed Khan](#), [Rabindranath Tagore](#) and [Dadabhai Naoroji](#).

They spread the message of self-confidence, removing of social evils, and making India free from domination of foreign power. [Lokmanya Tilak](#) was one such leader who was not very modest in his views. The British arrested him. In the court he declared: "Swaraj (independence) is my birthright". This concept of Swaraj later became a main policy and philosophy of India's independence movement in the following decades until India became independent.

In 1885, at the suggestion of [Allan Octavian Hume](#), a retired British civil servant, seventy-three Indian delegates met in Bombay. They founded the [Indian National Congress](#). The delegates represented educated Indians in professions such as [law](#), [teaching](#), and [journalism](#). A few years before, [Dadabhai Naoroji](#) had already formed the East India Association. It merged with the Indian National Congress to form a bigger party.

To begin with, the Indian National Congress was not a very active political party. It met annually and gave some suggestions to the rulers of the British Raj. The suggestions generally related to civil rights and opportunities for Indians in the government jobs. Despite its claim to represent all Indians, it

represented only the educated and higher class of the society. But, it failed to attract all Muslims. Many Muslims had become distrustful of Hindu reformers who raised their voice against matters like religious conversion and killing of cows for their meat. For Hindus, the cow is a sacred animal not to be killed. Sir [Syed Ahmed Khan](#) launched a separate movement for Muslims, and founded in 1875 a college in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh state, India. Later, this college became [Aligarh University](#) in 1921. The objective of the college was to give modern education to India's Muslims. By 1900, the Indian National Congress had become a national party, but did not represent all groups of Indian society, particularly the Muslims.

Partition of Bengal

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In 1905, Lord Curzon ([George Nathaniel Curzon, 1st Marquess Curzon of Kedleston](#)), the Viceroy and Governor-General (1899-1905) of India divided Bengal province into two provinces: Eastern Bengal & [Assam](#), with its capital at [Dhaka](#), and [West Bengal](#), with its capital at [Calcutta](#) (Kolkata). At that time Calcutta was the [capital city](#) of the British Raj. The people became very angry at that partition (division), and created the phrase "divide and rule" for the policy followed by the British Empire. The leading intellectual figures of India at that time expressed their unhappiness at this partition. For example, Rabindranath Tagore, the most famous Indian poet (originally from Bengal) composed a poem against this partition.

World War I

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During the First World War, Indians gave support to the United Kingdom. About 1.3 million Indian soldiers went to many parts of [Europe](#), [Africa](#), and the [Middle East](#) to fight. Many Indians, including the princes and rich people of India, contributed money and materials to the war funds of the United Kingdom. However, many Indian soldiers died in foreign lands. In India, [flu](#) called Spanish flu spread like an epidemic killing many people. The tax rates increased in India, and prices also increased. The Indians became restless. In August 1917, [Edwin Samuel Montagu](#), the Secretary of State for India, announced in the British Parliament about many steps to give more rights to Indians. A new law named the Government of India Act of 1919 gave many rights to the Indians in the provincial government. These rights related to farming, local government, health, education, and public works. The British administrators kept matters like taxation, finance, and law and order under their control.

The Rowlatt Act

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In 1919 the British made a new law named the Rowlatt Act. Under this law, the government got many powers, including the ability to arrest people and

keep them in prisons without a trial. They also obtained the power to stop newspapers from reporting and printing news. The people called this act the Black Act. Indians protested against this law in many places.

The positive impact of reform was seriously undermined in 1919 by the [Rowlatt Act](#), named after the recommendations made the previous year to the Imperial Legislative Council by the Rowlatt Commission, which had been appointed to investigate "seditious conspiracy." The Rowlatt Act, also known as the Black Act, vested the Viceroy's government with extraordinary powers to quell sedition by silencing the press, detaining political activists without trial, and arresting any individuals suspected of sedition or treason without a warrant. In protest, a nationwide cessation of work ([hartal](#)) was called, marking the beginning of widespread, although not nationwide, popular discontent.

The agitation reached a peak in Amritsar (Punjab, India). In Amritsar, on 13th April 1919, about 10,000 Indians had assembled at Jallianwala Bagh. They had no idea of the law that they couldn't gather. The British military commander, Brigadier-General [Reginald Dyer](#) ordered his troops to fire at the civilians without any warning. The troops fired 1,650 times. Some historians estimate that the troops killed 379 and injured about 1,137 people. This incident came to be known as the [Jallianwala Bagh massacre](#). With this killing of innocent people, the British lost the trust of the Indian people.

Congress forced Britishers to investigate massacre of jallianwala later, a tehkikat committee was made by congress.

Gandhi's way

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Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (also known as Mahatma Gandhi) had received his education at London. He was a barrister (lawyer). In 1893, he went to [South Africa](#). After Gandhi was thrown off a train because he was a colored person sitting in a first-class seat, he took that emotion and used it to begin to fight the injustices that many people of color faced at the time. He became successful and the government of South Africa removed most of such rules and restrictions. Gandhi led the Salt March, an act of protest.

When Gandhi returned to India in 1915, few people knew him. Under the leadership of Gandhi, Indians began to use a different method to get freedom over the next few years.

Civil disobedience

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Gandhi collecting salt from the seashore on 5 April 1930

In December 1929, the Indian National Congress Party agreed to start a movement for complete independence from British rule. The Party decided to start a movement named to disobey the British rule. It became the civil disobedience movement. They decided to observe 26th January 1930 as the complete Independence Day (this is the reason why India celebrate republic day on 26 January). Many other political parties and revolutionaries came together to support this movement.

Gandhi started this movement, leading 72 people on a 400 kilometer route from Ahmedabad to Dandi (both in the Indian state of Gujarat), on the coast of the [Arabian Sea](#). There they made salt from the seawater and broke a law of British India prohibiting making salt without paying taxes, so this event is referred to as the Salt March. Thus the civil disobedience movement began, and it soon spread throughout India. Indians started to break unfair laws in a peaceful manner in protest against the British rule. The effect of civil disobedience movement in Kerala was at Payannur and Beypore.

Revolutionary activities

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Many Indians did not believe in such peaceful protests, claiming that the British would not give independence to Indians so easily. They believed in armed struggle was necessary to oust the British from India. In some way, this had continued for years after the partition of Bengal in 1905. Many revolutionaries and leaders emerged from time to time. [Bhagat Singh](#) was one of them.

The elections

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The rulers of the British Raj made a new law to govern India, named the [Government of India Act 1935](#). This law aimed at constitutional process to govern India. It had three major aims: to establish a federal system with many provinces, to give self-ruling position (autonomy) to the provinces, and to give the Muslim minority protection through giving them some separate electorates. In such separate electorates only Muslims could stand for elections. In February 1937, elections took place for the provincial assemblies. The members of the Indian National Congress won in five provinces, and held upper position in two more provinces. The Muslim League's performance in the election was not good.

The Indian move to freedom

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During the Second World War, the rulers of the British Raj declared India to be a party to the war. They did not discuss the matter with Indians and their leaders. The Indians and their leaders became divided over this matter.

Some supported the British, while many did not. British rulers of India wanted the Indians to fight and die in the name of freedom, yet they had denied this freedom to India and the Indians for more than a hundred years. This created a lot of dissatisfaction among Indians, and two big movements for India's independence took shape. The first was the Indian National Army of [Subhas Chandra Bose](#). The second was Quit India Movement of Mohandas Gandhi.

The Indian National Army

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Subhas Chandra Bose

[Subhas Chandra Bose](#) and many leaders did not like the British decision to drag India into the Second World War. He had twice (in 1937 and 1939) become president of the Indian National Congress Party, the leading Indian political party of that time. However, he and many other leaders of the Indian National Congress Party differed on many matters. He resigned and formed a new party named All India Forward Bloc. The British government of India put him under house arrest, but he escaped in 1941. He reached Germany and secured the support of Germany and Japan to fight the British in India. In 1943, he traveled in submarines of Germany and Japan, and reached Japan. He organised the Indian National Army. The INA fought the troops of the British Raj in northeastern India. Despite many difficulties, INA recorded many victories. However, with the surrender of Japan in 1945, INA's operations stopped. Bose died in a plane crash, but circumstances of his death are not clear.

The British government of India put on trial three Indian National Army officers at the Red Fort in Delhi. The British had chosen for this trial one Hindu, one Sikh, and one Muslim of the INA. This made many Indians of all religions very angry. A naval mutiny also broke out in Bombay. Ultimately, the British ruled that these officers were guilty, but they set them free seeing the public anger. When India became independent, the government of India did not allow the former officers and soldiers of the INA to join the armed forces of the independent India. However, the government granted them very good pensions and other facilities. The Indian public also gave them much respect.

Many consider Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose a controversial figure due to his association with the [Axis Powers](#). But, in India, people consider him a patriotic hero of the Indian independence movement.

Quit India

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On 8th August 1942, the leaders of the Indian National Congress Party met in Bombay (Mumbai). The leaders adopted a policy to force the British out of India. Gandhi's slogan "Do or Die" became a national slogan, and the

movement became the Quit India Movement. At the beginning of the Second World War, the Indian National Congress Party had supported the British, but they had demanded freedom for India after the war. The British did not agree to this proposal. On 14th July 1942, the Indian National Congress Party passed a resolution demanding complete independence from the British rule. However, this did not have support of some other political parties.

Gandhi had asked the people to keep the Quit India Movement as a peaceful movement. Many people started the movement in many places of India. But at some places, the movements turned violent. Gandhi refused to eat until the violence stopped. He was successful in ending the violence.

The British action was very quick. They arrested over 100,000 people. They levied fines on many people. They dropped bombs on the people who demonstrated against the British Raj. The troops of the British Raj even beat people with sticks and caned them. The British arrested all the leaders of the Congress Party. Gandhi's wife, Kasturba Gandhi, died during detention, as well as his secretary Mahadev Desai. Gandhi's health had also become very bad. In 1944, the British set him free fearing that Gandhi's death might result in a very large protest by Indians. Gandhi continued to oppose the British, and demanded that all other leaders be set free.

The Second World War had reduced the economic, political, and military strength of the British Empire. They were also aware that after the war Indians would begin a larger movement for independence. The mood of the British people and the British Army had also changed. After the Second World War, most of them were no longer willing to support the British ruling class in India. That position was now clear to the leaders of the United Kingdom. By early 1946, those leaders set free all the political prisoners held in India and opened independence discussions with the Indian National Congress Party. On the 14th of August 1947 Pakistan gained independence and a day later on the 15th of August India gained its independence as well.

India's independence (1947 to 1950)

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Gandhi with Lord and Lady Mountbatten, 1947

On midnight of 14th and 15th August 1947, Britain handed India and Pakistan its formal political Independence. A short time after that, Gandhi, who was aging and ill, died from a bullet fired by a Hindu extremist named [Nathuram Godse](#). The national leadership was then passed to his chief lieutenant, [Jawaharlal Nehru](#). On 3rd June 1947, the Viceroy [Lord Mountbatten](#) announced partition of India into two countries: an Hindu [India](#), and an Islamic [Pakistan](#). In this partition, many people died while others were separated from their families. On 26th January 1950, India adopted their constitution, the longest constitution in the world.

References

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1. [↑] Cite error: The named reference Tyagi1974 was used but no text was provided for refs named (see the [help page](#)).
2. [↑] ["Timeline of India's Independence and Democracy: From 1857 to 1947"](#). *Pacific Atrocities Education*. Archived from [the original](#) on 2021-01-16. Retrieved 2021-03-18.
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4. [↑] [The uprising of 1857](#). Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, Science Museum. New Delhi. 2017. [ISBN 978-93-85360-11-4](#). [OCLC 1031406367](#).

Further reading

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- History of the Freedom movement in India [ISBN 0-8364-2376-3](#) by R. C. Majumdar

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