

NCERT Notes: The August Offer [Modern Indian History Notes For UPSC]

NCERT notes on important topics for the UPSC [Civil Services Exam](#) preparation. These notes will also be useful for other competitive exams like banking PO, SSC, state civil services exams and so on.

Background

- During the Second World War, the Indian National Congress (INC) leaders were upset with the British government for having pulled India into a war without the consent of Indians. Lord Linlithgow had declared India to be at war with Germany without consultation.
- France had fallen to the Axis Powers and the Allies were suffering many reverses in the war. There was also a change of government in Britain and Winston Churchill became the British Prime Minister in 1940.
- The British government were keen to get Indian support for the war. Britain herself was in danger of being occupied by the Nazis and in this light, the INC softened its stand. It said that support for the war would be provided if power was transferred to an interim government in India.
- Then, the Viceroy Linlithgow made a set of proposals called the 'August offer'. For the first time, the right of Indians to frame their own constitution was acknowledged.

The terms of the August Offer

- A representative Indian body would be framed after the war to frame a constitution for India. Dominion status was the objective for India.
- The Viceroy's Executive Council would be expanded right away to include for the first time more Indians than whites. However, defence, finance and home portfolios were to remain with the British.
- An advisory war council was to be established.
- An assurance was given to the minorities that no transfer of power would take place "to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in Indian national life."

The Viceroy also stated that there would be no revision of the Government of India Act. He also said that before any real constitutional reform could be done, the differences between the INC and the Muslim League would have to be resolved.

Response of the Indian leaders

- The INC rejected this offer at its meeting at Wardha in August 1940. It demanded complete freedom from colonial rule. Jawaharlal Nehru remarked that the dominion status concept was as dead as a doornail.
- The League also rejected the offer saying that nothing short of partitioning the country would be acceptable to them.

- After this, Mahatma Gandhi initiated the Individual Satyagraha to affirm the right to free speech. He avoided a mass satyagraha because he did not want violence.
- The first three satyagrahis were Vinoba Bhave, Nehru and Brahma Datt. All three were jailed.
- The satyagrahis also started a march towards Delhi which was called the 'Delhi Chalo Movement'.
- The movement failed to pick up steam and was aborted in December 1940.
- After the failure of the August Offer, the British government sent the Cripps Mission to India in a bid to garner Indian support for the war.