

CHAPTER 7

The Quit India Movement

Syllabus

The Quit India Movement

Causes (failure of the Cripps Mission (clauses will not be tested), Japanese threat), Quit India Resolution and the significance of the Movement.

The growing resentment against the British government brought together various groups and classes of Indians into a common struggle for freedom in the first half of the 20th century. This wide spread discontentment was channelised by the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi into various organised movements for independence. It culminated in a movement calling for complete withdrawal of the British from India or the famous *Quit India Movement*.

EVENTS LEADING TO QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

The following events built up the momentum and finally led to be Quit India Movement.

Resignation of the Congress Ministries:

The Second World War broke out in September 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France went to Poland's aid and declared war on Germany. The British Government of India immediately joined the War without consulting the National Congress or the elected members of the Central Legislature.

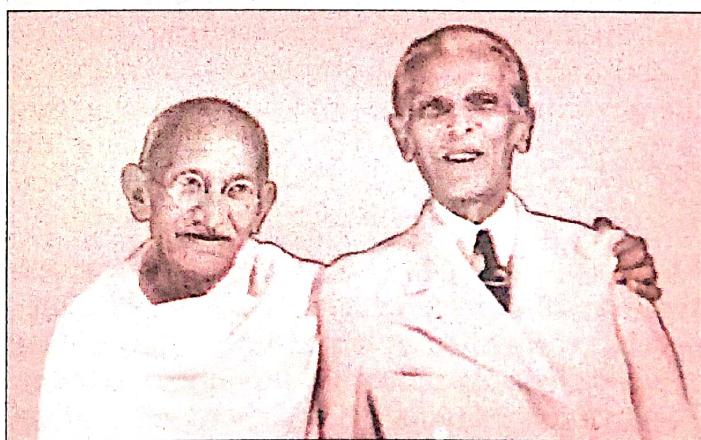
The Congress leaders asked how it was possible for an enslaved nation to aid others in their fight for freedom. They, therefore, demanded that India must be declared free or at least have effective power before it could actively participate in the War. Lord Linlithgow,

the Viceroy, could not give any such assurance. He declared Dominion Status as the goal of British Policy in India. This was considered inadequate by the Congress.

The British government tried to pit the religious minorities and Princes against the Congress. The Congress, therefore, asked its ministries to resign.

In July 1937, the Congress had formed ministries in the United Provinces, Central Provinces, Orissa, Bihar, Madras and Bombay. Later, Assam and the North-West Frontier also came under the Congress rule. The resignation of the Congress ministries in October-November 1939 had many implications.

- (i) The Viceroy was happy because the Congress ministries had controlled several provinces.
- (ii) The ministries in Punjab, Bengal and Sind did not resign to win the government's goodwill.
- (iii) The Muslim League was jubilant over the resignation of Congress Ministries and offered its friendship to the British



■ Jinnah with Gandhiji

Government. It celebrated the day when the Congress ministries resigned as a 'day of deliverance and 'thanks-giving.'

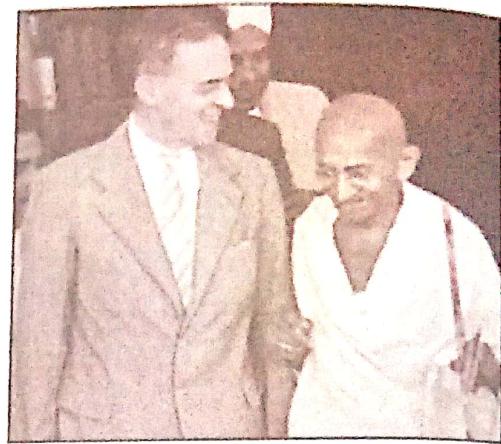
A change came in the attitude of the Muslim League and Jinnah after the elections of 1937 and formation of the Congress Ministries in the Provinces. Jinnah and other leaders of the League proclaimed that Muslims could not expect any justice at the hands of the Congress.

In 1940, the Muslim League passed a resolution demanding the partition of the country and the creation of a State called Pakistan. The name Pakistan was derived from the letters of the provinces and communities that the new country would comprise: Punjab, Afghan (North-West Frontier Province), Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan. Jinnah proclaimed that the division of India into two autonomous States was the only solution to the Indian problem.

August Offer (1940): A change of government took place in Britain in May 1940. Winston Churchill became Prime Minister and L.S. Amery took over as the Secretary of State for India. The War situation in Europe worsened. The fall of France and the danger of Nazi occupation of Britain temporarily softened the hard stance of Congress. On June 1, 1940, Gandhiji declared: 'We do not seek our independence out of British ruin.'

The international compulsions forced the British Government and the British Indian Government to seek some settlement or understanding with the Congress. On August 8, 1940 (on the eve of the Battle of Britain), Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, made a new offer known as the 'August Offer'. The Congress rejected the offer because the minorities especially the Muslim League were assured that no constitutional scheme would be acceptable to the government unless and until it was agreed to by the minorities. The Muslim League did not accept the offer, as it did not give a clear assurance for the establishment of Pakistan.

The Cripps Mission (1942): With the Japanese army rapidly advancing towards India, it became necessary for the British to break the political deadlock in India. Churchill announced in March 1942, that Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the War Cabinet, would go to India for consultation



■ Cripps with Gandhiji

with all the parties. The Cripps Mission proposed the following Constitutional reforms:

- (i) India would be given a Dominion Status when the War would end. This Dominion would have the freedom to remain with the British Commonwealth or to secede from it.
- (ii) A Constituent Assembly would be set up. It would consist of the members elected by the Lower House of the Indian Legislature and the representatives of the Princely States nominated by their rulers. It would be set up to draft a new Constitution.
- (iii) There would be a federation of British India and Indian States. Any province that was not prepared to accept the Constitution would be allowed to obtain Dominion Status separately.
- (iv) The Provinces would be free to join the Indian Union. If they would not join the Indian federation, they would formulate their own Constitutions which could have the same status as the Union of India.
- (v) An undertaking would be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the Constituent Assembly covering all matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibilities.
- (vi) Provisions would also be made for the protection of the racial and religious minorities.
- (vii) During the critical years of the War, the power of the Viceroy would remain as hitherto and he would be responsible for the defence of the country. But

the task of organising the military and material resources of India would be the responsibility of the Government of India with the cooperation of the people of India.

Failure of the Cripps Mission: Almost all the parties and sections of the people rejected the proposals on the following grounds:

- (i) The Cripps Mission did not bring with it the promise of independence in the near future.
- (ii) The plan involved partitioning the country.
- (iii) The League opposed the creation of a single union. The proposals did not accept Pakistan specifically. They did not grant the right of self-determination to Muslims.
- (iv) The Hindu Mahasabha rejected the proposals because it feared the partition of the country.
- (v) The Sikhs, the Anglo-Indians, the Indian Christians and labour leaders also opposed them because they did not provide sufficient safeguards for their interests.
- (vi) The people of the Princely States had no right to send their representatives to the proposed Constitution-making body. Their representatives were to be selected by the rulers.
- (vii) The Congress was opposed to the principle of non-accession of the provinces. Gandhiji opposed the Declaration and urged the Working Committee to reject it. Mahatma Gandhi described the Cripps proposals as a 'post-dated cheque on a failing bank.'
- (viii) The Congress wanted that all Subjects, including Defence should be handed over to the National Government. The Congress insisted on the immediate formation of a National Government with full responsibility.

Japanese Threat: The War situation was discouraging in 1942. The Japanese Army had attacked Burma (Myanmar) and was marching towards Assam. Gandhiji observed, '*The presence of British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes the bait.*' The Indian leaders were anxious to save their country from the Japanese invasion but their

slavery was a hindrance. Gandhiji and other leaders were convinced that this situation called for complete independence from the British immediately. Gandhiji said, '*India's safety, and Britain's too, lies in the orderly and timely British withdrawal from India.*' So they decided to launch a movement calling upon the British to quit India.

QUIT INDIA RESOLUTION

In 1942, the failure of the Cripps Mission left no further meeting ground between the British Government and the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi felt that the British presence in India was an invitation to Japan to invade India and that their withdrawal would remove the bait. He therefore, asked the British "to leave India in God's hands."

The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha in July, 1942. It adopted a resolution, known as the *Quit India Resolution*. The resolution stated: '*British rule in India must end immediately.*'

The Quit India Movement

The All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay on August 8, 1942 and passed the Quit India Resolution adopted at Wardha in July 1942. The Congress proposed to start a non-violent mass struggle under Gandhiji's leadership if this demand of immediate and complete independence was not conceded by the British. In his speech before the All India Congress Committee, Gandhiji declared that it was a decision "*To Do or Die*".

Before the Congress could start the movement, the Government struck hard. Early in the morning of August 9, Gandhiji and other Congress leaders were arrested and taken to unknown destinations and the Congress was once again declared illegal.

All over the country there were strikes and demonstrations which were lathi-charged and fired upon. People attacked the symbols of British authority—the police stations, post offices, railway stations, etc. National flags were hoisted on public buildings in defiance of the police. British authority disappeared in parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

In some areas such as Ballia in Eastern U.P., Tamluk in Midnapore district of West Bengal and Satara district of Maharashtra, the nationalists set up parallel governments.

Achyutrao Patwardhan, Jai Prakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Aruna Asaf Ali and Nana Patil were among the prominent leaders of the underground movement. They set up a Central Directorate at Mumbai. They kept the movement alive despite the government's repressive measures.

The movement also saw the active participation of women such as Matangini Hazra in Bengal, Kanaklata Barua in Assam and Rama Devi in Odisha. Aruna Asaf Ali hoisted the Indian National flag at the Gowalia Tank ground, now popularly known as *August Kranti Maidan*, Mumbai on August 9, 1942. She, along with Usha Mehta, also broadcasted news through an underground radio station.

Government's Repressive Measures

The government resorted to severe measures to crush the 1942 Movement. The Press was completely muzzled. The demonstrating crowds were machine-gunned and even bombed from the air. Prisoners were tortured. The police and secret police reigned supreme. Nearly ten thousand people were killed and 60,000 people were arrested by the end of 1942.

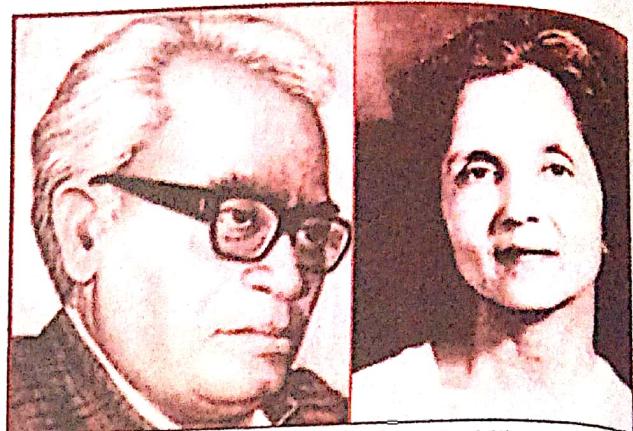
The military took over many towns and cities. Rebellious villages had to pay huge sums as punitive fines and the villagers had to undergo mass floggings. India had not witnessed such intense repression since the First War of Independence, 1857.

Gandhiji was detained at the Agha Khan Palace in Pune; the other leaders were sent to jail in Ahmednagar Fort. In the end, the government succeeded in crushing the movement.

The Significance of the Quit India Movement

The Quit India movement made independence of India as the only agenda of the National Movement. It proved that there could be no retreat and future negotiations could only be on the manner of the transfer of power. The Movement had the following impact:

- The Quit India Movement was in fact short-lived. Its importance lay in the



Ram Manohar Lohia

Aruna Asaf Ali

fact that it demonstrated the depth that nationalist feeling had reached in the country and the great capacity for struggle and sacrifice that the people had developed.

- It was evident that the British would no longer find it possible to rule India against the wishes of the people.
- It was the mass uprising before attaining independence. People from all parts of India took part in processions and demonstrations. The Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis and even people from the Princely States participated.
- The Quit India Movement strengthened the Congress Socialist Party because of its heroic role in the movement. Its leader Jai Prakash Narayan became a legendary figure. The Party continued its underground movement till 1944 when it came to an end.
- After the suppression of the Quit India Movement, the Constitutional question remained dormant till the close of the War in 1945.
- After the suppression of the Quit India Movement of 1942, there was hardly any political activity inside the country till the War ended in 1945. The leaders of the National Movement were in jail, and no new leaders arose to take their place to give a new lead to the country.

Henceforth, the battle for the freedom of India was carried on beyond the country's frontiers. It was led by the Indian National Army and its chief, Subhas Chandra Bose.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

August Offer: (i) The Congress Ministries resigned in October 1939 when the Viceroy declared that India was at war with Germany; (ii) The Muslim League was jubilant over the resignation of the Congress Ministries; (iii) In 1940, the Muslim League demanded the division of India into two autonomous States; (iv) international compulsions due to the World War.

The Cripps Mission: proposed India would be given a Dominion Status. It did not propose any immediate transfer of power.

Japanese Threat: The threat of Japanese invasion of India convinced the Indian leaders that for India's safety the British should withdraw from India immediately. He asked the British to quit India.

Quit India Resolution: This resolution was adopted by the Congress Working Committee at Wardha (July 1942), ratified on August 8, 1942 at Mumbai. The British put down the movement with ruthless brutality. Gandhiji and other important leaders were arrested. The Congress was declared illegal.

The Significance of the Quit India Movement: (i) demonstrated the depth of the nationalist feeling in India and the capacity of Indians for struggle and sacrifice; (ii) made it clear that the British would no longer find it possible to rule India against the wishes of its people; (iii) People of all sections of society participated in this movement.

EXERCISES

I. Multiple-Choice Questions

A. Select the correct option.

1. Arrange the following events chronologically.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| (i) Quit India Resolution | (ii) Cripps Mission |
| (iii) Resignation of Congress Ministries | (iv) August Offer |
| (a) (iii), (ii), (i) and (iv) | (b) (iii), (iv), (ii) and (i) |
| (c) (iv), (iii), (ii) and (i) | (d) (iii), (ii), (iv) and (i) |

2. In 1942, Japanese forces were marching towards _____.

- (a) China (b) Arunachal Pradesh (c) Assam (d) Tibet

3. At Wardha, the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution that was passed at Bombay (Mumbai). Name the resolution.

- (a) Poorna Swaraj Resolution (b) Quit India Resolution
(c) Non Cooperation Resolution (d) Swaraj Resolution

4. Which of the following was NOT stressed by Mahatma Gandhi while exhorting the people to join the Quit India Movement?

- (a) Forget the differences between the Hindus and Muslims and think of yourselves as Indians only.
(b) Our quarrel is not with British people, we fight their imperialism and we must purge ourselves of hatred.
(c) Feel from today that you are a free man and not a dependent. Do or die. Either free India or die in the attempt.
(d) Freedom of India is an end that will purify all means employed to achieve it.

B. Select the option that shows the correct relationship between Statements (I) and (II).

1. (I) The Congress Ministries resigned in October-November 1939 as the British government joined the Second World War without consulting the Indian National Congress.
(II) The Muslim League celebrated the day when the Congress Ministries resigned as the day of 'thanks-giving'.

- (a) (I) contradicts (II) (b) (I) is the reason for (II)
 (c) (I) is true but (II) is false (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.
- 2.** (I) Lord Linlithgow made the August Offer in 1940.
 (II) The Congress rejected the offer but the Muslim League accepted the offer.
 (a) (II) contradicts (I) (b) (II) is the reason for (I)
 (c) (I) is true but (II) is false (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.
- 3.** (I) The Cripps Mission proposed that India would be given a Dominion Status after the end of the Second World War.
 (II) The Cripps Mission failed to fulfil its promise after the Second World War.
 (a) (II) contradicts (I) (b) (II) is the reason for (I)
 (c) (I) is true but (II) is false (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.
- 4.** (I) Gandhiji decided to launch a movement calling upon the British to quit India.
 (II) In 1942 Gandhiji declared that the presence of British in India was an invitation to Japan to invade India.
 (a) (II) contradicts (I) (b) (II) is the reason for (I)
 (c) (I) is true but (II) is false (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.
- 5.** (I) The Quit India movement made independence of India as the only agenda of the National Movement.
 (II) After the suppression of the Quit India Movement, the battle for the freedom was carried on beyond India's frontier by Subhas Chandra Bose.
 (a) (II) contradicts (I) (b) (II) is the reason for (I)
 (c) (I) is true but (II) is false (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.

II. Short Answer Questions

- Under what condition, the Congress proposed to support Britain during the Second World War? Why did the Congress Ministries resign in 1939?
- What was reaction of the British Government and the Muslim League to the resignation of Congress ministries in 1939?
- Give any two salient features of the August Offer.
- Why was the August Offer rejected by the Congress as well as the Muslim League?
- What reasons did the Muslim League put forward for the creation of two independent nations?
- How was the Constitution-making body to be constituted according to the Cripps Proposals of 1942?
- Which point in the Cripps Offer was against the unity of the nation?
- Why did the people of the Princely States oppose the Cripps mission? What kind of status was promised to India after the War by Sir Stafford Cripps?
- What did the Congress think of the threat of a Japanese attack on India in 1942?
- What was meant by the Quit India Movement?
- Read the excerpt given below and answer the questions that follow:

Govt. Decides to Meet Congress "Challenge"

Action To Be Preventive
Not Punitive

—Indian Express, August 10, 1942

Which "Challenge" is referred to in the above newspaper article? What 'Action' did the Government take?

III. Structured Questions

1. The Congress Working Committee passed the famous Quit India Resolution at Wardha in July 1942. With reference to this, answer the following questions:

- (a) What were the reasons for the passing of this resolution?
- (b) What was the British Government's reaction to the Quit India Movement?
- (c) How did the Quit India Movement show that national feelings had become too deep-rooted?

2. Read the excerpt given below and answer the questions that follow:

"I, therefore, want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn, if it can be had. ... Fraud and untruth today are stalking the world. You may take it from me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroy for ministries and the like. I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. Here is a mantra, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is: "Do or Die". We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery.

—(Mahatma Gandhi addressing the Congress delegates on the night of 8 August, 1942)

3. Study the picture and answer the following questions:
 - (a) State briefly the reasons that led Mahatma Gandhi to assert that he would not strike a bargain with the Viceroy.
 - (b) Which movement was started as a consequence of Mahatma Gandhi's call for 'Do or Die'? Explain briefly what all happened during this movement.
 - (c) Was this movement a success or a failure? Give reasons to support your answer.

3. Study the picture and answer the following questions:

- (a) Identify the person in the picture with Gandhiji. Why did he come to India?
- (b) Give any two important points in the proposals given by this person. How did Gandhiji describe his proposals?
- (c) Why were the proposals of this Mission rejected by both the Congress and the Muslim League?



IV. Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

1. Do you think the masses deviated from Gandhiji's ideology of a non-violent mass struggle during the Quit India Movement? Give reasons to support your answer.
2. How was the Quit India Movement different from other popular movements organised earlier by Mahatma Gandhi?
3. The British put down the Quit India Movement with ruthless brutality and the movement, unlike its predecessor, was short-lived. Despite all this, the Quit India Movement made the British realise that their days were numbered in India. What was the reason for it?

