

UNIT 11 INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT-2

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11.0 OBJECTIVES

The Indian National Movement was gradually developing into a mass movement. After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

understand the significance of the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene,

known about the characteristics of the Non-Cooperation, Khilafat and Civil Disobedience Movements,

grasp the socio-economic content of Swaraj and understand the part played by the leadership and various peasants and working class movements in achieving it,

know about the development of Indian National Movement during the Second World War, and finally

learn how independence was achieved.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

After the First World War the Indian National Movement entered into a new phase. With the emergence of Gandhi, the element of mass mobilisation was introduced. Till the coming of independence three major mass movements were launched; Non-Cooperation (1920-22), Civil disobedience (1930-34) and Quit India (1942). Besides these mass movements the revolutionary movement, peasants and working class movements and state people's movements also played a vital role in the struggle for freedom.

In this period sufficient emphasis was laid on the socio-economic content of Swaraj. The Communist Party of India and the Socialist groups within the Congress pointed out towards economic emancipation of the masses along with the importance of the struggle for independence.

This Unit, in dealing with the various above mentioned aspects, ultimately introduces you to the various events which brought about independence.

11.2 THE EMERGENCE OF GANDHI

The third and the last phase of the national movement began in 1919 when the era of popular mass movements was initiated.

During the First World War the Allies — Britain, France and the U.S.A. had declared that the World War was being fought in defence of democracy and the right of nations to self-determination. But after their victory they showed little willingness to end the colonial rule. The Indians had not only cooperated with the war effort but had considerably suffered also. They hoped of getting due returns. But they were very soon disenchanted. While the British Government made a half-hearted attempt at constitutional reform, it also made it clear that it had no intention to part with political power; and a new leader Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, took command. The new leader kept in mind the basic weakness of the previous leadership and sought to remove them. He had evolved a new form of struggle-non-cooperation-and a new technique of struggle-Satyagraha-which would not remain a mere programme but were capable of being put into practice. He had already put them to test in South Africa while fighting for the rights of immigrant Indians. Gandhi also took up the cause of peasants in Champaran (Bihar) and the working class in Ahmedabad (Gujarat).

This was also a period of rising prices and epidemics in various parts of the country. In many regions the peasants had been subjected to extortions in the name of war effort. Gandhi responded to the growing anger and militancy of the Indian people after the end of the World War and created the organisation and techniques that would give the movement a mass base.

11.2.1 Official Response

Throughout the war, the Government had carried on repression of militant nationalists. It now decided to acquire further powers to meet the nationalist challenge. In March 1919 it passed the Rowlatt Act (the Indians called it a Black Act) which authorised the Government to imprison any person without trial. The Indian sentiment was outraged. In February 1919, Gandhi started a Satyagraha Sabha whose members were committed to disobeying the Act and thus to court arrest. Thus, Gandhi took the first step towards making the national movement a movement of mass political action, rather than of mere agitation. Simultaneously,



10: A Pamphlet Against Rowlatt Act.

Almost the entire country came to life in the next two months. Strikes, hartals, processions and demonstrations became the order of the day. At this time occurred the notorious Jallianwala Bagh incident in Amritsar when, on 13 April 1919, a peaceful crowd was trapped in an enclosed garden by a unit of the British army and fired upon with rifles and machine-guns. Thousands were killed and wounded. A wave of horror ran through the country. The brutality of colonial rule was exposed once again. Simultaneously, the British Government broke its war-time pledge of treating Turkey generously after the war and put into jeopardy the control of the Sultan of Turkey, who was also regarded by many as the Caliph or religious head of the Muslims thus producing deep resentment among Indian Muslims.

11.2.2 Non-Cooperation and Khilafat

Gandhi and the National Congress decided in September 1920 to launch a non-violent non-cooperation movement and continue it till the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were removed and Swaraj established. Gandhi gave the slogan "Swaraj in a year". The people were asked to boycott government affiliated schools and colleges, law courts and legislatures and foreign cloth and to surrender officially-conferred titles and honours. Later the programme would be extended to include resignation from government service and mass civil disobedience including the non-payment of taxes. National schools and colleges were to be set up. People were asked to practise handspinning and produce khadi, to give up untouchability and promote and maintain Hindu-Muslim unity. Provincial Congress Committees were now to be organised on a linguistic basis. The Congress organization was to reach down to the village level and its membership fee was to be reduced to 4 annas (25 paise of today) per year to enable the rural and urban poor to become members.

This first mass movement assumed during 1920-22 unprecedented proportions.

Lakhs of students left schools and colleges. Hundreds of lawyers gave up their practice. Majority of voters refused to participate in elections to the legislatures. The boycott of foreign cloth became a mass movement, with thousands of bonfires of foreign cloth lighting the Indian sky. Picketing of shops selling foreign cloth and of liquor shops was also very successful. In many regions the factory workers and peasants were at the forefront.

Gandhi was, however, not satisfied. On 4 February, 1922 occurred the Chauri Chaura incident when a Congress procession of 3,000 peasants was fired upon by the police and in retaliation the angry crowd burnt the police station causing the death of 22 policemen. Gandhi took a very serious view of the incident. Feeling that the people were not yet properly trained in non-violence, he called off the entire movement on February 1922.

The movement had, however, far-reaching consequences:

- i) It had for the first time brought millions of peasants and urban poor within the sphere of nationalism. In fact, all sections of Indian society had been politicised: peasant, workers, artisans, shopkeepers, traders, lawyers, doctors, other professionals and white-collar employees. Women had been drawn into the movement. The movement had reached the remotest corners of the land. In fact, Gandhi based his entire politics on the militancy and self-sacrificing spirit of the masses. He brought them to the forefront of the national struggle. He transformed it into a mass movement.
- ii) The people of India were imbued with fearlessness. They were no longer afraid of the might of British imperialism. As Nehru was to comment later that Gandhi made a man of him. This was true of the entire nation.

It must be understood in this respect that, for Gandhi, non-violence was not a weapon of the weak and the cowardly. Only the strong could practise it. Gandhi repeatedly said that he preferred even violence to cowardice. He wrote in 1920:

Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour, than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour.

The most important consequence of the Non-Cooperation Movement was the tremendous self-confidence and self-esteem which Indian people gained. Indian people had begun a war against colonial rule. No temporary retreat in a battle could deflect the people from their march towards the goal. As Gandhi wrote on 23 February 1922, after the withdrawal of the movement:

It is high time that the British people were made to realize that the fight that was commenced in 1920 is a fight to the finish, whether it lasts one month or one year or many months or many years and whether the representatives of Britain re-enact all the indescribable orgies of the Mutiny days with redoubled force or whether they do not.

11.2.3 Aftermath

After the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement leaders like C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Swarajist Party. The Swarajists believed that they will Fight the British in legislature. The Swarajists fought elections, gained considerable victories and successfully obstructed work in many provincial legislatures.

In November 1927 the British declared the formation of Simon Commission to look into the constitutional aspects. This Commission had exclusively Englishmen as members. The Indians regarded it as a great insult. The Commission was boycotted when it landed in India. All over the country there were demonstrations with the slogan "Simon go back".

The scenes of Non-Cooperation days reappeared. The demonstrators were dealt with bullets and batons by the Government. Lala Lajpat Rai succumbed to the injuries which he received in the police lathi charge at Lahore.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (X)?
- i) Gandhi kept in mind the basic weaknesses of the earlier leadership and tried to remove them.
 - ii) Indian masses welcomed the Rowlatt Act.
 - iii) Khilafat was aimed at removing the wrongs done by the British in Turkey
 - iv) The Congress did not accept a linguistic basis for organising its provincial committees.

- 2) What were the far reaching consequences of the Non-Cooperation Movement?
Answer in about ten lines.

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11.3 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

A new wave of political enthusiasm arose in 1928 and 1929. The youthful Jawaharlal Nehru became the president of the National Congress at its historic Lahore session of 1929. The Congress passed at this session a resolution declaring Poorna Swaraj (complete independence) to be its goal. 26 January 1930 was fixed as the first Independence Day on which tricolour flag would be hoisted and the people would take the pledge that it was "a crime against man and God to submit any longer" to foreign rule. On 12 March 1930, the Congress started the second Civil Disobedience Movement with the famous Dandi March by Gandhi. Consequently, lakhs of Indians broke the salt law by manufacturing and selling illegal salt. Lakhs offered Satyagraha or non-violent resistance. Millions participated in hartals, demonstrations and boycott of foreign goods and liquor in many parts of the country, the peasants refused to pay land revenue and rent and had their land confiscated. A notable feature was the wide participation of women. Another was the extension of the movement to the Pathans of North-Western Frontier Province and Nagaland and Manipur in North-Eastern India. The British Government ceased to exist in Peshawar from 24 April to 4 May.

A temporary truce was signed through Gandhi-Irwin Pact in March 1931; but the struggle was resumed in the beginning of 1932. No mass movement could, however, last for ever and the struggle gradually waned and had to be withdrawn in mid-1934. In the meantime the Round Table Conferences which were called by the British in London failed to evolve any formula regarding the political situation in India.

11.4 THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

Revolutionary terrorism as a form of political activity emerged in the 20th century in spurts—first after the petering out of the Swadeshi Movement and then again after the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement. It was pursued by a generation of highly motivated nationalist youth who found themselves disillusioned with the activities of the dominant political groups. Fired with enthusiasm and devoted to the cause of independence for India these young people increasingly took to violent action against the Government offices, property and officials.

One major cause of the emergence of revolutionary terrorism was the creation of political vacuum every time any major political movement was either exhausted or withdrawn. An organised form was given to the revolutionary movement with the formation of the Hindustan Republican Association in 1924. The Government responded with immediate repression. Consequently, a number of Hindustan Republican Army (HRA) activists were arrested and tried in the famous Kakori Conspiracy case in 1925. In 1928, owing largely to the influence of socialist ideas the name was changed to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). Chandra Shekhar Azad, whose name you all must be familiar with, was the leader of this organisation. Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru, Ramprasad Bismil, Sukhdev and Batukeshwar Dutt were some of the leading revolutionary activists in the 1920s.



14: Bhagat Singh

One major limitation of revolutionary terrorism was a lack of long-term vision. Although endowed with unquestionable patriotism and capable of threatening the State apparatus, their movement tended to be short lived and was suppressed by the Government.

Although defeated and suppressed these revolutionaries contributed to the cause of nationalism in no small measure. They became a source of inspiration for the youth and the stones of their sacrifices helped in keeping the flames of nationalism alive and burning.

11.5 THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTENT OF SWARAJ

From the beginning the national movement had a pro-people or rather pro-poor people orientation. The entire economic critique of colonialism and agitation on economic questions by the Moderates was developed around the problem of the poverty of the Indian people. Their programme of industrial development and taxation reform was designed to tackle this problem. In fact, their programme of economic reforms was quite radical by contemporary standards. The commitment to the poor was further strengthened as a result of the emergence of Gandhi as the main leader of the movement and the impact of the Russian Revolution of 1917. From 1919 onwards, the movement continuously defined itself further and further in a radical direction, as a strong left wing developed inside the Congress. The left wing did not confine its politics to the struggle against imperialism. It simultaneously raised the question of internal class oppression.

11.5.1 Emergence of Communist and Socialist Groups

1920s witnessed a general radicalization of Indian youth and the emergence of Communist and Socialist groups. Students and youth associations were organized all over the country from 1928 onwards. Hundreds of youth conferences were organized during 1928 and 1929. Moreover, the Indian youth increasingly took to socialist ideas. The Revolutionary Terrorists led by Chander Shekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh also turned to socialism and changed the name of their organization from Hindustan Republican Association to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. In one of his last letters, Bhagat Singh wrote:

"The peasants have to liberate themselves not only from foreign yoke but also from the yoke of landlords and capitalists."

Socialist ideas became even more popular during the 1930s as the world was shaken by economic depression. The Communist Party was reorganized after 1935 under the leadership of P.C. Joshi and the Congress Socialist Party was founded in 1934 under the leadership of Acharya Narendra Dev and Jai Prakash Narayan. Subhash Chandra Bose had already emerged as a powerful left-wing leader of the Congress in the mid-1920s.

11.5.2 Role of Nehru

It was Jawaharlal Nehru who became the symbol of socialism and socialist ideas in India after 1929. The notion that freedom could not be defined only in political terms but must have a socio-economic content, began increasingly to be associated with his name.

Nehru became the president of the historic Lahore Congress of 1929. He was elected to the post again in 1936 and 1937. As president of the Congress and as the most popular leader of the national movement after Gandhi, Nehru repeatedly toured the country, travelling thousands of miles and addressing millions of people. In his presidential speeches, as also in his popular speeches, Nehru propagated the ideas of socialism and declared that political freedom would become meaningful only if it led to the economic emancipation of the masses and would therefore be followed by the establishment of a socialist society.

At the Lahore session of the Congress in 1929, Nehru had already declared his commitment to socialism:

I am a socialist and a republican, and I am no believer in kings and princess, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even the kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy.

He also said that India's poverty and inequality could be ended only by the adoption of a socialist programme.

Nehru's commitment to socialism found a clearer and sharper expression during 1933-36. Answering the question as to which direction India was going in October 1933, he wrote: "Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class". And, in December 1933, he wrote: "The true civic ideal is the socialist ideal, the communist ideal". Nehru put his commitment to socialism in clear and unequivocal terms in his presidential address to the Lucknow Congress in 1936:

I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism.... That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative service.... I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation, and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism.



16: A Congress procession during Luknow Congress 1936.

11.5.3 Impact on Congress

The growth of the radical forces in the country was soon reflected in the programme and policies of the Congress. A major point of departure was the resolution of Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy passed by the Karachi session of the Congress on the urging of Jawaharlal Nehru. The resolution declared: "in order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of starving millions". The resolution guaranteed the basic civil rights of the people:



15 Jawaharlal Nehru

equality before the law irrespective of caste, creed or sex, elections on the basis of universal adult franchise, and free and compulsory primary education.

The resolution further promised:

substantial reduction in rent and revenue,
exemption from rent in case of uneconomic holdings,
relief from agricultural indebtedness and control of moneylending,
better conditions for workers including a living wage, limited hours of work and
protection of women workers,
the right to organise and form unions by workers and peasant, and
state ownership or control of key industries, mines and means of transport.

Radicalism in the Congress was further reflected in Faizpur congress resolutions and the Election Manifesto of 1936 which promised:

radical transformation of the agrarian system,
substantial reduction in rent and revenue,
scaling down of rural debts and provision of cheap credit,
abolition of feudal levies,
security of tenure for tenants,
a living wage for agricultural labourers, and
the right to form trade unions and peasant unions and the right to strike.

Later in 1945 the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution recommending abolition of landlordism.

During 1938, when Subhash Chandra Bose was its president, the congress got committed to economic development and set up a National Planning Committee under the Chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru and other leftists and Gandhi also argued for the public sector in large-scale industries as means of preventing concentration of wealth in a few hands. In fact, a major development of the 1930s was the increasing acceptance of radical economic policies by Gandhi. In 1933, he agreed with Nehru that, "without a material revision of vested interests the condition of the masses can never be improved. He also accepted

the principle of land to the tiller. He declared in 1942 that "the land belongs to those who will work on it and to no one else".

The National Congress had from its inception in 1885 opposed the use of Indian army for suppressing or conquering other nations in the interests of British imperialism. It had also gradually developed a policy of anti-imperialism and extending support to national movements in Asia and Africa. In the 1930s, under the guidance of Nehru, it adopted a more above foreign policy. It took a strong anti-fascist stand and extended full support to the people of Ethiopia, Spain, Czechoslovakia, and China in their struggle against aggression by the three Fascist powers, Italy, Germany and Japan. It recognized that struggle against imperialism and Fascism were aspects of a common struggle on a world scale.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (X)?
- i) Women took prominent part in the Civil Disobedience Movement.
 - ii) HRA was converted into HSRA due to the influence of socialist ideas.
 - iii) Nehru offered socialism as a remedy for the poverty of Indian masses.
 - iv) The Congress did not oppose the use of Indian army by the British for conquering other countries.

- 2) Discuss in about ten lines the basic features of the Karachi Resolution.

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11.6 PEASANTS' WORKING CLASS AND STATE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

The National Movement deeply influenced the already existent anti-British feelings amongst the peasants and the workers. They were actively involved in the freedom struggle after 1917. The emergence of socialist ideas also created a deep impact on the peasants and the working class. They linked their economic and social grievances with the struggle for freedom. Similarly, there emerged State People's Movements in the princely states of India.

11.6.1 Peasant Movements

The Indian peasantry had a long history of uprisings against their oppression by the British, landlords and moneylenders. The National Movement gave an impetus to this movement and brought them in the mainstream of the freedom struggle.

The agrarian relations varied in different parts of the country. Yet there were certain grievances which could be listed as prevailing in all the regions:

high land revenue demand
exorbitant rents,
forced labour and supplies,
evictions from holdings and insecurity of tenure,
low wages for agricultural labour,
indebtedness, etc.

The peasants along with their own initiatives now looked upon the Congress for support. We briefly discuss some of the peasant movements here:

i) **Champan**

The peasants in Champan were forced to cultivate indigo by the European planters. They faced all kinds of extortions at the hands of the planters. Raj Kumar Sukul, a ruined peasant took up the cause of indigo peasants. In 1916 he went to Lucknow Congress session and spoke from the Congress platform about the plight of Champan peasants. It was Raj Kumar Sukul who brought Gandhi to Champan (in 1917) to see for himself the plight of peasants. A movement was launched and ultimately the Government had yield to certain demands of the peasants.

ii) **Awadh**

In Awadh there was no security of tenure for the peasants and they had to pay **Nazarana** (extra premium) to get and retain their holdings. Forced labour, **rasad** (forced supplies) and various other forms of illegal ceases were extorted by the landlords. During 1918 many Kisan Sabhas (Peasant associations) were organised. Baba Ram Chandra, who had earlier been an indentured labourer in Fiji, started organising the peasants and built up a strong movement. In June 1920, he marched with about 500 peasant to Allahabad in order to draw the attention of Gandhi. In December 1920 a massive peasant meeting was held in Ayodhya. Temples and Mosques were thrown open to the peasants for stay. In January 1921, massive peasant uprising took place in Awadh. In many villages peasants established **Swaraj**. The Government crushed the uprising with a heavy hand. Many peasants lost their lives in police firings. The massacre of peasants at Munshiganj in Rai Bareili district sent a wave of anger throughout the country. The Government was compelled to pass the Oudh Rent (Amendment) Act in 1922. An important feature of this movement was that it was during this period that Jawaharlal Nehru experienced the misery of the peasants and took up their cause.



17: Baba Ram Chandra

iii) **Malabar**

At about the same time, peasant discontent broke out in the Malabar district (now in Kerala). Here too the Mappila tenants complained of insecurity of tenure, high rents and illegal dues. The peasant protest developed in a massive fashion as a result of its becoming a part of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements. The protest soon took the form of an armed uprising. The peasants attacked Government offices, courts and police stations, burnt records, looted the treasuries, and attacked unpopular landlords. Unfortunately, the Government was successful in giving the uprising a communal turn and succeeded in suppressing it.

iv) **Andhra**

As a result of the Forest Laws introduced by the British there was considerable resentment among the tribals all over the country. Alluri Sitarama Raju, inspired by the Non-Cooperation Movements, started organising the tribals in the 'Rampa' region in Andhra, Village panchayats were started and a strong anti-liquor campaign was initiated. Raju held Gandhi in high esteem but he believed that violence was necessary to oust the British. The movement soon took a violent turn. Raids were carried on police stations. A guerilla type of war went on between the armed forces and the followers of Raju. Ultimately Raju was captured by the British and shot dead. Till today Raju remains a legendary figure in the region.

v) **Bardoli**

In 1928, under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the peasants of the Bardoli taluka of Gujarat organised a no-tax campaign against the official effort to enhance land tax by nearly 30 per cent. The peasants demanded that the Government should appoint an independent tribunal to enquire into the enhancement. The peasants refused to pay the enhanced tax, resisted all official attempts to coerce them, organised a neartotal boycott of all Government officials and locked up their houses and fled to the neighbouring Baroda territory along with their cattle. In the end their demand for an enquiry had to be accepted and the enhancement was reduced to about 6 per cent. There were also tribal and peasant uprisings in Udaipur and Mewar under the leadership of Motilal Tejawat and in Darbhanga under the leadership of Swami Vidyand. In Bihar Swami Sahajanand Saraswati organised the Bihar Kisan Sabha.

A new, nation-wide awakening of the peasantry to their class defence occurred during the 1930s. The symbol of this awakening was the establishment of the All-India Kisan Sabha in 1936. The main demands around which the peasants mobilised were reduction in rents and land tax, abolition of illegal levies such as **begar** or vethi by the zamindars, reduction of debt, ending of oppression by the landlords and moneylenders, restoration of illegally seized lands, and security of tenure as tenants. The main forms of peasant mobilisation were through meetings, conferences, demonstrations, peasant marches, formation of kisan sabhas, non-payment of rent and taxes, and satyagraha.

Peasant movements acquired a fresh thrust after 1945 as freedom approached. The demand for abolition of the zamindari system now acquired greater urgency all over the country. The most militant of the post-war struggles was the Tebhaga struggle by the share-croppers of Bengal who said that they would pay not 1/2 but 1/3rd of the crop to the **jotedars** (intermediary landlords). Similarly, there emerged a very strong peasant movement in Telangana. Both these movements were directed by the Communist leadership.

Though the peasant struggles before 1947 were organised around immediate demands which would lessen the rigour of the exploitation and oppression by the state, landlords, and moneylenders, their long term effect was to prepare the climate for basic transformation of the agrarian structure, system of credit, and peasants relationship with the state.

11.6.2 Working Class Struggles

There was a rapid growth of working class struggles and trade unionism in the 1920s. There had been a steady increase in the numerical strength of the workers since the 1860s as modern industry, mining and railways had developed, though in a stunted manner. From the beginning, workers were subjected to inhuman and unscrupulous exploitation in the form of low wages, long hours of work and horrible conditions of work and living. Even so, despite occasional spontaneous protest it took a long time for the workers to organise themselves in trade unions. The Swadeshi movement inspired the first major struggles, particularly, by the railway workers of Bengal. There was a wave of spontaneous strikes in almost every industry during 1918 to 1920 as a result of rise in prices during and after World War I and contemporary nationalist ferment. The lead was given by railway workers, who were subjected to racial discrimination (the European staff was given high wages) apart from economic and class oppression. To coordinate working class struggles, the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was founded in October 1920. Lala Lajpat Rai, the famous nationalist leader, was its first president. C.R. Das, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Bose were some of the other nationalist leaders who presided over the AITUC session.

A fresh upsurge of workers strikes occurred during 1928-29. There was a general strike by jute workers in Bengal. There was a long strike lasting for two months in railway workshop at Kharagpur. The South Indian Railway and East Indian Railway workers went on strike. Another strike was organised in the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur. The most important strike of the period was in Bombay textile mills. Nearly 1,50,000 workers remained on strike for over five months. The strike was conducted by the legendary Girmikamgar Union. The last of this wave of strikes occurred on the G.I.P Railway in Bombay.

The Government was unnerved by this strike wave. In 1929 they arrested 31 labour leaders and put them on trial for conspiring against the King and the Government. Their trial came to be popularly known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case. Simultaneously, they appointed a Royal Commission (Whitley Commission) to investigate conditions of workers in India and to make recommendation for their amelioration. During the Civil Disobedience Movement the working class in Sholapur played a heroic role in opposing the British.

Major strikes occurred during 1935 and 1936 at Calcutta, Ahmedabad, and Kanpur. The formation of Congress Ministries in 1937 and the consequent expansion of civil liberties led to another spurt in workers, organisation and struggles. Trade union membership increased by 50 per cent in 1938 over that in 1937. Massive strikes occurred in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Kanpur during 1937-38.

11.6.3 Movement in Princely States

The British had permitted hundreds of princely states to exist where colonial domination was exercised indirectly through Indian rulers who were totally subservient to the British but who ruled their states autocratically. Appalling economic, political and social conditions prevailed in most of them. They spent most of the state revenue on themselves and their courtiers and officials. Since the British Indian Government was there to defend them against internal protest or revolt, they freely indulged in gross misgovernment.

As the national movement developed in British India, the people of the princely states were also influenced. All-India States people's Conference had already come into existence in 1927 to coordinate political activities in the states. These activities increased under the impact of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Popular struggles were organised in many states including Kashmir, Jaipur, Rajkot, Hyderabad and Travancore. Praja Mandals were organised in a large number of states with the development of democratic and national consciousness.

The National Congress in the beginning kept itself aloof from these movements. But after 1937 it supported them and opposed the princes' efforts to suppress them. It urged the princes to grant civil liberties to their people and to introduce democratic representative government. In 1938, the Congress defined its goal of independence so as to include the independence of the states. In order to emphasise the close links between, and in fact integration of, the freedom struggle in India and struggle for democratic government in the states, Jawaharlal Nehru became the president of the All-India States People's Conference in 1939. The States People's Movement contributed towards the integration of princely states into the Indian Union.

11.6.4 Other Movements

Note must be taken of two other sets of powerful movements. One was the movement for linguistic provinces. Initially developed outside the nationalist framework to promote the languages and cultures of different regions, they were rapidly incorporated into the national movement, and in 1921 the Congress reorganised its provincial committees on the basis of language. The national movement fully accepted that India is a country of immense linguistic and cultural diversity and that its unity has to be based on the principle of "Unity in Diversity".

Similarly, the "lower castes" organised many movements in different parts of the country against upper caste social and economic domination. There was the Satyashodhak Samaj Movement and the Non-Brahmo Movement of the Marathas in Maharashtra, and the Self-Respect Movement and Anti-Brahmin movements in South India, and the movement of the Harijans or Scheduled Castes led by Dr B. R. Ambedkar. Most of them gradually faded away as the national movement itself included struggle against caste oppression in its programme.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note:**
- Use the space given below for your answer.
 - Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit..

- 1) In column 'A' some important peasant movement are given and in column 'B' their leaders. Match 'A' with 'B'.;

A		B	
i)	Awadh	a)	Rajkumar Sukul
ii)	Champaran	b)	Sita Ram Raju
iii)	Andhra	c)	Motilal Tejawat
iv)	Darbhangha	d)	Baba Ram Chandra
v)	Udaipur and Mewar	e)	Swami Viyanand

- 2) Discuss in about ten lines the growth of working class movement in 1921's and 1930's.

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- 3) Discuss in about five lines the attitude of Congress towards the princely States People's Movement.

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11.7 TOWARDS FREEDOM

In this section we discuss in brief the process from 1937 on wards through which India achieved independence. By this time the national movement was on a firm footing with all sections of the masses participating in the struggle.

11.7.1 Congress Ministries

In 1935, a new Government of India Act had been passed and elections were to be held in 1937. There was a debate within the Congress whether it should participate in the elections or not. Ultimately it was decided to participate in this election and an all out effort was made to achieve success. The Congress leaders toured vast parts of the country and there was tremendous enthusiasm amongst the masses.

The Congress swept the polls in Madras, Bombay, Central provinces, Orissa, Bihar and United Provinces. Now the question was whether the Congress should take up office or not? After a lot of debate and thinking the decision taken was in favour of office acceptance. The Congress formed the Government under the new system of provincial autonomy in the provinces where it had absolute majority.

Later it succeeded in forming coalition governments in Assam and North-Western Frontier Province. Within the narrow limits of power conferred on them, the Congress administration in the provinces tried to give relief to the people and introduced many radical reforms:

- political prisoners were released

- police powers were curbed

- civil liberties were encouraged and expanded

- greater attention was paid to education and health

- the ministries attempted to give relief to the peasantry through legislation for

 - debt-relief, restoration of lands lost by the peasants in recent years, and security of tenure

- attempts were made to give relief to workers.

The ministry period had a symbolic achievement as well. It established the Congress's credentials in not only launching movements, but also running effective administration. It also put the withdrawal of British firmly on the political agenda. The people were now convinced that independence was now only a matter of time.

11.7.2 Second World War and India

The start of the Second World War in September 1939 confronted the Congress with a difficult choice. As we have seen earlier, it was in full sympathy with the victims of fascist aggression and it was keen to help the anti-fascist forces led by the Allies, Britain and France. But how could, it argued, a colony help in other nations fight for freedom, when it was itself enslaved. It, therefore, demanded that the British give proof of their devotion to freedom and democracy by putting political power into Indian hands and promising full freedom after the war. This would enable the Indian people to contribute fully through men and materials to war effort. The British would not oblige. As Winston Churchill was to put it later, he had not become the war-time Prime Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.

The Congress ordered its ministries to resign in protest. But it still did not want to impede the British war effort by giving a call for a massive anti-British struggle. At the same time, the patience of Congress leadership and the masses was getting exhausted. Gandhi now decided to initiate a limited Satyagraha on an individual basis by a few selected individuals in every locality. The individual Satyagraha had two aims: On the one hand, it gave expression to the Indian people's strong political feelings, on the other hand, it gave the British Government further opportunity to avoid confrontation and accept Indian demands. By the end of May 1941, more than 25,000 satyagrahis had been arrested and sentenced.

Two major changes occurred in 1941. Having occupied western Europe, Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. And on 7 December 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbour in the Pacific. Advancing rapidly through Philippines, Indo-China (Vietnam), Indonesia, and Malaya, Japan began to overrun Burma in March 1942, and thus brought the war to India's borders.

The Indian leaders, released from prisons in early December, were worried about India's defence. They were also concerned about the safety of the Soviet Union and China. They were once again ready to fully cooperate in the war effort if India was granted the substance of power. The British Government too was under pressure from its American and Chinese allies.

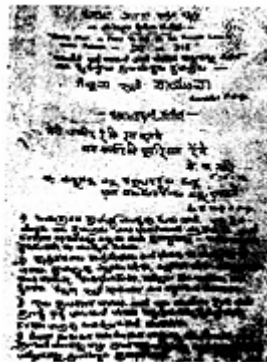
In March 1942, it sent the Cripps Mission to negotiate with Indian leaders. But negotiations soon broke down because the British were not willing to accept the demand for the immediate transfer of power. The Indian people were embittered and felt that time had come for a final assault on imperialism.

11.7.3 Quit India Movement

The All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay on 8 August 1942 and passed the famous "Quit India" resolution, proposing to start a final mass struggle for freedom. Addressing the Congress delegates on the night of 8 August, Gandhi asked the people to "Do or Die", "We shall either free India", he said, "or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery". The British Government struck before the movement could be started. Early in the morning of 9 August, it arrested Gandhi and other Congress leaders and kept them in jail for the duration of the war. A spontaneous popular upsurge arose everywhere. There were **hartals** and strikes all over. The Government's reply was large-scale arrests and repeated lathi charges and firings. The angry people took to violent action and attacked the symbols of British authority—police stations, post offices, railway stations. They cut telephone and telegraph wires and railway lines. In several parts of the country, the people set up parallel governments.



18: Gandhi Asking British to Quit India (a cartoon).



19: Congress Bulletin in Kannad (9 August 1942)

The Government now launched full machinery of repression. Over 10,000 persons died in police and military firings.

In the meanwhile another front for freedom had been opened in South-East Asia. Subhash Bose had escaped from India in March 1941. In 1943, he went to Japan and South-East Asia where he organized thousands of Indian army soldiers and officers, who had surrendered to the Japanese, into the Indian National Army. The INA marched along with the Japanese army towards India's borders to free India from the foreign yoke. But Japan collapsed in 1944-45 and Subhash Bose, it appears, was killed in an aeroplane accident.

11.7.4 Independence

With the end of the war, India's freedom struggle entered a new phase. The Indian people were in an angry mood. The new struggle took the form of a massive movement against the trial of the soldiers and officers of the INA which finally forced the Government to set them free. Throughout 1945-46 there occurred numerous agitations, strikes, **hartals**, demonstrations, etc., all over the country. In February 1946, the naval ratings at Bombay revolted. There was a massive demonstration in Bombay in sympathy with the ratings. The army shot over 250 persons on the streets of Bombay in an effort to suppress the popular upsurge.



20: Bose Inspecting Andaman Jail.

In any case, despite having won the war, Britain was faced with a new situation. The entire world balance of power had changed. Britain, weakened by the war, was no longer a world power. Its economic and military power had been shattered. Moreover, the entire colonial system had collapsed. France and Holland had been occupied and weakened; Germany, Italy and Japan had been defeated. The Soviet Union supported India and other colonial countries' aspiration for freedom; nor was the U.S.A. averse to these aspirations. In any case, it would not support Britain in any effort at total suppression of the national movement in India.



21: Mahatma Gandhi

Within Britain itself, the political situation did not favour a renewed effort at suppression of the national movement. The British army, recruited from the citizens, was tired and sick of war and had no stomach left

for waging a virtual war of suppression. The Labour Party, which was more sympathetic to India, defeated the Conservative Party in elections in mid-1945. In any case, the British people would not support a policy of colonial reassertion.

Within India, the colonial apparatus of administration and repression was breaking down. The bureaucracy was no longer 'reliable'. The police was restive. The army was no longer loyal. Even apart from the RIN Revolt, there had occurred numerous strikes, etc., in the army and airforce. And, above all, as brought out earlier, there was the determination of the Indian people to no longer agree to be ruled by the alien power.

The Labour Government (of Britain) decided to heed the voice of the times. It decided to withdraw from India after nearly 200 years of colonial rule. On 15 August 1947, India celebrated with joy its first day of freedom, though its joy was marred by the fact that not one but two independent states-India and Pakistan-had come into existence in the sub-continent.

Check Your Progress 4

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Discuss in about five lines the reforms introduced under the Congress ministries

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- 3) Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (X)?

- i) Fascist aggression was condemned by the Congress.
ii) The slogan of the Quit India Movement was 'do or flee'.
iii) The Indian National Army fought along with the Japanese army against the British.
iv) Conservative Party won the election in 1945 in England.

11.8 LET US SUM UP

We have been seen in this Unit how the Indian National Movement gradually developed towards its goal of achieving independence. The shift from moderate means to mass movements was a major achievement for the movement and this shift was brought about by the efforts of Gandhi. During this period three major mass movements were launched under the Congress leadership. Along with and within the Congress movement we find the emergence of Communist and Socialist groups. Their contribution was of much significance not only in terms of achieving political independence but also for gaining economic and political freedom.

During this period the peasants and workers movements also took an organised form-particularly with the formation of All India Kisan Sabha and the All India Trade Union Congress. In the princely states, the people fought for democratic rights and they linked their struggles with the national movement. Ultimately the struggle of the Indian people and the changing international scenario forced the British to Quit India and India became a free nation on 15 August 1947.

11.9 KEY WORDS

Adult Franchise: Right of vote to every adult irrespective of caste, sex, income, religion.

Conservative Party: A British political party which was rightist and dominated by the interests of landlords and merchants.

Exploitation: The historical phenomenon of one class living off the surplus produced by another, e.g., land lords living off the peasants produce.

Fascist: An extreme right wing political ideology which arose as a reaction to communists, social democrats and labour movements in 20th century Italy and Germany.

Feudal Levies: Obligations of extra economic nature like that of **begar** or forced labour.

Indebtedness: The phenomenon of moneylender keeping long term hold over sections of rural or urban poor.

Labour Party: A British political party distinct from conservatives and communists which argued for advancing labours interests.

Landlordism: The phenomenon of Zamindars of medieval times being converted into permanent landlords under the British permanent settlement.

Non-Violence: Basis of Gandhi's philosophy for conducting struggles without hurting the enemy.

Picketing: A peaceful agitational action to prevent routine work and to express protest.

Radicalisation: A sharp or slow swing of a movement, thought or idea towards the left.

Salt Law: The British law imposing a tax on Indians producing salt.

Satyagraha: Struggle against domination, based on validity of truth.

Socialism: The broad philosophy calling for equal socio-economic redistribution of resources and wealth.

11.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) i) ✓ ii) X iii) ✓ iv) X
- 2) See Sub-sec. 11.2.2

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ✓ iv) X

- 2) See Sub-sec. 11.5.3

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) i) d ii) a
2) See Sub-sec. 11.6.2
3) See Sub-sec. 11.6.3

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See Sub-sec. 11.7.1
2) i) ✓ ii) X iii) X iv) ✓