

Indian Freedom Struggle 1935-1947

The Government of India Act, 1935

- This Act was the last of the constitutional measures prepared by the British Parliament for India. It received the royal assent on August 2, 1935.
- It had two main parts, dealing with the Federation of India and Provincial Autonomy.

Provincial Elections and Formation of Popular Ministries in Provinces (1937)

- In the elections held in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935, Congress got absolute majority in 5 provinces – Madras, United Provinces, Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa; in Bombay, Assam and North West Frontier Province it was the largest party and formed Governments. In Bengal, Punjab and Sindh it did not have majority.
- In Punjab, Unionist Party and Muslim League formed a coalition government. In Bengal the coalition ministry of the KrishakPraja Party and Muslim League came to power.

Work done by Congress Ministries: 1937 – 39

- In United Provinces and Bihar, Tenancy Bills were passed.
- The Congress Ministries also took a pro – labour stand. The Bombay Ministry appointed a Textile Enquiry Committee in 1937, which recommended a wage increase and health and insurance cover to the workers.
- In UP, the Government set up a Labour Enquiry Committee headed by Rajendra Prasad. A similar, Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee headed by Rajendra Prasad was set up in 1938.
- In Madras, a committee under the chairmanship of T. Prakasam, the Revenue Minister, recommended that in the area under Permanent Zamindari Settlement, the ryot and not the zamindar was the owner of the land.

Second World War and Resignation of Congress Ministries

- The Second World War broke out in September 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland.
- Soon afterwards, the Government of India declared India to be at war with Germany without consulting the Congress or the elected members of the Central Legislature.

- The Congress Working Committee which met at Wardha on September 14, declared that it could not associate herself in war unless British Government publicly stated that India would be granted political independence after the war.
- As there was no positive response from the Government, the Congress Ministries resigned after being in the office for 28 months.
- The Muslim League celebrated the Deliverance Day (December 22, 1939), on the day of the resignation of the Congress Ministries in the provinces.

Congress Socialist Party (1934)

- In May 1934, Acharya Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan, who were members of the Congress Working Committee, organized the Congress Socialist Party.
- The Socialist while being active in peasants and workers movements never lost the sight of the fact that India's primary aim was freedom.

Haripura Session (1938) and Tripuri Session (1939) of the Congress

- At Haripura session (1938), where Subash Chandra Bose was unanimously elected President, the Congress adopted two important resolutions. First, the people of princely states were assured of moral support in their struggle against the rulers. Second, the Congress declared that India could not be a party to an imperialist war.
- Bose formed the National Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru for drawing up a comprehensive plan of economic development on the basis of industrialization.
- In the Tripuri session (1939) Subash Chandra Bose was again re-elected as the Congress President after he defeated Gandhiji's candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya. But, the opposition of Gandhiji and his supporters in the Congress Working Committee compelled Bose to resign from the Presidentship of the Congress in April 1939. This led to the election of Rajendra Prasad in his place.
- Bose and many of his followers founded the Forward Bloc within the Congress.

August 8, 1940 Offer

- After the resignation of Congress Ministries, the annual session of Congress was held at
- Ramgarh (Bihar) in March 1940. The Congress offered to cooperate with British Government if a Provisional National Government was set up at the Centre.
- In response, on August 8, 1940 the Viceroy Linlithgow, offered from Shimla, a set of proposals to the Congress, for securing its co-operation during the war, which are popularly known as August Offer.
- The August Offer turned down the Congress demand for setting up the Provisional National Government, but it offered –
 - I. an immediate expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council by inducting into that body a number of representative Indians.
 - II. the establishment of War Advisory Council comprising representatives of British India;
 - III. a representative constitution making body would be set up after the war.
- The Congress rejected the August Offer. Jawaharlal Nehru said that the whole idea of Dominion status, on which the offer was based, was as dead as a doornail. The only party that was happy about this was the All India Muslim League.

Individual Satyagraha (October 17, 1940)

- After the Congress Ministries had resigned, Gandhiji gave the call for a limited satyagraha in October, 1940, by a few selected individuals. The satyagraha was kept limited so as not to embarrass Britain's war efforts by a mass upheaval in India. It also gave an expression to the Indian people's strong political feeling and further opportunity to the British government to peacefully accept the Indian demands.
- The individual satyagraha was started on October 17, 1940 from Pavnar Ashram in Maharashtra. Vinoba Bhave was the first individual satyagrahi on October 17, 1940 and Jawaharlal Nehru was the second one.

- The satyagrahis unless arrested would move toward Delhi, thus participating in a movement that came to be known as the Delhi chalo (onwards to Delhi) movement.
- In the meantime in 1941, Nazi Germany had already occupied Poland, Belgium, Holland, Norway and France. It attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. In the East, Japan launched a surprise attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. Winston Churchill was the British Prime Minister during this time.

Demand for Pakistan

- The idea of a separate independent Muslim state has been nourishing among the Muslim intelligentsia for quite some time. The ideological and political background had been prepared by the Aligarh movement, the foundation of the Muslim League and Morley Minto reforms (it introduced separate electorates for the Muslims).
- However, it was Muhammad Iqbal who first articulated the demand for a separate Muslim state in the Indian sub - continent. He presided over the Allahabad session of the Muslim League in 1930.
- During the Round Table Conference, Rahmat Ali (a muslim student in England) conveyed the Muslim delegates, the scheme of a separate muslim nation consisting of Punjab, North West Frontier or Afghan province, Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan. The proposed separate Muslim state was to be named PAKSTAN. The name was derived by taking the first letter of the first four provinces and the end of the last name province. Rahmat Ali founded the Pakistan National Movement in 1933 to propagate the idea. He wrote a book Now or Never
- In March, 1940 the Muslim League in its Lahore session declared that the Muslims in India must have a separate independent state. It was presided by M. A. Jinnah.
- The Muslim League adopted a resolution on March 24, 1940. In this session, famous Pakistan Resolution, was passed which totally rejected the scheme of Federation given by the Government of India Act, 1935.

Cripps Mission (1942)

- As the conditions got worsened during the World War II - Germany had invaded Soviet Union and Japan attacked US Naval base at Pearl Harbour (December 7, 1941) - President Roosevelt of the USA and President Kai - Shek of China put pressure on Churchill to seek active cooperation of Indians in the war. To secure this cooperation, the British Government sent to India on March 11, 1942 a mission headed by a cabinet minister, Stafford Cripps (a left wing Labourite).
- The Draft Declaration promised India a dominion status and a constitution making body after the War, whose members would be elected by provisional assemblies and nominated by the rulers in case of princely states. The Pakistan demand was accommodated by the provision that any province which was not prepared to accept the new constitution would have the right to sign a separate agreement with Britain regarding its future status. As for now, the British would continue to exercise sole control over the defence of the country.
- Negotiations between Cripps and the Congress leaders broke down. The Congress working committee, which met on April 11, 1942 rejected the Cripps proposals.
- Mahatma Gandhi described it as an invitation to Muslim League to create Pakistan. He called the proposals "a post - dated cheque on a falling bank".

Quit India Movement (1942)

- Due to the failure of the Cripps Mission and the threat of Japanese aggression, there was a radical change in Gandhiji's approach towards the British government. There was people's discontent due to rising prices and war - time shortages. All these factors made the need for a struggle both inevitable and necessary.
- In order to give shape to Gandhiji's views, the Congress Working Committee met on July 14, 1942, at Wardha and adopted the famous Quit India Resolution.
- The All India Congress Committee met at Bombay on August 8, 1942. It passed the Quit India Resolution and proposed the starting of a nonviolent mass struggle under Gandhiji's leadership to achieve this aim.

- A significant clause of the resolution was that if the Congress leadership gets removed by arrest, then every Indian must be his own guide. The same day Gandhi gave his famous slogan Do or Die, meaning we shall either free India or die in the attempt. The historic Gowalia Tank in Bombay where the AICC met in August to ratify the Quit India Resolution is now known as August KrantiMaidan.

Progress of the movement

- In the early hours of August 9, 1942, in a single sweep, all the top leaders of the Congress were arrested (such as Gandhiji, Nehru, Patel, Maulana Azad, Sarojini Naidu, etc.)
- Gandhiji along with Kasturba Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu was kept in Aga Khan Palace, Jawaharlal Nehru in Almora jail, Rajendra Prasad in Bankipur jail and Jayaprakash Narayan in Hazaribagh jail.
- An all-India underground leadership with prominent members such as Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Ram Manohar Lohia, Sucheta Kripalani, Chotubahi Puranik, Biju Patnaik, R. P. Goenka and later after his escape from jail, Jayaprakash Narayan had also begun to emerge.
- An underground radio was broadcast by Usha Mehta.
- The National Herald and Harijan ceased publication for the entire duration of the struggle
- At Ahmedabad, the textile strike lasted for three and a half months and the city was later described as the Stalingrad of India.

Parallel Governments

- Ballia The first parallel government was proclaimed in Ballia in East U. P. in August 1942, under the leadership of Chittu Pandey

- JatiyaSarkarInTamluk in the Midnapur district of Bengal, the JatiyaSarkar came into existence on December 17, 1942 and lasted till September 1944. It undertook cyclone relief work, gave grants to schools and organized an armed VidyutVahini.
- Satara A parallel government or PratiSarkar was set up in Satara, Maharashtra. Nana Patil, Y. B. Chavan, AchyutPatwardhan were its important leaders NyayadanMandals or people's court were set up and justice dispensed. The PratiSarkar continued to function from August 1942 till 1945

Gandhiji's Fast and Release from Jail

- Gandhiji decided to observe 21 days fast against the leonine violence of the state, He commenced a fast on February 10, 1943 in jail. His condition became critical after 13 days. There was a country wide agitation for his release. But the Viceroy refused to set him free. In protest, three members of the Viceroy's Executive Council H. P. Modi, N. R. Sarcar and M. S. Aney resigned from their offices.
- Lord Wavell, who had taken over as the Viceroy of India, in October 1943, released Gandhiji on May 6, 1944.

Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauz)

- RasBehari Bose, an Indian revolutionary who took a political refuge in Japan, organized the Indian Independence League with the support of Indians living in South east Asia. In March, 1942, he convened a conference in Tokyo at which it was decided to form the Indian National Army (INA). The INA was initially organized by Captain Mohan Singh an Indian officer of the British army in Malaya who had surrendered to the Japanese
- RasBehari Bose Convened a conference at Tokyo from 28 to 30 March, 1942. It passed a resolution to form Azad Hind Fauz or Free India Legion (Indian National Army). On September 1, 1942, the first division of INA was formed with 16300 men.
- The second phase of the INA began when Subash Chandra Bose was brought to Singapore on July 2, 1943 by the means of German and Japanese submarines. He went to Tokyo and Prime Minister Tojo declared that Japan had no territorial designs on India.

- Subash Chandra Bose returned to Singapore and set up the Provisional Government for Free India on October 21, 1943. He set up two INA headquarters, in Rangoon and in Singapore and gave his famous call Delhi Chalo.
- On July 6, 1944, Subash Bose in a broadcast on Azad Hind Radio addressed to Gandhiji as Father of our Nation.
- One INA battalion commanded by Shah Nawaz accompanied the Japanese army to Indo - Burma front, and participated in the Imphal campaign. However, British troops recaptured Rangoon in May 1945 and INA troops were forced to surrender and made prisoners.
- The INA prisoners were tried in the famous Red Fort trial in Delhi. Shah Nawaz Khan, Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon and P.K..Sehgal etc. were put on trial. The defence of INA prisoners was taken up by the Congress. Bhulabhai Desai, TejBahadurSapru, K. N. Katju, Nehru and, Asaf Ali appeared in court at the historic Red Fort trials.
- The Congress organized an INA Relief and Enquiry committee. INA day was observed on 12 November and INA week from 5 to 11 November, 1945.

Rajagopalachari Formula (1944)

- The Muslim League observed the Pakistan Day on March 23, 1943 and declared that Pakistan was the final goal of the Muslims in India. It was therefore felt necessary that some sort of compromise was necessary between Congress and the Muslim League.

Desai - Liaquat Pact

Bhulabhai Desai (leader of the Congress in the Central Legislative Assembly) and Liaquat Ali Khan (deputy leader of the League in the Assembly) proposed that an Interim Government should be formed at the centre consisting of equal number of members nominated by the Congress and the League in the Central Legislature. The Muslim League rejected this scheme as well.

Wavell Plan and Simla Conference

- On June 14, 1945, Lord Wavell announced a plan known as Wavell Plan simultaneously in London and New Delhi.
- It related to the formation of a provisional interim government at the Centre. It was proposed that the Viceroy's Executive Council would have equal representation of Muslims and Hindus. The new Executive Council at the Centre would have Indian members except the Viceroy and the commander in - chief. All portfolios except defence would be held by the Indian members.
- On June 25, 1945 Lord Wavell convened a conference of 22 political leaders at Simla to discuss the new proposals. But the conference broke down on the issue of reconstitution of the Viceroy's Executive Council and Congress refused to accept the claims of the Muslim League to be the sole representative of the Muslim opinion.
- AbulKalam Azad represented the Congress at the Simla conference.

General Elections (1945 -46)

- In the elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures held in 1945 46, Congress made its presence felt at both the Central and Provincial legislatures.
- In the Central Assembly, the Congress secured 91.3 percent votes in general constituencies, the Muslim League won every Muslim seat.
- In the Provincial legislature, the Congress Won absolute majority in Bombay, Madras, Bihar, Orissa, Central Provinces and United Provinces. In NWFP the Congress won 30 seats while the League got only 17 seats. In Punjab a coalition Government of the Congress, Akalis and the Unionist was formed. The Muslim League could secure majority only in Bengal and Sind.

Revolt of RIN Ratings (1946)

- The Royal Indian Navy (RIN) revolt started on February 18, 1946 when 1100 ratings on HMIS Talwar protested against the ill treatment given to them such as racial discriminations, unpalatable food etc.
- By February 22, the strike had spread to naval bases all over the country.
- Sardar Patel with the help of Jinnah managed to persuade the ratings to end their strike on February 23, 1946.

Cabinet Mission Plan (1946)

- British Government announced the sending of a Cabinet Mission to India, a day after the RIN Ratings mutiny began.
- The Cabinet Mission composed of three British Cabinet Ministers Sir Pethick Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade and A. V. Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty. It arrived in New Delhi on March 24, 1946. It announced its recommendations on May 16, 1946.
 - I. According to it, there was to be a Union of India comprising both British India and Indian states, with control over foreign affairs, defence and communications.
 - II. Residuary powers should be left to the Provinces. The provinces could organise themselves into groups.
 - III. India was to be divided into 3 groups of provinces:
 - Group A** Madras, Central Provinces, United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa.
 - Group B** NWFP, Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan.
 - Group C** Bengal and Assam.
- The Congress agreed to the proposals relating to the Constituent Assembly but did not agree on the proposal for an interim government. The Muslim League accepted it on June 6, 1946 as the basis and foundation of Pakistan were inherent in the Mission's plan by virtue of the compulsory groupings of six Muslim majority provinces of Group B and C.

- On June 29, 1946, the Cabinet Mission left India and the Viceroy formed a caretaker Government comprising nine officials.

Direct Action Day

- The Muslim League withdrew its assent to the Cabinet Mission on July 29, 1946 and pledged to resort to direct action to achieve Pakistan.
- On August 16, 1946 fixed as Direct Action Day by the Muslim League, a communal frenzy took place in Calcutta by the battle cry Lekarrahenge Pakistan, Larkelenge Pakistan. Hindu communal groups retaliated in equal measure. 5000 lives were lost.
- The British authorities were worried that they had lost control over the Frankenstein monster, they had helped to create, but felt it was too late to tame it.

Interim Government

- The Interim Government with Jawaharlal Nehru as its Vice President, took office on September 2, 1946.
- Later, Viceroy persuaded Muslim League to join the Government and five Muslim League nominees were added to it on October 26, 1946
- The Muslim League members of the Interim Government led by Liaquat Ali Khan (Finance Minister) formed a King's Party and embarrassed the Congress members in different ways.

Constituent Assembly

The Constituent Assembly which met on December 9, 1946, was boycotted by the elected members of the Muslim League.

Attlee's Declaration February 20, 1947

- Attlee made a statement in British parliament, that the date of British withdrawal from India was fixed as June 30, 1948 and the appointment of new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten was announced.

Mountbatten Plan (June 3, 1947)

- Lord Mountbatten was sworn in as the Governor - General on March 24, 1947.
- The Mountbatten Plan, as the 3rd June 1947 plan came to be known, sought to effect on early transfer of power on the basis of Dominion status to two successor states India and Pakistan.
- Mountbatten advanced the date for transfer of power to August 15, 1947.
- The Plan was accepted by both Congress and the Muslim League.
- This became the basis of the India Independence Act which was ratified by the British Parliament and Crown on July 18 and implemented on August 15, 1947.
- Pakistan gained independence on August 14, 1947 and India on August 15, 1947.
- Jinnah became the first Governor General of Pakistan and Liaqat Ali was the first Prime Minister.
- Lord Mountbatten was the first Governor General of independent India and Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India. Lockhart was the Commander - in - chief of the Indian army from August 15 to December 31, 1947.

Boundary Commission (1947)

- In order to settle the boundaries of the new dominions of India and Pakistan, two commissions with a common Chairman Cyril Radcliffe were set up.
- The first was to deal with partition of Bengal and separation of Sylhet from Assam. The second was to deal with the partition of Punjab.
- The boundary commission award was ready by August 12, 1947, but Mountbatten decided to make it public after Independence Day, so that the responsibility would not fall on the British.
- Their awards were handed over to the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League on August 17, 1947.