

HISTORY



Quit India Movement

Quit India Movement

Quit India Movement was started in 1942. Circumstances before the beginning of the movement were

Resignation of the Congress Ministries

- Congress had formed ministries in the United Provinces, Central Provinces, Odisha, Bihar, Chennai and Mumbai. Later, it also formed governments in the Assam and Northwest Frontier Provinces.
- When the Second World War broke out in 1939, the government of India also joined the War without consulting the Congress leaders.
- The Congress leaders questioned as to how an enslaved nation could aid others in fighting war. In protest against the decision of the government to join the War and its refusal to liberate India, the Congress ministries resigned.
- The resignation of the ministries had the following implications:
 - The Viceroy was happy as Congress had formed government in many provinces.
 - The non-Congress ministries did not resign in Punjab, Bengal and Sind.
 - The resignation of the Congress ministries was celebrated by the Muslim League as a 'day of deliverance' and 'thanksgiving'.
- The attitude of the Muslim League had changed after the provincial elections of 1937. It became friendlier towards the Indian government and believed that the Muslims cannot expect any just treatment under the Congress government.
- The Muslim League passed a resolution in 1940 demanding the formation of a separate state called 'Pakistan' which was to consist of Sind, Northwest Frontier Provinces, Punjab, Kashmir and Baluchistan.

August Offer

- In the British parliamentary elections in 1940, Winston Churchill became the Prime Minister of Britain. At this time, the Fall of France and the possibility of the Nazi occupation of Britain softened the Congress stand. On 1 June 1940, Gandhi stated, "We do not seek our independence out of the British ruin."
- Under international compulsion, the British government made a new offer to the Congress known as the 'August Offer' on 8th August 1940.
- The Congress rejected the offer as too much constitutional independence was given to the minorities. The League also rejected the offer because it did not talk about the formation of the separate state of Pakistan.

Causes Leading to the Launch of the Quit India Movement

Cripps Mission

When the Japanese army began to advance quickly towards the Indian borders, the government sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India to garner the support of Indians and to break the political deadlock. The Cripps Mission proposed the following constitutional reforms:

- To give Dominion Status to India after the end of the war.
- Setting up of the Constituent Assembly which would consist of members elected by the Lower House of the Indian Legislature and the representatives of the Princely States nominated by the rulers.

- Formation of the federation of British India and the Indian states.
- The Provinces had the choice of joining or not joining the Indian Union. If they did not wish to join the Indian Union, they could form their own Constitution and they were to be given the same status as the Indian Union.
- To make constitutional provisions to protect and guard the racial and religious minorities.
- During the First World War, the Viceroy would be responsible for maintaining defences of the country. After the War, the Indian government would reorganise its own defences.



Gandhi with Sir Stafford Cripps

Failure of the Cripps Mission

The mission failed and was not accepted by the political parties in India because of the following reasons:

- It did not promise complete independence to the country.
- The League rejected the proposals as it did not talk about giving a separate state to the Muslims.
- The Hindu Mahasabha rejected the proposals as it feared the partition of the country.
- Other minorities such as the Sikhs, Anglo Indians, Christians and Dalit leaders refused to accept the terms as they felt that the proposals did not safeguard their interests.
- The Congress opposed the principle of non-accession of the Provinces. It wanted all subjects including the Defence to be handed over to the people of India.

Japanese Threat

- The Japanese army in 1942 had already attacked Burma and was fast approaching towards Assam.
- Gandhi felt the presence of British in India was an invitation to the Japanese troops to invade the country.
- Many leaders felt that the British must be forced out of the country. Thus, they launched the Quit India Movement asking the British government to quit India.

Quit India Movement

- The All India Congress Committee met at Mumbai on 8 August 1942 and passed the Quit India Movement which was adopted at Wardha in July 1942.
- Before the movement could start, the government arrested Gandhi and other prominent Congress leaders and declared the party illegal.
- Strikes and demonstrations were organised all over the country. People attacked the symbols of British rule such as post offices, police stations and railway stations.
- In many towns of Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, people set up a parallel government.
- Some popular leaders of the movement were Aruna Asaf Ali, Jai Prakash Narayanan, Ram Manohar Lohia and Nana Patil. These leaders kept the movement alive despite the brutal suppression by the government.
- The government was intended to crush the movement. The press was censored and the protesting crowds were fired upon and were even bombarded.
- About ten thousand people were killed and sixty thousand were arrested by the government by the end of 1942.
- Military was deployed in many villages and towns. It has been said that India had not witnessed such kind of repression since the Revolt of 1857.
- In the end, the government successfully crushed the movement.



Jai Prakash Narayanan



Aruna Asaf Ali

Impact of the Quit India Movement

- Although the movement was short lived, the people developed greater ability to struggle and sacrifice.
- It became evident that the British no longer would be able to rule India.
- The movement signified the mass uprising of the people. People from every state, class, caste, sex and creed participated in the movement.
- The Quit India Movement strengthened the Congress Socialist Party, and its leader Jai Prakash Narayan became a legendary figure. The party continued to function underground.
- After the suppression of the movement, there was hardly any political activity till the Second World War ended.
- As most of the prominent leaders were arrested and jailed, there was an absence of leadership which could guide the people.

The Quit India Movement also saw efforts by the Indian National Army under Subhas Chandra Bose to work in cooperation with Germany and Japan to bring much awaited independence to the country.