

APPOLO STUDY CENTRE

Indian National Movement

Unit 5. Period of radicalism in Anti-imperialist Struggles

Introduction

- The influence of the Left-wing in the Indian National Congress and consequently on the struggle for independence was felt in a significant manner from the late 1920s. The Communist Party of India (CPI) was formed, by M.N. Roy, Abani Mukherji, M.P.T. Acharya, Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan then in the Soviet Union in October 1920. This opened a new radical era in the anti-imperialist struggles in India.
- Even though there were many radical groups functioning in India earlier the presence of a Communist state in the form of USSR greatly alarmed the British in India. The first batch of radicals reached Peshawar on 3 June 1921. They were arrested immediately under the charges of being Bolshevik (Russian communist agents) coming to India to create troubles. A series of five conspiracy cases were instituted against them between the years 1922 and 1927. The first of these was the Peshawar Conspiracy case. This was followed by the Kanpur (Bolshevik) Conspiracy case in (1924) and the most famous, the Meerut Conspiracy case (1929). Meanwhile, the CPI was formally founded on Indian soil in 1925 in Bombay.
- Various revolutionary groups were functioning then in British India, adopting socialist ideas but were not communist parties. Two

revolutionaries - Bhagat Singh of the Hindustan Revolutionary Socialist Association and Kalpana Dutt of the Indian Republican Army that organised repeated raids on the Chittagong Armoury in Bengal will be the focus of the next section. The Karachi Session of the INC and its famous resolutions especially on Fundamental Rights and Duties is dealt with next. The last two topics are about the world-wide economic depression popularly known as Great Depression and its impact on India and Tamil Society and the Industrial Development registered in India in its aftermath. The Great Depression dealt a severe blow to the labour force and peasants and consequently influenced the struggle for independence in a significant way.

Kanpur Conspiracy Case, 1924

- The colonial administrators did not take the spread of communist ideas lightly. Radicalism spread across the British Provinces - Bombay, Calcutta and Madras - and industrial centres like Kanpur in United Province (UP) and cities like Lahore where factories had come up quite early. As a result, trade unions emerged in the jute and cotton textile industries, the railway companies across the country and among workers in the various municipal bodies. In order to curb the radicalisation of politics, especially to check what was then called Bolshevism, repressive measures were adopted by the British administration. The Kanpur Conspiracy case of 1924 was one such move. Those charged with the conspiracy were communists and trade unionists.
- The accused were arrested spread over a period of six months. Eight of them were charged under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code - 'to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty of British India, by complete separation of India from imperialistic Britain by a violent revolution', and sent to various jails. The case came before Sessions Judge H.E. Holmes who had earned notoriety while serving as Sessions Judge of Gorakhpur for awarding death sentence to 172 peasants for their involvement in the Chauri Chaura case. In the Kanpur Conspiracy case, Muzaffar Ahmed, Shaukat Usmani, Nalini Gupta and S. A. Dange were sent to jail, for four years of rigorous imprisonment. The trial and the imprisonment, meanwhile, led to some awareness about the communist activities in India. A

Communist Defence Committee was formed in British India to raise funds and engage lawyers for the defence of the accused. Apart from these, the native press in India reported the court proceedings extensively.

- The trial in the conspiracy case and the imprisonment of some of the leaders rather than kill the spirit of the radicals gave a fillip to communist activities. In December 1925, a Communist Conference of different communist groups, from all over India, was held. Singaravelu Chettiar from Tamil Nadu took part in this conference. It was from there that the Communist Party of India was established, formally, with Bombay as its Headquarters.

13 persons were originally accused in the Kanpur case: (1) M.N. Roy, (2) Muzaffar Ahmad, (3) Shaukat Usmani, (4) Ghulam Hussain, (5) S.A. Dange, (6) M. Singaravelu, (7) R.L. Sharma, (8) Nalini Gupta, (9) Shamuddin Hassan, (10) M.R.S Velayudhun, (11) Doctor Manilal, (12) Sampurnananda, (13) Satyabhakta. 8 persons were charge-sheeted: M.N. Roy, Muzaffar Ahmad, S.A. Dange, Nalini Gupta, Ghulam Hussain, Singaravelu, Shaukat Usmani, and R.L. Sharma. Ghulam Hussain turned an approver. M.N. Roy and R.L. Sharma were charged in absentia as they were in Germany and Pondicherry (a French Territory) respectively. Singaravelu was released on bail due to his ill health. Finally the list got reduced to four.

M. Singaravelu (18 February 1860 - 11 February 1946), was born in Madras. He was an early Buddhist, and like many other communist leaders, he was also associated with Indian National Congress initially. However, after sometime he chose a radical path. Along with Thiru. V. Kalyanasundaram, he organised many trade unions in South India. On 1 May 1923, he organised the first ever celebration of May Day in the country. He was one of the main organisers of the strike in South Indian Railways (Golden Rock, Tiruchirappalli) in 1928 and was prosecuted for that.

Meerut Conspiracy Case, 1929 Communist Activities

- The Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1929, was, perhaps, the most famous of all the communist conspiracy cases instituted by the British Government. The late 1920s witnessed a number of labour upsurges and this period of unrest extended into the decade of the Great Depression (1929–1939). Trade unionism spread over to many urban centres and organised labour strikes. The communists played a prominent role in organising the working class throughout this period. The Kharagpur Railway workshop strikes in February and September 1927, the Liluah Rail workshop strike between January and July 1928, the Calcutta scavengers' strike in 1928, the several strikes in the jute mills in Bengal during July-August 1929, the strike at the Golden Rock workshop of the South Indian Railway, Tiruchirappalli, in July 1928, the textile workers' strike in Bombay in April 1928 are some of the strikes that deserve mention.

Government Repression

- Alarmed by this wave of strikes and the spread of communist activities, the British Government brought two draconian Acts - the Trade Disputes Act, 1928 and the Public Safety Bill, 1928. These Acts armed the government with powers to curtail civil liberties in general and suppress the trade union activities in particular. The government was worried about the strong communist influence among the workers and peasants.
- Determined to wipe out the radical movement, the government resorted to several repressive measures. They arrested 32 leading activists of the Communist Party, from different parts of British India like Bombay, Calcutta, Punjab, Poona and United Provinces. Most of them were trade union activists though not all of them were members of the Communist Party of India. At least eight of them belonged to the Indian National Congress. The arrested also included three British communists-Philip Spratt, Ban Bradley and Lester Hutchinson - who had been sent by the Communist Party of Great Britain to help build the party in India. Like those arrested in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case they were charged under Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code. All

the 32 leaders arrested were brought to Meerut (in United Province then) and jailed. A good deal of documents that the colonial administration described as 'subversive material,' like books, letters, and pamphlets were seized and produced as evidence against the accused.

The British government conceived of conducting the trial in Meerut (and not, for instance in Bombay from where a large chunk of the accused hailed) so that they could get away with the obligations of a jury trial. They feared a jury trial could create sympathy for the accused.

Trial and Punishment

- Meanwhile, a National Meerut Prisoners' Defence Committee was formed to coordinate defence in the case. Famous Indian lawyers like K.F. Nariman and M.C. Chagla appeared in the court on behalf of the accused. Even national leaders like Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru visited the accused in jail. All these show the importance of the case in the history of our freedom struggle.
- The Sessions Court in Meerut awarded stringent sentences on 16 January 1933, four years after the arrests in 1929. 27 were convicted and sentenced to various duration of transportation. During the trial, the Communists made use of their defence as a platform for propaganda by making political statements. These were reported widely in the newspapers and thus lakhs of people came to know about the communist ideology and the communist activities in India. There were agitations against the conviction. That three British nationals were also accused in the case, the case became known internationally too. Most importantly, even Romain Rolland and Albert Einstein raised their voice in support of the convicted.
- Under the national and international pressure, on appeal, the sentences were considerably reduced in July 1933.

Bhagat Singh and Kalpana Dutt

Bhagat Singh's Background

- Bhagat Singh represented a distinct strand of nationalism. His radical strand complemented, in a unique way, to the overall ideals of the freedom movement.
- Bhagat Singh was born to Kishan Singh (father) and Vidyavati Kaur (mother) on 28 September 1907 in Jaranwala, Lyallpur district, Punjab, now a part of Pakistan. His father was a liberal and his family was a family of freedom fighters. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre happened when Bhagat Singh was 14 years. Early in his youth, he was associated with the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and the Hindustan Republican Association. The latter organisation was founded by Sachin Sanyal and Jogesh Chatterji. It was reorganised subsequently in September 1928 as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (H.S.R.A) by Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Socialist ideals and the October Revolution in Russia of 1917 were large influences on these revolutionaries. Bhagat Singh was one of the leaders of the H.S.R.A along with Chandrashekhar Azad, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar.

“I began to study. My previous faith and convictions underwent a remarkable modification. The romance of the violent methods alone which was so prominent among our predecessors was replaced by serious ideas. No more mysticism, no more blind faith. Realism became our cult. Use of force justifiable when resorted to as a matter of terrible necessity: non-violence as a policy indispensable for all mass movements. So much about methods. The most important thing was the clear conception of the ideal for which we were to fight..... from Bhagat Singh's "Why I am an Atheist".

Bhagat Singh's Bomb Throwing

- The image that comes to our mind at the very mention of Bhagat Singh's name is that of the bomb he threw in the Central Legislative Assembly on April 8, 1929. The bombs did not kill anybody. It was

intended as a demonstrative action, an act of protest against the draconian laws of the British. They chose the day on which the Trade Disputes Bill, an anti-labour legislation was introduced in the assembly.

Lahore Conspiracy Case

- Bhagat Singh along with Rajguru, Sukhdev, Jatindra Nath Das and 21 others were arrested and tried for the murder of Saunders (the case was known as the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case). Jatindra Nath Das died in the jail after 64 days of hunger strike against the discriminatory practices and poor conditions in jail. The verdict in the bomb throwing case had been suspended until the trial of Lahore Conspiracy trials was over. It was in this case that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death on 7 October 1930.
- A letter from them to the Governor of Punjab shows their courage and their optimism over the future of India even while facing death for the cause of freedom of their country. It says, 'the days of capitalism and imperialism are numbered. The war neither began with us nor is going to end with our lives... According to the verdict of your court we had waged a war and we are therefore war prisoners. And we claim to be treated as such i.e., we claim to be shot dead instead of being hanged.'
- Some narratives describe Bhagat Singh and his fellow patriots as terrorists. This is a misconception. The legendary Bhagat Singh clarified how his group is different from the terrorists. He said, during his trial, that revolution is not just the cult of bomb and pistol... Revolution is the inalienable right of mankind. Freedom is the imperishable birth-right of all. The labourer is the real sustainer of society.. To the altar of this revolution we have brought our youth as incense, for no sacrifice is too great for so magnificent a cause.' Symbolically, they also shouted Inquilab Zindabad after this defence statement of his in the court.
- Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged early in the morning of March 23, 1931 in the Lahore Jail. They faced the gallows with courage, shouting Inquilab Zindabad and Down with British Imperialism until their last breath. The history of freedom struggle is

incomplete without the revolutionary strand of nationalism and the ultimate sacrifice of these revolutionaries. One more name in the list of such fighters is Kalpana Dutt.

Kalpana Dutt (1913–1995)

- In the late 1920s a young woman, Kalpana Dutt (known as Kalpana Joshi after her marriage to the communist leader P.C. Joshi), fired the patriotic imagination of young people by her daring raid of the Chittagong armoury.
- To understand the heroism of Kalpana Dutt, you should understand the revolutionary strand of nationalism that attracted women like her to these ideals. You have already learnt that there existed many revolutionary groups in British India. The character of these organisations gradually changed from being ones that practiced individual annihilation to organising collective actions aimed at larger changes in the system.
- As Surya Sen, the revolutionary leader of Chittagong armoury raid, told Ananda Gupta, 'a dedicated band of youth must show the path of organised armed struggle in place of individual action. Most of us will have to die in the process but our sacrifice for such noble cause will not go in vain.' When revolutionary groups like the Yugantar and the Anushilan Samiti began stagnating in the mid-1920s, new groups sprang out of them. Among them, the most important group was the one led by Surya Sen, a school teacher by profession, in Bengal. He had actively participated in the Non-cooperation movement and wore Khadi. His group was closely working with the Chittagong unit of the Indian National Congress.

The H.S.R.A was a renewed chapter of the Hindustan Republican Association. Its aim was the overthrow of the capitalist and imperialist government and establish a socialist society through a revolution. The H.S.R.A involved a number of actions such as the murder of Saunders in Lahore. In that, Saunders was mistaken for the Superintendent of Police, Lahore, James A. Scott who was responsible for seriously assaulting Lajpat Rai, in December 1928, and Rai's subsequent death. They also made an attempt to blow up the train in which Lord Irwin (Governor

General and Viceroy of India, 1926-1931) was travelling, in December 1929, and a large number of such actions in Punjab and UP in 1930.

Chittagong Armoury Raid

- Surya Sen's revolutionary group, the Indian Republican Army, was named after the Irish Republican Army. They planned a rebellion to occupy Chittagong in a guerrilla-style operation. The Chittagong armouries were raided on the night of 18 April 1930. Simultaneous attacks were launched on telegraph offices, the armoury and the police barracks to cut off all communication networks including the railways to isolate the region. It was aimed at challenging the colonial administration directly.
- The revolutionaries hoisted the national flag and symbolically shouted slogans such as Bande Matram and Inquilab Zindabad. The raids and the resistance continued for the next three years. Often, they operated from the villages and the villagers, gave food and shelter to the revolutionaries and suffered greatly at the hands of police for this. Due to the continuous nature of the actions, there was an Armoury Raid Supplementary Trial too. It took three years to arrest Surya Sen, in February 1933, and eleven months before he was sent to the gallows on 12 January 1934. Kalpana Dutt was among those who participated in the raids.

On 13 June 1932 in a face-to-face battle against government forces, two of the absconders of the Armoury Raid were killed, while they in turn killed Capt. Cameron, Commander of the government forces in the village of Dhalghat in the house of a poor Brahmin widow, Savitri Debi. After the incident the widow was arrested together with her children. Despite many offers and temptations, not a word could the police get out of the widow. They were uneducated and poor, yet they resisted all the temptation offers of gold and unflinchingly could bear all the tortures that were inflicted upon them.

–From Kalpana Dutt's autobiography Chittagong Armoury Raiders' Reminiscences.

Women in Action

- While Bhagat Singh represented young men who dedicated their lives to the freedom of the country, Kalpana Dutt represented the young women who defied the existing patriarchal set up and took to arms for the liberation of their motherland. Not only did they act as messengers (as elsewhere) but they also participated in direct actions, fought along with men, carrying guns.
- Kalpana Dutt's active participation in the revolutionary Chittagong movement led to her arrest. Tried along with Surya Sen, Kalpana was sentenced to transportation for life. The charge was "waging war against the King Emperor." As all their activities started with the raid on the Armoury, the trial came to be known as the Chittagong Armoury Raid Trial.
- Kalpana Dutt recalls in her book Chittagong Armoury Raiders Reminiscences the revolutionary youth of Chittagong wanted "to inspire self-confidence by demonstrating that even without outside help it was possible to fight the Government."

Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress, 1931

- The Indian National Congress, in contrast to the violent actions of revolutionaries, mobilised the masses for non-violent struggles. The Congress under the leadership of Gandhi gave priority to the problems of peasants. In the context of great agrarian distress, deepened by world-wide economic depression, the Congress mobilised the peasantry. The Congress adopted a no-rent and no-tax campaign as a part of its civil disobedience programme. Under the pressure of Great Depression, socio-economic demands were sharply articulated in its Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress.
- The freedom struggle was taking a new shape. Peasants organised themselves into Kisan Sabhas and industrial workers were organized by the trade unions, made their presence felt in a big way in the freedom struggle. The Indian National Congress had become a mass party during the 1930s. The Congress leadership, which was now

taking a left turn under Nehru's leadership, began to talk about an egalitarian society based on social and economic justice.

- The Karachi session held in March 1931, presided over by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, adopted a resolution on Fundamental Rights and Duties and provided an insight into what the economic policy of an independent India. In some ways, it was the manifesto of the Indian National Congress for independent India. These rights and the social and economic programmes were derived from a firm conviction that political freedom and economic freedom were inseparable.
- Even a cursory look at the fundamental rights resolution will tell you that all the basic rights that the British denied to the Indians found a prominent place in the Resolution. The colonial government curtailed civil liberties and freedom by passing draconian acts and ordinances. Gandhian ideals and Nehru's socialist vision also found a place in the list of rights that the Indian National Congress promised to ensure in free India.
- The existing social relations, especially the caste system and the practice of untouchability, were also challenged with a promise to ensure equal access to public places and institutions.
- The Fundamental Rights, in fact, found a place in the Part III of the Constitution of India- Fundamental Rights - and some of them went into Part IV, the Directive Principles of the State policy. You will study more on these in unit 13 of the second volume in the discussion on the Constitution of India.

The Great Depression and its Impact on India

- The Great Depression was a severe and prolonged economic crisis which lasted for about a decade from 1929. The slowdown of the economic activities, especially industrial production, led to crises like lockouts, wage cut, unemployment and starvation. It began in North America and affected Europe and all the industrial centres in the world. As the world was integrated by the colonial order in its economic sphere, developments in one part of the world affected other parts as well.

- The crash in the Wall Street (where the American Stock Exchange was located) triggered an economic depression of great magnitude. The Depression hit India too. British colonialism aggravated the situation in India. Depression affected both industrial and agrarian sectors. Labour unrest broke out in industrial centres such as Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, United Province and Madras against wage cuts, lay-offs and for the betterment of living conditions. In the agriculture sector, prices of the agricultural products, which depended on export markets like jute and raw cotton fell steeply. The depression brought down the value of Indian exports from Rs. 311 crores in 1929–1930 to Rs 132 crores in 1932–33. Therefore, the 1930s witnessed the emergence of the Kisan Sabhas which fought for rent reduction, relief from debt traps and even for the abolition of Zamindari.
- The only positive impact was on the Indian industrial sector that could use the availability of land at reduced prices and labour at cheap wage rates. The weakening ties with Britain and other capitalist countries created a condition where growth was recorded in some of the Indian industries. Yet only the industries which fed the local consumption thrived.

Industrial Development in India

- The British trade policy took a heavy toll on the indigenous industry. Industrialization of India was not part of British policy. Like other colonies, India was treated as a raw material procurement area and a market for their finished goods.
- Despite this, industrial expansion took place in India, because of certain unforeseen circumstances, first during the course of the First World War and then during the Great Depression.
- The first Indian to start a cotton mill was Cowasjee Nanabhoy Davar (1815–73), a Parsi, in Bombay in 1854. This was known as the Bombay Spinning and Weaving Company. The city's leading traders, mostly Parsis, contributed to this endeavour. The American Civil War (1861–65) was a boon to the cotton farmers. But after the Civil War when Britain continued to import cotton from America, Indian cotton cultivators came to grief. But Europeans started textile mills in India,

taking advantage of the cheapness of cotton available. Ahmedabad textiles mills were established by Indian entrepreneurs and both Ahmedabad and Bombay became prominent centres of cotton mills. By 1914, there were 129 spinning, weaving and other cotton mills within Bombay presidency. Between 1875-76 and 1913-14, the number of cotton textile mills in India increased from 47 to 271.

- An important landmark in the establishment of industries in India was the expansion of the railways system in India. The first passenger train ran in 1853, connecting Bombay with Thane. By the first decade of the twentieth century, railways was the biggest engineering industry in India. This British-managed industry, run by railway companies, employed 98,723 persons in 1911. The advent of railways and other means of transport and communication facilities helped the development of various industries.
- Jute was yet another industry that picked up in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first jute mill in Calcutta was founded in 1855. The growth of jute industry was so rapid and by 1914, there were 64 mills in Calcutta Presidency. However, unlike the Bombay textile industry, these mills were owned by Europeans. Though the industrial development in the nineteenth century was mainly confined to very limited sectors like cotton, jute, etc., efforts were made to diversify the sectors. For example, the Bengal Coal Company was set up in 1843 in Raiganj by Dwarakanath Tagore (1794-1847), grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore. The coal industry picked up after 1892 and its growth peaked during First World War years.
- It was in the early twentieth century, industries in India began to diversify. The first major steel industry - Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) - was set up by the Tatas in 1907 as a part of swadeshi effort in Sakchi, Bihar. Prior to this, a group of Europeans had attempted in 1875 to found the Bengal Iron Company. Following this, the Bengal Iron and Steel Company was set up in 1889. However, TISCO made a huge headway than the other endeavours in this sector. Its production increased from 31,000 tons in 1912-13 to 1,81,000 tons in 1917-18.

- The First World War gave a landmark break to the industrialisation of the country. For the first time, Britain's strategic position in the East was challenged by Japan. The traditional trade routes were vulnerable to attack. To meet the requirements, development of industries in India became necessary. Hence, Britain loosened its grip and granted some concessions to the Indian capitalists. Comparative relaxation of control by the British government and the expansion of domestic market due to the War, facilitated the process of industrialisation. For the first time, an industrial commission was appointed in 1916. During the war-period, the cotton and jute industries showed much growth. Steel industry was yet another sector marked by substantial growth.
- Other industries showing progress were paper, chemicals, cement, fertilisers, tanning, etc. The first Indian owned paper mill - Couper Paper Mill - was set up in 1882 in Lucknow. Following this, Itaghur Paper Mill and Bengal Paper Mill, both owned by Europeans, were established. Cement manufacturing began in 1904 in Madras with the establishment of South Indian Industries Ltd. Tanning industry began in the late nineteenth century and a government leather factory was set up in 1860 in Kanpur. The first Indian-owned National Tannery was established in 1905 in Calcutta. The gold mining in Kolar also started in the late nineteenth century in the Kolar mining field, Mysore.
- The inter-war period registered growth in manufacturing industries. Interestingly the growth rate was far better than Britain and even better than the world average. After a short slug in 1923-24, the output of textile industry began to pick up. During the interwar period, the number of looms and spindles increased considerably.
- In 1929-30, 44 per cent of the total amount of cotton piece goods consumed in India came from outside, but by 1933-34, after the Great Depression, the proportion had fallen to 20.5 percent. Other two industries which registered impressive growth were sugar and cement. The Interwar years saw a growth in the shipping industry too. The Scindia Steam Navigation Company Limited (1919) was the pioneer. In 1939, they even took over the Bombay Steam Navigation Company Ltd., a British concern. Eight Indian concerns were

operational in this sector. A new phase of production began with the Second World War, which led to the extension of manufacturing industries to machineries, aircrafts, locomotives, and so on

Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, popularly known as J. N. Tata (1839- 1904), came from a Parsi (Zoroastrian) business family in Navsari, Baroda. The first successful Indian entrepreneur, he is called the father of the Indian modern industry. In order to help his father's business, he travelled all over the world and this exposure helped him in his future endeavours. His trading company, established in 1868, evolved into the Tata Group. A nationalist, he called one of the mills established in Kurla, Bombay "Swadeshi". His children Dorabji Tata and Ratanji Tata followed his dream and it was Dorabji Tata who finally realised the long term dream of his father to establish an iron and steel company in 1907. His enthusiasm was such that he spent two years in US to learn from the American Iron Industrialists. His yet another dream to set up a hydroelectric company did not materialize during his life time. However, the first major Hydroelectric project - Tata Hydroelectric Company - was set up in 1910. With great foresight the Tatas founded the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Industrial Development in Tamilnadu during the Depression

- The industrial growth in the Madras Presidency was substantial. In Coimbatore, after Stanes Mill (Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills) was established in 1896, no other mill could come up. The objective conditions created by the Depression like fall in prices of land, cheapness of labour and low interest rates led to the expansion of textile industry in Coimbatore. Twenty nine mills and ginning factories were floated in the Coimbatore area during 1929-37. A cement factory started at Madukkarai in Coimbatore district in 1932 gave fillip to the cement industry in the state. The number of sugar factories in the province rose from two to eleven between 1931 and 1936. There were also proliferation of rice mills, oil mills and cinema enterprise during this period.

Unit - 6. Religion in Nationalist Politics

Introduction

- Before the establishment of British Raj, Mughals and their agents had ruled large parts of the country. Large sections of the Muslims therefore enjoyed the advantages of being the co-religionists of the ruling class many of whom were sovereigns, landlords, the generals and officials. The official and court language was Persian. When the British gradually replaced them they introduced a new system of administration. By the mid-nineteenth century English education predominated. The 1857 rebellion was the last gasp of the earlier ruling class. Following the brutal suppression of the revolt, the Muslims lost everything, their land, their job and other opportunities and were reduced to the state of penury. Unable to reconcile to the condition to which they were reduced, the Muslims retreated into a shell. And for the first few generations after 1857 they hated everything British. Besides they resented competing with the Hindus who had taken recourse to the new avenues opened by colonialism. With the emergence of Indian nationalism especially among the educated Hindu upper castes, the British saw in the Muslim middle class a force to keep the Congress in check. They cleverly exploited the situation for the promotion of their own interests. The competing three strands of nationalism namely Indian nationalism, Hindu nationalism, and Muslim nationalism are dealt with in this lesson.

Origin and Growth of Communalism in British India

(a) Hindu Revivalism

- Some of the early nationalists believed that nationalism could be built only on a Hindu foundation. As pointed out by Sarvepalli Gopal, Hindu revivalism found its voice in politics through the Arya Samaj, founded in 1875, with its assertion of superior qualities of Hinduism. The organization of cow protection leagues in large parts of North India in the late nineteenth century gave a fillip to Hindu communalism. The effort of organizations such as Arya Samaj was

strengthened by the Theosophical movement led by Annie Besant from 1891. Besant identified herself with Hindu nationalists and expressed her ideas as follows: 'The Indian work is first of all the revival, strengthening and uplifting of ancient religions. This has brought with it a new self-respect, a pride in the past, a belief in the future and as an inevitable result, a great wave of patriotic life, the beginning of the rebuilding of a nation.'

(b) Rise of Muslims Consciousness

- Islam on the other hand, to quote Sarvepalli Gopal again, was securing its articulation through the Aligarh movement. The British, by building the Aligarh college and backing Syed Ahmed Khan, had assisted the birth of a Muslim national party and Muslim political ideology. The Wahabi movement had also created cleavage in Hindu-Muslim relations. The Wahabis wanted to take Islam to its pristine purity and to end the superstition which according to them had sapped its vitality. From the Wahabis to the Khilafatists, grassroots activism played a significant role in the politicization of Muslims.
- Muslim consciousness developed due to other reasons as well. The Bengal government's order in the 1870s to replace Urdu by Hindi, and the Perso-Arabic script by Nagri script in the courts and offices created apprehension in the minds of the Muslim professional group.

(c) Divide and Rule Policy of British

- The object of the British was to check the development of a composite Indian identity, and to forestall attempts at consolidation and unification of Indians. The British imperialism followed the policy of Divide and Rule. Bombay Governor Elphinstone wrote, 'Divide at Impera was the old Roman motto and it should be ours.' The British government lent legitimacy and prestige to communal ideology and politics despite the governance challenge that communal riots posed. The consequence of such sectarian approaches by all parties led to increasing animosity between Hindus and Muslims in northern India which had its fall out in other parts of India as well. The last decades of the nineteenth century was marked by a number of Hindu-Muslim

riots. Even in south India, there was a major riot in Salem in July-August 1882.

(d) Cow Slaughter and Communal Riots

- In July 1893, a dispute arose between Hindus and Muslims in Azamgarh district in the North-West Provinces. The riots that followed spread over a vast area, encompassing the United Provinces, Bihar, Gujarat and Bombay, claiming over a hundred lives. Gaurakshini Sabhas (cow protection leagues) were becoming more militant and there were reports of forcible interference with the sale or slaughter of cows. The riots over cow-slaughter became frequent after 1893 and 15 major riots of this type broke out in the Punjab alone between 1883 and 1891. Cow protectionists in the Punjab, the activities of Gaurakshini Sabhas in the Central Provinces, the campaigners for the recognition of Devanagiri as official language in courts and government offices in the United Provinces were also involved in the Congress organization.

(e) Failure of Congress and Government to combat Communalism

- The Indian National Congress, despite its secular and nationalist claims was unable to prevent the involvement of its members in the activities of Hindu communal organisations. This was a major factor in the Muslim distrust of the Congress. Congressmen's participation in shuddhi and sangathan campaigns of the Arya Samaj further estranged Hindus and Muslims. The British government could have adopted measures to outlaw Cow Protection Associations or to arrest the rank communalists who were causing distrust among the people. But the British deliberately dodged the issue, as the identification of the Congressmen with revivalist and communal causes provoked anti-Congress feelings among Muslims in North India. The Secretary of State Hamilton considered the development a happy augury for he was earlier worried over the growing solidarity among various social and religious groups in the context of the foundation of the Indian National Congress.

'One hardly knows what to wish for, unity of ideas and action would be very dangerous politically; divergence of ideas and collision are administratively troublesome. Of the two, the latter is the least risky,

though it throws anxiety and responsibility upon those on the spot where the friction exists.' - Hamilton to the Viceroy Elgin

(f) Moves of the Congress

- Though many congress men had involvement in Hindu organisations like Arya Samaj, the Congress leadership was secular. When there was an attempt by some Congressmen to pass a resolution in the third session of the Indian National Congress, making cow killing a penal offence, the Congress leadership refused to entertain it. The Congress subsequently resolved that if any resolution affecting a particular class or community was objected to by the delegates representing that community, even though they were in minority, it would not be considered by the Congress.

(g) Role of Syed Ahmed Khan

- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of Aligarh movement was initially supportive of the Congress. Soon he was converted to the thinking that in a country governed by Hindus, Muslims would be helpless, as they would be in a minority. However, there were Muslim leaders like Badruddin Tyabji, Rahmatullah Sayani in Mumbai, Nawab Syed Mohammed Bahadur in Chennai and A. Rasul in Bengal who supported the Congress. But the majority of Muslims in north India toed the line of Syed Ahmed, and preferred to support the British. The introduction of representative institutions and of open competition to government posts gave rise to apprehensions amongst Muslims and prompted Syed and his followers to work for close collaboration with the Government. By collaborating with the Government Syed Ahmed Khan hoped to secure for his community a bigger share than otherwise would be due according to the principles of number or merit.
- The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was an attempt to narrow the Hindu-Muslim divide and place the genuine grievances of all the communities in the country before the British. But Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and other Muslim leaders like Syed Ameer Ali, the first Indian to find a place in London Privy Council, projected the Congress as a representative body of only the Hindus. Of the seventy-two delegates attending the first session of the Congress only

two were Muslims. Muslim leaders opposed the Congress tooth and nail on the plea that Muslims' participation in it would create an unfavourable reaction among the rulers against their community.

(h) Religion in Local Body Elections

- Democratic politics had the unintended effect of fostering communal tendencies. Local administrative bodies in the 1880s provided the scope for pursuing communal politics. Municipal councillors acquired vast powers of patronage which were used to build-up one's political base. Hindus wresting the control of municipal boards from the Muslims and vice-versa led to communalisation of local politics.
- Lal Chand, the principal spokesperson of the Punjab Hindu Sabha and later the leader of Arya Samaj, highlighted the extent to which some Municipalities were organised on communal lines: 'The members of the Committee arrange themselves in two rows, around the presidential chair. On the left are seated the representatives of the banner of Islam and on the right the descendants of old Rishis of Aryavarta. By this arrangement the members are constantly reminded that they are not simply Municipal Councillors, but they are as Muhammedans versus Hindus and vice-versa....'.

(i) Week-kneed Policy of the Congress

- At the dawn of twentieth century, during the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1905-06), Muslim supporters of the Swadeshi movement were condemned as "Congress touts." The silence of the Congress and its refusal to deal with such elements frontally not only provided stimulus to communal politics but also demoralized and discouraged the nationalist Muslims. Hindu communalism had also gathered strength round this time. It derived its sustenance from the view that the history of Muslim rule in India was characterised by degradation of the Hindus through forcible conversion, imposition of jizya, strict application of the shariat and the destruction of the places of worship. History textbooks and literature based on the prejudiced views of British writers added fuel to such views.

Hindu and Muslim Communalism were products of middle class infighting utterly divorced from the consciousness of the Hindu and Muslim masses. –Jawaharlal Nehru

- The situation took a turn for the worst in the first decade of the twentieth century when political radicalism went hand in hand with religious conservatism. Tilak, Aurobindo Gosh and Lala Lajpat Rai aroused anti-colonial consciousness by using religious symbols, festivals and platforms. The most aggravating factor was Tilak's effort to mobilise Hindus through the Ganapati festival. The Punjab Hindu Sabha founded in 1909 laid the foundation for Hindu communal ideology and politics. Lal Chand spared no efforts to condemn the Indian National Congress of pursuing a policy of appeasement towards Muslims.

Formation of All India Muslim League

- On 1 October 1906, a 35-member delegation of the Muslim nobles, aristocrats, legal professionals and other elite sections of the community mostly associated with Aligarh movement gathered at Simla under the leadership of Aga Khan to present an address to Lord Minto, the viceroy. They demanded proportionate representation of Muslims in government jobs, appointment of Muslim judges in High Courts and members in Viceroy's council, etc. Though the Simla deputation failed to obtain any positive commitment from the Viceroy, it worked as a catalyst for the foundation of the All India Muslim League (AIML) to safeguard the interests of the Muslims in 1907. A group of big zamindars, erstwhile Nawabs and ex-bureaucrats became active members of this movement. The League supported the partition of Bengal, demanded separate electorates for Muslims, and pressed for safeguards for Muslims in Government Service.

Objectives of All India Muslim League

- The All India Muslim League, the first centrally organized political party exclusively for Muslims, had the following objectives:

- To promote among the Muslims of India feelings of loyalty to the British Government, and remove any misconception that may arise as to the instruction of Government with regard to any of its measures.
- To protect and advance the political rights and interests of Muslims of India, and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government.
- To prevent the rise among the Muslims of India of any feeling of hostility towards other communities without prejudice to the aforementioned objects of the League.
- Initially, AIML was an elitist organization of urbanized Muslims. However, the support of the British Government helped the League to become the sole representative body of Indian Muslims. Within three years of its formation, the AIML successfully achieved the status of separate electorates for the Muslims. It granted separate constitutional identity to the Muslims. The Lucknow Pact (1916) put an official seal on a separate political identity to Muslims.

Separate Electorate or Communal Electorate: Under this arrangement only Muslims could vote for the Muslim candidates. Minto-Morely Reforms, 1909 provided for eight seats to Muslims in the Imperial Legislative Council, out of the 27 non-officials to be elected. In the Legislative Council of the provinces seats reserved for the Muslim candidates were: Madras 4; Bombay 4; Bengal 5.

(a) Separate Electorates and the Spread of Communalism

- The institution of separate electorate was the principle technique adopted by the Government of British India for fostering and spreading communalism. The people were split into separate constituencies so that they voted communally, thought communally, judged the representatives communally and expressed their grievances communally.
- That the British did this with ulterior motive was evident from a note sent by one of the British officers to Lady Minto: 'I must send your

Excellency a line to say that a very big thing has happened to-day. A work of statesmanship, that will affect Indian History for many a long year. It is nothing less than pulling of 62 million people from joining the ranks of seditious opposition.

Communalism: Organising a religious group on the basis of its hostility towards the followers of other religions to fight even material issues. Communalism as an ideology or movement has been defined in various ways by various scholars. According to Nehru, communalism is one of the obvious examples of backward-looking people trying to hold on to something that is wholly out of place in the modern world and is essentially opposed to the concept of nationalism. According to another scholar, communalism denotes 'organised attempt of a group to bring about change in the face of resistance from other groups or the government through collective mobilisation based on a narrow ideology.'

- The announcement of separate electorates and the incorporation of the principle of "divide and rule" into a formal constitutional arrangement made the estrangement between Hindus and Muslims total.

Emergence of the All India Hindu Mahasabha

- In the wake of the formation of the Muslim League and introduction of the Government of India Act of 1909, a move to start a Hindu organisation was in the air. In pursuance of the resolution passed at the fifth Punjab Hindu Conference at Ambala and the sixth conference at Ferozepur, the first all Indian Conference of Hindus was convened at Haridwar in 1915. The All India Hindu Mahasabha was started there with headquarters at Dehra Dun. Provincial Hindu Sabhas were started subsequently in UP, with headquarters at Allahabad and in Bombay and Bihar. While the sabhas in Bombay and Bihar were not active, there was little response in Madras and Bengal.
- Predominantly urban in character, the Mahasabha was concentrated in the larger trading cities of north India, particularly in Allahabad, Kanpur, Benares, Lucknow and Lahore. In UP, the Mahasabha, to a large extent was the creation of the educated middle class leaders

who were also activists in the Congress. The Khilafat movement gave some respite to the separatist politics of the communalists. As a result, between 1920 and 1922, the Mahasabha ceased to function.

- The entry of ulema into politics led Hindus to fear a revived and aggressive Islam. Even important Muslim leaders like Ali brothers had always been Khilafatists first and Congressmen second. The power of mobilisation on religious grounds demonstrated by the Muslims during the Khilafat movement motivated the Hindu communalists to imitate them in mobilising the Hindu masses. Suddhi movement was not a new phenomenon but in the post-Khilafat period it assumed new importance. In an effort to draw Hindus into the boycott of the visit of Prince of Wales in 1921, Swami Shradhananda tried to revive the Mahasabha by organizing cow-protection propaganda.

Before the World War I, Britain had promised to safeguard the interests of the Caliph as well the Kaaba (the holiest seat of Islam). But after Turkey's defeat in the War, they refused to keep their word. The stunned Muslim community showed its displeasure to the British government by starting the Khilafat movement to secure the Caliphate in Turkey.

- The bloody Malabar rebellion of 1921, where Muslim peasants were pitted against both the British rulers and Hindu landlords, gave another reason for the renewed campaign of the Hindu Mahasabha. Though the outbreak was basically an agrarian revolt, communal passion ran high in consequence of which Gandhi himself viewed it as a Hindu-Muslim conflict. Gandhi wanted Muslim leaders to tender a public apology for the happenings in Malabar.

(a) Communalism in United Provinces (UP)

- The suspension of the non-cooperation movement in 1922 and the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 left the Muslims in a state of frustration. In the aftermath of Non-Co-operation movement, the alliance between the Khilafatists and the Congress crumbled. There was a fresh spate of communal violence, as Hindus and Muslims, in the context of self-governing institutions created under the Act of 1919, began to stake their political claims and in the process vied with

each other to acquire power and position. Of 968 delegates attending the sixth annual conference of the Hindu Mahasabha in Varanasi in August 1923, 56.7 % came from the U.P. The United Provinces (UP), the Punjab, Delhi and Bihar together contributed 86.8 % of the delegates. Madras, Bombay and Bengal combined sent only 6.6% of the delegates. 1920s was a trying period for the Congress. This time the communal tension in the United Province was not only due to the zeal of Hindu and Muslim religious leaders, but was fuelled by the political rivalries of the Swarajists and Liberals.

- In Allahabad, Motilal Nehru and Madan Mohan Malaviya confronted each other. When Nehru's faction emerged victorious in the municipal elections of 1923, Malaviya's faction began to exploit religious passions. The District Magistrate Crosthwaite who conducted the investigation reported: 'The Malaviya family have deliberately stirred up the Hindus and this has reacted on the Muslims.'

(b) The Hindu Mahasabha

- In the Punjab communalism as a powerful movement had set in completely. In 1924 Lala Lajpat Rai openly advocated the partition of the Punjab into Hindu and Muslim Provinces. The Hindu Mahasabha, represented the forces of Hindu revivalism in the political domain, raised the slogan of 'Akhand Hindustan' against the Muslim League's demand of separate electorates for Muslims. Ever since its inception, the Mahasabha's role in the freedom struggle has been rather controversial. While not supportive of British rule, the Mahasabha did not offer its full support to the nationalist movement either.
- Since the Indian National Congress had to mobilize the support of all classes and communities against foreign domination, the leaders of different communities could not press for principle of secularism firmly for the fear of losing the support of religious-minded groups. The Congress under the leadership of Gandhi held a number of unity conferences during this period, but to no avail.

(c) Delhi Conference of Muslims and their Proposals

- One great outcome of the efforts at unity, however, was an offer by the Conference of Muslims, which met at Delhi on March 20, 1927 to give up separate electorates if four proposals were accepted. 1. the separation of Sind from Bombay 2. Reforms for the Frontier and Baluchistan 3. Representation by population in the Punjab and Bengal and 4. Thirty-three per cent seats for the Muslims in the Central Legislature. Motilal Nehru and S. Srinvasan persuaded the All India Congress Committee to accept the Delhi proposals formulated by the Conference of the Muslims. But communalism had struck such deep roots that the initiative fell through. Gandhi commented that the Hindu-Muslim issue had passed out of human hands. Instead of seizing the opportunity to resolve the tangle, the Congress chose to drag its feet by appointing committees, one to find out whether it was financially feasible to separate Sind from Bombay and the other to examine proportional representation as a means of safeguarding Muslim majorities. Jinnah who had taken the initiative to narrow down the breach between the two, and had been hailed the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity by Sarojini, felt let down as the Hindu Mahasabha members present at the All Parties Convention held in Calcutta in 1928 rejected all amendments and destroyed any possibility of unity. Thereafter, most of the Muslims were convinced that they would get a better deal from Government rather than from the Congress. In despair Jinnah left the country, only to return many years later as a rank communalist.

Expressing anguish over the development of sectarian nationalism, Gandhi wrote, 'There are as many religions as there are individuals, but those who are conscious of the spirit of the nationality do not interfere with one another's religion. If Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in a dream land. The Hindus, the Sikhs, the Muhammedans, the Parsis and the Christians who have made their country are fellow countrymen and they will have to live in unity if only for their interest. In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms nor has it ever been so in India.'

(d) Communal Award and its Aftermath

- The British Government was consistent in promoting communalism. Even the delegates for the second Round Table Conference were chosen on the basis of their communal bearings. After the failure of the Round Table Conferences, the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald announced the Communal Award which further vitiated the political climate.
- The R.S.S. founded in 1925 was expanding and its volunteers had shot upto 1,00,000. K.B. Hedgewar, V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalker were attempting to elaborate on the concept of the Hindu Rashtra and openly advocated that 'the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and language...they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation claiming nothing.' V.D. Savarkar asserted that 'We Hindus are a Nation by ourselves'. Though the Congress had forbidden its members from joining the Mahasabha or the R.S.S. as early as 1934, it was only in December 1938 that the Congress Working Committee declared Mahasabha membership to be a disqualification for remaining in the Congress.

First Congress Ministries

- The nationalism of the Indian National Congress was personified by Mahatma Gandhi, who rejected the narrow nationalism exemplified by the Arya Samaj and the Aligargh movement and strove to evolve a political identity that transcended the different religions. Notwithstanding the state-supported communalism of different hues, the Indian National Congress remained a dominant political force in India. In the 1937 elections, Congress won in seven of the eleven provinces and formed the largest party in three others. The Muslim League's performance was dismal. It succeeded in winning only 4.8 per cent of the Muslim votes. The Congress had emerged as a mass secular party. Yet the Government branded it a Hindu organisation and projected the Muslim League as the real representative of the Muslims and treated it on a par with the Congress.

- Seeing this dismal performance, the Muslim League was convinced that the only choice left to it was to whip up emotions on communal lines in provinces like Bengal and Punjab. The over confidence of the Congress, given its overwhelming victory in the elections, made it misjudge Muslim sentiment. Jinnah exploited the emotional campaign of 'Islam in danger' to gain mass Muslim support after the 1936-37 elections – a divisive cause in which the Hindu Mahasabha came to its help through coalition ministries.

Observation of Day of Deliverance

- The Second World War broke out in 1939 and the Viceroy of India Linlithgow immediately announced that India was also at war. Since the declaration was made without any consultation with the Congress, it was greatly resented by it. The Congress Working Committee decided that all Congress ministries in the provinces would resign. After the resignation of Congress ministries, the provincial governors suspended the legislatures and took charge of the provincial administration.
- The Muslim League celebrated the end of Congress rule as a day of deliverance on 22 December 1939. On that day, the League passed resolutions in various places against Congress for its alleged atrocities against Muslims. The demonstration of Nationalist Muslims was dubbed as anti-Islamic and denigrated. It was in this atmosphere that the League passed its resolution on 26 March 1940 in Lahore demanding a separate nation for Muslims.
- Neither Jinnah nor Nawab Zafrullah Khan then had considered creation of separate state for Muslims practicable. However, on March 23, 1940, the Muslim League formally adopted the idea by passing a resolution. The text of the resolution ran as under: "Resolved that it is the concerted view of this session of the All India Muslim League that no c o n s t i t u t i o n a l scheme would be workable in this country or acceptable to Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz. that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the area in which the Muslims are numerically in majority should be grouped to constitute Independent State." The League resolved

that the British government before leaving India should effect the partition of the country into Indian union and Pakistan.

Though the idea of Pakistan came from the Muslim League platform in 1940 it had been conceived ten years earlier by the poet-scholar Mohammad Iqbal. At the League's annual conference at Allahabad (1930), Iqbal expressed his wish to see a consolidated North-west Indian Muslim State. It was then articulated forcefully by Rahmat Ali, a Cambridge student. The basis of League's demand was its "Two Nation Theory" which first came from Sir Wazir Hasan in his presidential address at Bombay session of League in 1937. He said, "the Hindus and Mussalmans inhabiting this vast continent are not two communities but should be considered two nations in many respects."

Direct Action Day

- Hindu communalism and Muslim communalism fed on each other throughout the early 1940s. Muslim League openly boycotted the Quit India movement of 1942. In the elections held in 1946 to the Constituent Assembly, Muslim League won all 30 seats reserved for Muslims in the Central Legislative Assembly and most of the reserved provincial seats as well. The Congress Party was successful in gathering most of the general electorate seats, but it could no longer effectively insist that it spoke for the entire population of British India.
- In 1946 Secretary of State Pethick- Lawrence led a three-member Cabinet Mission to New Delhi with the hope of resolving the Congress-Muslim League deadlock and, thus, of transferring British power to a single Indian administration. Cripps was primarily responsible for drafting the Cabinet Mission Plan. The plan proposed a three-tier federation for India, integrated by a central government in Delhi, which would be limited to handling foreign affairs, communications, defence, and only those finances required to take care of union matters. The subcontinent was to be divided into three major groups of provinces: Group A, to include the Hindu-majority provinces of the Bombay Presidency, Madras Presidency, the United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, and the Central Provinces; Group B, to contain the Muslim-majority provinces of the Punjab, Sind, the North-West Frontier, and Baluchistan; and Group C, to include the

Muslim-majority Bengal and the Hindu-majority Assam. The group governments were to be autonomous in everything excepting in matters reserved to the centre. The princely states within each group were to be integrated later into their neighbouring provinces. Local provincial governments were to have the choice of opting out of the group in which they found themselves, should a majority of their people desire to do so.

- Jinnah accepted the Cabinet Mission's proposal, as did the Congress leaders. But after several weeks of behind-the-scene negotiations, on July 29, 1946, the Muslim League adopted a resolution rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan and called upon the Muslims throughout India to observe a 'Direct Action Day' in protest on August 16. The rioting and killing that took place for four days in Calcutta led to a terrible violence resulting in thousands of deaths. Gandhi who was until then resisting any effort to vivisect the country had to accede to the demand of the Muslim League for creation of Pakistan.
- Mountbatten who succeeded Wavell came to India as Viceroy to effect the partition plan and transfer of power.

Unit - 7. Last Phase of Indian National Movement

Introduction

- The outbreak of Second World War and Britain's decision to involve India in the War without consulting Congress ministries in provinces, provoked the leaders of Indian National Congress and Gandhi. The Congress ministers resigned in protest. Gandhi launched the individual Satyagraha in October 1940 to keep up the morale of the Congress. In the meantime, the election of Subash Chandra Bose as Congress President upset Gandhi this led to Bose's resignation. Later Bose started his Forward Bloc Party. After his escape to Germany and Singapore formed Indian National Army and carried on his revolutionary activities independent of the Congress movement.
- The Cripps Mission arrived in March 1942 to assuage the nationalists. But its proposals bore no fruit. Gandhi decided to embark on the Quit India Movement in August 1942. The British arrested all prominent leaders of the Congress and put down the movement with an iron hand. Gandhi languished in jail until May 1944. Then came the Cabinet Mission, whose plan was eventually accepted by the Congress. However, Jinnah and the Muslim League, persisting in their Pakistan demand, announced Direct Action Day programme that ignited communal riots in East Bengal. Gandhi began his tour in the riot-hit Naokali. Rajaji's compromise formula and Wavell plan and the Simla conference convened to consider the latter's plan did not help to resolve the deadlock. In the meantime, Royal Indian Navy revolted, prompting the British to quicken the process of Independence. Mountbatten was appointed governor general to oversee independence and the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan.

Individual Satyagraha

- Unlike in the past, where Gandhi's campaign had assumed a mass character, Gandhi decided on the strategy of individual Satyagraha so

that the war against fascism was not hampered. The satyagrahis were handpicked by Gandhi and their demand was restricted to asserting their freedom of speech to preach against participation in the war. The chosen satyagrahi was to inform the District Magistrate of the date, time and place of the protest. On reaching there at the appointed time, and publicly declare the following: 'It is wrong to help the British War effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war efforts with non-violent resistance' and offer arrest.

- The programme began on October 17, 1940 with Vinobha Bhave offering Satyagraha near his Paunar ashram in Maharashtra. Gandhi suspended the Satyagraha in December 1941. It was revived with some changes and groups offered satyagrahas from January 1941 and was eventually withdrawn in August 1941.

August Offer

- Individual Satyagraha was the Congress response to the August offer by the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow. On August 8, 1940, Linlithgow offered the following: Dominion status at some unspecified future; expansion of the Viceroy's Council (or the Executive Council) to accommodate more Indians in it; setting up a War Advisory Council with Indians in it; recognition of the rights of the minority; and a promise to recognize the Indian peoples' right to draft a constitution at some future date after the war.

Removal of Bose from Congress

- The August offer came too late for the Congress to even negotiate a settlement. The Congress, at this time, was losing its sheen. Its membership had fallen from 4.5 million in 1938-39 to 1.4 million in 1940-41. Subhas Chandra Bose was isolated within the Congress, as most leaders in the organisation's top refused cooperation with him. Bose resigned and the AICC session at Calcutta elected Rajendra Prasad as president. Bose founded the Forward Bloc to function within the Congress and was eventually removed from all positions in the organization in August 1939.

Lahore Resolution

- The arrogance displayed by the colonial government and its refusal to find a meeting point between the promise of dominion status at some future date and the Congress demand for the promise of independence after cessation of the war as a pre-condition to support war efforts was drawn from another development. That was the demand for a separate nation for Muslims. Though the genesis of a separate unit or units consisting of Muslim majority regions in the Eastern and North-Western India was in the making since the 1930s, the resolution on March 23, 1940, at Lahore was distinct.
- There is ample evidence that the Muslim League and its associates were given the necessary encouragement to go for such a demand by the colonial administrators. The resolution, then, gave the colonial rulers a certain sense of courage to refuse negotiating with the Indian National Congress even while they sought cooperation in the war efforts.
- In many ways the Congress at the time was weaker in the organizational sense. Moreover, its leaders were committed to the idea that the British war efforts called for support given the character of the Axis powers – Germany, Italy and Japan – being fascist and thus a danger for democracy. Bose was the only leader who sought non-cooperation with the allied forces and active cooperation with the Axis powers.
- All these were the important markers of 1940. Things however changed soon with the Japanese advance in Southeast Asia and the collapse of the British army. It led to a sense of urgency among the colonial rulers to ensure cooperation for the war efforts in India even while not committing to freedom. Winston Churchill, now heading the war cabinet, dispatched Sir Stafford Cripps to talk with the Congress.

Cripps Mission

Japan Storm South-East Asia

- The year 1941 was bad for the allied forces. France, Poland, Belgium, Norway and Holland had fallen to Germany and Great Britain was facing destruction as well. Of far more significance to India was Japan's march into South-east Asia. This was happening alongside the attack on Pearl Harbour, where Japanese war-planes bombed the American port on December 7, 1941. US President F.D. Roosevelt and Chinese President Chiang Kai-Shek were concerned with halting Japan on its march. India, thus, came on their radar and the two put pressure on British Prime Minister, Churchill to ensure cooperation for the war from the Indian people.
- By the end of 1941, the Japanese forces had stormed through the Philippines, Indo- China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Burma and were waiting to knock at India's doors in the North-East. The way the South East Asian region fell raised concerns to Britain and the Indian National Congress. The British forces ran without offering any resistance. The Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army were left to the mercy of the Japanese forces. It was from among them that what would later on to become the Indian National Army (INA) would be raised. We will study that in detail in this lesson (in Section 7.3). Churchill was worried that Calcutta and Madras might fall in Japanese hands. Similar thoughts ran in the minds of the leaders of the Congress too and they too were desperate to seek an honourable way out to offer cooperation in the war effort. It was in this situation that the Congress Working Committee, in December 1941, passed a resolution offering cooperation with the war effort on condition that Britain promised independence to India after the war and transfer power to Indians in a substantial sense immediately.

Arrival of Cripps

- A delegation headed by Sir Stafford Cripps reached India in March 1942. That Cripps, a Labour party representative in the War cabinet under Churchill, was chosen to head the delegation lent credibility to the mission. Before setting out to India, he announced that British

policy in India aimed at 'the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India'. But the draft declaration he presented before he began negotiations fell far short of independence.

Cripps Proposals

- Cripps promised Dominion Status and a constitution-making body after the war. The constitution-making body was to be partly elected by the provincial assemblies and nominated members from the Princely states. The draft also spelt out the prospect of Pakistan. It said that any province that was not prepared to accept the new constitution would have the right to enter into a separate agreement with Britain regarding its future status. The draft did not contain anything new. Nehru recalled later: 'When I read these proposals for the first time I was profoundly depressed.'

Rejection of Cripps' Proposals

- The offer of Dominion Status was too little. The Congress also rejected the idea of nominated members to the constitution-making body and sought elections in the Princely States as in the Provinces. Above all these was the possibility of partition. The negotiations were bound to breakdown and it did.

Options for Congress in the wake of Pearl Harbour Attack

- Churchill's attitude towards the Indian National Movement for independence in general and Gandhi in particular was one of contempt even earlier. He did not change even when Britain needed cooperation in the war efforts so desperately. But he came under pressure from the US and China.
- The Indian National Congress, meanwhile, was pushed against the wall. This happened in two ways: the colonial government's adamant stand against any assurance of independence on the one hand and Subhas Bose's campaign to join hands with the Axis powers in the fight for independence. Bose had addressed the people of India on the Azad Hind Radio broadcast from Germany in March 1942. This was the context in which Gandhi thought of the Quit India movement.

Quit India Movement

- Sometime in May 1942 Gandhi took it upon himself to steer the Indian National Congress into action. Gandhi's decision to launch a mass struggle this time, however, met with reservation from C. Rajagopalachari as much as from Nehru. Conditions were ripe for an agitation. Prices of commodities had shot up many-fold and there was shortage of food-grains too.

Congress Meet at Wardha

- It was in this context that the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress met at Wardha on July 14, 1942. The meeting resolved to launch a mass civil disobedience movement. C. Rajagopalachari and Bhulabhai Desai who had reservations against launching a movement at that time resigned from the Congress Working Committee. Nehru, despite being among those who did not want a movement then bound himself with the majority's decision in the Working Committee.

'Do or Die'

- The futility that marked the Cripps mission had turned both Gandhi and Nehru sour with the British than any time in the past. Gandhi expressed this in a press interview on May 16, 1942 where he said: 'Leave India to God. If that is too much, then leave her to anarchy. This ordered disciplined anarchy should go and if there is complete lawlessness, I would risk it.' The Mahatma called upon the people to 'Do or Die' and called the movement he launched from there as a 'fight to the finish'.

Quit India

- The colonial government did not wait. All the leaders of the Indian National Congress, including Gandhi, were arrested early in the morning on August 9, 1942. The Indian people too did not wait. The immediate response to the pre-dawn arrests was hartals in almost all the towns where the people clashed, often violently, with the police. Industrial workers across India went on strike. The Tata Steel Plant in Jamshedpur closed down by the striking workers for 13 days beginning August 20. The textile workers in Ahmedabad struck work

for more than three months. Industrial towns witnessed strikes for varied periods across India.

Brutal Repression

- The colonial government responded with brutal repression and police resorted to firing in many places. The army was called in to suppress the protest. The intensity of the movement and the repression can be made out from the fact that as many as 57 battalions were called in as a whole. Aircrafts were used to strafe protesters. The momentum and its intensity was such that Linlithgow, wrote to Churchill, describing the protests as 'by far the most serious rebellion since 1857, the gravity and extent of which we have so far concealed from the world for reasons of military security.'
- Though this phase of the protest, predominantly urban, involving the industrial workers and the students was put down by use of brutal force, the upsurge did not end. It spread in its second phase into the villages. A sixty-point increase in prices of food-grains recorded between April and August 1942 had laid the seeds of resentment. In addition, those leaders of the Congress, particularly the Socialists within, who had managed to escape arrest on August 9 fanned into the countryside where they organised the youth into guerrilla actions.

Outbreak of Violence

- Beginning late September 1942, the movement took the shape of attacks and destruction of communication facilities such as telegraph lines, railway stations and tracks and setting fire to government offices. This spread across the country and was most intense in Eastern United Provinces, Bihar, Maharashtra and in Bengal. The rebels even set up 'national governments' in pockets they liberated from the colonial administration. An instance of this was the 'Tamluk Jatiya Sarkar' in the Midnapore district in Bengal that lasted until September 1944. There was a parallel government in Satara.
- Socialists like Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Asaf Ali, Yusuf Mehraly and Ram Manohar Lohia provided leadership. Gandhi's 21 day fast in jail, beginning February 10, 1943, marked a

turning point and gave the movement (and even the violence in a limited sense) a great push.

Spread and Intensity of the Movement

- The spread of the movement and its intensity can be gauged from the extent of force that the colonial administration used to put it down. By the end of 1943, the number of persons arrested across India stood at 91, 836. The police shot dead 1060 persons during the same period. 208 police outposts, 332 railway stations and 945 post offices were destroyed or damaged very badly. At least 205 policemen defected and joined the rebels. R.H. Niblett, who served as District Collector of Azamgarh in eastern United Province, removed from service for being too mild with the rebels, recorded in his diary that the British unleashed 'white terror' using an 'incendiary police to set fire to villages for several miles' and that 'reprisals (becoming) the rule of the day.' Collective fines were imposed on all the people in a village where public property was destroyed.

Clandestine Radio

- Yet another prominent feature of the Quit India movement was the use of Radio by the rebels. The press being censored, the rebels set up a clandestine radio broadcast system from Bombay. The transmitter was shifted from one place to another in and around the city. Usha Mehta was the force behind the clandestine radio operations and its broadcast was heard as far away as Madras.
- The Quit India movement was the most powerful onslaught against the colonial state hitherto. The movement included the Congress, the Socialists, and the Forward Bloc. The movement witnessed unprecedented unity of the people and sent a message that the colonial rulers could not ignore.

Release of Gandhi

- Gandhi's release from prison, on health grounds, on May 6, 1944 led to the revival of the Constructive Programme. Congress committees began activities in its garb and the ban on the Congress imposed in the wake of the Quit India movement was thus overcome. The

colonial state, meanwhile, put forward a plan for negotiation. Lord Archibald Wavell, who had replaced Linlithgow as Viceroy in October 1943, had begun to work towards another round of negotiation. The message was clear: The British had no option but to negotiate!

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the INA

- A considerably large contingent of the Indian Army was posted on the South East Asian countries that were part of the British Empire. They were in Malaya, Burma and elsewhere. The forces, however, could not stand up to the Japanese army. The command of the British Indian Army in the South-East Asian front simply retreated leaving the ranks behind as Prisoners of War (POWs).
- Mohan Singh, an officer of the British Indian Army in Malaya, approached the Japanese for help and they found in this an opportunity. Japan's interests lay in colonising China and not much India. The Indian POWs with the Japanese were left under Mohan Singh's command. The fall of Singapore to the Japanese forces added to the strength of the POWs and Mohan Singh now had 45,000 POWs under his command. Of these, Mohan Singh had drafted about 40,000 men in the Indian National Army by the end of 1942. Indians in the region saw the INA as saviours against Japanese expansionism as much as the commander and other officers held out that the army would march into India but only on invitation from the Indian National Congress. On July 2, 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose, reached Singapore. From there he went to Tokyo and after a meeting with Prime Minister Tojo, the Japanese leader declared that his country did not desire territorial expansion into India. Bose returned to Singapore and set up the Provisional Government of Free India on October 21, 1943. This Provisional Government declared war against Britain and the other allied nations. The Axis powers recognised Bose's Provisional Government as its ally.

After the Indian National Congress acted against Bose in August 1939, shunting him out of all offices including as president of the Bengal Congress Committee, Bose embarked upon a campaign trail, to mobilise support to his position, across India. He was arrested by the British on

July 3, 1940 under the Defence of India Act. and kept under constant surveillance. As the war progressed in Europe Bose believed that Germany was going to win. He began to nurture the idea that Indian independence could be achieved by joining hands with the Axis powers. In the midnight of January 16-17, 1941, Bose slipped out of Calcutta, and reached Berlin by the end of March, travelling through Kabul and the Soviet Union on an Italian passport. Bose met Hitler and Goebbels in Berlin. Both the Nazi leaders were cold and the only concession they gave was to set up the Azad Hind Radio. Nothing more came out of his rendezvous with Hitler and his aides. With Germany facing reverses, Bose found his way to Singapore in July 1943

Subash and INA

- Bose enlisted civilians too into the INA and one of the regiments was made up of women. The Rani of Jhansi regiment of the INA was commanded by a medical doctor and daughter of freedom fighter Ammu Swaminathan from Madras, Dr Lakshmi. On July 6, 1944, Subhas Bose addressed a message to Gandhi over the Azad Hind Radio from Rangoon. Calling him the 'Father of the Nation', Bose appealed to Gandhi for his blessing in what he described as 'India's last war of independence.'

INA with Axis Powers in War

- A battalion of the INA commanded by Shah Nawaz accompanied the Japanese army, in its march on Imphal. This was in late 1944 and the Axis powers, including the Japanese forces, had fallen into bad times all over. The Imphal campaign did not succeed and the Japanese retreated before the final surrender to the British command in mid-1945. Shah Nawaz and his soldiers of the INA were taken prisoners and charged with treason.

INA Trial

- The INA trials were held at the Red Fort in New Delhi. The Indian National Congress fielded its best lawyers in defence of the INA soldiers. Nehru, who had given up his legal practice as early as in 1920 responding to Gandhi's call for non-cooperation, wore his black gown to appear in defence. Even though the INA did not achieve

much militarily, the trials made a huge impact in inspiring the masses. The colonial government's arrogance once again set the stage for another mass mobilisation. The Indian National Congress, after the debacle at the Simla Conference (June 25 and July 14, 1945) plunged into reaching out to the masses by way of public meetings across the country. The INA figured more prominently as an issue in all these meetings than even the Congress's pitch for votes in the elections (under the 1935 Act) that were expected soon.

- It was in this context that the colonial rulers sent up three prominent officers of the INA – Shah Nawaz Khan, P.K. Sehgal and G.S. Dhillon – to trial. The press in India reported the trials with all empathy and editorials sought the soldiers freed immediately. The INA week was marked by processions, hartals and even general strikes across the nation demanding release of the soldiers. The choice of the three men to be sent up for trial ended up rallying all political opinion behind the campaign. The Muslim League, the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Hindu Maha Sabha, all those who had stayed clear of the Quit India campaign, joined the protests and raised funds for their defence. Although the trial court found Sehgal, Dhillon and Shah Nawaz Khan guilty of treason, the commander in chief remitted the sentences and set them free on January 6, 1946. The INA trials, indeed, set the stage for yet another important stage in the history of the Indian National Movement in February 1946. The ratings of the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) raised the banner of revolt.

The Royal Indian Navy Revolt

- The economic impact of the war was manifest in rising prices, shortage of food- grains and closure of war time industries causing retrenchment and employment. This merged with the anti-British sentiments evident in the mass scale of the protests revolving around the INA trials. B.C. Dutt, a rating (the designation for the Indians employed in the various war-ships and elsewhere in the Royal Indian Navy) in the HMIS Talwar was arrested for scribbling 'Quit India' on the panel of the ship. This provoked a strike by the 1,100 ratings on the ship. The ratings resented the racist behaviour of the English commanders, the poor quality of the food and abuses that were the norm. Dutt's arrest served as the trigger for the revolt on February 18, 1946. The day after, the revolt was joined by the ratings in the Fort

Barracks and the Castle and a large number of them went into the Bombay cities in commandeered trucks waving Congress flags and shouting anti-British slogans. Soon, the workers in the textile mills of Bombay joined the struggle.

- The trade unions in Bombay and Calcutta called for a sympathy strike and the two cities turned into war zones. Barricades were erected all over and pitched battles fought. Shopkeepers downed shutters and hartals became the order of the day. Trains were stopped in the two cities with people sitting on the tracks. On news of the Bombay revolt reaching Karachi, ratings in the HMIS Hindustan and other naval establishments in Karachi went on a lightning strike on February 19. The strike wave spread to almost all the naval establishments across India and at least 20,000 ratings from 78 ships and 20 shore establishments ended up revolting in the days after February 18, 1946. There were strikes, expressing support to the ratings in the Royal Indian Air Force stationed in Bombay, Poona, Calcutta, Jessore and Ambala units. The sepoys in the army cantonment station at Jabalpur too went on strike.
- The ratings, in many places, hoisted the Congress, the Communist, and the Muslim League flags together on the ship masts during the revolt.
- The colonial government's response was brutal repression. It was, indeed, a revolt without a leadership; nor did the ratings move in an organised direction. While the trade unions came out in solidarity with the ratings in no time and the strikes in Bombay and Calcutta and Madras were strong expressions against British rule in India, these did not last for long and the ratings were forced to surrender soon.
- Sardar Vallabhai Patel, then in Bombay, took the initiative to bring the revolt to an end. The RIN mutiny, however, was indeed a glorious chapter in the Indian National Movement and perhaps the last act of rebellion in the long story of such acts of valour in the cause of independence.

The March 23, 1940 resolution read as follows: 'That geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the north-western and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute "Independent States", in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.' (Source: Sumit Sarkar *Modern India 1885-1947*, Pearson, 2018, p 324)

Rajaji Proposals and the Wavell Plan

Demand for a Separate Nation

- Meanwhile, the communal challenge persisted and the Muslim League pressed with its demand for a separate nation. The Lahore resolution of the Muslim League in March 1940 had altered the discourse from the Muslims being a 'minority' to the Muslims constituting a 'nation'. Mohammed Ali Jinnah was asserting this right as the sole spokesperson of the community.

Rajaji's Proposals

- In April 1944, when the Congress leaders were in jail, C.Rajagopalachari put out a proposal to resolve the issue. It contained the following:
 - A post-war commission to be formed to demarcate the contiguous districts where the Muslims were in absolute majority and a plebiscite of the adult population there to ascertain whether they would prefer Pakistan;
 - In case of a partition there would be a mutual agreement to run certain essential services, like defence or communication;
 - The border districts could choose to join either of the two sovereign states;
 - The implementation of the scheme would wait till after full transfer of power.

- After his release from prison, Gandhi, in July 1944, proposed talks with Jinnah based on what came to be the 'Rajaji formula'. The talks did not go anywhere.

Wavell Plan

- In June 1945 Lord Wavell moved to negotiate and called for the Simla conference. The rest of the Congress leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and the Congress president, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were released from jail for this. Wavell had set out on this project in March 1945 and sailed to London. There he convinced Churchill of the imperative for a Congress–Muslim League coalition government as a way to deal with the post-war political crisis.
- The Viceroy's proposal before the leaders of all political formations and most prominently the Congress and the Muslim League was setting up of an Executive Council, exclusively with Indians along with himself and the commander-in-chief; equal number of representatives in the council for the caste Hindus and the Muslims and separate representation for the Scheduled Castes; and start of discussions for a new constitution.
- The proposal displeased everyone. The Simla Conference held between June 25 and July 14, 1945 ended without resolution. The talks broke down on the right of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League to nominate members to the Viceroy's Council.
- The Muslim League insisted on its exclusive right to nominate Muslim members to the Council. Its demand was that the Congress nominees shall only be caste Hindus and that the Indian National Congress should not nominate a Muslim or a member from the Scheduled Caste! This was seen as a means to further the divide on communal lines and deny the Congress the status of representing the Indian people. Lord Wavell found a council without Muslim League representation as unworkable and thus abandoned the Simla talks.
- The years between the Lahore resolution of 1940 and the Simla Conference in 1945 marked the consolidation of a Muslim national identity and the emergence of Jinnah as its sole spokesperson. It was

at a convention of Muslim League Legislators in Delhi in April 1946, that Pakistan was defined as a 'sovereign independent state'. For the first time the League also declared its composition in geographical terms as 'the region consisting of the Muslim majority provinces of Bengal and Assam in the Northeast and the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the Northwest. The Congress president Maulana Abul Kalam Azad rejected this idea and held that the Congress stood for a united India with complete independence.

- All these were developments after the Simla conference of June-July 1945 and after Churchill was voted out and replaced by a Labour Party government headed by Clement Attlee. Times had changed in a substantial sense. British Prime Minister, Attlee had declared the certainty of independence to India with only the terms left to be decided.

Mountbatten Plan

Cabinet Mission

- The changed global scenario in the post- World War II context led to the setting up of the Cabinet Mission. Headed by Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, and A.V. Alexander, the mission landed in India in March 1946 and began work on its brief: to set up a national government before the final transfer of power. The mission proposed to constitute a 'representative' body by way of elections across the provinces and the princely states and entrust this body with the task of making a constitution for free India. The idea of partition did not figure at this stage. Instead, the mission's proposal was for a loose-knit confederation in which the Muslim League could dominate the administration in the North-East and North- West provinces while the Congress would administer rest of the provinces.
- Jinnah sounded out his acceptance of the idea on June 6, 1946. The Congress, meanwhile, perceived the Cabinet Mission's plan as a clear sanction for the setting up of a Constituent Assembly. Nehru conveyed through his speech at the AICC, on July 7, 1946, that the Indian National Congress accepted the proposal. Subsequently,

Jinnah on July 29, 1946, reacted to this and announced that the League stood opposed to the plan.

- After elaborate consultations, the viceroy issued invitations on 15 June 1946 to the 14 men to join the interim government. The invitees were: Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari and Hari Krishna Mahtab (on behalf of the INC); Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Mohammed Ismail Khan, Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin and Abdul Rab Nishtar (from the Muslim League) and Sardar Baldev Singh (on behalf of the Sikh community), Sir N.P. Engineer (to represent the Parsis), Jagjivan Ram (representing the scheduled castes) and John Mathai (as representative of the Indian Christians).
- Meanwhile, the Congress proposed Zakir Hussain from its quota of five nominees to the interim council. The Muslim League objected to this and, on 29 July 1946, Jinnah announced that the League would not participate in the process to form the Constituent Assembly. This invited a sharp reaction from the British administration. On 12 August 1946, the viceroy announced that he was inviting Nehru (Congress president) to form the provisional government. After consultation with Nehru, 12 members of the National Interim Government were announced on 25 August 1946. Apart from Nehru, the other members were: Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Asaf Ali, C. Rajagopalachari, Sarat Chandra Bose, John Mathai, Sardar Baldev Singh, Sir Shafaat Ahmed Khan, Jagjivan Ram, Syed Ali Zaheer and Cooverji Hormusji Bhabha. It was stated that two more Muslims will be nominated in due course.
- Five Hindus, three Muslims and one representative each from the scheduled castes, Indian Christians, Sikhs and Parsis formed the basis of this list. Later Hari Krishna Mahtab was replaced by Sarat Chandra Bose. The Parsi nominee, N.P. Engineer was replaced by Cooverji Hormusji Bhabha. In place of the League's nominees, the Congress put in the names of three of its own men: Asaf Ali, Shafaat Ahmed Khan and Syed Ali Zaheer.
- The League, meanwhile, gave a call for 'Direct Action' on 16 August 1946. There was bloodshed in Calcutta and several other places, including in Delhi. This was when Gandhi set out on his own course

to arrive in Calcutta and decided to stay on at a deserted house in Beliaghata, a locality that was worst affected, accompanied only by a handful of followers. Muslims who were hounded out of their homes in Delhi were held in transit camps (in Purana Quila and other places). It was only after Gandhi arrived there (on 9 September 1946) and conveyed that the Muslims were Indian nationals and hence must be protected by the Indian state (Nehru by then was the head of the interim government) that the Delhi authorities began organising rations and building latrines.

- It was in this context that the Congress agreed to the constitution of the interim government. Nehru assumed office on 2 September 1946. Yet another round of communal violence broke out across the country and more prominently in Bombay and Ahmedabad. Lord Wavell set out on another round of discussion and after sounding out Nehru, he proposed, once again, to Jinnah that the League participate in the interim government. The Muslim League accepted the proposal but Jinnah refused to join the cabinet.
- The interim cabinet was reconstituted on October 26, 1946. Those who joined on behalf of the League were Liaquat Ali Khan, I.I. Chundrigar, A. R. Nishtar, Ghazanfar Ali Khan and Jogendra Nath Mandal.
- But there was no let-up in the animosity between the Congress and the League and this was reflected in the functioning (rather non-functioning) of the interim council of ministers. The League, meanwhile, was determined against cooperating in the making of the constituent assembly. At another level, the nation was in the grip of communal violence of unprecedented magnitude. Naokhali in East Bengal was ravaged by communal violence. The members of the League who were part of the interim government refused to participate in the 'informal' consultations that Nehru held before the formal meeting of the cabinet in the viceroy's presence. The Muslim League, it seemed, were determined to wreck the interim government from within.
- While the Congress scored impressive victories in the July-August 1946 elections and secured 199 from out of the 210 general seats, the Muslim League did equally well in seats reserved for the Muslims.

The League's tally was 76. All but one of the 76 seats came from the Muslim-reserved constituencies. The League, however, decided against participating in the Constituent Assembly. Hence, only 207 members attended the first session of the Constituent Assembly on 9 December 1946.

- Meanwhile the functioning of the interim government was far from smooth with animosity between the Congress and the League growing by the day. The 'informal' meetings of the cabinet intended to settle differences before any proposal was taken to the formal meeting that the Viceroy presided over, could not be held from the very beginning.
- The proverbial last straw was the budget proposals presented by Liaquat Ali Khan in March 1947. The finance minister proposed a variety of taxes on industry and trade and proposed a commission to go into the affairs of about 150 big business houses and inquire into the allegations of tax evasion against them. Khan called this a 'socialistic budget'. This, indeed, was a calculated bid to hit the Indian industrialists who had, by this time, emerged as the most powerful supporters of the Congress. The intention was clear: to hasten the partition and prove that there was no way that the League and the Congress could work together towards independence.
- British Prime Minister Atlee's statement in Parliament on February 20, 1947, that the British were firm on their intention to leave India by June 1948 set the pace for another stage. Lord Wavell was replaced as Viceroy by Lord Mountbatten on March 22, 1947.

Mountbatten Plan

- Mountbatten came up with a definite plan for partition. It involved splitting up Punjab into West and East (where the west would go to Pakistan) and similar division of Bengal wherein the Western parts will remain in India and the East become Pakistan. The Congress Working Committee, on 1 May 1947, conveyed its acceptance of the idea of partition to Mountbatten. The viceroy left for London soon after and on his return disclosed the blueprint for partition and, more importantly, the desire to advance the date of British withdrawal to 15 August 1947. There were only 11 weeks left between then and the

eventual day of independence. The AICC met on 15 June 1947. It was here that the resolution, moved by Govind Ballabh Pant, accepting partition, was approved. It required the persuasive powers of Nehru and Patel as well as the moral authority of Gandhi to get the majority in the AICC in favour of the resolution.

- The period between March 1946 and 15 August 1947 saw many tumultuous events such as (i) the setting up of the Cabinet Mission, (ii) the formation of the interim government, (iii) the birth of the Constituent Assembly and (iv) the widening of rift between the Congress and the Muslim League leading to the partition and finally the dawn of independence.

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