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## INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The History of our freedom movement is not a single homogeneous story. It has several diverse strands that intertwine and influence each other and unfold into the narrative of a struggle of our people for Independence. The efforts of the moderates led to legal and constitutional changes. The zest of the revolutionaries led to heroic actions and an uncompromising struggle. The mass movement brought to focus by Mahatma Gandhi led to widespread response from all sections of the population. Each movement fed into the other and enriched each other and in the end led to freedom. We shall study in this lesson these different movements and see how each affected the other and led to the achievement of the common goal i.e. independence.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- form an overall idea of the movement India's freedom;
- identify and place chronologically, the various strands of the movement and
- see how each section of the national movement influenced the other.

### 21.1 THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND THE EARLY NATIONALISTS

The Indian National Congress was formed in December 1885 by a group of 72 politically conscious educated Indians. Mr. A.O. Hume a retired English Indian Civil Service officer played a significant role in its formation. Among its members were Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, WC Bonnerji, Surendranath Banerji, Anandamohan Bose and Romesh Chandra Dutt. This organisation was by no means the first such association of the Indian people. The English educated class in India was slowly becoming politically conscious and several political associations were being formed between 1875 and 1885. Dwarkanath Ganguly of Calcutta, Ranade and GV Joshi of Poona, KT Telang of Bombay and G Subramaniya Iyer, Viraraghavachari of Madras were already associated with regional political associations. The names of their organizations were Indian Association, Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, Bombay Presidency Association, and Madras Mahajan Sabha, respectively. The agenda of these associations *was* limited and far from the ideal of complete independence. These associations were raising their voice against policies of the colonial regime that might be inimical to the interests of Indians. The primary issues of concern taken up by the early nationalists belonging to these associations were as follows:



- (a) cotton import duties to be made favourable for Indians
- (b) Indianization of government services
- (c) Opposition to Afghan policy of the British Government
- (d) Opposition to Vernacular Press Act and control over the press

What made the Indian National Congress (INC) different from the other associations was its attempt to provide a common political platform for the people of India which enabled it to claim that it represented the country. Although the British administrators attempted to play down the significance of the INC, it did manage to reflect the aspirations of the people. Thus the most important and the foremost objective of this organization was to create the consciousness among the people of belonging to a single nation. The task was daunting because of the existence of diverse cultural, linguistic and religious traditions of the land. All the different forces had to be brought together against the common adversary, the British imperialism.

At first the founders of the INC had hoped to influence the colonial government in matters that affected the well-being of the country and specially its economic upliftment. They expected that if the problems of the nation were brought to light through proper propaganda, the colonial government would take steps to improve matters. Thus in the initial years through lectures, writings in newspapers the nationalists put forward the main problems of the nation and ways in which they could be remedied. The most valuable contribution of the so called 'moderates' or the initial members of the Congress was to formulate an economic critique. Firstly Dadabhai Naoroji and thereafter other nationalists found that instead of bringing about an industrial revolution, which the Indian intelligentsia were expecting, the British rule was making the nation poorer and was, destroying its indigenous handicraft production. This discovery led to some disillusionment among the early nationalists who had hoped that India would be modernized as a result of British rule. The other concerns of the early Congress were as follows:

- (i) The reform of Supreme and Local Legislative Councils with greater powers for Indian representatives
- (ii) Indianization of the Civil Services with simultaneous examinations to be held in England and India.
- (iii) Changes in the forest laws that affected the Indian people
- (iv) Organization of campaigns against indentured labour in Assam tea plantations

Slowly, there came to the fore other younger leaders who realised that colonial rule would bring no positive gains for India and her people and the end of colonial rule was the only way in which India can progress. Thus was born a new group of leaders who condemned the 'moderates' for their methods of appeal and petition. Aurobindo Ghosh, Aswinikumar Dutt, Lajpat Rai, BG Tilak, were the new breed of leaders who sought to generate mass support for their goal of Swaraj and Swadeshi.

## **21.2 SWADESHI AND BOYCOTT: THE EXTREMIST POLITICS**

The phase between 1885–1905 is known as the period of the moderates. In 1905 Lord Curzon, the then Governor general announced the partition of Bengal. The province of Bengal at that time comprised of the present states of West Bengal, Bihar



## Notes

and Jharkhand, Orissa and Assam. It also included the present country of Bangladesh, it was indeed a very large administrative unit. However the way the partition was done clearly showed the divisive policies of the British. Firstly, it was on the lines of religion, where the areas where Hindus were in a majority, were separated from Muslim majority areas. Moreover the urban bases of the resurgent intelligentsia (English educated upper caste Indian), were separated from the mainly cultivating areas, (most significantly the jute producing areas), was also an attempt to reduce the significance of Calcutta where the intelligentsia from all over Bengal met and inspired each other. There were widespread protests following this announcement. Initially the protest was on the lines of the 'prayer and petition' tactics of the moderates whereby petitions and memoranda were addressed to the colonial government, and speeches, public meetings and press campaigns were held. This was an attempt to influence the public opinion in India and in England. In spite of these attempts the partition of Bengal was announced in July 1905.

As soon as the final announcement was made Bengal broke out in protest. Protest meetings were held all over Bengal and most significantly not only in Calcutta but also in the smaller towns in the interiors of Bengal e.g. Dinajpur, Pabna, Faridpur, Dacca, Barisal etc. The decision to 'boycott' British goods was taken up for the first time in one of these meetings. Formal proclamation of the Swadeshi movement was made on August 7 1905 with the passing of the 'Boycott' resolution in a meeting at the Calcutta townhall which brought about the unification of the hitherto dispersed leadership. On the day the partition was put into effect i.e. October 16, 1905, a hartal was called in Calcutta and a day of mourning was declared. People fasted and no fire was lit in the cooking hearth. People paraded the streets singing *Bande Mataram*. The people of Bengal tied *rakhis* on each others' wrist as a symbol of solidarity.

This peculiar form of mass protest of 'swadeshi and boycott' attained popularity among the new members of the Congress who were more impatient than the moderates to see a positive response to their efforts. Lokmanya Tilak took the message of swadeshi and the boycott of foreign goods to Bombay and Pune; Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai to Punjab and other parts of North India; Syed Haider Raza to Delhi and Chidambaram Pillai to Madras presidency which was also motivated by Bipin Chandra Pal's extensive lecture tours. The INC formally took up the swadeshi call in its Benaras session of 1905 presided over by GK Gokhale. Although the Congress supported the swadeshi movement in Bengal it did not envisage the further intensification of the movement throughout India or the extension of the cause to total independence. The extremist leadership of Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghosh etc wanted just that. This extremist pressure promoted Dada Bhai Naoroji in his presidential address in Calcutta session of the Congress to say that the ultimate goal of the INC was 'self-government or *swaraj*'.

The contribution of the swadeshi movement was the initiation of new forms of protest. Some of these terms of protest anticipated many of the methods adopted by Mahatma Gandhi during his *satyagraha*. These new forms of protest were mass meetings, processions, boycott of foreign goods (later extended to boycott of government schools, colleges, courts, titles and government services), and organization of strikes, burning of foreign goods in public, picketing of shops selling foreign goods. Attempts were made to achieve mass mobilization and 'samitis' were formed which penetrated deep into the interiors of Bengal spreading the swadeshi message.

For the first time in the national movement there was the use of traditional and popular festivals to reach the people. The *Ganapati* and *Shivaji* festivals in Maharashtra

**Notes**

were employed by Tilak to draw the masses to the movement and educate them about it. In Bengal the use of swadeshi songs was made to inspire the people. The popular theatre form known as *jatra* was also used to spread nationalist feeling. This movement was accompanied by a great out-burst of cultural activities.

Finally the colonial government was compelled to withdraw the partition in the form in which they had envisaged it. However they did try to decrease the importance of Calcutta and hence the intellectuals of Bengal by shifting the capital to Delhi in 1911.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.1**

1. When was Indian National Congress was formed? Which English officer played a significant role in its formation?  
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2. Who announced the partition of Bengal and when?  
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3. Which popular theatre form was used to spread nationalist feeling.  
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4. What was the main reason for shifting of capital in 1911?  
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**21.3 FIRST PHASE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN INDIA AND ABROAD**

The rift between the moderates and extremists grew wider and wider within the Congress. The Extremists were in favour of boycott of the assembly elections to be conducted under the constitutional reforms introduced by the colonial government. The moderates wanted to participate in the electoral process however limited. Finally the rift resulted in the split in the Congress in the Surat session of the Congress, 1907. The extremist leaders continued to mobilise the masses while the Congress tried to influence the government policies. The Morely- Minto reforms of 1909 were a blow to the aspirations of the moderates. The swadeshi movement had lost its momentum. However the revolutionary message of the movement inspired another more individualistic kind of protest i.e. the revolutionary movement.

The revolutionary goal was the end of British rule through extreme self sacrifice. Their methods were to assassinate unpopular colonial officials who were responsible for giving shape to the repressive acts of the Government. The colonial response to the mass movements was always two fold. On the one hand it gave concessions to the leaders by undertaking constitutional reforms and inviting them to participate in the limited elections, on the other hand there was large scale repression mainly through arrest of key leaders. The extremist leadership spent several years in jails. Their being in and out of jails resulted in the revolutionary movement largely being underground, operated by secret organizations. These organizations had their genesis in the *samitis* of the Swadeshi days.

In 1908 Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki threw a bomb at a carriage that was occupied, they believed, by Kingsford, the unpopular judge of Muzzafarpur. However



## Notes

they killed two English ladies in his place. Chaki shot himself and Khudiram was hanged. The revolutionaries who mainly belonged to the Anushilan and Yugantar samitis, also undertook swadeshi dacoities to raise funds for their movement. The revolutionary movement was not confined to Bengal. Rasbehari Bose and Sachindranath Sanyal setup a revolutionary network spanning Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi areas. In 1912 these two revolutionaries made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Viceroy Lord Hardinge in Delhi.

The Revolutionary movement had also started slowly spreading beyond the shores of India. Shyamji Krishnavarma had started in 1905 a centre for Indian students in London called India House. In 1907 this organization was taken over by a revolutionary group under VD Sarvarkar. Madanlal Dhingra of this organization assassinated the India Office bureaucrat Curzon-Wyllie in London in 1909. In Europe (Paris and Geneva) Madame Cama a Parsi revolutionary established contacts with French socialists and brought out the revolutionary journal *Bande Mataram*. In Berlin, Virendranath Chattopadhyay and others operated since 1909. In Britain and Europe the revolutionary groups were fairly isolated. However the movement found something of a mass base in the United States of America, specially in the states of British Columbia and those along the Pacific coast. These states had a population of 15000 Indians mainly of the Sikh community who were facing considerable amount of racial discrimination in spite of being successful traders and workers. Amongst this population began the Ghadr Movement in 1913 in the city of San Francisco. The movement was founded by Sohan Singh Bhakna and Har Dayal was one of its most prominent leaders.

The First World War began in 1914, and the revolutionaries saw in this a very good opportunity in pushing through their agenda of complete independence. Britain was busy in preparation for war and troops from India were sent out for this purpose. Enemy nations like Germany would be only too willing to give funds for revolutionary activities to weaken Britain. Britains aggression on Turkey brought the support of pan Islamists as Turkey was the seat of the Khalifa revered by Muslims the world over. Barkatulla was one of the important Muslim revolutionary leaders who joined the Ghadr movement. At Deoband, in an Islamic centre of learning in Uttar Pradesh a group of learned men, or Ulema, also preached the revolutionary message which had a large following among Muslims.

Meanwhile swadeshi dacoities and the assassination of Englishmen continued and there was a marked increase in revolutionary activity at this time. The Bengal revolutionary outfits united under Jatin Mukherjee (Bagha Jatin) and planned large scale disruption of rail communications and seizure of arms. They were successful when a large arm and ammunition of the Rhoda firms in Calcutta came into their hands. However their long-term plans were cut short due to the capture of Bhagha Jatin by the police in Balasore, Orissa. Ras Behari Bose and Sachin Sanyal plan was also a part of the Bengal revolutionary movement. This group established contact with the Ghadr movement. The Ghadrites had started coming back to India in large numbers. The Komagata Maru incident further inflamed passions. The ship Komagata Maru carrying Sikh and Muslim passengers to Canada was turned away by the Canadian government and reached Calcutta in September 1914. The passengers clashed with the police and 22 people were killed.

The Ghadr movement and the revolutionary plans were unsuccessful because the British government came down with a heavy hand on them. Most of the Ghadrites who returned were immediately arrested. The attempt to incite mutiny in several



army units was foiled and Ras Behari Bose fled to Japan and Sachin Sanyal was transported for life. The revolutionaries and specially the Ghadrites were the pioneers of organizing revolution among the army units and among peasants.

**21.4 HOME RULE MOVEMENT**

Balgangadhar Tilak who served a jail sentence from 1908-1914, returned to the Congress which had now become more open to him after the disappointment of the Council elections under the Morley Minto reforms. By 1914-15 the swadeshi movement, the efforts at council entry and influencing the administration from within and the revolutionary movement had all spent themselves. It was a time for a new thrust to the national movement that was to come from the Home Rule Movement of Annie Besant and Tilak. Tilak worked from within the Congress to set up a kind of agitational network through his Home Rule League, which he set up in April 1916. At about the same time Theosophist leader Annie Besant rose to great prominence and proposed to start agitation for a great measure of self-government for the Indians. Besant also proposed to set up a Home Rule League in the country modeled on the Irish Home Rule movement to spread awareness. Besant's League was set up in September 1916.

Tilak's League was active in Maharashtra and Karnataka. Besant's League, with its headquarters in Adyar, Madras had more of an all India following. The activities of the Home Rule Leagues were to organize discussions and reading rooms in cities, to circulate pamphlets and conduct lecture tours to sway public opinion. The Home Rule movement never spelled out the goal of complete independence, however they did focus on the oppression of colonial policy through its opposition to government policy, e.g., forest laws, liquor laws etc. A new generation of leaders of the nationalist movement was formed during this time and the focus of the movement shifted from Bengal and Punjab to Maharashtra and the South. Many moderate Congressmen also joined the Home Rule movement. However, the Home Rule movement came to an abrupt end after 1918.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.2**

1. Who founded Ghadr Movement in the city of San Francisco?

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2. What is Komagata Maru incident?

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3. Who brought out the revolutionary journal?

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4. Annie Besant and Tilak started which movement?

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**21.5 THE GANDHIAN MASS MOVEMENT: THE INITIAL YEARS**

The British Government introduced the next set of constitutional reforms in 1919 (The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms). Although these reforms claimed to have brought



## Notes

forth local self-government and considerable autonomy to Indians, they kept the real powers firmly in British hands. The system of dyarchy as introduced by these reforms gave greater representation to Indians and greater control of local expenditure. However the elected legislature had no control over the executive.

The post war years (the First World War ended in 1918) saw growing unrest in the country as the impact of the War on the economy of India became more apparent. War led to rise in the prices, scarcity, unemployment etc added to which there was an influenza epidemic. Wartime necessities had given rise to a class of entrepreneurs in India and a large working class was also created that was becoming more organized. This working class was restive and a potential force in the nationalist movement. Part of the capitalist class was loyal to the colonial state because it helped them control the labour force. However there were also some among them who were supportive of the national movement. They were opposed to the economic policies of the colonial government and realised that the end result of British policy would be to the detriment of Indian industry.

The arrival of MK Gandhi in these turbulent times marked yet another phase in the nationalist movement. Gandhi who arrived in India in 1915, used his own methods to harness these forces that existed in India in the post war years. His style was to address specific issues and laws and organize a peaceful resistance and violation of the laws with the help of disciplined cadres. The significance of Gandhi's movement was that he brought the focus upon specific issues. Gandhi first achieved success in three movements in Champaran Kheda and Ahmedabad respectively. The first two were peasant movements and the last was a strike of the millworkers of Ahmedabad.

The peasantry at Champaran was agitating against the European planters who forced them to cultivate indigo. There was a history of peasant unrest against planters in Champaran. Raj Kumar Shukla, one of the peasant leaders, went all the way to Lucknow to invite Gandhi to see their plight. Gandhi instituted an open enquiry into the matter in 1917. The Champaran movement also got wider publicity with the government trying to restrict Gandhi's entry into that area and later letting him go there on threat of *satyagraha*. The outcome of the Champaran movement was that the *tinkathia* system, under which the farmers had to cultivate indigo in 3/20<sup>th</sup> of their holdings, was abolished.

The next movement Gandhi associated himself with was the agitation of the mill workers at Ahmedabad. The dispute between the workers and the owners had occurred due to the withdrawal of the 'plague bonus'. The owners withdrew the bonus after the epidemic had passed and the workers opposed the withdrawal because of the rising prices after the War. Gandhi persuaded the workers and owners to negotiate before a tribunal. The owners suddenly withdrew from the arbitration on the pretext of a strike called by some workers and declared that they were ready to give only 20% bonus and threatened dismissal to those workers who did not comply. Gandhi was greatly offended by this breach of agreement and declared that after proper study of the production cost, profits and the cost of living the conclusion was drawn that the workers were justified in asking for 35% increase in wages. Ambalal Sarabhai, one of the mill owners was a close friend of Gandhi and had given a liberal donation to his ashram at Sabarmati, and his sister Anasuya Ben was one of his greatest supporters in the Ahmedabad mill workers struggle. During the last stages of this struggle Gandhi for the first time used the fast as a means of protest. Gandhi observed that the workers were slowly losing their morale so he decided to go on a fast.

**Notes**

He declared that if the strike was to lead to starvation then he should be the first to once more and the matter was resolved with the workers getting the 35% raise.

The third movement was that of the Kheda peasants whose crops had failed and they were unable to get a remission of land revenue from the government. First, enquiries were made into the situation, as was the norm of all Gandhian movements. Crop yields were studied and it was confirmed that it had been one third of the normal yield which made the peasants eligible for a total remission of revenue. Gandhi advised the peasants to withhold the revenue. Vallabhbhai Patel and Indulal Yajnik helped Gandhi in the Kheda district by organising his tour of the villages and urging the peasants to stand firm. The government unleashed severe repression seizing cattle, household goods and even attaching standing crops. After putting up a brave struggle however they began to suffer in the face of repression. At that very movement Gandhi learnt that the Government was contemplating a compromise by directing that the revenue be recovered from only those who could pay it. Gandhi had asked the well off peasants also to withhold payment so that the poorer peasantry may not surrender. On learning of the Government directions, thus, Gandhi withdrew the movement.

The outcome of the Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda movements, that occurred between 1916–1917, was that Gandhi was able to experiment with his method of non-violent satyagraha. The movements helped him to test the waters so to say. He cultivated his own core group of followers who would assist him and follow his orders in the forthcoming movements. In these movements Gandhiji showed his special talent for reconciling apparently opposed interests e.g. mill owners and workers, keeping his friendship with one and at the same time gaining the trust of the other.

The next significant movement under Gandhi's leadership was the Rowlatt satyagraha. In February 1919, two bills that would severely curb the civil liberty of Indians were sought to be made into laws. The government wanted to pass these laws so that they may be able to control the rising tide of discontent among the population. The laws would provide for arbitrary detention and punishment without trial etc. In fact one of the bills was passed in the Council and made into law inspite of protests from the elected Indian members. This kind of restriction on the liberty of individuals might have been acceptable during the war years. But the end of the war had given rise to the hopes of further constitutional reform and a greater control of Indians over their own affairs if not self-government.

Having seen the futility of the protests from the Council members and others, Gandhi launched 'Satyagraha'. A 'Satyagraha Sabha' was formed that attracted many members. It was decided that a nationwide 'hartal' or strike would be observed to protest against the Act and fasting and prayers will be conducted. There would also be civil disobedience of certain laws. The Rowlatt Satyagraha was the first nationwide protest in India under the guidance of Gandhi. The people of India showed a great and swelling resentment against British rule and the hartals became violent. 6<sup>th</sup> April 1919 was decided as the day of hartal, however due to some confusion it was observed on 30<sup>th</sup> March in Delhi and led to fighting in the streets. Punjab had faced very severe wartime oppression due to forcible recruitment and widespread disease and other hardships. Amritsar and Lahore were centres of this movement. Gandhi tried to go to Punjab and get the movement back on the track of non-violent satyagraha. However Gandhi was prevented from entering the Punjab by the British government and was deported to Bombay. Bombay and Ahmedabad were also experiencing disturbances at that time and Gandhi tried to control the movement there.





**Notes**

Events in Punjab came to a head when two local leaders were arrested and the local town hall and post office were attacked as a result. During the nationalist movement a popular form of protest was to attack the symbols of British government, telegraph wires were cut, post offices attacked, and Europeans including women were attacked. The army was called and meetings and assemblies were banned.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1919 a Baisakhi day gathering at Jalianwalla Bagh in Amritsar invited the wrath of General Dyer who was made in charge of the city. The General, angered that the ban on public meetings was being flouted attacked the unarmed and helpless gathering and had his men fire at the crowd for ten minutes and only stopped when his ammunition was spent. No prior warning was issued to the people before firing started and there was no escape other than the narrow pathway where Dyer's men stood with their guns as the Jallianwalla Bagh was enclosed by walls on all sides. This incident left 379 dead according to a conservative government estimate. This brutal incident was followed by even more brutal repression.



**INTEXT QUESTION 21.3**

1. Gandhiji experimented with which movement on his method of non-violent satyagraha during 1916–1917?  
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2. When was Rowlatt satyagraha launched?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the importance of Baisakhi day of 1919 in National Movement?  
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**21.6 NON-VIOLENT NON-COOPERATION**

Martial law was imposed in Punjab after the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre. Inhuman treatment was meted out to Indians e.g. men were made to crawl on their bellies in the bylane where a European woman had been attacked. Although the Rowlatt satyagraha had been withdrawn, the feeling of resentment toward British rule grew even more bitter. The Montague Chelmsford reforms of 1919 frustrated the hopes of those who still had any faith in the colonial government's intention for bringing about reforms enabling Indians to participate in the government.

At this juncture a large group of enlightened Muslim leaders emerged and they had a special reason for discontent with the British government. The Muslims were offended by the insensitive treatment of Turkey after the First World War. Muslims all over the world regarded the Caliph of Turkey as their spiritual leader and they had been assured that the Caliph will be treated leniently after the defeat of Turkey and its allies in the War. However in the post war treaty with Turkey the powers of the Caliph were severely curtailed.

Matters came to a head when the Hunter Committee that was appointed by the government to look into the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy submitted its report. In this report they upheld the action of General Dyer and all other kinds of repression. This report enraged all the Indian leaders and the moment was ripe for the next movement of protest. It was at this time that Gandhi contemplated a non-violent non-cooperation movement. The non-cooperation movement was an expression of the growing

**Notes**

resentment of all classes of the Indian people against oppressive British rule. Gandhi took up three specific points on which the movement was initiated: (a) the Khilafat wrong, (b) the Punjab wrong, and (c) Swaraj.

The call for non-cooperation first came from the All India Khilafat Conference at Delhi on 22-23rd November 1919 at the initiative of the Ali brothers (Mohammad and Shaukat). At the Allahabad meeting of the Khilafat Conference, a programme of four-stage non-cooperation was announced- boycott of titles, of the civil services, of the police and army and finally non-payment of taxes. Thereafter, Gandhi began to urge the members of the Congress to give their support to the movement. In the historical Calcutta special session in September, 1920 the Congress adopted a programme of giving up of titles, a boycott of schools, courts and Councils and also boycott of foreign goods. This boycott would be side by side with the establishment of national schools and courts to resolve matters without taking recourse to the judicial system of the government and the adoption of khadi. In the Nagpur Congress of December 1920, veteran Congress leader of Bengal Chittaranjan Das lent his support to the movement. Although the movement was formally initiated on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1920, the Congress leaders support gave a new impetus to it and from January 1921, it gained great strength. Within a month a large number of students left government aided schools and colleges and joined national institutions that had been started in different parts of the country.

Several well-established lawyers like CR Das, Motilal Nehru, Saifuddin Kichhlu, Vallabhbhai Patel, C Rajagopalachari, Asaf Ali etc, gave up their lucrative practices. This sacrifice inspired the people. Boycott of foreign goods, picketing of shops selling foreign cloth were other forms of protest. Charkhas began to be distributed and handspun cloth became popular among nationalists. Nationalist newspapers held advertisements inviting people to participate in bonfires of foreign goods. The value of cloth exports fell to a great extent. Along with cloth shops there was also for the first time picketing of liquor shops.

To the alarm of the British government Muhammad Ali in July 1921 appealed to all Muslims in the British Indian army and declared that they must consider it morally wrong to be a part of the British army and that they should not continue in it.

He was arrested at once. This call was taken up by the Congress and Gandhi. A manifesto was issued calling all men (civilian and soldier) to sever all links with the British Indian army. In the midst of this the Prince of Wales visited India in November 1921, and was greeted by a hartal in Bombay where he landed and also in the rest of the country. Gandhi addressed a huge meeting on the day of the Prince of Wales' arrival and anti- British feeling was so strong that a riot situation occurred when the people dispersing from the meeting came across the others who had gone for the welcome procession of the Prince. Gandhi had to go on a four day fast to reduce tension.

The non-cooperation movement was gaining strength progressively. In Midnapur district of Bengal a movement was organized against Union Board taxes and a no-tax movement was also organized in Andhra Pradesh. The refusal to pay taxes under the Gandhian scheme was to be resorted to in the very last and most radical stage of the movement. In the Awadh region of UP the kisan movement was gaining ground through the kisan sabhas which were becoming more organized and a great threat to British rule.

The stand of the colonial government was also becoming more rigid. The fall in cloth exports, the show of resentment from the students, lawyers, government officials,



## Notes

workers, peasants, plantation workers and attempts to influence the army finally led to the adoption of repressive measures against the movement. Public meetings and assemblies were banned, newspapers repressed, and midnight raids were conducted at Congress and Khilafat offices. The Congress under Gandhi's guidance was beginning to chalk out a programme of civil disobedience at Bardoli. This move was however cut short by a violent incident at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district of UP. A Khilafat and Congress procession on being confronted by some policemen turned violent and attacked the police. The policemen tried to take shelter in the police station, however the enraged mob set fire to it and hacked to death those policemen who came out to escape the fire. Twenty-two policemen were killed. This incident occurred on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February and on the 12<sup>th</sup> Gandhi withdrew the non-cooperation movement. This withdrawal proved that at this stage Gandhi did not want to lead a movement which he could not control and it also proved that the nationalists would heed Gandhi's call, for though there were many who differed from him, no one thought of defying his call for withdrawal.

Within the Congress party there was a difference of opinion between those who wanted to enter the legislative councils through the soon to be held elections; and those who wanted to undertake Gandhian constructive work in villages and preparing for the next step of the struggle. Rajagopalachari, Ansari and others advocated rural constructive work while Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel and Hakim Ajmal Khan wanted to enter the councils and disrupt the business of the government through creating a deadlock in the system. Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel supported the former view while CR Das adhered to the latter view. Das and Motilal Nehru set up a Swaraj Party in 1923 to contest the elections. The 'No-Changers' as the group of Gandhians was called gained support with the release of Gandhi from jail in 1924. However the Congressmen could not be prevented from standing in the elections though they were made to acknowledge the importance of constructive work.

The Congress candidates did win several seats in the elections held in November 1924 in the Central Provinces and in Bengal. Initial efforts at disrupting the processes of the Councils began, but whatever regulation the members did not allow to be passed was pushed through by the special powers assigned to the Governor exposing the limitations of the system of dyarchy. Soon the elected members began to lose direction and were slowly beginning to be absorbed in the system. In Bengal, CR Das suddenly passed away causing a leadership problem there. At this stage of the nationalist movement amidst political uncertainties and a lull in the activities under the 'mainstream' Congress movement arose a far more radical group of activists in the second phase of the revolutionary movement.

### 21.7 THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT: REORGANIZATION AND REORIENTATION

The spontaneous upsurge of the non-cooperation movement released the great force of India's youth that were determined to wrest freedom. The youth of the country had responded eagerly to the call of Gandhi and had participated in the non-cooperation movement. The sudden withdrawal of the movement was a blow to their aspirations. The secret samitis of the first phase of the revolutionary movement began to be revived in Punjab and in Bengal.

The Anushilan Samiti in Bengal was associated with Subhas Bose and the Yugantar Samiti with the JM Sengupta group. There was considerable amount of political

**Notes**

rivalry between these two groups. Some smaller revolutionary groups began to be formed at about this time for example the one under Surya Sen of Chittagong that developed along much more radical lines. The most striking revolutionary action of the time was the murder of an Englishman, Day, by Gopinath Saha in January 1924. Saha had planned to kill Tegarb the police Commissioner of Calcutta and killed Day by mistake. This incident resulted in the arrest of many nationalists.

Another centre of revolutionary ferment was northern India where Sachin Sanyal and Jogesh Chatterji and others formed the Hindustan Republican Association in the United Provinces and started raising funds through dacoities. The most renowned of which was the Kakori train robbery in August 1925 that resulted in the arrest of several members of the organization. This organization also established links with a group of young men in the Punjab under the dynamic and brilliant student leader Bhagat Singh. The Punjab group was deeply influenced by socialist ideology. Hence the organization was renamed Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). The aim of the revolutionaries was complete independence and they had a vision of how the State should be after the achievement of the same. They envisaged a mass struggle of the people and for this purpose they tried to mobilise students workers and peasants.

**21.8 BYCOTT OF SIMON COMMISSION**

Amidst this reformulation and resurgence of the revolutionary movement and the subdued state of the mainstream movement was announced the Simon Commission to formulate further constitutional reforms for India. The all-white commission did not include any Indian and thus it was clear that the forthcoming reforms, if any, would not fulfill the aspirations of the Indian people. Dyarchy had already shown itself to be a great farce with all the key decision-making powers still firmly in the hands of the colonial government. The announcement of the all-white Simon Commission sparked off widespread discontent and fanned the fires of the nationalist movement. All shades of political opinion in India unanimously condemned the Commission as not a single Indian was included in it.

The Indian response to the Commission was a unanimous resolution by leaders of every shade of opinion to boycott it. All the important cities and towns observed a *hartal* on the day that the members of the Commission landed in India (3rd February 1928). There were mass rallies and processions and black flag demonstrations against the Commission. 'Go Back Simon' was imprinted on banners, placards and even kites. Black flags were waved at the Commission wherever it went. Needless to say police repression was harsh and merciless and processions were attacked and not even the most prominent leaders were spared. The most insensitive attack was on Lala Lajpat Rai, one of the outstanding leaders of the extremist era in Lahore. This, now elderly, leader was hit by lathis and he succumbed to this attack a few days later. The death of Lajpat Rai created tremendous resentment against the British rule all over. During this period an important development within the Congress was the adoption of *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence as its objective. Complete independence meant a total severance from the British connection.

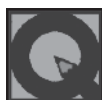
As a result of the adoption of the *Purna Swaraj* pledge there was a rise of great expectations in the country and similar independence pledges were taken all over the country on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1930. There was unrest brewing in the country proof of which was a railway strike led by the communists based in the Bombay-Nagpur region. The Congress led movement started getting ready for a movement of civil disobedience that would include non-payment of taxes in its extreme form. Congress



## Notes

legislators were instructed to resign preparation for the next round of struggle. Gandhi however began with issuing an ultimatum to the

Viceroy Irwin on 31<sup>st</sup> January, which did not mention anything about complete independence, or *Purna Swaraj*. The Eleven points were rather a set of specific demands that the nation was making from the colonial government. One of the demands was for the abolition of the salt tax and the government monopoly of manufacture of salt. The demands also included fifty per cent reduction in land revenue, protection of textiles, fifty per cent cuts in army expences and civil service salaries etc.



## INTEXT QUESTION 21.4

1. On which specific points non cooperation movement was initiated?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. When and by whom Swaraj Party was founded?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Give full form to HSRA.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 21.9 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

As there was no response to the eleven point ultimatum, the movement of civil disobedience was launched based on the issue of salt. Salt was an item of basic necessity for all and any taxation on it would affect the poorest of the poor, thus salt became the symbol of the deprivation and oppression of the Indian people. Both the masses and the nationalist leaders began to identify with the issue. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1930, Gandhi accompanied by 72 of his followers at the Sabarmati ashram began a march upto the sea at Dandi. The dramatic Dandi march drew a great response from people. Crowds of people greeted and followed the marchers all along the way. Villagers spun yarn on charkhas, as Gandhi went past, to show their solidarity to him. On 6<sup>th</sup> April, Gandhi reached the sea at Dandi and picked up a handful of salt at the sea side launching a country-wide civil disobedience movement by breaking the salt law. All over India people began the illegal manufacture of salt. Through careful planning and large scale recruitment of volunteers the movement spread from one part of the country to another, from Madras to Maharashtra and from Bengal and Assam to Karachi. In the farthest north there was a massive demonstration at Peshawar, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and his followers the Khudai Khidmatgars or the Red Shirts had been active here doing constructive work for some years and the response was tremendous. The city came under the control of the masses for atleast a week and the soldiers of the Garhwali regiment refused to fire at the unarmed crowds. Nehru's arrest on 14<sup>th</sup> April was followed by public protests in Madras, Calcutta and Karachi. The colonial government was in a dilemma as they had not expected the salt satyagraha to create such an upheaval. Finally it decided to act and Gandhi was also arrested in May that only resulted in further intensification of the movement. The most important aspect of the civil disobedience movement was the widespread participation the youth, particularly students and also women. Women picketed liquor shops and shops that sold foreign goods.

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The government started to issue ordinances curbing the civil liberties of the people and civil disobedience organizations began to be banned in the provinces. The Congress Working Committee was banned in June and the Congress President Motilal Nehru was arrested. Local Congress Committees were also banned by August. A number of local issues also became a part of the civil disobedience movement.

In the midst of government repression and the intensification of the movement the Simon Commission report was published and there was no suggestion that India might be given dominion status. This resulted in turning the most moderate of Indian political opinion against the British. The Viceroy then extended the invitation for a Round Table Conference and reiterated the intention of discussing the award of Dominion Status. Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru were taken to Gandhiji to discuss the offer. However no headway could be made between the Congress and the government. The First Round Table Conference was held in London in November 1930 between the Indian leaders and the British but the Congress was not represented. However it was evident that in any negotiation involving the British and Indian leaders on an equal footing the absence of the Congress would fail to bring any results. The next Conference was scheduled to be held in the next year. The Government released Gandhiji on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1931, all other members of the Congress Working Committee were also released unconditionally. The Congress was asked to deliberate on the Viceroy's offer to participate in the next Round Table Conference.

After a lot of deliberation and discussions with the delegates of the First Round Table Conference the Congress assigned Gandhi the task of negotiating with the Viceroy. The discussions between Gandhi and Irwin went on for a fortnight. Finally on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1931 the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed. The terms of the Pact were as follows—

- (a) all people arrested for non-violent protest were to be released immediately
- (b) fines that had not been collected were to be remitted
- (c) confiscated land that had not been sold off yet was to be returned to peasants
- (d) government employees who had resigned were to be treated leniently
- (e) villages along the coast were to be given the right to make salt for consumption
- (f) the right to peaceful and non-aggressive picketing was granted

On its part the Congress agreed to withdraw the civil disobedience movement and also agreed to participate in the next Round Table Conference. Many among the nationalist leaders perceived this agreement as a temporary truce. However many were not convinced of the necessity of this settlement. This gave rise to the renewed activities of the revolutionary secret societies and the more radical communist movements. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were executed at this time as the communist movement spread throughout the country.

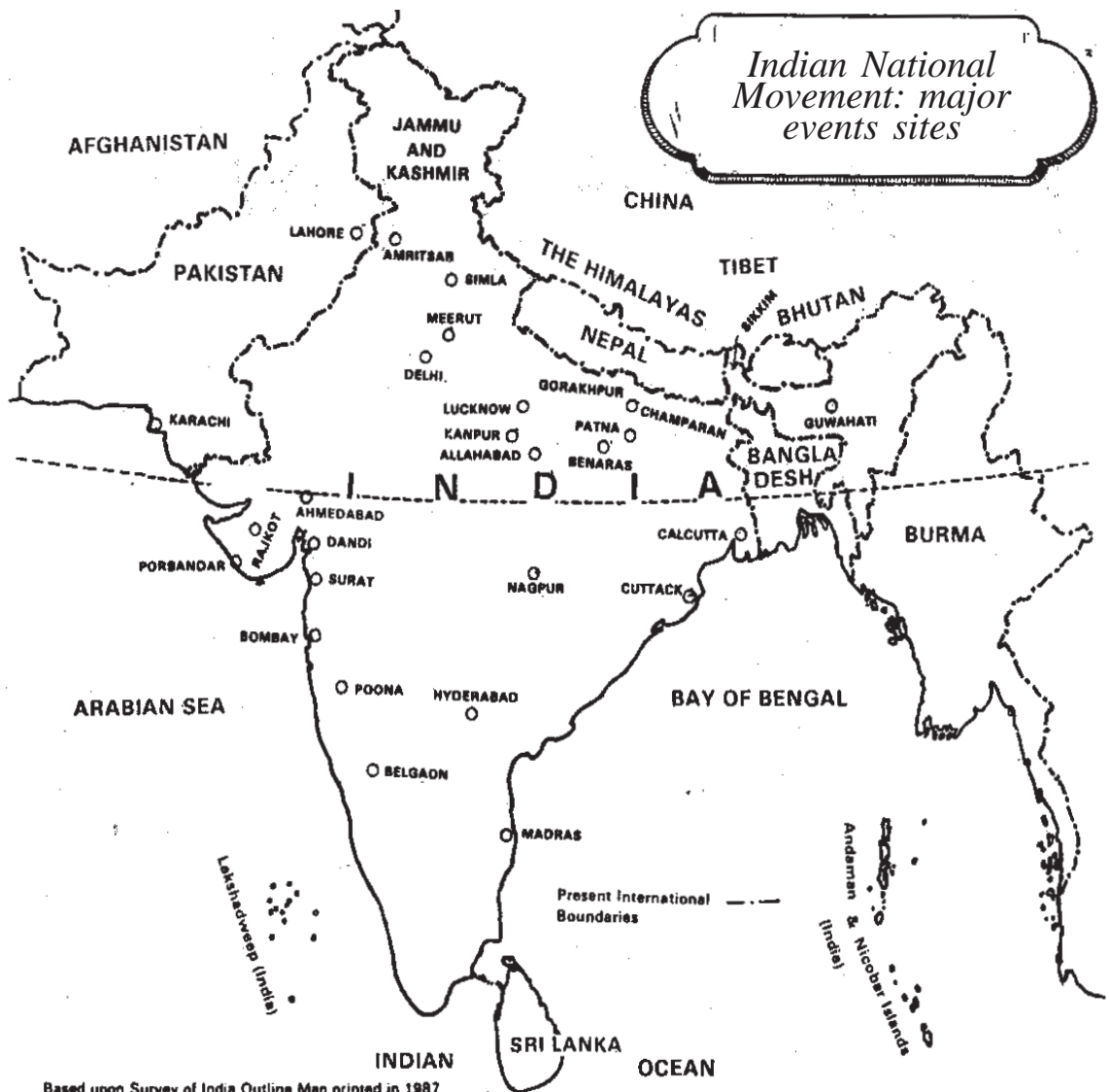
The Congress in the Karachi session in March 1931 while reiterating the goal of *Purna Swaraj*, also in the same breath endorsed the Delhi Pact between Gandhi and Irwin. Although the Delhi Pact had made no mention of independence, the Congress at Karachi was preparing for the framing of India's Constitution and it adopted resolutions on Fundamental Rights and a National Economic policy. This resolution was one of the landmarks of our constitutional history, where the civil liberties of free speech, free press and freedom of association was worked out. Neutrality in religious matters, equality



**Notes**

before law, universal adult franchise, free and compulsory primary education and many other provisions anticipated Constitutional provisions of free India.

Gandhi set off to attend the second Round Table Conference in August 1931. Meanwhile the British Government's stand was hardening in Britain and in India. Irwin was replaced by Willingdon and the favourable attitude of the Home Government had also changed. As a result not only did Gandhi gain nothing from the discussions at the Round Table but on his return in December 1931 he found that new Viceroy did not wish to meet him. It was as if the colonial government was regretting that they had put the Congress at an equal footing with themselves by making an agreement with them. The government had also arrested Jawaharlal Nehru and had repressed the



Based upon Survey of India Outline Map printed in 1987  
The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line  
Responsibility for correctness of internal details shown on the map rests with the publisher.

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Map 21.1 Indian National Movement: major events sites

**Notes**

movement of the Khudai Khidmatgars in the North West Frontier Province by arresting their leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

Under these circumstances the Congress decided to resume the civil disobedience movement on the eve of which Gandhi had requested to meet the Viceroy to negotiate peace and the Viceroy refused. The colonial Government thereafter launched a severe offensive the first step of which was to arrest Gandhi in early January and a total curtailment of the civil liberties of the people. This was followed by the government getting the right to appropriate property and detain the people. Armed with this power the Government put all the prominent leaders of the Congress behind bars.

This was followed by a massive reaction by the people. Thus mass demonstrations, picketing of liquor shops and those selling foreign goods, 'unlawful' gatherings etc occurred in a large scale which was followed by severe repression by a Government that was in no mood to come to an understanding with the nationalists. Jails were filled, the Congress was banned, Gandhian ashrams were occupied by the police. Processions were beaten up and scattered, people who refused to pay taxes were beaten and jailed and their properties attached. The people of the country with most of the leaders in jails and on their own initiative with ruthless rep from the government managed to sustain this civil disobedience for more than two years. Finally in April Gandhi withdrew the movement. This movement exemplified the moral strength of the common people of India and the stronghold of Gandhi as a national leader. Even at this stage the leaders and the people alike, in spite of difference in opinion, obeyed his decisions regarding the continuance of a movement.

**21.10 INTENSIFICATION OF RADICAL AND REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS AND RISE OF THE LEFT**

The years between 1930 and 1934 was also marked by an unprecedented explosion of acts of revolutionary terrorism with its focus in Bengal and Punjab. A total of 92 incidents were reported in 1931 itself that included 9 murders. Exemplary among them was the Chittagong Armory Raid. In Chittagong a group of revolutionaries under Surya Sen captured the local armoury, issued an Independence Proclamation in the name of Indian Republican Army and put up a brave fight with the British in the hills of the countryside for several days. The number of terrorist cases kept rising in spite of severe repression by the colonial administration. The HSRA had also become very active in the Punjab with 26 incidents reported in 1930 alone.

The freedom struggle was never confined to the single path of Gandhian satyagraha. It contained the very violent and extremist revolutionary movement, it also comprised of the socialist ideology that came to India after the Russian Revolution, it would also include a military offensive. These different strands of the movement were by no means isolated. Most of the revolutionaries had participated in the Gandhian non-cooperation movement. In fact the Chittagong armoury was siezed amidst cries of 'Gandhi raj has come!' Chandrashekar Azad and Bhagat Singh's revolutionary groups adopted Socialism as did sections of the Congress under Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose.

Socialism combined the freedom struggle with a clear cut agenda of social equality through organized mass movements that helped to mobilise the working class. The initiative of working out the ideology of the communist movement in India was taken up by eminent men like MN Roy who interpreted Marxism and the ideas of Lenin to





## Notes

fit the Indian context. Seven Indians including Roy founded the Communist Party of India at Tashkent in October 1920. Slowly the idea of Communism found favour among many Indian intellectuals and even members of the Congress.

Subhas Chandra Bose was a unique personality influenced by a wide variety of ideologies and epitomized the spirit of the nationalist movement from non-cooperation through giving up of government posts, to the revolutionary extreme, upto the ideas of socialist thought and finally choosing the courageous option of military offensive. Bose straddle all these different strategies and proved that there was in essence no basic conflict between the different visions of freedom at work within the nationalist movement.

### 21.11 CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND THE CONGRESS PARTICIPATION IN LEGISLATURES

In 1935 was passed the Government of India Act that extended some concessions to the nationalist movement by introducing more autonomy to the elected members in the legislatures of the provinces. This Act also extended the voting rights to a greater percentage of the Indian People.

The British after introducing the 1935 Act announced the holding of elections to the provincial legislatures in early 1937. After the resolution of the dilemma within the Congress, it took part in the electoral process and did very well. The Congress had absolute majorities in five out of the eleven provinces. This win encouraged the nationalist movement with students, peasants and the working class. They all made their presence felt and soon there were movements among these classes even in the Princely States that were outside the full control of the colonial State.

### 21.12 TOWARDS FREEDOM

Congress governments in different provinces remained in office for over two years and undertook various measures in the interest of various sections of the people. Reduction in rent for the peasantry, release of political prisoners and the lifting of restriction on the press were some of the steps taken by the Congress governments. But above all it indicated that the Indian people were capable to governing themselves.

Towards the end of 1939 all the Congress governments resigned. The second world war broke out in 1938 and the Viceroy unilaterally declared that India, as a British colony was a party to the war on the British side. As a marks of protest against this decision, the Congress high command instructed all the Congress governments to resign.

With the resignation of the Congress ministers, an important phase in the national movement came to an end. As a result of the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement, the national movement had reached out to new areas and groups. This led to an erosion of the British control from the minds and hearts of the people. The effective running of the government by the congress in the proving undermined the British control further.

The second world war created a new crisis for the British. The War created a new demand for various commodities like clothes and food for the soldiers. These demands could only be met through extractions from the society. This added to general resentment against the British and weakened their support base further. To take an example, as a part of the requirement for the war, large quantities of food stuffs had to carried out of Bengal. This resulted in a severe famine in Bengal and over three million people died due to starvation. Thus the situation created by the second world

**Notes**

war created tremendous hardships for the people. It also created an unprecedented crisis for the British rule in India.

In these circumstances a constantly declining support base of the British, Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch a final offensive against the British rule. Thus began the famous Quit India movement in August 1942. In this movement no demands were made from the British. They were simply asked to quit India. The British retaliated to Gandhi's call to 'Quit India' by arresting him and all the members of congress working committee. The news of the arrest of Congress leader angered the people further who came out on the streets and attacked the British government which way they could. In the absence of their leaders people became their own leaders and attacked, looted and destroyed government property. The government dealt with the movement with severe brutality and many people were killed in police firing.

In the end of British government was able to suppress the movement only with the help of large scale killings and arrests. According to official figures, the number of people arrested by the end of 1943 was well over 91,000. Although the movement had been suppressed, it became very clear to the British government that they would not be able to hold on to India for long. The British themselves had realized it. Uptill now they had ruled the country with the help of a support system that they had built in India since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This support system had been eroded by the national movement, through a series of struggles. Without the help of various sections of Indians (peasants, workers, middle classes, rich people, police, army among others) it was not possible for the British to rule India.

Once the British realized this they began to make preparations for a gradual and peaceful withdrawal from India. From 1944–45 onward, they released all the Congress leaders and initiated a process of negotiations for a transfer of power from British to Indian hands.

And so it was that India became free in August 1947. The attainment of freedom was a matter of great joy for Indian people. Indian people had won their battle against mighty British imperialism. But it was not an absolute victory. Along with the freedom of India came the partition of the land in two nation states-India and Pakistan. The British government had always tried to prevent a unity of the Indian people. They had never agreed that all the Indian people were one with common interests. And so, when they left India they decided to divide the country on the basis of religion. The Partition of India was also accompanied by communal violence at a very large scale.

The year 1947 is a very important phase in the history of India. It was a year of triumph of Indian people as they achieved their freedom from foreign rule. But it was also the year of a great tragedy for the unity of Indian people as the country was partitioned into two separate nation-states.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.5**

1. From where Dandi March was started?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In how many provinces Congress got absolute majorities during 1937 election?  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Notes**

3. How many people were arrested in Quit India Movement?

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**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

Following points are worth mentioning in this lesson:

- Indian National Movement was not the name of one single event, but a whole series of political events, spread over many decades.
- Anti-imperialism and national unity were two themes that were common to all the events and connected them with one another.
- The early phase of the national movement was dominated by moderate leaders. These leaders put forward a series of demands before the colonial rules. But much more importantly, they started the idea that the British rule was not leading to Indian's economic development, but rather the decline of Indian economy.
- The moderate leaders followed by the were extremist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lajpat Rai who introduced the idea of the Participation of masses in the national movement. The extremists led the swadeshi movement which was launched against the British decision to partition Bengal.
- The end of the swadeshi movement brought the entry of revolutionary activities into the national movement. These revolutionary leaders, such as Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki, wanted to fight the British government by violent means. They also wanted to target individual British offices.
- Mahatma Gandhi's entry into the national movement was the next major step. Mahatma Gandhi initially experimented with his political methods through local struggles at Champaran, Kheda and Ahmadabad. Soon he took the lead in launching a country wide struggle.
- Gandhi based his struggle on a non-violent non-cooperation with the British rule. Through these methods he led three major struggles- non-cooperation movement (1920–22), civil-disobedience Movement (1930–34) and Quit India Movement (1942).
- A result of these struggles was that the national movement gained tremendous popularity among Indian people. It reached out to various sections of the population like peasants, women, workers and students. National movement gradually spread to most parts of the country.
- As the popularity of the national movement increased, that of the British government decreased. The British had ruled India with the help of many Indians. These Indians constituted the support system of the British rule in India. The national movement succeeded in damaging and dismantling this support system.
- As the support system of the British began to be gradually eroded, they found it impossible to rule India. The British therefore decided to initiate a process of negotiations with the Indian leaders for a gradual transfer of power from the British to Indian hands.
- The British finally left India in 1947. Indians become free from foreign rule on 15 August 1947.

**Notes**

- However, before leaving the British decided to partition India on the basis of religion. Along with the freedom of India, came the partition of India. Thus the freedom and partition should be seen as two very important events in the history of Modern India.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Mention the issues of Concern of early congress!
2. Trace the development of Swadeshi and Boycott movement:
3. Briefly discuss the various strengths of Revolutionary movement in India and abroad during 1907–1914.
4. Discuss the Boycott of Simon Commission?
5. What were the terms of Gandhi–Irwin Pact?
6. Why was second non–cooperation movement launched?
7. Account for Rise of left during 1930–1934?
8. ‘1947 was a year of triumph as well as a great tragedy’ – Comment?

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****21.1**

1. December 1885; A.O.Hume.
2. 1905: Lord Curzon.
3. Jatra
4. To decrease the importance of Calcutta.

**21.2**

1. Sohan Singh Bhakna and Har Dayal
2. Passengers of the ship Komagata Maru to Canada were turned away by the Canadian Government, when they reached Calcutta in 1914 passengers clashed with the police and 22 people were killed.
3. Madame Cama.
4. Home rule movement.

**21.3**

1. Champaran, Ahmedabad, Kheda.
2. 6th April 1919
3. On this day on the gathering at Jalianwalla Bagh General Dyer has his men fire at the crowd of unarmed and helpless people leaving 379 dead.

**Notes****21.4**

1. Khilafat wrong, Punjab wrong and Swaraj.
2. 1923; Motilal Nehru and CR Das.
3. Hindustan Socialist Republican Association.

**21.5**

1. Sabarmati Ashram
2. Five
3. Over 91,000.

**HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Refer Page 3 of 21.1
2. Refer 21.2
3. Refer 21.3
4. Refer 21.8
5. Refer 21.9 para 4
6. Refer 21.9 para 7,8 and 9
7. Refer 21.10 para 2 and 3
8. Refer 21.12