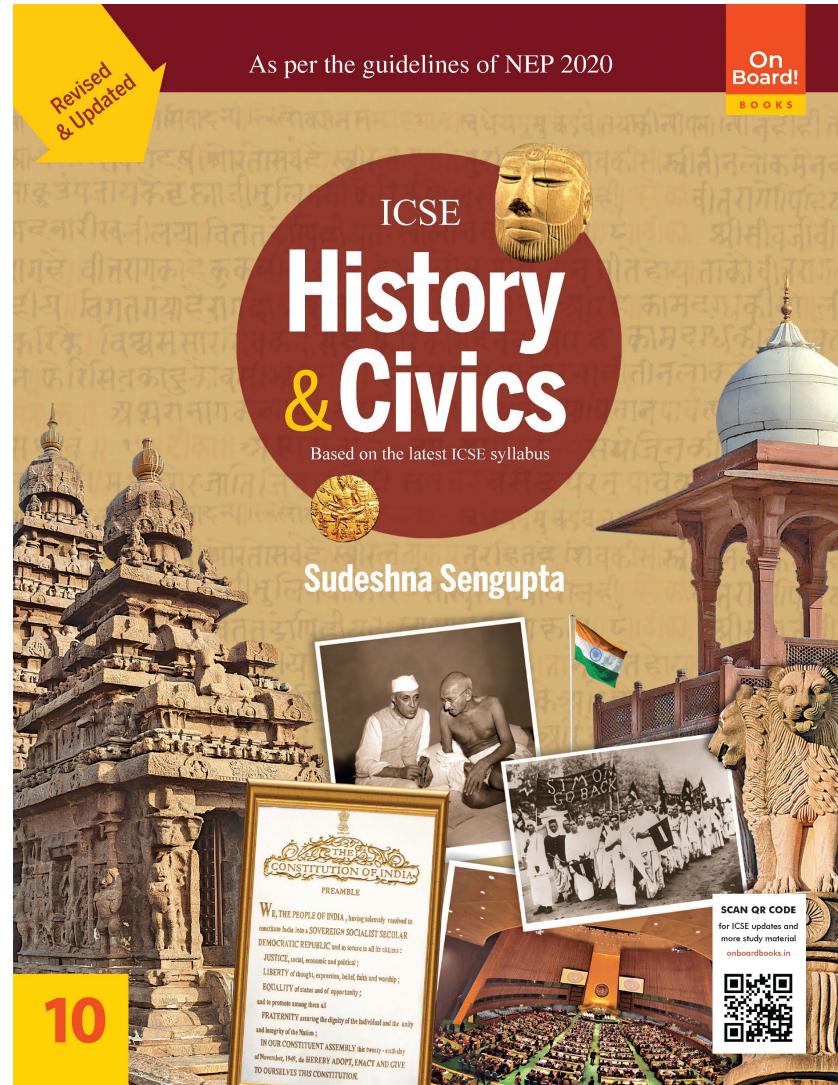


On Board!

B O O K S

ICSE History and Civics 10



Section B: History

Chapter 7 The Quit India Movement

- **THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT (1935)**
- **Provisions**
- **GENERAL ELECTIONS AND THEIR RESULTS**
- **Growth of communalism**
- **EVENTS LEADING TO THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT**
- **Resignation of Congress ministries (1939)**
- **August Offer (1940)**
- **Individual satyagraha (1940)**
- **The Japanese threat (1942)**
- **Cripps' Mission (1942)**
- **THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT**
- **The Quit India resolution**
- **Government response**
- **Course of the movement**
- **Repressive measures of the government**
- **Impact**

Chapter 7 The Quit India Movement

WHO WERE THE RADICALS?

The Quit India Movement marks an important phase in the freedom movement of India. This movement, like the preceding ones, was triggered by a number of events.

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT (1935)

The British government passed the Government of India Act in 1935, introducing changes in the administration of British India.

Provisions

The main features of the Government of India Act 1935 were:

- A federal government would be set-up at Delhi for the whole country. It would be headed by the Viceroy and look after important matters that affected all of India, such as defence, currency and posts. The federal government would be formed by members elected from the provinces of British India as well as the Indian or princely states.
- A federal court was set-up at Delhi.
- In the provinces, dyarchy was ended. Ministers chosen from the elected members of the Provincial Legislative Councils would be responsible for the administration, but under the control of the Governor. This was known as provincial autonomy.
- The right to vote was given to about one-sixth of the population of British India.
- Burma was separated from India. It became a separate colony.
- To the Indians, the Act represented little advance over 1919 and therefore, it was rejected by almost all the political parties of the day, including the Muslim League.

GENERAL ELECTIONS AND THEIR RESULTS

A general election under this Act was held in 1936–37 in the 11 newly constituted provinces. The Congress, despite criticizing the Act, decided to contest the elections. It won an absolute majority in the five provinces of Madras, Bihar, Orissa, Central Provinces and United Provinces. It emerged as the largest single party in Bombay, Bengal, Assam and the NWFP. The election results proved beyond doubt the popularity of the Congress, and were also a pointer to the limited influence exercised by the Muslim League.

Congress formed ministries and the ministries took up constructive work such as improving education, cottage industries, the condition of workers and harijans. For the first time, Indians were granted self-government which made them eager for complete independence.

Growth of communalism

The formation of communal parties was a very unhealthy development because they obstructed the progress of the national movement.

Hindu Mahasabha In 1915, the Hindu Mahasabha was formed to protect the interests of the Hindus and to counter the policy of ‘divide and rule’ used by British to divide the Hindus and the Muslims.

Jinnah’s two-nation theory Jinnah’s ‘two-nation theory’ which was already strengthened by refusal of Congress to form joint ministries was endorsed by the Muslim League, which at its Lahore Session on 23 March 1940 passed the ‘Pakistan Resolution’ demanding the partition of the country and creation of an independent Muslim State called Pakistan.

EVENTS LEADING TO THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

In 1939, the Second World War broke out. Germany, Italy and Japan, known as the Axis Powers, opposed Britain, France and later the USA. The British government involved India in the War without consulting either the Central Legislature or the provincial legislatures.

Resignation of Congress ministries (1939)

The All-India Congress Committee demanded in a resolution that India be declared an independent nation. The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow stated that the Government of India Act of 1935 would apply for the present. The Congress Working Committee refused to support Great Britain and it called upon the Congress ministries to tender their resignation. All the Congress ministries resigned.

The Muslim League, under Jinnah, was not prepared to follow the lead of the Congress nor was it willing to lend unconditional support to the British.

August Offer (1940)

As the War situation worsened, the British needed the willing support of India. The following proposals were put forward:

- After the War, a representative Indian body would be set up to frame the new constitution.
- The Governor General's Council and the Advisory War Council would be set up immediately.
- The minorities were assured that the British would not handover the reins of the government to any authority which would not recognize their privileges.

Though it was aimed as a compromise proposal, the August Offer failed to satisfy the Congress and the Muslim League. Gandhi described this offer as a means of widening the gulf between the Congress and the Muslim League.

Individual satyagraha (1940)

As the British regarded the partition of the country as the only solution, the Congress decided to resume the Civil Disobedience Movement. People were to disobey civil laws individually. The way it worked was that as soon as an individual or a small group was arrested, another took his/its place. This continued over a period of time.

The Japanese threat (1942)

Indians realized that the danger of Japanese invasion was entirely due to the British who had dragged the country into the War against their will. They believed that Japan would have never invaded India if it were not a part of the British Empire. Also, if India had been granted Dominion Status, it would have chosen to remain neutral. The Congress decided to not cooperate with the government and its war efforts as long as India's independence was not assured. Gandhi and the other leaders called for immediate and unconditional independence to be granted to India and the British to quit India.

Cripps' Mission (1942)

The anticipated Japanese threat made the British realize the need to seek cooperation of the Indians. In March 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps, a British Minister, was sent to India to meet its leaders. The main proposals of Cripps were:

- Steps would be taken to create a new Indian Union
- A body to frame the constitution would be set-up immediately after the War.
- The provinces and the Indian states would have the freedom to accept the new constitution or frame one of their own choosing.
- Racial and religious minorities would be protected.
- Until the new constitution was framed, the British government would retain control over the defence of the country.

The Cripps' proposals meant 'complete and absolute self-determination and self-government for India.'

- The proposals were rejected by the Congress for three definite reasons:
- The deep-rooted distrust of the British and the false promises
- A growing sense of fear that the Germans would defeat the British and that the future freedom of India would be uncertain.

Further, it was felt that the offer was too little and too late.

THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

The failure of the Cripps Mission brought about a radical change in the attitude of Gandhi and the other Congress leaders. The Muslim League had also made a definite demand for the formation of Pakistan.

The Quit India resolution

The Congress Working Committee passed an exhaustive resolution referred to as the 'Quit India Resolution'. It renewed the demand that 'British rule in India must end immediately'. India's independence was necessary not only for the country but also to end the different forms of aggression and imperialism operating in the world. The Congress also realized that the communal issue would not be sorted out in the presence of a foreign power that believed in the policy of divide and rule.

Government response

Gandhi's ultimatum galvanized the government into immediate action. The government arrested Gandhi, Maulana Azad and all other prominent leaders. The All India Congress Committee and the Provincial Congress Committees were declared unlawful. The government thought that it had nipped the rebellion in bud but it had miscalculated its move.

Course of the movement

The news of Gandhi's and all Congress leaders' arrest was followed by spontaneous non-violent Demonstrations.

- In Bombay, students took the lead. Schools, colleges and even markets remained closed. Government buildings were destroyed and railway lines were broken.
- In Satara, people established a parallel government.
- In Bihar, telegraph and telephone wires were cut. Roads were blocked and bridges damaged. The administrative machinery was paralyzed and people set up their own government and courts.
- In the United Provinces, a 'National Government' was set-up. The entire structure of British government had collapsed.
- In Bengal, students took the lead. There were attacks on government buildings. No one was allowed to use any European clothes. People were asked to boycott all government offices.
- In Assam and Orissa, the movement was quite intense. Processions were taken out, trains were derailed and parallel governments were set-up.

Nevertheless, almost all over India all such acts were directed against the railways, posts and telegraphs or the police – all symbols of colonial power.

Repressive measures of the government

The government took serious action.

- The press was gagged.
- Crowds were fired upon and lathi-charged.
- The army took over the towns and villages, and people faced untold suffering.
- People lost their lives and many more were injured.
- The movement was crushed using all possible government machinery.

Impact

The Quit India Movement, however, did not last for a considerable period of time. It was not totally non-violent, but it displayed the depth of nationalistic feeling and the capacity of struggle and sacrifice. It lacked organization but it achieved its objectives. The government was shaken. In spite of the brutal repression, people came together to make it clear to the authorities that they would not be able to rule this country against their wishes. The Quit India Movement was crushed within a few months. Nevertheless, the instances of individual and collective heroism in the face of all odds clearly demonstrated that the people were determined to seek independence once and for all. Its significance lay in the fact that the movement made complete independence an imminent event.

To Remember

Background – The Government of India Act of 1935, general election in the 11 newly constituted provinces, Congress won an absolute majority and formed ministries, the party remained in office till the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Events leading to the Quit India Movement – Resignation of Congress ministries in 1939, August Offer in 1940, individual satyagraha, the Japanese threat in 1942, Cripps' Mission in 1942

Quit India Movement – The Quit India Resolution: Adopted at Wardha, passed in Bombay on 8 August 1942, demanded the end of British rule in India, slogan – Do or Die, Government response: All leaders including Gandhi arrested on 9 August, the Congress declared unlawful, headquarters seized, funds confiscated, government hoped to stop the movement from gaining momentum, Course of the movement: Spontaneous demonstrations as news of arrests spread across the country, processions, meetings, hartals, parallel governments set up, railway and communication facilities disrupted, road blocks, treasury and armoury looted, public meetings and boycott of government offices, all over India intense activity both non-violent and violent, Repressive measures of the government: To crush the movement, arrests were randomly made, firing and lathis used indiscriminately, Impact: Battle for freedom had begun, the slogan of 'do or die' religiously followed, outbreak spontaneous, people motivated into acts of heroism, did not last long, was not always non-violent, violence due to repressive measures, though lacked organization yet brought the country together, the last stage of the struggle for freedom, no important movement within the country after this, realization by the British that freedom had to be granted.

Thank You