

## Cripps offer and the Cabinet Mission Plan

### Unit Structure

- 16.0 Introduction**
- 16.1 Objectives**
- 16.2 Main theme**
  - 16.2.1 to 16.2.11 Sub-theme**
- 16.3 Summary**
- 16.4 Key Words**
- 16.5 Suggested Questions**
  - (A) Short questions**
  - (B) Long questions**
- 16.6 Suggested Books**

### 16.0 Introduction

There was anger and frustration among the Indian nationalists at the in a deguacy of the Act of 1935 and forcible involvement of India into the Second World War. That anger found expression in the shape of the Quit India Movement in 1942. Though the British Government succeeded in quelling the revolt within a short time, yet they had begun to realise that in view of the adverse rituation of the British in the Second World War the Indians had to be pacified and cajoled. So once again they resorted to political diague with the Indian leaders.

### 16.1 Objectives

With the object of mollifying the Indian people the British government decided to send sri stafford cripps to negotiate with the Indian political parties and thus secure their co-operation in the prosecution of the War. The choice of cripps was significant because he was the Member of the British war Cabinet and also the Leader of the Hense of Commons. In addition to this, he was said to be the personal friend of PLandit Jawahar lal Nehru. Cripps had lately returned from Russia after succesful competition of his mission. Hence there could be no more suitable person than Cripps to be sent to India as a negotiator.

## 16.2. Main theme

Cripps reached Delhi on 22 March 1942 with the draft of the Proposals on the basis of which he was to conduct negotiations with the leaders of various Political Parties. The terms of Cripps' Proposals were as follows:

- a. **Establishment of Dominion** : The British Government in view of the political unrest and doubts in Indian minds about the fulfilment of any promise made on behalf of the Crown, stated in very clear words that their object was the creation of Indian Union which would constitute a Dominion, equal in every respect to other Dominions and in no way subordinate to any foreign power in its domestic and external affairs.
- b. **Establishment of a Constitutional Assembly** : The British Government would see to it that an elected body was set up soon after the end of war to frame a new constitution for India.
- c. **Participation of Indian States** : Provision would be made for the participation of Indian States in the constitution-making body.
- d. **Right of the Provinces to Make Separate Constitutions** : The Provinces would have the option to accept the new constitution or retain their existing constitutional position. Doors would be open for them to join the Indian Union at any stage later. The willing Provinces would have the right to frame a constitution of their own and enjoy the same status as the Indian Union.
- e. **Treaty** : A treaty would be negotiated between and signed by the British Government and the Constitution making body of India. Such a treaty would cover all the matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands. The constituent Assembly would be bound to honour the assurance given to the racial and religious minorities regarding protection of their interests. The treaty would not, however, impose any restriction on the power of Indian Union to revise its relations with other states.
- f. **Revision of old treaties** : Whether or not an Indian State agreed to accept the new Constitution, it would be binding on it to get its former treaty revised in accordance with the New Constitution.
- g. **Composition of the Constituent Assembly** : The Constituent Assembly would be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion agreed upon some other form before the end of war. Immediately upon the end of hostilities, Provinces would go to polls. The entire membership of the Lower House of Provincial Legislature would form a single electoral college and proceed to elect

the Constituent Assembly on the basis of proportional representation. The new body would, in number, be about one-tenth of the electoral college.

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as members of British Provinces.

### **Sub-theme**

#### **16.2.1 Gripp's Proposals Relating to Interim Settlement :**

The draft further said "During the critical period which now faced India and until the new constitution can be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for, and retain the control and direction of the Defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full, the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the people of India. His Majesty's Government desire, and invite, the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of the country of the commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help to the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India".

#### **16.2.2 Rejection of Cripps' proposal by the Congress :**

The Congress rejected the new scheme brought by Cripps for the following reasons:

- a. **Right to send representations :** The people of the States were not given the right to send their representatives. The Congress in principle could not accept that the States in the Constituent Assembly might be represented by the nominees of the rulers and not by the elected representatives of the people. The Congress feared that the State nominees would form a reactionary bloc and in league with other groups would obstruct all progressive legislation.
- b. **Right of the Indian States and the Provinces to keep out of the Indian Union :** The Congress stood for undivided India. It was deadly opposed to the creation of Pakistan. The provision in the Cripps Proposal regarding the right of the Provinces to keep out of the Indian Union was a clear hint and encouragement to the Muslims to stick to their demand for Pakistan. The Congress resented the subtle attempt made by the British Government to break-up the country into several independent States. The same sort of mischief was being played with regard to Indian States. They (Indian States) were also given the choice to accept or reject the new Constitution. According to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar, "The creation of more than one Union, howsoever consistent in theory

with the principle of self-determination, will be disastrous to the lasting interests of the country and its integrity and security." Jawaharlal Nehru commenting on it said : "The States as well as the Provinces would all join in the Constitution-making, would influence the Constitution, and then would walk out of it....Reactionary elements differing from each other would unite to prevent the evolution of a strong, progressive, unified national state." The Congress deplored the incentive which the proposals gave to separatism. Although the Congress was resolved not to compel any Province or State to remain in the Indian Union, still it intended to preserve the territorial integrity of the country unimpaired. Had the Congress accepted Cripps Proposals, the communal problem might have become more complicated and tense than ever before. Besides the country might have been split into several Sovereign States.

- c. **Indians were not given control over Defence** : The British Government flatly rejected the Congress demand for Indian control over the Defence Department. The proposals said that during the critical war period and until the new Constitution was framed, Defence was to remain in the hands of an Englishman. The Congress in a resolution passed on 2nd April, 1942 said : British War Cabinet's proposals are vague and altogether incomplete and there appears to be no vital change in the present structure. At any time Defence is a vital subject... to take away Defence from the sphere of responsibility at this stage is to reduce that responsibility to a farce and nullity. "Congress demanded full freedom as a condition precedent to Indian co-operation in war effort. It stated clearly that a slave country cannot have inspiration to shoulder any responsibility in the prosecution of war.
- d. **Refusal of Cripps to make Viceroy as the Constitutional head and to establish National Government** : The Congress in view of the grave war situation, insisted on setting up a National Government and making the Viceroy a titular head. The Congress was worried not about the 'post-dated cheque' so much as about the interim arrangement. It wanted the Executive Council of the Governor-General to work as a cabinet. It believed in the principle of having one bird in hand rather than two in the bush. It worked on the criterion laid down in its resolution that 'the real test of any declaration is its application to the present,' It is wrong to say that Gandhiji was responsible for the rejection of Cripps Proposals. In fact he alone was favouring it while other members of the Congress Working Committee were unanimous in their denunciation of the scheme, Gandhiji described the proposal as a 'post-dated cheque' : someone added 'on a failing bank.'

### **16.2.3 Rejection of Cripps Proposals by Muslim League :**

The Muslim League in a resolution passed on 11th April 1942, stated the following reasons for rejecting the proposals :

- a. The Proposals had not clearly accepted the League's demand for Pakistan. Notwithstanding the giving of right to the Provinces to retain their independence, the proposals appeared to lay stress on the formation of a single Union of India.
- b. The proposals did not provide for another Constituent Assembly comprising only Muslim members.
- c. The proposals had failed to provide for separate electorate system for the Constituent Assembly. It was likely to have Hindu majority in it.
- d. The proposals did not provide for the protection of the interests of racial and religious minorities. It also did not clarify the wording and contents of the proposed be and as to who would be the enforcing authority to secure it compliance.
- e. The proposals had not made it compulsory for the State to join the Constituent Assembly, which the League Considered unjust.
- f. No date for the proposed interim arrangement had been fixed in Cripps' scheme.
- g. The representation of the Muslims in Provincial Assembly was inadequate. Thus Cripps offer remained still-born because it was rejected both by the Congress and the League. Cripps returned empty-handed.

### **16.2.4 CABINET MISSION PLAN :**

In view of the failure of Cripps Mission the British Government come out with another plan to resolve the political deadlock. Lord Attlee's Announcment of 15 March 1946 : The British Labour Party on the eve of elections in Great Britain had repeatedly assured the Indians that it would take up the case of India's independence in the right earnest. After coming to office, despite the threat of Japan, it began to take interest in Indian affairs. When the deliberations were being held in India, the Labour Government sent a Parliamentary Delegation consisting of the representatives of all the British political parties for the purpose of collecting first-hand informations about India. On the basis of the Delegation's report, Attlee announced in the House of Commons on 15 March that the tide of nationalism was surging very fast in India and that it was in the British interest to take positive action. He further said that the Cabinet Mission was visiting India with the intention of helping her to attain independence as speedily as possible. The Indians themselves were to decide what form of government would suit them although he hoped that they would decide to remain in the Commonwealth.

- (g) Reconsideration of the terms of the Constitution : The Constitution of the Union and of the group should contain a provision whereby and province could by a majority vote of its Legislature Assembly call for a reconsideration of the terms of the Constitution after an initial period of ten years and at every ten-years interval thereafter.

### **16.2.7 Composition of the Constituent Assembly :**

The Mission also felt the need of suggesting the broad basis of future Constitution because without doing so, there was hardly any hope of persuading the Hindus and Muslims to join hand in the setting up of the constitution-making body.

- (a) The Mission proposed the formation of a Constituent Assembly consisting of 389 members - 93 States Representatives; 4 from the Chief Commissioner's Provinces; and remaining 292 from the British Indian Provinces.
- (b) The seats allotted to the Provinces should be further divided between the main communities in proportion to their numerical strength. Every Province should send as many representatives to the Constituent Assembly as were proportionate to its population in the ratio of one to a million.
- (c) The representatives allocated to each community in a Province should be elected by members of that community in its Legislative Assembly.
- (d) The Mission discarded the practice of giving over-representation to the minorities. It recognised only three categories of electorate-General, Muslim and Sikhs, Hindus, Parsees and Anglo-Indians were placed in the first group.
- (e) The representatives of the States not exceeding 93 should be distributed among the States on the basis of the population of each State. To begin with, the mode of their selection was to be decided by mutual talks between the Negotiating Committee of British Indian Provinces and a committee set up for that purpose by the Indian States.
- (f) After the elections, the Constituent Assembly should meet at new Delhi as one body and elect a chairman. The representatives of the Provincial Legislatures then should break up into three sections, as follows :

Section A - Madras, Bombay, U. P., Bihar, C.P. and Orissa.

Section B - Punjab, N.W.F.P. and Sind

Section C - Bengal and Assam.

The representatives of each group should confer separately and decide the constitutions for the Provinces within their group and also about the Provincial

subjects to be dealt with jointly, leaving the rest to be handled by the legislature of each Province.

- (g) The Provinces should have power to withdraw from one group and join another, by a decision of their legislature after the new Union Constitution had come into force.
- (h) If the Constituent Assembly proposed to make any change in recommendations of the Mission regarding the form of constitution or the raising of any communal issue, it could not do so without obtaining the approval of the majority of the representatives of both the Hindus and the Muslims.

#### **16.2.8 Interim Government :**

The Cabinet Mission Plan stated that until the new constitution was framed, the administration should be run by an Interim Government having the support of all major political parties. All the portfolios including that of War Minister should be held by Indian leaders enjoying the full confidence of the people. The British Government promised to give the fullest co-operation to the Interim Government in the smooth administration of India and also in accomplishing the transfer power at an early date.

#### **16.2.9 Treaty :**

The Cabinet Mission also provided for the negotiation of a treaty between the Constituent Assembly and Great Britain to cover all matters arising out of the transfer of power. The Cabinet Mission declared that after the transition, it would not be possible for the Crown to retain paramountcy over the States. That paramountcy could also not be transferred to the Indian Union. It implied that the States would be free to become Sovereign States after the withdrawal of the British. The Cabinet Mission had expressed the hope that India would not break-off with the Commonwealth although she would be legally free to do so.

#### **16.2.10 Merits of the Cabinet Mission Plan :**

- a. **Preservation of Indian Unity and Rejection of Pakistan :** The first redeeming feature of the Plan was that it ruled out League's demand for Pakistan and recommended an undivided India. The Congress and the League were already at daggers drawn over the issue of Pakistan. The Mission had a tough job for suggesting a plan agreeable to both the parties. The Plan that they offered went a long way to accommodate both the Congress and League. It pleased the Congress because it preserved the basic unity of India. It brushed aside the demand for Pakistan on the consideration that such a State would not be a viable unit. Moreover, Pakistan was no solution to the minority problem. The Plan sought to satisfy the Sikhs by preserving the unity of the Punjab, their homeland.

The Plan tried to please the Muslims also by weakening the Centre and allowing maximum freedom in many subjects to the Provinces. The grouping of the Provinces was a subtle way to allow the Muslims to develop their religion, culture, education, in their own way. Groups B and C of the Provinces virtually meant East and West Pakistan within the Union of India.

- b. **Democratic Basis of Constituent Assembly** : The other point to the credit of the Plan was that it proposed the formation of a Constituent Assembly on democratic principle of population. It discarded the usual practice of weighty representation to the minorities. It did not show any under favour to the States with regard to representation.
- c. **No Official Representatives** : The Plan made no provision for the representation of the British interests and the Europeans in the Constituent Assembly which was to consist of purely the Indian element.
- d. **Communal Representation Restricted** : Another merit of Plan was that it made communal representation quite restricted. Unlike the Acts of 1919 and 1935 wherein there was provision for separate representation of Europeans, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Labour, Harijans and women, the new scheme restricted this privilege only to Muslims in Hindu majority Provinces and Sikhs in the Punjab.
- e. **Recognition of the Rights and Claims of the People of Indian States** : That the Cabinet Mission made an honest attempt to solve Indian problem, is further proved by the fact it did not leave scope for the coming in of reactionary elements in the Constituent Assembly. If it did not admit expressly the right of the people of the States to elect their representatives in the Assembly. It did not clearly state as well that the State representatives would be nominated by the rulers.
- f. **Interim Government** : Another highlight of the Plan was that all the members of the Interim Government were to be Indians. They were to hold all the portfolios including that of Defence Minister. There was to be little interference by the Viceroy in day-to-day administration.
- g. **Sovereignty of Constituent Assembly** : The proposed Constituent Assembly was given full freedom to make a constitution within the framework of the Mission Plan. The Cabinet Mission also declared on behalf of the British Government that the new Constitution would be accepted by the Crown provided due projection was given to minority interests and a Treaty was signed between the framers of the constitution and the Crown to cover all the cases arising out of the transfer of power. Thus for the first time an honest effort was made to let the



Indians frame a Constitution for themselves.

- h. The plan also recognised the right of India to secede from the Commonwealth.

#### 16.2.11 Demerits of the Cabinet Mission Plan

- a. **Weak Centre** : The Cabinet Mission scheme was not without some drawbacks. It was a mixed blessing. The first defect of the Plan was that it proposed a weak federal government. It suggested the transfer of only three subjects - Defence, Communication and External Affairs - to the Union, leaving all other subjects to be administered by the Provinces. A weak Centre meant a weak nation.
- b. **Substance of Pakistan Demand Conceded** : Though apparently the Plan discarded the partition of India, indirectly it granted the League's demand for Pakistan. The provisions regarding compulsory grouping of the Provinces into A, B and C categories and the right given to each group to enjoy perfect autonomy in all matters excepting the three Union subjects, was a clear proof of the Mission's motive to split the country into three parts. The provinces were tagged with the others in each group without taking into account the wishes of the people, N.W.F.P. in spite of being Congress majority Province, had to accept the decisions of the group. It was simply absurd to divide the Constituent Assembly first into three groups and then letting each group frame a constitution for itself before the final constitution for the Union was drafted.
- c. **Illegitimate Rights of the Indian State** : The Cabinet Mission Plan was a sort of snake in the grass. It sinister implications if accepted without any change. The Plan said that after the drafting of the new constitution the British Government could neither keep the Paramountcy over the Indian States to itself nor transfer it to the Union Government. The motives of the Mission were certainly sinister and doubtful. In a way the scheme gave the option to the States to join the Union or remain independent.
- d. **Unscientific Grouping of the Provinces** : The grouping of the Province was highly unscientific. Assam was predominantly a Hindu majority Province but it was grouped with Bengal which had Muslim majority, N.W.F.P. which had a Congress majority was placed in Group B. In short the communal basis of making groups was highly detrimental to national interests.
- e. **Limitations on the Powers of the Constituent Assembly** : The proposed Constituent Assembly was not to be a sovereign body. It could not go, at the time of constitution making, against the lines laid down by the Mission. Moreover,

the Constitution made by it had to satisfy certain conditions. It had to honour the British obligations towards the minorities and States. Above all, the Constituent Assembly was not to draft a constitution for the whole of India. The groups of the Provinces were authorised to make separate constitutions for themselves. The federal scheme suggested by the Mission was also mischievous. Nowhere has a federation been formed by yoking together the autocratic States and democratic provinces, as proposed in Mission's Schemes.

- f. **Some Vague Provisions :** The provisions relating to the Provinces were so vague that they had double meanings. The Congress and the League interpreted them in different ways according as they suited their own interest. The powers of the Interim Government were also not clearly detailed.

**Conclusion :**

Like Cripps proposals, Mission's Plan was also unalterable. It had either to be accepted in original or rejected completely. Its part acceptance was out of question.

### 16.3. Summary

- (i) Cripps Offer was made under shadow of the bad fortune of the British during the War.
- (ii) Provisions were so unsatisfactory that the offer was rejected both by the Congress and the League.
- (iii) Failure of Cripps Offer led to the arrival of the Cabinet Mission.
- (iv) Provisions of the Cabinet Mission Plan were again unsatisfactory.
- (v) Interim Government was experimented with that too failed.

### 16.4. Key Words

Dominion; Crown; Indian States; Constituent Assembly; Constitutional head; Federal; Residuary Power.

### 16.5. Suggested Questions

A. Short questions :

- (i) Discuss the Proposals of Cripps.

(ii) Why was Cabinet Mission sent to India?

(iii) Briefly describe Interim Government.

B. Long questions :

(i) Evaluate the Cripps Proposals.

(ii) Give a critical estimate of the Cabinet Mission Plan.

### 16.6. Suggested Books

1. Cripps Offer - R. Coupland
2. Constitutional History of India - A.C. Bannerjee
3. Imperial Strategy and Transfer of Power - 1939-51 - Partha Sarthy Gupta.
4. Constitutional History of India - D. D. Basu
5. Constitutional Development and National Movement of India - R.C. Agarwal



16.3. Summary

16.4. Key Words

16.5. Suggested Questions

## The Indian Independence Act, 1947 : Factors, Provisions and Evaluation

### Unit Structure

- 17.0 Introduction**
- 17.1 Objectives**
- 17.2 Main theme**
  - 17.2.1 to 17.2.13 Sub-theme**
- 17.3 Summary**
- 17.4 Key Words**
- 17.5 Suggested Questions**
  - (A) Short questions**
  - (B) Long questions**
- 17.6 Suggested Readings**

### 17.0 Introduction

The success of the nationalist forces in the struggle for hegemony over Indian society was fairly evident by the end of the war. The British rulers had won the war against Hitler, but lost the one in India. The space occupied by the national movement was far larger than that over which the Raj cast its shadow.

### 17.1 Objectives

The social base of the colonial regime was among the Zamindars and upper classes etc. the loyalists, who received the main share of British favours and offices. These were the Indians who manned the administration supported government policy and worked. The reforms of British reluctantly and belatedly introduced. The British also secured the consent of the people to their rule by successfully getting them to believe in British justice and fairplay, accept the British Officer as the mai-bap of his people and appreciate the prevalence of Pax

Britannica. The Raj, to a large extent ran on prestige and the embodiment of this prestige was the district officer who belonged to the Indian Civil Service (ICS), the heaven-born service' much vaunted as the steel frame of the Raj.' Thus, when the loyalists began to go abroad, the prestige was rocked, when the district officer and secretariat official left the helm, it became clear that the ship was sinking and sinking fast, it was the result of years of ravage wrought from two quarters the rot within and the battering without.

## 17.2 Main theme

By 1945, war-weariness was actual and long absences from home were telling on the morale of British Officials. Economic worries had set in because of inflation. It was a vastly depleted war-weary Bureaucracy, battered by the 1942 movement that existed in 1945. However, much more than manpower shortage, it was the coming to the fore of contradictions in the British strategy of countering nationalism that debilitated the ICS and the Raj' : The British had relied over the years on twin policy of conciliation and repression to contain the growing national movement. But after the Cripps offer of 1942, there was little left to be offered as a concession except transfer of power itself. But the strategy of the national movement of a multi-faceted struggle combining non-violent mass movement with working constitutional reforms proved to be more than a match for them. When non-violent movements were met with repression, the naked force behind the government stood exposed, whereas if government did not clamp down on 'sedition' or effected a truce, or conceded provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act. 1935, it was seen to be too weak to wield control and its prestige and authority were undermined. The brutal repression of the 1942 movement offended the sensibilities of both liberals and loyalists. The friends of the British were upset when the Government appeared to be placating its enemies - as in 1945-46, when it was believed that the Government was wooing the Congress into a settlement and into joining the government. The powerlessness of those in authority dismayed the loyalists, officials stood by while the violence of Congress speeches rent the air. This shook the faith of the loyalists in the might of the 'Raj' If the loyalists' crisis was one of the faith, the services' dilemma was that of the action. The dilemma first arose in the mid 1930s when the officials were worried by the prospect of popular ministries as the Congressmen, repressed during the civil disobedience movement were likely to become their political masters in the provincial ministries. This prospect soon became a reality in eight provinces, Constitutionalism wrecked services morale as effectively as mass movement before it, though this is seldom realized, if fear of authority was exercised by mass non violent action, confidence was gained because of Congress.

### 17.2.1

But most importantly, the likelihood of Congress returning to power became a consideration with officials when dealing with subsequent congress agitation. Action was

generally harsh in 1942 and this was to create concrete entanglements between repression at the end of the war when Congressmen were released and provincial ministries were again on the cards. By the end of the war the portents were clear to those officials and policy makers who understood the dynamics of power and authority. With the Congress demand being that the British quit India, the Cabinet Mission went out to India in March 1946 to negotiate the setting up of a national government and to set into motion a machinery for transfer of power.

Situation was conducive for a settlement as the Imperialist rulers were cognisant of the necessity of a settlement and the nationalist leaders were willing to negotiate with them. But rivers of blood were to flow before India Independence, tacitly accepted in early 1946, became a reality in mid 1947. The stage was then taken over by the warring conceptions of the post-imperial order held by the British, the Congress and the Muslim League. The Congress demand was for transfer of power to one centre, with minorities' demands being worked out in a framework ranging from autonomy to Muslim provinces to self-determination on secession from the Indian Union but after the British left. The British bid was for a United India, friendly with Britain and an active partner in commonwealth defence. As the Government's policy of fostering the League ever since its inception in 1906 and the alignment between Pakistan and the Western imperialistic bloc might suggest. British policy in 1946 clearly reflected this preference for United India, in sharp contrast to earlier declarations. The Cabinet Mission was convinced that Pakistan was not viable and that the minority's autonomy must somehow be safeguarded within the framework of a United India.

### 17.2.2

The Congress and League interpreted the Mission Plan in their own way, both seeing it as a confirmation of their stand. Patel maintained that the Mission's Plan was against Pakistan, that the League's veto was gone and that one Constituent Assembly was envisaged. The dilemma before the Government was whether to go ahead and form Interim Government with Congress or await League agreement to the Plan. Wavell, who had opted for the second course at the Simla Conference a year earlier, preferred to do the same. The Secretary of State argued that it was vital to get Congress co-operation. Formation of the Interim Government on 2nd September 1946 was a defiance of the League's insistence that all settlement be acceptable to it, the British in 1946, in keeping with their strategic interests in the post-independence Indian sub-continent, took up a stance very different from their earlier posture of encouraging communal forces and denying the legitimacy of nationalism and the representative nature of the Congress.

### 17.2.3

Jinnah had no intention of allowing the British to break with their past. He thinly veiled threat to Attlee that he should avoid compelling the Muslim to shed their blood, by a surrender to the Congress, had already been seen out and the pistol of Direct Action forged ahead,

Jinnah had become answerable to the wider electorate of the streets. Wavell quietly brought the League into the interim Government on 26 October, 1946 though it had not accepted either the short term or long term provisions of the Cabinet Mission Plan and had not given up its policy of Direct Action. The Secretary of State argued that without the League's presence in the Government Civil War would have been inevitable. Jinnah had succeeded in keeping the British in his gap.

#### 17.2.4

Jinnah felt that it was fatal to leave the administration in Congress hands and had sought a foothold in the Government to fight for Pakistan. For him, the Interim Government was the continuation of Civil war by other means. Their disruptionist tactics convinced Congress leaders of the futility of the Interim Government as an exercise on Congress-League co-operation. But they held on till 6 February 1947 when nine members of the Interim Government wrote to the demanding that the League Members resign. The League' demand for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly that had met for the first time on 9th December, 1946 had proved to be the last straw. A direct bid for Pakistan, rather through the Mission Plan seemed to be the card Jinnah now sought to play.

#### 17.2.5

The developing crisis was temporarily defused by the statement made by Attlee in Parliament on 20 February 1947. The date for British withdrawal from India was fixed as 30 June and the appointment of a new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, was announced. The hope was that the date would shock the parties into agreement on the main question and avert the constitutional crisis that threatened. The anticipation of freedom from imperial rule lifted the gloom that had set in with continuous internal wrangling. The statement was enthusiastically received in Congress circles as a final proof of British sincerity to quit. Partition of the country was implied in the provision that if the Constituent Assembly was not fully representative (i.e. if Muslim majority provinces did join) power would be transferred to more than one Central Government. But even this was acceptable to the Congress as it meant that the existing Assembly could go ahead and frame a Constitution for the areas represented in it. It offered a way out of the existing deadlock, in which the League not only refused to join the Constituent Assembly but demanded that it be dissolved.

#### 17.2.6

Congress hope was illusory and Jinnah was more convinced than ever that he only had to bide his time in order to reach his goal, Punjab Governor Jenkins' prophecy took immediate shape with the League launching civil disobedience in Punjab and bringing down

the Unionist-Akali Congress Coalition ministry led by Khizr Kayat Khan. This was the situation in which Mountbatten came to India as Viceroy. He was given the task of winding up the 'Raj' by 30 June, 1948. Thus Mountbatten had a clear cut directive from the British Government. He was directed to explore the options of unity and division till October 1947 after which he was to advise the British Government on how the transfer of power should take place. He felt that the Cabinet Mission Plan would not push the Cabinet Mission Plan forward, it was a dead horse, Jinnah was obdurate that the Muslim would settle for nothing less than a sovereign state. He was unable to move Jinnah from his stand.

#### **17.2.7**

The British could keep India united only if they gave up their role as mediators, trying to effect a solution India had agreed upon. Unity needed positive intervention in its favour, including putting down communal elements with a firm hand. This they avoided rather than doing that, they preferred to woo both sides into friendly collaboration with Britain on strategic and defence issues. The British preference for a united Indian sub-continent that would be a strongly in commonwealth.

#### **17.2.8**

Mountbatten's formula was to divide India but retain maximum unity. The country would be partitioned but so would Punjab and Bengal, so that the limited Pakistan that emerged would meet both the Congress and League's position to some extent. The League's position on Pakistan was conceded to the extent that it would be created, but the Congress position on unity would be taken into account to make Pakistan as small as possible. Since Congress were asked to concede their main point i.e. a united India, all their other points would be met. The Mountbatten Plan, of the 3rd June, 1947, sought to effect an early transfer of power on the basis of Dominion status to two successor States-India and Pakistan. Congress was willing to accept Dominion status for a while because it felt it must assume full power immediately and meet boldly the explosive situation in the country.

#### **17.2.9**

The rationale for the early date for transfer of power 15th August, 1947, was securing Congress agreement to Dominion Status. The additional benefit was that the British could escape responsibility for the rapidly deteriorating communal situation. If abdication of responsibility was callous, the speed with which it was done made it worse. The seventy-two day time-table-3 June to 15 August, 1947, for both transfer of power and division of the country was to prove disastrous, As it happened the Partition Council had to divide assets, down to type-writing and printing presses, in a few weeks. Mountbatten had hoped to be



common Governor-General of India and Pakistan and provide the necessary link but which was not to be as Jinnah wanted the Position himself. Hence, even the Joint defence machinery set up failed to last beyond December 1947 by which time Kashmir had already been attacked by Pakistani raiders. The Punjab massacres that accompanied partition were the final indictment of Mountbatten. The Boundary Commission Award was ready by 12 August, 1947 but Mountbatten decided to make it public after Independence Day, so that the responsibility would not fall on the British. Independence Day in Punjab the Bengal saw strange scenes. Flags of both India and Pakistan were flown in villages between Lahore and Amritsar as people of both communities believed that they were on the border. The morrow after Freedom was to find them aliens in their own homes.

#### **17.2.10**

Why and how did the Congress come to accept partition? That the League should assertively demand it and get its Shylockian pound of flesh, or that the British should concede it, being unable to get out of the web of their own making, seems explicable, But why the Congress wedded to a belief in one Indian nation accepted the division of the country, remains a question difficult to answer. Most surprising of all, why did Gandhi acquiesce? Gandhiji's consels are believed to have been ignored, But he heroically fought communal frenzy single handedly as a one-man boundary force' as Mountbatten called him.

#### **17.2.11**

The Congress leaders felt by June 1947 that only an immediate transfer of power could forestall the spread of Direct Action and communal disturbances. Nehru was dismayed at the turning of the Interim Government into an arena of struggle. Nehru wondered whether there was any point in continuing in the interim Government while people were being butchered. Immediate transfer of power would at least mean the setting up of a government which could exercise the control it was now expected to wield.

#### **17.2.12**

There was an additional consideration in accepting immediate transfer of power to two dominions. The prospect of balkanisation was ruled out as the provinces and Princes were not given the option to be independent the latter were, in fact, much to their chargin, cajoled and coerced into joining one or the other dominion. This was by no means achievement. Princely states standing out would have means a graver blow to Indian unity than Pakistan was.

#### **17.2.13**

The acceptance of partition in 1947 was, thus, only the final act of a process of step by step concession to the League' intransigent championing of a sovereign Muslim State.

Autonomy of Muslim Majority provinces was accepted in 1942 at the time of Cripps Mission, Gandhiji went a step further and accepted the right of self determination of Muslim majority provinces in his talk with Jinnah in 1944. In June, 1946, Congress conceded the possibility of Muslim majority provinces. On 4 June 1947 the Congress acted Partition and Gandhi's dream of an undivided India was shattered along with Dr. Rajendra Prasad's vigorous arguments against the division of the country. On the debris bloomed the twin Dominions of India and Pakistan by virtue of the Indian Independence Act.

## INDIAN INDEPENDENCE ACT. 1947

The provisions of the Act were as given below :

1. Clause 1 of the Act provided for the creation of two independent Dominions, India and Pakistan, from 15th August, 1947.

"The word independent emphasized", as Earl Listowel, Secretary of State for India, said in the House of Lords on the second reading of the Bill, "the absence of any external restraint. Independence in this sense is a universal attribute of Dominion Status, a fact that is often misunderstood by the outside world, it is also in accordance with the famous definition of the British Empire in the Report of the Imperial conference of 1926."

2. Clause 2 of the Independence Act defined the territories of the two Dominions adjustable after the Award of the Boundary Commission (for that purpose two Boundary Commissions, one for the Punjab and another for Bengal had been set up both under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Radcliff, In each Boundary Commission two representatives of Hindus and two representatives of Muslims had been taken). Clauses 3 and 4 provided for the partition of Bengal and the Punjab and secession of Sylhet from Assam after the wishes of the people have been known and also for the fixation of the final boundaries of India and Pakistan after the award of the Boundary Commission. When the Dominion of Pakistan was born on August 14, 1947 after the Partition of India it consisted of two wings, Eastern and Western Pakistan. The eastern Pakistan consisted of East Bengal and Sylhet. Sylhet was the Muslim majority district of Assam which had opted for East Pakistan in a referendum. The Western Wing of Pakistan consisted for West Punjab, Sind, North West Frontier Province, Bhawalpur, Khairpur, Baluchistan and eight other relatively minor States in Baluchistan.

3. Both the Dominions were to have Governor-Generals appointed by British King for the purpose. The Act also provided for one common Governor-General if both the Dominions so agreed.
4. The Constituent Assemblies of both the Dominions got the power to draft a new constitution according to their wishes in addition to the right to withdraw from the British Commonwealth.
5. For the time being till the new constitutions were framed each of the Dominion and all the Provinces were to be governed in accordance with the Act of 1935. Each Dominion was, however, authorised to modify the Act of 1935 as it pleased. In the case of each of the Dominions, the powers of the Legislature of the Dominions would be exercisable in the first instance by the Constituent Assembly of that Dominion. If any other provision is not made by the Constituent Assembly, then both the Dominions will be governed according to the Act of 1935 with such modifications, omissions or additions as may be done by the Governor-General-in-Council. The provisions regarding the Discretionary and Individual Judgement's powers will not remain effective after independence.
6. The British Government no longer possessed any control over the Dominions, Provinces or any part of the Dominions after 15th August, 1947.
7. The legislature of each Dominion was empowered to frame the laws for the governance of that Dominion. No law made by that Dominion will be treated as null and void on this ground that it conflicted with any law of England or the Provisions of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 or any rules regulation made thereunder.
8. The King of Great Britain ceased to be Emperor of India. The British King will no longer possess the power of disallowing any law made by the Dominion Legislature. The Governor-Generals became the constitutional heads. They were empowered to give assent to any ordinary Bill on behalf of the Crown.
9. No Provincial Bill to be reserved for the assent of His Majesty in future. The Governor-General was, however, invested with adequate powers until March, 1948 to issue order for the effective implementation of the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 and the division of the assets between the two Dominions and to make suitable changes in the Government of India Act, 1935 to remove any difficulty that might arise in the transitional period.
10. The Office of Secretary of State for India and his advisers was abolished and affairs relating to the Dominions of India and Pakistan were to be conducted in future by Secretary of the Commonwealth Relations Department.

11. Those persons who had been appointed by the Secretary of State or Secretary of State-in-Council to a civil service under the Crown in India before August 15, 1947 would continue in that service after Independence and enjoy the same privileges and rights in respect of leave, remuneration and pension, disciplinary matters and tenure of office which had been enjoyed by them before Independence.
12. After the establishment of two independent Dominions, The British Government would have absolutely no responsibility in regard to any territory which was included in British India. The paramountcy of His Majesty's Government over the India States lapsed and with it all treaties and agreements between the British Government and Indian Rulers which were in force at the time of the passing of the Indian Independence Act also lapsed. All obligations, jurisdiction and functions of His Majesty arising out of the various treaties, grants, usage, sufferance, or otherwise were also to lapse and the Indian States would become independent in their political relations with the Governments of the new Dominions. In other words, the British Government would have absolutely no relation of any kind with the Indian States and they will be free either to join Indian or Pakistan or remain independent.
13. The British Government would exercise no authority in future over the tribal areas and any treaty or agreement in force at the time of the passing of the Indian Independence Act between His Majesty and any tribal authority would also lapse.
14. Pakistan was henceforth to negotiate with tribes of North Western Frontier Province.

### 17.3. Summary

- (i) Hardships of the British Government during the World War.
- (ii) On the failure of Cripps Mission, Cabinet Mission was sent to India for evolving constitutional formula to solve the deadlock.
- (iii) Establishment of Interim Government and its failure due to sabotaging policy of Muslim League.
- (iv) Mountbatten Plan and decision to divide India.
- (v) The Indian Independence Act and its provisions.

## 17.4. Key Words

August Offer; Dominion States; Constituent Assembly; Boundary Commission; Partition.

## 17.5. Suggested Questions

### A. Short Questions :

- (i) What do you mean by August Offer? Why did it fail?
- (ii) Why did the Cabinet Mission come to India?
- (iii) Discuss the merits and demerits of the Cabinet Mission Plan.

### B. Long Questions :

- (i) Trace the circumstances leading to the passing of the Indian Independence Act.
- (ii) Give a critical estimate of the Indian Independence Act.
- (iii) Discuss the provisions of the India Independence Act.

## 17.6. Suggested Books

1. India Divided by Rajendra Prasad.
2. Imperial Strategy and Transfer of Power - Parth Sarthy Gupta.
3. Constitutional History of India - D. D. Basu.
4. Struggle for Freedom - R.C. Majumdar.



## Role of Mahtama Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in Freedom Movement

### Unit Structure

- 18.0 Introduction**
- 18.1 Objectives**
- 18.2 Main theme**
  - 18.2.1 to 18.2.22 Sub-theme**
- 18.3 Summary**
- 18.4 Key Words**
- 18.5 Suggested Questions**
  - (A) Short questions**
  - (B) Long questions**
- 18.6 Suggested Books**

### 18.0 Introduction

It is true that Mahtma Gandhi alone was not responsible for the Independence of India. It has to be conceded that a lot of work had already been done in that direction by the Indian leaders who preceded him. Undoubtedly, the Moderates played their part in laying the foundations of the nationalist movement in the country. It was under their leadership that the leaders of public opinion in India met every year at one place and deliberated upon the problems facing the country. They passed resolutions in which they asked the Government to remove certain grievances of the people. They also demanded the introduction of representative institutions in the country. They worked through the Councils in which they exposed the evils of the foreign Government in the country. They criticised the various measures passed by the Government. They brought to the notice of the public of India and the British Government the suffering of the people of India as a result of the continuous economic drain the country. They did what was possible to be done by following the constitutional methods.

### 18.0.1

The nationalist movement was taken a step further by the Extremist leaders like Tilak, B. C. Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghose. They employed both constitutional and unconstitutional methods criticize the working of the British administration in India and called upon the people to demand from the Government that they must be given a share in the administration of the country. Tilak declared in his speeches, "Swaraj is my birth-right and I will have it". He even advocated violence against the Government to achieve independence for the country. He asked the people to take action against those Englishmen who were oppressing the people in India. He wrote articles and gave speeches in which he asked the people to demand their rights and fight for them and make sacrifices for the achievement of those rights. Lala Lajpat Rai asked the people to depend upon their own efforts and not to beg for favours from the Government. He was beaten while leading a demonstration against the Simon Commission and actually died as a result of the injuries received by him on that occasion. The new ideas of militant nationalism advocated by Aurobindo Ghose played their part in the national awakening.

### 18.0.2

The same can be said about the part played by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad and many other who spend their whole lives fighting against the British Government. They were imprisoned on many occasions. They suffered at the hands of British bureaucracy, but they continued the struggle.

### 18.0.3

The Revolutionaries also played their part in India's struggle for freedom. They not only suffered for the cause of India but also sacrificed their lives while doing so. They were hanged. They were sent to the Andamans where inhuman conditions prevailed and were subjected to all kinds of atrocities unknown to the world. They were beaten. They were tortured. They suffered in the cause of India's freedom without any complaint. Many of them preferred to die unknown and unsung.

## 18.1. Objectives

But the part played by Mahatma Gandhi in India's struggle for independence was unique. He is rightly called the "Father of the Indian Nation". He was really the Generalissimo of the Congress. Before Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the political horizon of India, the nationalist movement in the country was confined to cities and towns and the intellectuals of the country who had no touch with the masses of India. Mahatma Gandhi brought about a revolution in the nature of the nationalist movement in the country. Whatever he did, his one object was to involve the masses of India in the national movement. He worked among the

peasants and he appealed to them for support. He appealed to the workers and got their support.

## 18.2. Main theme

It was Mahatma Gandhi who was responsible for starting the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1920. It was under his leadership that massive preparations were made all over the country. The movement was not confined to the cities or the middle classes or the upper middle classes of India. It is the masses who participated in it. Mahatma Gandhi alone had the courage to suspend the movement when it was at its height. No other leader would have survived such an action. Mahatma Gandhi was the leader of the Civil Disobedience Movement from 1930 to 1934. It was he who started the movement in 1930 by his march to Dandi to violate the salt laws. He was the unquestioned and unrivalled leader of the movement. It was he who negotiated the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931 on behalf of the Congress. It was he who alone went to the Second Round Table Conference as the only representative of the Congress. He alone could deliver the goods on behalf of the Congress. It was Mahatma Gandhi who first suspended the Civil Disobedience movement in 1933 and then withdrew it in 1934. Nobody can deny the part played by Mahatma Gandhi in the Quit India movement. During the deliberations of the Congress at Bombay on 7 and 8 August 1942, everybody looked up to him for guidance and leadership. His was the last word. It was he who asked the people to either get freedom for their country or die fighting for the national cause. He remained the leader of the Congress till India won independence.

### 18.2.1. Sub-theme

It is true that there were many other nationalist leaders of India who had spoken at length about the poverty of the masses of India and Britain's exploitation of India, but hardly anything had been done by them for improving the lot of the poor masses. It was Gandhiji who made it clear that the Congress represented the dumb, semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of India and initiated practical steps to improve their social and economic condition. He put emphasis on the abolition of untouchability which he called a great curse. He set up the Village Industries Association, the Cow Protection Association and the Basic Education Society. He advocated the use of Khadi by all Indians as that alone could improve the lot of the poor masses living in the villages.

### 18.2.2

As a fighter for India's freedom, Mahatma Gandhi had no peer. He was not only a saint but also a politician. He employed moral means for the attainment of political ends. He used non-force against brute force. He advocated legal and extra-legal methods but not immoral or dishonest methods. He was the unique national figure. He was a social reformer, a religious reformer, a proper and a nationalist fighting for India's freedom. The effect of the nationalist movement led by him was that even the British politicians began to realise that India could not be kept in bondage for long.



### 18.2.3

Mahtma Gandhi was a nationalist par excelliene. His greatest contribution to the Indian nationalist movement lay in the fact that he created a mass basis for the movement. He was the pioneer of the first mass national liberation struggle of the Indian people after 1857. He exploded the illusion lovingly cherished by the Moderates that freedom could be obtained only with the asistance and co-operation of foreign "democracy". He was the first realised the importance of the role of the masses and the extra-constitutional mass action in the national liberation struggle in sharp contract to his predecessors like Tilak and other militant nationalist leaders who did not properly appreciate their decisive importanace for making the national struggle for independence effective. As a matter of fact, the requisite political imagination to evolve a suitable programme for drawing the mass of people into the orbit of that movement such as Mahatma Gandhi accomplished, was conspicuous by its absence.

### 18.2.4

Under the leadership of Mahatm Gandhi, the people of India became brave fighters for national freedom, counters of jails and receivers of jail-storms of bullets of teh imperialist enemy. Mahatma Gandhi injected the people with deep hatred for the "Satanic" British Government and with an unquenchable thirst for national freedom. He was the highest expression of nationalism. Subjectively, he incarnated the very spirit of nationalism its profound hatred of foreign enslavement and heroic will and determination to end that enslavement.

### 18.2.5

According to Romain Rolland, "Mahatma Gandhi has raised up 300 millions of his fellowmen, shaken the British Empire and inaugurated in human politics the most powerful movement that the whole world has seen for nearly 2000 years". Louis Fischer wrote : "The symbol of India's unanimous wish for freedom is Mahtma Gandhi. He does not represent all of India but be does reflect the will of all for national liberation . . . Gandhi is great because every single act that he performs is calculated to promote the one goal of his life - the liberation of India. He is not the man, he has no intention and never had to rule India or administer India. His function ends when he frees India", Again, "Gandhi is the father of India's defiance and its symbol. Gandhi walks to sea to make salt in defiance of the British. It becomes a popular piligrimage. The idealism of the youth spills into it. So does the leaderless nation's yearning for a leader. Gandhi had given his follower the elation of standing up to a foreigner who is the master in his house".

### 18.2.6

Percival Spear writes, "For nearly thirty years Congress was dominated by Gandhi was influenced more by him than by any other single man. It is not too much to say that the destiny of India was modified and the world itself influenced by this single personality". The same writer says that Gandhi made the Congress a truly national instrument, a political

microcosm of the national life. As a result of his tactics and attitudes at various time, it became identified with most of the progressive movements in the country. By means of its anti-Government campaigns and under the leadership of people like Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, it became closely identified with the movement for women's liberation. Gandhi's crusade for the Harijans was the Congress sense unofficial but the Mahatma's prestige effectively linked it with Congress in the public mind. Gandhi introduced moral values into politics. The early Congressmen were high-minded and earnest men but their creeds were unknown to the masses and if they could have been communicated, would have been unintelligible. In this sphere, Gandhi proved the necessary happen. He translated his moral ideals into popular terms and so made the whole political movement seem more of a pilgrimage than a war. He attracted high-minded followers to himself and thereby raised the whole tone of public life. The influence of Gandhi is one of the factors which distinguishes Indian public life from that of the other Asian countries and has given India a unique position in the present international community. Gandhi could secure acquiescence from men like Nehru even when he could not convince them. Gandhi died for his faith and in dying he created a nation. It was the influence of Gandhi which primarily kept India peaceful during those years of unavoidable tension. Under other leaders, India might have slipped into a large-scale terrorist movement or exploded in a violent outbreak which could have led to widespread repression, delayed independence and left a legacy of bitterness. The whole relationship of India with the West would have been placed in jeopardy, Gandhi evolved a method of non-violent revolution which in fact largely succeeded in maintaining the goodwill between the combatants. Gandhi's influence in restraining his more ardent followers and keeping the party clear of the real terrorists was as important as the skill and ingenuity with which he perplexed the British.

### 18.2.7

The view of Penderal Moon is that Gandhi basically changed the character of the Congress in the years 1920-21. From a small, upper middle class Westernised institution, he converted the Congress into extensive political organisation of an essentially Indian character with a strong movement in so far as under his leadership, it attracted the support or at least the sympathy of a majority of literate Hindus throughout the country and in urban areas of many of the illiterates also. Centuries of autocratic rule, mostly, the rule of foreigners had demoralised much of the population of India and fostered timidity and submissiveness. One of the virtues that Gandhi preached and practised in his own life was fearlessness. "By his exhortations, by his own example and by organising disciplined movements of defiance of the Government. He did more than any one man to instill in the Hindus self-confidence, self-respect and a readiness to stand up for themselves. For this as much as for the actual attainment of independence, he deserves the title of Father of the Nation".

### 18.2.8

About Mahatma Gandhi, Rajni P. Dutt wrote in 1927, "The achievement of Gandhi consisted in that he almost above all the leaders sensed and reached out of the masses. This

was the first great achievement of Gandhi. And this positive achievement of Gandhi is bigger than all the idiosyncrasies and weaknesses which are brought against him constitutes his real contribution to India Nationalism". His second achievement was the policy of action, of action of the masses, non-co-operation to win Swaraj and at the height of his agitation, mass Civil Disobedience movement.

#### **18.2.9**

About the work of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote that he had changed the face of India, given pride and character to a cringing and demoralised people, built up strength and consciousness in masses and made the Indian problem a world problem". Commenting upon the impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Indian politics, he further observed, "And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths, like a beam of light that, pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like a whirlwind that upset many things but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all you who lived by their exploitation, get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery," Again "Gandhiji's influence is not limited to those who agree with him or accept him as a National Leader, it extends to those also who disagree with him and criticise him. To the vast majority of India's people he is the symbol of India determined to be free, of militant nationalism, of a refusal to submit to arrogant might, of never agreeing to anything involving national dishonour".

#### **18.2.10**

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, India's first President of Independent India wrote, "Mahatma's contribution to India politics has been immense. The Indian National Congress had been in existence for thirty years when he returned to India from South Africa in 1915. The Congress had aroused national consciousness to a certain extent, but the awakening was confined largely to the English educated middle classes and had not penetrated the masses. He carried it to the masses and made it a mass movement. Mahatma Gandhi's movement operated both horizontally and vertically. He took up causes which were not entirely political but which touched very intimately the life of large masses of people".

#### **18.2.11**

The view of Dr. S. R. Mehrotra is that Mahatma Gandhi made the Indian National Movement more truly Indian and national than it had been so far. He provided it with a firmer and larger indigenous base. He emphasized the fact that national freedom meant something wider and deeper than emancipation from a foreign yoke. It was a matter of preserving national culture and building up a national character, developing internal strength and renewing all departments of life. His contention was that India would gain little if she only shook off the alien Government and did not get back her soul. Every nation represents an ideal, principle,

a spirit and India must discover herself. Mahatma Gandhi converted the Indian national movement into a genuine mass movement. He carried politics from the drawing rooms and Council Chambers to the streets and fields. He was a great mobilizer. By his personal charisma, by his capacity for mediating between various groups and forces, by his skilful use of popular symbols and his interpretation of tradition for modern purpose, he drew into the national movement the peasants, workers, untouchables and women who had hitherto remained virtually untouched by it. Gandhi was a great organizer and builder. He transformed the character of the Congress by giving it a new direction, a new constitution, a new organisational structure, a new technique of agitation, a new leadership and a new programme of action. He broke the hypnotic spell of the British Raj in India. He removed the fear of the people and taught them to say "No" to their oppressors. He uplifted the spirit and exalted the dignity of a vast people by teaching them to straighten their backs, to raise their eyes and to face circumstances with steady gaze.

#### 18.2.12

Rajni Kothari writes about Gandhi, "He realised clearly what few before him did, that the urbanised middle class alone did not provide a sufficient basis for national awakening. The task was to penetrate the masses, to arouse them from their state of apathy and isolation, to provide them with self-confidence and a positive elan in place of both the defensive postures of Moderates and the inferiority complex of the anti-Western radicals, and to confront the authorities with proof that they were dealing not with a small group of agitators, but tens of thousands of people organised and disciplined into a great movement, drawn from all over the country".

#### 18.2.13

The contention of Sir Penderel Moon is that Gandhi was a Hindu and he imparted to the Congress its own Hindu bias. This Hinduising of the national movement was injurious and ultimately fatal to Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhi was blind to the adverse effects on Muslim opinion of his Hinduism. In his writings and speeches, Gandhi constantly employed language, imagery and symbolism derived from Hindu sources. The result was that the Muslims were alienated. However, the fact is that Mahatma Gandhi cannot be held responsible for the alienation of Muslims. The responsibility for that was that of the Government of India which from the very inception of the Indian National Congress left no stone unturned to wean away the Muslims from the Congress. This is clear from all the favours shown to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan by Government of India and the British Government. The Government of India had a hand in the creation of the Muslim League with a view to fight against the Congress leaders who were agitating for India's freedom. At every stage, the Government helped the Muslim League against the Congress. No student of recent Indian history can deny the support given by the Government of India and the British Government to the demand put forward by M.A. Jinnah for Pakistan. Mahatma Gandhi and the other Congress leaders did everything in their power to win over the Muslims by offering them all kinds of concessions but they failed

because the British Government was always ready to give them more. it is not correct to say that Mahatma Gandhi was in any way communalist. This is clear from the fact he tried his best to check the communal riots in the country in 1947. When India became free on 15 August 1947, Mahatma Gandhi was not in new Delhi but in Bengal with the Muslims. It has rightly been said that more than any other single individual. Mahatma Gandhi placed before the people a picture of secular India and communal harmony. India chose to remain a secular republic in spite of what was happening in Pakistan. Mahatma Gandhi was o friend of the Hindu communalists. His outlook was thoroughly nationalist.

#### **18.2.14**

We may conclude by qoting the following tribute paid by the Indian Parliament through a resolution passed by it on 25 December 1969 : "That this House, on the occasion of centenary year of Mahatma Gandhi, pays its respectful tribute to the memory of the Father of the nation, who led the country to Swarajya by non-violent means, who infused a new " spirit into the masses, who uplifted the teeming millions of the oppressed and the down-trodden, who awadened the national conscience of the people, and who inspired the people with a spirit of dedication and service, places on record its deep gratitude to that Apostle of Ahimsa who crusaded for peace, justice and equality and gave the strife-ridden world the message of universal brotherhood and humanism; and rededicates itself to promote the high ideals of Truth, non-violence and service to the nation and to humanity, for which the Mahatma lived and sacrificed his life".

### **ROLE OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU**

#### **18.2.15**

Long before his death, Mahatma Gandhi had predicted that Jawaharlal Nehru would be his political heir. About Nehru he once said, "He is pure as a crystal and truthful beyond suspicion. The nation is safe in his hands and I know his. When I am gone, he will speak my language." The prophecy of Mahatma Gandhi came true. For seventeen long years, after independence, Nehru remained at the healm of affairs in India as Prime Minister and ensured for her a strong democratic government whose stability and s teady progress is unique amongst all the remaining emerging nations of Asia and Africa.

#### **18.2.16**

In personal popularity among the masses of India the like of Nehru was seldom seen except Gandhiji and for many years to come, might not emerge. If Nehru is apt to be remembered, mostly as the builder of modern India, his contribution to freedom movement was also tremendous. Being the son of a very rich father. He was used to a life of luxury, which e sacrificed for the sake of his motherland. He was imprisoned 9 times and he spent 3262 days in jail. During the days of the national movement, his influence was, invariably, that of an extremist thinking far ahead of his times. He personified youth, courage and revolt. He came to the forefront of the freedom movement in 1928 when he openly criticised the Nehru

Report in the drafting of which his illustrious father Pandit Motilal Nehru had played the leading part. In September, 1928 when the Congress Working Committee endorsed the Nehru Report, Jawahar Lal Nehru resigned his Secretaryship of the Congress, because the goal had been diluted to Dominion Status.

#### **18.2.17**

At the Calcutta, Congress of December, 1928, where the question of ratification of the Nehru report was to be taken up, quite a wrangle was expected between the two wings of the Congress over the issue of Dominion Status Vs. Independence. Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose were the leaders of the young people, which stood for independence. At this stage, Gandhi intervened and avoided a rift in the Congress by getting passed a resolution in which an ultimatum was given to the government to the effect that if the Nehru Report was not accepted in its entirety on or before 31 December, 1929, the Congress would organise Non-violent Non-co-Operation by advising the country to refuse to pay taxes and in such other manner as may be decided upon. An amendment against this Resolution in favour of "Complete Independence" was moved by Subhash Chandra Bose and seconded by Jawahar Lal Nehru, but was lost by 350 against 773 votes. Even when Lord Irwin made a declaration on 31 October, 1929, evidently in reply to the ultimatum regarding the acceptance of the Nehru Report by December 31, 1928 and a manifesto was issued under the signatures of Mahatma Gandhi and other important public leaders of the time appreciating the sincerity underlying the declaration and assuring full Co-Operation to the government. But there were some men in the Congress, who were disappointed with the attitude adopted in the manifesto. Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose resigned from the Congress working committee, as a protest against the adoption of the manifesto. They firmly stood for Purna Swaraj or complete Independence.

#### **18.2.18**

And finally, when the talks between the Viceroy and Gandhiji failed on December 23, 1929 as the government was not willing to concede even Dominion Status demanded in the Nehru Report the stage was set for a revolutionary change in the attitude of the Congress. The Lahore Session of Congress in December, 1929 was held in a tense atmosphere and it was in the fitness of things that Jawahar Lal Nehru a dozen of Indian youth, should have been elected as the President of the Lahore Session of the Congress.

#### **18.2.19**

Consequently the famous Independence Resolution was adopted on December 31, 1929 authorising the Congress Working Committee to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes whether in selected areas or otherwise and under such safeguards, as it may consider necessary. Prior to his election as Congress President, in November 1929, Jawahar Lal Nehru presided over the meeting of the All-Indian Union Congress and passed a resolution for gaining independence and establishing in India a

Socialist Republic. As soon as the civil disobedience movement spread, Jawahar Lal Nehru was arrested on April 16, 1930. The Civil Disobedience movement was called off on March 5, 1931, after the signing of Gandhi-Irwin pact. Prior to that, the ban on the Congress was lifted and its members including Gandhiji and Nehru were released unconditionally on 26 January, 1931. Jawaharlal Nehru was very much opposed to the Gandhi-Irwin pact which meant clearly that control over Indian affairs would not be full. Before Gandhiji returned empty handed on December 28, 1931 after attending the Second Round Table Conference at London. Jawahar Lal Nehru had been placed under detention in connection with the agrarian trouble over the Jamindari lands. When Gandhiji finally suspended he civil desobedience movement in April 1934, the Youthful elements in the Congress under the leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawahar Lal Nehru expressed their resentment at the decision of Mahatma Gandhi.

### **18.2.20**

When the Congress working committee passed the famous Quit India Resolution on August 8, 1942 at Bombay, Mahtama Gandhi and all members of the Congress Working Committee including Nehru were arrested. Nehru was kept in Ahmednagar Fort. Nehru along with others like Sardar Patel were released on the eve of the Simla Conference in 1945. It infused new life in the people. The three years of the movement had made the people very despondent. Doubts and fears ha be set their minds. The government had used its propaganda machinery to discredit Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress. Jawahar Lal Nehru and Vallabh Bhai Patel issued public statements which dispelled fears and doubts of the people about the Quit India Movement once for all. In brave words, they justified the movement including the acts of violene committed by the people and owned full responsibility, for all that the people had done. In this hour of crisis and agony, these words had magical effect. Jawahar Lal Nehru had played the most significant role in this difficult task. The Congress became popular once again and thumping majority was assured for it in the ensuing elections. Under the Cabinet Mission Plan, a proposal for forming the National Government was communicated to the Congress and the Muslim League by Lord Wavell. The Congres accepted the proposal and Jawahar Lal Nehru was invited to form the Interim Government on August 24, 1946. Although the Muslim League not only rejected the plan but even proposed the policy of direct action for achieving Pakistan, the National Government was able to establish some healthy conventions under the leadership of Jawahar Lal Nehru. it declared itself collectively reponsible to the Central legislature and worked as a team. From that day onwards, till the passing of the Independence Act of 1947 Jawahar Lal Nehru not only remined in he forefront of the fredom movement, but also guided the destiny of the nation in the company of Gandhi.

### **18.2.21**

When the British Government decided to quit on February 20, 1947, the Congress accepted the partition of India. On June 3, 1947, Jawahar Lal Nehru, While recommending the proposal for partitoin to the people said, "For generation we have dreamt and struggle for a Free, Independent, and United India, the proposal to allow certain parts to secede is painful

for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless, I am convinced that our present decision is the right one". This shows that the Congress accepted Pakistan as a necessary evil and Nehru certainly showed his statesmanship and maturity in handling the situation. After the Direct Action started by the Muslim League on 16 August, 1946, the government could not stop the agony of violence and destruction of property. It seemed that the administration had broken down and there was no authority left in the country to enforce order. Some British officers even encouraged these riots to prove that the Indians were not fit for freedom and would cut each other's throats when the Britishers left. It was in this hour of chaos and anarchy that Nehru took a decisive stand and accepted the proposal for Pakistan. Nehru considered partition better than the murder of innocent citizens.

### 18.2.22

Whereas the British government looked to men like Mahatma Gandhi for moderation and compromise during the days of freedom movement, Nehru came in the category of persons like Subhash Chandra Bose whom the government feared and who provided the needed sanction of mass revolt to the national demand. First attracted by the Home Rule Movement of Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant, Nehru plunged into the national agitation over the Rowlatt Act, stated by Gandhi. He had a first-hand knowledge of peasants in Uttar Pradesh and also of the Sikh agitation of 1923 against the Nabha rulers. Jawahar Lal Nehru played a very important role in popularising the vision of a socialist India both within the national movement and in the country at large. Nehru argued that political freedom must mean the economic emancipation of the masses. Throughout 1930, he pointed to the inadequacy of the existing nationalist ideology and the hegemony of bourgeois ideology over the national movement and stressed the need to inculcate a new socialist concept-based on Marxist ideology, which would enable the people to study their social condition scientifically and to give the Congress a new socialist ideological orientation. This radicalism found reflection in the Congress Resolutions at Karachi, Lucknow and Faizpur in 1931 and 1936 and in the Election Manifestos of 1936 and 1945 and also in the economic and social reforms of the Congress Ministries from 1937 to 1939. All these happened because Jawahar Lal Nehru had a clear vision of the radical socio-economic and political aims for the Congress. Thus it can be said that a large part of the history of India's struggle for freedom was the history of Jawahar Lal Nehru.

### 18.3. Summary

- (i) Gandhi comes back from South Africa and champions the cause of indigo cultivators of Champaran.
- (ii) Lands support to British War efforts but is disappointed with Morley Minto Reforms.
- (iii) Organize Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience Movement.



- (iv) On failure of Cripps Mission started Quit Movement.
- (v) Nehru supported his moves and passed the complete Independence Resolution at Lahore Congress Session, 1929.
- (vi) Fought against the British under Gandhi's leadership.
- (vii) Appointed Prime Minister in the Interim Government.

### 18.4. Key Words

Indigo peasants, Khilafat Movement; Non-co-operation Movement; Complete Independence Resolution; Do or Die.

### 18.5. Suggested Questions

#### A. Short questions :

- (i) What was Gandhi's role in Champaran Movement?
- (ii) Why did Gandhi suspend Non-co-operation Movement?
- (iii) What led to Quit India Movement?

#### B. Long questions :

- (i) Review the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the Freedom Movement of India.
- (ii) Discuss the social and economic contributions of Gandhiji
- (iii) Outline Pandit Nehru's role in Freedom Movement.

### 18.6. Suggested Books

- (i) Mahatma Gandhi - A Biography - B. R. Nanda.
- (ii) Gandhi - Louis Fisher.
- (iii) Gandhi, Nehru and J.P. - Bimal Prasad.
- (iv) Jawahar Lal Nehru - Biography - S. Gopal
- (v) History of the Indian National Congress - Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

