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Quit India Movement

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the Quit India Movement and its analysis. The Indian National Congress's final campaign of widespread civil disobedience against British authority was the Quit India movement, which took place between 1942 and 1944. This paper talks about the background of the movement to the causes and significance of the movement. The movement was divided into three phases. There were a lot of women who actively participated in the movement.

Keywords: *Gandhiji, Quit India Movement, Cripp's Mission.*

I. INTRODUCTION

²The Indian National Congress's final campaign of widespread civil disobedience against British authority was the Quit India movement, which took place between 1942 and 1944. Its goal was to get a British commitment to prompt full independence (purna swaraj), as opposed to the promise of Dominion status, after the Second World War was finished. The British monarch continued to serve as head of state in the dominions (such as Australia and Canada), which were generally self-governing but yet belonged to the British Empire. The immediate result of the movement was the detention of thousands of Congress followers as well as the senior leadership of the party, including Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Up until the end of the war, the majority of them remained behind bars. However, in the long run, the protest's characteristics—namely, a greater willingness on the part of some Congress activists to resort to violence against the colonial state—had an impact on post-war discussions regarding India's future. The British authorities were able to put a stop to Quit India's immediate threat, but the pace with which they thereafter pursued a "exit strategy" between 1945 and 1947 might be partly blamed on the movement's ability to instill fear of a bloody collapse of the Empire. The Raj's former air of invincibility was irreversibly tarnished by the

Quit India campaign, together with the military reverses Britain suffered throughout the war.

¹ Author is a student at IILM, Gurgaon, India.

² Sarah Ansari, The Second World War and Quit India Movement, 1939-1945, The British Library, (7 nov 2022) [bl.uk/voices-of-partition/articles/introduction-to-the-quit-india-movement](https://www.bl.uk/voices-of-partition/articles/introduction-to-the-quit-india-movement)

II. BACKGROUND OF QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT³

One of the most well-known mass movements during India's battle for independence was the "Quit India Movement," which took place in the month of August. Every person is now frustrated and disgusted with the political environment as a result of the Cripps Mission's failure. People eagerly awaited one such popular movement that might put an end to imperialism in India completely as they waited in total frustration. At this time, Congress, led by Mahatma Gandhi, called for the Quit India Movement, which went on to become the most well-known mass movement, encompassing every sphere of society. One of the aggressive measures used by the Indian National Congress to press for India's quick independence through the July and August 1942 resolutions was the "Quit India Movement." The political climate in India had gotten worse due to the Cripps Mission and the forced involvement of India in the war. Therefore, the time has come for Congress to deal a final blow to British supremacy in India if it was to keep its promises for an independent India.

Congress adopted a resolution in July calling for the rapid end of British rule in India. The resolution provided a brief account of the congress's attempts to persuade the British rulers that freeing India was necessary for everyone's safety as well as the abolition of militarism, fascism, and other forms of imperialism around the globe. It further asserted that it had no desire to degrade the Allies and urged the British Empire to abdicate its control over India as soon as feasible. It also underlined its efforts to resolve the ongoing communal schisms and to work with the United Nations to achieve a peaceful world. As a result, if the government fails to meet the demands of the Congress, the party will be forced to launch a nonviolent mass campaign, gathering all of its nonviolent strength accumulated since 1920 and organising a major civil disobedience movement.

The government purposefully ignored the July Resolution, blaming the requests for being untimely. This compelled the Indian National Congress to approve a new resolution in August 1942, which used the July resolution as its foundation. The resolution to leave India was passed at the Bombay (now Mumbai) session of Congress on August 8, 1942. The resolution's agenda stated that the committee resolves to sanction, for the vindication of India's alienable right to freedom and independence, the beginning of a mass struggle on nonviolent lines on the broadest possible scale, so that the country must use all nonviolent strength accumulated over the last twenty years. The committee put the whole movement under Gandhi's leadership, and it was

³ Quit India Movement, Indianetzone (visited on 29 apr 2023) https://www.indianetzone.com/26/quit_india_movement_indian_history.htm

expected that with the movement's debut, every man and woman who will be participating in the movement must operate under four broad party instructions. Gandhi declared four parameters of the Quit India Movement in his famous 'Do or Die' speech: first, forget the differences between Hindus and Muslims and think of yourself as an Indian only; second, realise that our quarrel is not with the British people but with the Imperialism under which they operate; third, feel from today that you are a free man and not a dependent; and fourth, Do or Die, either free India or in the attempt.

Despite passing the resolution, he declared that the struggle had not yet begun and that it would begin only after he met with the Viceroy and presented these demands. He urged all journalists, public employees, princes, soldiers, and students to recognise their role to the country and contribute if they want to see India free by non-violent methods.

III. CAUSES⁴

Disillusionment with British Rule: The Indian National Congress was becoming increasingly disillusioned with British rule in India and desired independence. This was obvious in the Quit India Resolution, which was voted at the All India Congress Committee's Bombay session in August 1942.

Unfulfilled Autonomy Promises: The Congress had hoped that the British would provide India more autonomy and self-rule, but their efforts had proven futile. As a result, the decision was made to begin a mass campaign to demand liberation.

The Cripps Mission was despatched by the British government in March 1942 to negotiate with the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. The Indian National Congress opposed the measures because they did not go far enough in giving autonomy.

World War II's Influence: The start of World War II had a tremendous influence on India as well. The Indian economy suffered as resources were allocated to the war effort. This fueled discontent with British control and a yearning for independence.

The Quit India Movement was the culmination of a continuous growth in Indian nationalism.

Mahatma Gandhi inspired Indians to rise up and fight for their rights.

IV. QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT: ANALYSIS

There were three phases:

⁴ Quit India Movement- causes, importance, outcomes, IASexpress (last visited on 29 apr 2023) <https://www.iasexpress.net/ie-pedia/quit-india-movement/>

⁵Phase 1: There was widespread urban uprising, boycott of goods, and shop picketing. Strikes and rioting erupted throughout the country, and employees fled the plant to support the opposition. Gandhiji was imprisoned at the Aga Khan Palace, and other leaders were detained as well.

Phase 2: Rebellion against government facilities, which were set on fire; communication was hampered; telephone lines and power were cut. Railway tracks and stations were destroyed, causing significant infrastructural damage. The British also retaliated vehemently, issuing fines, lathi charges, and jail.

Phase 3: Parallel governments were established in Tamluk, Satara, and Ballia, marking the end of the movement.

From April 29th to May 1st, 1942, the All India Congress Committee met in Allahabad to consider resolutions of the working committee, spurred by the previously mentioned causes and also to secure more masses in the war for freedom. Despite Gandhiji's absence from the meeting, many of his points were incorporated into the resolution. The most important of these had been the strategy of adhering to and uncompromising dedication to nonviolence in response to British crimes in India. On July 14, 1942, the Congress Working Committee reconvened in Wardha and decided to give Gandhiji command of the nonviolent mass movement. The proposal, which became known as the Quit India proposal, was to be passed by the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay in August 1942. The "Quit India Resolution" was ratified by the All India Congress Committee in Bombay on the 7th and 8th of August 1942. On August 8, 1942, Gandhiji, to whom the movement had been entrusted, issued a declaration to the crowd gathered at Gowalia Tank Maidan in Bombay, the famous cry of "Do or Die." This historic Do or Die speech officially inaugurated the Quit India action, also known as the Bharat Chodo Andolan, which was the final major civil disobedience action organised before India gained independence in 1947.

The next day, August 9th, Gandhiji, members of the Congress Working Committee, and other Congress leaders were arrested under the Defence of India Rules. Under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, the Wardha Committee, All India Congress Committee, and four provincial Congress Committees were declared unlawful associations. Public gatherings were forbidden under Rule 56 of the Defence of India Rules. The arrests of Gandhiji and other Congress leaders sparked widespread protests across the country. Thousands of people were

⁵ Dhartiganda07, Quit India Movement- History, Causes, Phases, Importance, GeeksforGeeks, <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/quit-india-movement-history-causes-phases-importance/>

murdered or injured as a result of the Bharat Chodo Andolan. On August 9, millions of people battled brutally with police in Bombay, Poona, and Ahmedabad. Protests erupted in Delhi across Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on August 10th. In defiance, there have been hartals, protests, and people's marches. Prohibitory orders were issued in Kanpur, Patna, Allahabad, and Varanasi. Protests have spread like wildfire over India's district towns and villages. The press was silenced, railway tracks were stopped, and peasants staged Satyagrahas in several locations. Students in schools and universities throughout India went on strike, marched, and distributed illegal nationalist material.

For weeks, mill and manufacturing employees in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Poona, Ahmednagar, and Jamshedpur have remained absent. Some of the organised protesters had resorted to more violent methods, such as blowing up bridges and setting telegraph fires. They even stopped trains and draped national flags over them. Crowds of peasants had gathered in the nearby Tehsil town and stormed the structures. It was said that the government had vanished in Bihar's Tirhut division for almost two weeks. In Patna, police opened fire on and killed seven students who were walking with the national flag to the Secretariat. Patna had been essentially freed for two days due to the subsequent riots and street fighting. Several European officers had been attacked across the country. Gaya, Bhagalpur, Saran, Purnea, and Shahabad in Bihar, and Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, have become rebellious protest hubs. Around 250 railway stations had been damaged or destroyed, as well as 500 post offices and 150 police stations.

In Karnataka, around 1,600 telegraph lines were severed. As a result, there was a protracted sequence of protests across India, some of which resulted in serious bloodshed. Strikes were declared in various parts of India. Arrests and tortures endured by Nationalist leaders who drove the campaign sparked outrage, with rallies taking place across India. Demonstrations that were supposed to be nonviolent turned into fatal riots, and violence occurred. Police stations, government buildings, railway lines, and communication towers were among the primary objectives. During the riots, about 1000 people were murdered and 3000 were wounded. Using widespread detentions, British police forces were able to quickly repress many of the protesters. According to estimates, about 100,000 individuals were imprisoned during the Movement.

V. ⁶ROLE OF GANDHI IN QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

Gandhiji was imprisoned at Poona's Aga Khan Palace. He was in excruciating pain as a result of the British actions to destroy the Quit India Movement. The British government accused

⁶ S. Priyadarshi, Role of Gandhiji in Quit India Movement, History Discussion, <https://www.historydiscussion.net/history-of-india/role-of-gandhiji-in-quit-indian-movement/2609>

Gandhi and his Congress Party of being to blame for all bloodshed and chaos in the country. Beside Gandhi twelve top Congress leaders Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Vallabhai Patel, Govinda Ballabh Pant, Syed Mahmud, Acharya J.B. Kripalani, Sankar Rao Deo, Hare Krishna Mahatab, Prafulla Chandra Ghose, Pattabhi Sitaramaya, Asaf Ali and Acharya Narendra Dev continued to suffer in the Ahmadnagar Fort. The whole Congress stayed in the prison. Jinnah saw it as a good chance to win over the Muslim people to his Pakistani cause. The government was unwavering in its support for Jinnah. Gandhiji, dissatisfied with the British government's attitude, decided to commence another three-week fast on February 10, 1943. His condition deteriorated to the point that he was "very close to death." Millions of people prayed for his survival. Leaders of the country wrote to Churchill pleading for his release. Churchill, who was terrified by Gandhi, remained unaffected. Gandhi made it through the full fast. The government also refused to negotiate unless the "Quit India Policy" was repealed. This attitude compelled three members of the Viceroy's Executive Council to resign: Homi Modi, N.R. Sarkar, and M.S. Aney. Jinnah declared Gandhi's fast to be totally Hindu.

Meanwhile, the country experienced the worst economic conditions possible as a result of the war and a man-made famine in some parts of the country. During this time, hundreds of thousands of people died. Even during this time of unending misery, the government remained callous. People's agony had reached new heights. Lord Wavell, the new Viceroy, took office on October 20, 1943, amid gloomy circumstances. Gandhi was staying at the Aga Khan Palace at the time. Kasturba Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's wife, became critically ill in February 1944. The government was so cruel that they showed no compassion for her wants and wishes when she was dying. He became very ill very quickly. By early May, the physicians were terrified that he would die at any moment. The government saw Gandhi dying as a prisoner in British hands as a severe concern. As a result, on May 6, 1944, the Viceroy ordered Gandhi's unrestricted release. Gandhi rapidly recovered. His appearance outside the jail instilled new hope in the people. "The August resolution is still there," he asserted, "and I cannot and do not wish to change a single comma in that resolution." Ordinary people and revolutionaries alike flocked to him for a new direction.

Even Subhash Chandra Bose, who disagreed with Gandhiji on a point, appealed to him over the radio in July 1944, saying, "Mahatmaji, For Indians outside India, you are the creator of the current awakening in our country." The final fight of freedom in India has begun. Azad Hind

Fauj troops are currently fighting heroically on Indian land, and despite all difficulties and hardship, they are marching ahead slowly but steadily—Father of our nation. We beg for your grace and well wishes in this solely liberating battle for India." While the Japanese were knocking on her door, India was wasting time. The level of community tension was escalating. The political impasse persisted, and India's fate appeared to be heading into the unknown. Price increases were producing anguish and wretchedness. Despite government ordinances, black marketers and profiteers operated in the open market and engaged in nefarious money collection activities. In 1944, India looked like this.

VI. REPRESSION OF THE MOVEMENT

⁷Violence was utilised on an unprecedented scale during the Quit India Movement, and the government exploited it to justify repression. To restore order, the English government diverted 35,000 army troops to assist police in their suppression efforts.

For the first time, the army was used in a wartime emergency, with as many as 57 battalions of British troops dispatched to quell what was basically a civilian agitation. The scale and severity of the response caused by the revolt were unparalleled. Military planes swooping low over them had machine-gunned crowds. Police had taken up protesters from communities and kept them hostage. Lakhs of dollars in collective penalties were levied on whole towns, and the money was swiftly recovered via looting.

⁸Suspects were beaten mercilessly, and village after town was burned to the ground in retaliation for their citizens' acts. According to some estimates, 60,000 people were imprisoned in the five months from the commencement of the campaign and December 1942. Some 26,000 people had been convicted for minor and major offences, and 18,000 were imprisoned under the harsh Defence of India Act. There had been no official declaration of Martial Law, but the Army continued to work alongside the police.

VII. ROLE OF WOMEN IN QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT⁹

Gandhi's nationalist cause was founded on nonviolence. Metaphorically, the streets were considered as moral battlegrounds, and this mindset encouraged women to leave their homes. Because of the example set by the non-cooperation movement and civil disobedience in the previous two decades, more women stepped forward to join in the 1940s leave India campaign

⁷ Quit India Movement, INSIGHTIAS, <https://www.insightsonindia.com/modern-indian-history/freedom-topartition-1939-1947/quit-india-movement/>

⁸ Quit India Movement, Career Launcher IAS, <https://www.careerlauncher.com/upsc/quit-indiamovement/>.

⁹ P. Vimala, Women Leaders Of Quit India Movement, Shanlax Journals, Vol 1, No 4, arp 2014

(Thapar-Bjorkert, Suruchi. 2006). When the majority of the men-folk were imprisoned, women stepped forward to lead the struggle. "When the history of India's fight for independence is written, the sacrifice made by the women of India will occupy the foremost place," Mahatma Gandhi said. Volunteering, lobbying, protesting, fasting, and giving time and supplies were made available by uneducated and educated women. Women's early contributions to the national struggle began with their membership in the Indian National Congress in the late nineteenth century. Their resistance was not just nonviolent, but it also involved armed movement. Picketing the Secretariat, several female students demonstrated against British control.

Among the many women who took part in the Quit India campaign, some of whom also advocated for women's rights, are:

- A.V. Kuttimalu Amma
- Ambujammal
- Padmaja Naidu
- Rukmini Lakshmi pathi
- Maya Thomas
- Sister Subbalakshmi

VIII. SPREAD OF MOVEMENT ACROSS INDIA

During the movement, after the arrests of Gandhiji and other leaders, processions were held across the country, and the entire country was influenced in some way by the Quit India movement. Punjab, as well as the Congress province of NFWP, were surprisingly peaceful, with only two incidences of police fire and around 2500 arrests. Except for a few pockets in Guntur and West Godavari in Coastal Andhra, Coimbatore and Ramnad in Tamilnadu, movement was relatively weak in the Madras Presidency. Movement was similarly restricted in Kerala. Only Mysore was substantially affected among the large states, since there were three tier demonstration actions at urban, village, and secret group activities. Four major locations in Bihar's east UP, Midnapur, Orissa, and Maharashtra-Karnataka painted a very different picture of a very serious mass insurrection.

It had taken many weeks and a major deployment of army and police to restore order and normal communications in the 16 severely impacted districts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Cuttack had been a storm centre, but terrorist activities organised by a local Rakta Vahini rapidly took precedence over popular action. Talcher and Koraput have also witnessed guerrilla and

revolutionary operations.

After the initial urban uprising was put down, the movement in Bombay Presidency took two distinct forms: peasant guerilla warfare in a few pockets, and more widespread terroristic activity and sabotage carried out primarily by educated cadres, despite obvious popular support.

IX. OPPOSITION OF THE MOVEMENT

C. Rajagopalachari was a well-known Madras-based Congress politician who opposed the Quit India campaign. Leaders such as Rajagopalachari had resigned from the provincial legislature because they did not support Gandhiji's idea. The Communists had been absent and opposed, and the non-Brahmans had been indifferent throughout the agitation. Because of their people's war policy, the Communist Party of India did not support the campaign.

Muslims and the Indian Union Muslim League stayed out of the campaign in practically all regions. Participation in the Movement has also been denounced by the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS. V. D. Savarkar, B. S. Munje, and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had been staunch supporters of the British war effort, which had supposedly been sabotaged by the Congress Campaign.

X. ABRUPT END TO QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

The British administration ultimately put an end to the Quit India campaign. There were certain downsides that caused the movement to be halted after only one year. The most notable reason was that the movement, which began as non-violent (Ahimsa) in character, quickly lost its essential nature and transformed fully to brutal violence. Gandhiji realised that his disciples had not adequately comprehended the notion of ahimsa since they were causing injury to one another by employing harsh weapons. As a result, Gandhiji failed to denounce mass violence and held the administration accountable for it. Other elements that contributed to the setback included heavy-handed government suppression, poor coordination, a lack of leadership, and a clear plan of action.

XI. AFTERMATH AND IMPACT OF THE MOVEMENT

The most significant consequence, in my opinion, was that it let the British feel the might of the Indian populace. The British realised they could not stay in India for long. This movement resulted in the realisation of Colonial rulers in the context of the Second World War's destruction of British resources, as well as bitter resistance to British authority in India. People from all around the country came out in force. The political climate at the time was able to instill fresh confidence in the Indian populace while simultaneously instilling a thorough sense of

sacrifice in them.

Women and men had participated in equal numbers, and another intriguing element had been the establishment of alternative administrations in areas like as Ballia, Tamluk, and Satara. A week-long Paralell government was established in Ballia in August 1942, led by Chittu Pandey. From December 1942 to September 1944, a parallel administration founded by Jatiya Sarkar in Tamluk, Midnapore, had done cyclone relief work, sanctioned grants to schools, provided grain from the affluent to the poor, arranged vidyut vahinis, and so on. In

Satara, a parallel government known as "Prati Sarkar" was established from mid-1943 to 1945. It was organised by leaders like as Y. B. Chavan, Nana Patil, and others. The commencement of the Quit India Movement was able to offer a boost to the INA, since antiBritish protests were organised throughout Malaya.

XII. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOVEMENT¹⁰

Underground operations were carried out by leaders who went on to become well-known figures, such as Ram Manohar Lohia, J.P. Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Biju Patnaik, and Sucheta Kripalani.

Women were active participants in the movement. Usha Mehta, along with other female activists, helped to build an underground radio station that raised awareness of the campaign.

There is a deeper sense of fraternity and solidarity as a result of the Quit India Movement. Many college and high school students dropped out, and many adults quit their jobs and withdrew money from financial institutions.

Even though the Quit India campaign was crushed in 1944 as a result of their refusal to grant immediate independence and instead insisting that it could only happen after the war ended, the British came to the critical conclusion that India was ungovernable in the long run as a result of the costs of World War II. In the end, it aided India's independence by changing the character of political discussions with the British.

XIII. CONCLUSION

After viewing this presentation, you will have a thorough grasp of the Quit India movement and its numerous elements and stages. This movement provided Indians with the opportunity to recognise their own strength. The August Kranti movement was a watershed moment in the Indian Freedom Struggle because it was more of a spontaneous movement than a

¹⁰ Significance of Quit India Movement, Geeksforgeeks, <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/significance-of-quitindia-movement/>

premeditated uprising of the Congress. This movement created fresh confidence in the Indian masses and fostered in them a spirit of absolute sacrifice. This conflict boosted popular morale and anti-British emotions, putting ultimate independence at the top of the Freedom movement's agenda. After all, this movement had captured the interest of the whole India for having a uni-linear perspective towards the desire for emancipation from the great Sun never setting British Empire.
