

Quit India Movement

[UPSC Notes]

What is the Quit India Movement?

The Quit India Movement was a watershed movement in the history of India's independence. The movement was launched on August 8, 1942, by Mahatma Gandhi during the Bombay session of the All-India Congress Committee. Gandhiji called for "Do or Die" from the August Kranti or the Gowalia Tank Maidan. Aruna Asaf Ali, also known as the 'Grand Old Lady' of the Independence Movement hoisted the Indian flag at the Gowalia Tank Maidan in Mumbai during the Quit India Movement.

The slogan 'Quit India' was coined by Yusuf Meherally. The Quit India Movement started slogans like 'Bharat Chodo' or 'Quit India'. The Quit India Movement was considered a peaceful, non-violent initiative to insist the British leave India and offer Independence from their rule. The Prima facie reason for the launch of the movement was the failure of the Cripps Mission. Another reason that supported this was that Japan was at the doors of raging a war against India during the Second World War. The British Officials, without prior consultation with the Indian leaders, involved India in the war.

Gandhi believed that if the British left India, Japan would not have enough reason to invade India. The Quit India Movement is considered a part of Mahatma Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement.

Causes of Quit India Movement

The beginning of the Quit India Movement was due to many causes. First, Gandhi believed if the British left India, Japan would have fewer reasons to conquer India. The rise in the prices of essential goods during World War uplifted bitterness among the Indians. To know more reasons, check out the broad factors below.

Failure of Cripps Mission

The instant cause of the Quit India Movement was the failure of the Cripps Mission. The mission started settling Indian disputes of having new self-government and constitution under Stafford Cripps. However, it eventually failed because it did not provide absolute freedom but the Dominion Status to India, along with the partition.

Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister, sent the Cripps mission in March 1942. The reasons that led to the beginning of this mission were:

- There was mounting pressure from China, the United States, and the Labour Party in Britain.
- The British wanted the full participation of India in the war.
- Japan almost attacked and showed aggression toward South-East Asia.

Involvement of India in World War II

India was involved in the Second World War without a conversation with the leaders. The British presumed that they were receiving unlimited support from India in World War II was not taken well by the Indian National Congress.

Prevalence of Anti-British Sentiment

Indians had developed anti-British emotions and demanded complete independence from the British Government. This sentiment of Indian nationalism was gaining popularity among the masses of people.

Centralization of Many Small Movements

Two small mass movements, All India Kisan Sabha, Forward Bloc, etc., were conducted in a very revolutionary manner under the supervision of associated and affiliated bodies of the Congress, opening the ground for the initiation of the Quit India Movement. In many places of the country, there were military outbreaks that converged with the Quit India Movement.

Deficiency of Basic Entities

At the beginning of World War II, there was a lack of essential commodities, which led to the shattering of the overall economy.

Demand for the Quit India Movement

The primary demand of the Quit India Movement was to stop British rule in India. Indians believed to receive prompt cooperation from all the Indians in World War II so that they could unitedly fight against the British Government's dictatorship. Indians were also appealing to form a temporary Government soon after the parting of the Britishers.

Phases of the Quit India Movement

The Quit India Movement had three phases. These were:

- **First phase:** Revolts in metropolitan, strikes, boycotts, and picketing (pole stuck in the ground to mark a line), were quickly silenced. Workers did not work in factories. Gandhiji got jailed at Aga Khan Palace in Pune along with all the leaders.
- **Second phase:** The focus was more on the countryside, noticed a significant land owners revolt, destruction of railway stations, tracks, electrical poles, and wires, and attack on the building of Government or any colonial authority.
- **Third phase:** Formation of national and parallel governments in sheltered areas (Tamluk, Satara, Ballia, etc.)

Successes of the Quit India Movement

The Quit India Movement had had its own share of successes. There was a sense of unity among all the age groups of Indians, and after World War II, it became more accessible for the country to get independence from the British Government. A number of famous leaders participated in the movement.

- **Rise of New Leaders:** Some leaders, including J.P. Narayan, Biju Patnaik, Sucheta Kriplani, Aruna Asaf Ali, Ram Manohar Lohia, etc., initiated covert actions during the Quit India Movement. All these leaders, along with some more, appeared as renowned leaders of the Quit India Movement.
- **Women's Participation:** The Quit India Movement was highly dynamic as it also involved women's participation. Usha Mehta, one of the recognized female leaders, launched a new set up of an underground radio station that helped spread the latest news about the movement.
- **Rise of Nationalism:** The movement was beneficial for uniting the Indians and developing brotherhood among them. People stood together and fought their wars against the British Government. As a result, students didn't attend schools and colleges, and employers abandoned their jobs.
- **Paved the way for Independence:** The British refused to grant Independence to India, communicating that it could occur after World War II gets completed. British realized that India was impossible to govern in the long run due to the expense of the war. Finally, the political negotiations with the British became friendly and paved the path for the Independence of India.

Failure of the Quit India Movement

Though the Quit India Movement was successful in many aspects, failure was also seen. Many people lost their lives, areas were set on fire, and penalties got forced on those who tried to oppose the British.

- The Quit India Movement observed violence at locations not planned. The British took violent actions against the people trying to stop the trend. Many people were lathi-charged, shot dead, villages were set on fire, and huge fines were charged to those who were against the Government.
- The Quit India Movement could not get full support from Hindu Mahasabha, India's Communist Party, the Indian bureaucracy, and the Muslim League.

Following were the reasons for each of the communities to go against the movement:

- Hindu Mahasabha was against the Quit India Movement and officially boycotted it because they feared the movement would develop internal disorder and threaten security during the war.
- The Communist Party always supported the British associated with the Soviet Union.
- Muslim League were waiting for the country to get partitioned, which is why they did not want the British to leave India.

Being outside India, Subhas Chandra Bose classified Indian National Army and the Azad Hind government. C Rajagopalachari and many other Congress chiefs resigned from the regional legislature as they did not like the idea of Mahatma Gandhi.

Significance of Quit India Movement

The people remained rigid, unbothered, and continued their struggle for Independence even after the British Government's suppression with all fingers and thumbs. British conveyed that

Indians would receive Independence after World War II. Still, the Quit India Movement demonstrated that India could only be governed with the full support of the Indians. The main agenda of starting the Quit India Movement was to get freedom from British power and have a temporary Indian government. Indians developed anti-British feelings, and the overall public morale grew over time.

