

MODERN INDIA II

Mass Nationalism, Competing Futures, and Partition

India's Freedom Struggle from Gandhi's Early Satyagrahas
to 1947

Gaurav Tiwari

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Dedication

For the reader willing to hold unity, conflict, courage, compromise, and catastrophe in the same account.

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Preface

The national movement widened Indian politics, but it did not make India politically uniform. Gandhi's methods opened new forms of participation. Peasants, workers, women, business groups, caste movements, princely-state subjects, revolutionaries, socialists, communal organizations, and provincial leaders entered the field with aims that overlapped without becoming identical.

This volume follows the movement as a coalition under pressure. It asks what non-cooperation made possible, where constitutional negotiation stalled, how social questions entered nationalist politics, why repression sometimes widened solidarity and sometimes narrowed action, and how war altered the balance between empire and anti-colonial power.

Partition cannot appear as a final unfortunate page attached to a triumphant story. It requires its own causal history: representation, provincial politics, mass mobilization, mistrust, failed settlements, strategic choices, administrative haste, and violence. No single cause can carry that weight.

The chapters keep disagreement visible without turning every event into a contest of quotations. The reader's job is to reconstruct the coalition, its achievements, its unresolved conflicts, and the conditions under which independence arrived.

How to use this book

Read the main chapter before opening its companion. On the first pass, follow causation, institutions, and changes in political scale. On the second pass, close the narrative and rebuild the chronology, comparison, or map from memory. Use the answer key only after committing to an answer.

Names and dates are necessary, but they are not the book's organizing principle. Keep asking what changed, what caused it, who carried it, and what survived.

Part I

Gandhian mass politics and constitutional struggle

Gandhi's Method and the Early Satyagrahas

Gandhi lived and worked in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, organizing Indians across legal, religious, linguistic, and class differences.

The Natal Indian Congress, founded in 1894, gave diaspora politics a durable organization.

South Africa created a political laboratory

Gandhi went to Natal as a lawyer for an Indian merchant firm. His removal from a first-class railway compartment at Pietermaritzburg became a formative episode, but one incident did not create his politics. Years of discriminatory legislation did: poll taxes, franchise exclusion, registration, invalidation of Indian marriages, movement restrictions, and attacks on traders and workers.

The Indian population was internally divided. Wealthy Muslim and Hindu merchants, Tamil and Telugu indentured labourers, ex-indentured workers, Gujarati traders, and professionals did not share identical interests. Gandhi initially represented merchant concerns and used petitions within imperial citizenship. Mass resistance later widened his politics toward workers and women.

The Natal Indian Congress coordinated petitions and pub-

licity. *Indian Opinion* created political education. Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm supported activists and embodied experiments in manual labour, restraint, and community. European allies including Hermann Kallenbach and Henry Polak assisted, while Indian women such as Kasturba Gandhi and Thambi Naidoo's family became active participants.

From passive resistance to satyagraha

The 1906 Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act required registration, fingerprints, and passes. At a Johannesburg meeting, participants pledged resistance. Gandhi later coined *satyagraha*, "holding firmly to truth," to distinguish the method from passive resistance.

Its main elements were:

- **truth:** no deliberate falsehood or demonization;
- **nonviolence:** refusal to injure the opponent;
- **self-suffering:** accepting prison, fines, confiscation, or assault rather than retaliating;
- **open action:** lawbreaking announced rather than concealed;
- **discipline:** volunteers obey a collective code;
- **negotiation:** compromise is legitimate when it secures truth and dignity;
- **conversion and pressure:** suffering appeals morally but also imposes political and economic cost.

This was not political withdrawal. Marches, strikes, border crossing, certificate burning, and non-registration disrupted administration. Moral vocabulary and strategic leverage operated together.

The 1913 campaign included women crossing provincial borders and Indian mine workers striking and marching from Natal. Repression, prison overcrowding, deaths, and criticism in India and Britain pressed Jan Smuts's government toward the Indian Relief Act of 1914. It recognized Indian marriages, abolished the tax on ex-indentured workers, and addressed some registration

issues, but racial inequality continued.

Return to India and preparation

Gandhi returned in January 1915. Following Gopal Krishna Gokhale's advice, he traveled, observed, and initially avoided leading all-India confrontation. He founded an ashram, first at Kochrab and then on the Sabarmati, to train a community in truth, nonviolence, sanitation, manual labour, interfaith life, and opposition to untouchability.

The ashram was not the whole organization. Local lawyers, teachers, caste associations, newspapers, merchants, and village notables connected Gandhi to social groups he did not already command.

Champaran: inquiry becomes resistance

European indigo planters in Champaran, Bihar, compelled tenants under *tinkathia* to cultivate indigo on three kathas out of every twenty, roughly three-twentieths of the holding. Synthetic dyes weakened indigo profitability, and planters demanded compensation to release tenants from obligations. Rents, illegal dues, and coercive practices added grievances.

Raj Kumar Shukla persistently persuaded Gandhi to visit. Officials ordered Gandhi to leave. He disobeyed openly, appeared in court, and accepted punishment. The government withdrew the case, allowing an inquiry.

Gandhi and local colleagues recorded thousands of tenant statements. The method mattered: detailed testimony transformed scattered complaint into verified public evidence. Volunteers also opened schools and worked on sanitation, but these constructive activities did not replace the agrarian demand.

The government appointed Gandhi to the Champaran Agrarian Committee. Its recommendations produced a refund of part of illegal exactions and the Champaran Agrarian Act of 1918,

which ended *tinkathia* and regulated relations. Gandhi accepted a 25 per cent refund rather than insist on the full amount, judging planter admission and tenant confidence more important than the percentage.

Champaran's limits were clear. It did not redistribute land, eliminate landlord power, or create permanent peasant organization independent of elite leadership. Participation was mediated through local lawyers and village leaders. Yet peasants experienced the state retreating before organized testimony and disciplined defiance.

Ahmedabad: labour, intimacy, and the fast

During plague, Ahmedabad mill owners had paid a bonus to retain workers. When they withdrew it amid wartime inflation, workers demanded higher wages. Gandhi had close relations with both mill owners, especially Ambalal Sarabhai, and labour organizer Anasuya Sarabhai, Ambalal's sister.

Gandhi proposed arbitration. When owners resisted, workers struck and pledged not to return until settlement. Gandhi argued for a 35 per cent increase after examining competing claims. As hardship weakened discipline and some workers considered returning, he began a fast.

The fast strengthened the pledge and pressed owners morally, but it also revealed an ethical problem: Gandhi's personal authority could coerce allies and opponents even without physical violence. Arbitration ultimately awarded workers a 35 per cent increase.

The strike displayed class conflict, but Gandhi sought trusteeship and reconciliation rather than autonomous worker power. The later Textile Labour Association institutionalized welfare, arbitration, and disciplined unionism; critics view this as restraining militancy, supporters as creating durable protection.

Kheda: revenue remission and selective non-payment

Crop failure affected Kheda district in Gujarat in 1917–18. Revenue rules allowed suspension or remission when yield fell below a specified threshold. Officials disputed the extent of failure and demanded collection.

Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Indulal Yagnik, Mohanlal Pandya, Shankarlal Banker, and local activists organized village meetings and pledges. Cultivators able to withstand confiscation were asked to withhold payment so poorer peasants would not be isolated. Volunteers circulated information, watched official action, and maintained nonviolence.

The campaign faced limits. Participation varied by village and class; poorer peasants could not risk cattle, land, or household goods; secrecy in the government's final instructions made the ending appear ambiguous. Authorities eventually directed collection from those able to pay and relaxed pressure on the genuinely distressed. Gandhi ended the campaign and claimed the principle of collective dignity had been established.

Kheda did not obtain a public, universal cancellation. Its importance lay in organization, the emergence of Patel, and the demonstration that revenue rules could become the basis of collective resistance.

One method, three different conflicts

The early satyagrahas shared a sequence:

1. enter through trusted local invitation;
2. study the specific grievance before declaring struggle;
3. translate individual suffering into a collective, limited demand;
4. recruit local intermediaries and volunteers;
5. secure a public pledge and code of conduct;
6. disobey a selected rule or withhold cooperation openly;
7. accept legal and material penalties;
8. negotiate when the opponent offers a defensible settlement;

9. claim moral-political learning beyond the immediate concession.

But they were not identical. Champaran relied on inquiry and tenant testimony; Ahmedabad was a strike between labour and Indian capital; Kheda used tax non-payment against the colonial state. Different class relations required different tactics.

Organization and social base

Gandhi's authority was relational. Raj Kumar Shukla opened Champaran; Bihar lawyers translated and documented; Sarabhai networks linked labour and capital; Patel and Gujarat activists organized Kheda. Educated intermediaries connected peasant or worker grievances to law, newspapers, and national politics.

Mass participants were not blank followers. Tenants sought relief from planter coercion; workers wanted wages; Patidar and other cultivators defended household viability and status. They could reinterpret nonviolence, negotiate locally, or withdraw when risk became excessive.

Women's participation was more visible in South Africa than in the first Indian campaigns, though women sustained households, joined constructive work, and experienced confiscation and wage hardship. Landless labourers and the poorest tenants gained less organizational voice than substantial cultivators or formally employed mill workers.

Constructive work and political discipline

Sanitation, schools, spinning, communal living, removal of untouchability, and manual labour formed Gandhi's idea of *swaraj* as self-rule of persons and communities. Constructive work trained cadres and built trust between dramatic campaigns. Critics argue it could moralize structural exploitation; Gandhi

treated it as necessary to prevent political freedom from reproducing social domination.

Outcomes and limitations

The three campaigns established Gandhi as a leader capable of joining local suffering to national publicity. They trained Rajendra Prasad, J.B. Kripalani, Vallabhbhai Patel, Mahadev Desai, Narhari Parikh, and others. They demonstrated that fear could be broken through disciplined collective action.

Their settlements were modest. Planter power declined but landlordism remained; Ahmedabad workers won wages but not industrial control; Kheda gained selective relief rather than complete remission. Gandhi preferred controlled escalation and compromise, which widened participation but could disappoint radical demands.

The model also concentrated interpretive authority in Gandhi. He could decide when facts justified struggle, which demand was moral, when to fast, and when to settle. Later movements repeatedly confronted the tension between mass initiative and central discipline.

Language, symbols, and political translation

Gandhi made complex political action intelligible through familiar ethical vocabulary: *satya*, *ahimsa*, *swaraj*, vow, service, fearlessness, and self-purification. He wrote and spoke in Gujarati, Hindi, and English and used newspapers, prayer, public meetings, and personal example to cross the distance between educated politics and everyday moral reasoning. This language could unite participants who disagreed about class or constitutional theory.

Translation was not neutral. A tenant might understand *swaraj* as freedom from planter dues, a worker as a just wage,

a cultivator as revenue relief, and Gandhi as ethical self-rule. Campaign discipline depended on holding these meanings together long enough to pursue a limited demand. When popular expectation exceeded the agreed objective, Gandhi preferred withdrawal or compromise to uncontrolled escalation.

Negotiation was part of struggle, not its opposite

Gandhi did not treat settlement as betrayal. A satyagrahi had to recognize truth in the opponent's position and accept an honorable compromise without demanding humiliation. Investigation made negotiation possible because it established a credible factual baseline. Public pledges then increased the cost of refusal for both government and participants.

The approach created flexibility. Champaran's 25 per cent refund could be accepted because planter authority had yielded; an arbitration award could end Ahmedabad's strike; selective relaxation could close Kheda. Critics argue that symbolic victory sometimes replaced material gain. Supporters reply that organization, confidence, and recognition changed the balance for later struggles. Both effects could occur together.

Caste, religion, and the boundaries of inclusion

Gandhi opposed untouchability at the ashram and accepted an "untouchable" family despite donor resistance. Yet the early campaigns did not center landless Dalit labour or dismantle caste power. Local leadership often came from dominant cultivating groups and professional elites. Religious pluralism was explicit, but representation of Muslims varied by locality and issue.

South African experience also contained evolution and limits. Gandhi's early language sometimes accepted prevail-

ing racial hierarchies while demanding Indian rights; later mass struggle widened his solidarity and critique. Historical assessment should neither freeze him at his earliest position nor erase it. His method developed through conflict, failure, and revision.

Why these local victories scaled nationally

Each campaign offered a repeatable political story. An ordinary grievance could be documented; a law could be disobeyed without secret conspiracy; arrest could strengthen rather than destroy the movement; volunteers could link village, press, court, and national leadership; and a negotiated result could be claimed without military victory. The method reduced dependence on arms and made repression morally and administratively costly.

Scaling also depended on timing. Wartime inflation, Home Rule organization, expanding newspapers, returned soldiers, educated unemployment, and disappointment with reform had widened the audience. Gandhi did not create mass politics alone; he assembled methods and networks already developing across India.

Interpretations and debates

Judith Brown emphasizes Gandhi's mobilization through "sub-contractors," local notables and activists who connected his authority to society. This explains rapid reach but also dependence on existing hierarchies.

David Hardiman stresses peasant agency and the dialogic nature of Gandhian politics. Participants brought their own moral expectations and did not merely receive commands from above.

Nationalist interpretation presents the early campaigns as proof that fearless nonviolence could unite elite skill with popular grievance. Marxist criticism notes that Gandhi limited class

conflict, preserved scope for compromise, and restrained independent worker or peasant radicalism.

The Ahmedabad fast remains debated. It demonstrated self-suffering, but Gandhi’s moral prestige placed asymmetric pressure on mill owners and workers. Nonviolent action can be coercive without being physically violent.

Balanced judgement: Gandhi democratized participation by lowering the material threshold for action and legitimizing ordinary suffering, while retaining centralized moral authority and limiting demands to preserve coalition and discipline.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
1893	Gandhi arrives in South Africa	Direct experience of racial discrimination begins his political transformation.
1894	Natal Indian Congress founded	Builds a permanent representative organization.
1903	<i>Indian Opinion</i> launched	Connects scattered communities and explains campaigns.
1904	Phoenix Settlement established	Experiments with simple living, labour, and political community.
1906	First mass resistance to Transvaal registration law	Beginning of the campaign later named <i>satyagraha</i> .

Date	Event	Why it matters
1908	Registration certificates publicly burned	Makes voluntary law-breaking and suffering central tactics.
1910	Tolstoy Farm established	Supports families and trains resisters.
1913	Miners' march and renewed South African struggle	Women, workers, and cross-border march widen participation.
1914	Indian Relief Act; Gandhi leaves South Africa	Partial settlement ends the major campaign.
Jan 1915	Gandhi returns to India	Begins a period of travel and political observation.
May 1915	Satyagraha Ashram founded at Ahmedabad	Creates a disciplined organizational base.
1917	Champaran inquiry and satyagraha	First major Indian application to peasant grievance.
Feb–Mar 1918	Ahmedabad mill strike	Applies pledge, arbitration demand, and fast in labour conflict.
Mar–June 1918	Kheda revenue campaign	Develops village organization and selective non-payment.

High-confusion comparisons

Campaign	Grievance	Main participants	Principal method	Settlement	Limit
Champaran, 1917	Indigo coercion and illegal dues	Tenants and local lawyers	Inquiry, refusal to leave, testimony	Committee, refund, end of <i>tinkathia</i>	Landlordism remained.
Ahmedabad, 1918	Bonus withdrawal and wages	Mill workers	Strike, pledge, fast, arbitration	35 percent wage award	Independent labour militancy constrained.
Kheda, 1918	Revenue after crop failure	Cultivators and village activists	Selective collective non-payment	Pressure relaxed for distressed cultivators	No clear universal remission.

Self-test

1. What political skills did Gandhi develop in South Africa?
2. How does satyagraha differ from passive submission?
3. What was *tinkathia*?
4. Why was Gandhi's court appearance in Champaran important?
5. What did the Champaran settlement achieve and leave unchanged?
6. What caused the Ahmedabad dispute?
7. Why is Gandhi's Ahmedabad fast ethically debated?
8. What legal-administrative claim underlay Kheda satyagraha?
9. Why was Kheda's outcome ambiguous?
10. Identify the common sequence across the three campaigns.
11. How did local leaders shape Gandhian mobilization?
12. Give a balanced assessment of the early satyagrahas.

Answer key

1. He developed diaspora organization, newspapers, open law-breaking, prison discipline, marches, strikes, negotiation, and cross-community coalition.
2. It actively resists injustice through truth, nonviolence, public disobedience, self-suffering, organization, and negotiated pressure.
3. It compelled Champaran tenants to cultivate indigo on three *kathas* out of every twenty of their holding.
4. Openly disobeying the departure order and accepting punishment transformed inquiry into civil resistance and forced the government to retreat.
5. It ended *tinkathia*, regulated planter relations, and refunded part of exactions; it did not redistribute land or abolish landlord power.
6. Mill owners withdrew a plague bonus amid inflation, while workers demanded a compensating wage increase and arbitration failed initially.
7. The fast involved self-suffering but Gandhi's prestige exerted

- strong pressure on workers and owners, raising questions about moral coercion.
8. Revenue rules permitted suspension or remission after severe crop failure, while officials disputed whether Kheda met the threshold.
 9. Collection pressure eased selectively, but no transparent universal remission proclamation gave every participant the same gain.
 10. Invitation, investigation, limited demand, local organization, pledge, disciplined resistance, acceptance of penalties, and negotiated settlement.
 11. They provided trust, language, records, village or workplace links, volunteers, and independent social objectives that shaped participation.
 12. They won limited relief, broke fear, trained cadres, and created a mass method, while preserving Gandhi's central authority and leaving structural inequalities largely intact.

Closing perspective

South Africa developed Gandhi's methods through long organization, not one railway incident. Satyagraha combined moral appeal with organized political and economic pressure.

From Rowlatt to Non-Cooperation

The Rowlatt Act of March 1919 extended extraordinary wartime powers into peacetime despite unanimous Indian opposition in the Imperial Legislative Council.

Gandhi formed the Satyagraha Sabha and called an all-India hartal for 6 April 1919; the action revealed national reach but also weak control over crowds.

Rowlatt: coercion after wartime sacrifice

India had contributed men, money and material to the First World War. Inflation, taxation, recruitment and epidemics imposed heavy costs, while the 1917 declaration had promised gradual responsible government. The Rowlatt legislation therefore appeared as betrayal: instead of civil liberty after war, the state preserved emergency authority.

The enacted measure enabled detention without ordinary trial and trial by special procedures for specified political offences. Indian members opposed it across political lines. Mohammad Ali Jinnah resigned from the Imperial Legislative Council, arguing that a government claiming constitutional advance could not rely on exceptional coercion.

Gandhi's Satyagraha Sabha asked members to pledge civil disobedience and non-violence. The 6 April hartal brought closures, fasting, prayer and meetings across major towns. Yet dates were confused, communication uneven and violence occurred

in Delhi, Punjab, Ahmedabad and elsewhere. Gandhi called the premature launch a “Himalayan miscalculation”: mass courage had appeared before sufficient discipline and local organisation.

Punjab crisis and Jallianwala Bagh

Punjab carried distinctive wartime pressures: heavy recruitment, forced contributions, influenza and authoritarian administration under Lieutenant-Governor Michael O'Dwyer. Amritsar leaders Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr Satyapal were arrested and secretly removed on 10 April. A crowd seeking their release encountered firing; subsequent attacks killed Europeans and damaged banks and public buildings.

On 13 April, Baisakhi day, thousands assembled at Jallianwala Bagh. Some came for a political meeting; others were visitors or festival-goers. The ground was enclosed by buildings and narrow passages. Dyer entered with troops, blocked the principal exit and, without adequate warning to disperse, ordered fire towards the densest parts of the crowd until ammunition was nearly exhausted. About 1,650 rounds were fired.

The official death count was 379, with over a thousand wounded; Indian inquiry estimates placed deaths substantially higher. Exact recovery was impossible because families removed bodies, the injured feared authorities and no full register existed. The central facts do not depend on choosing one precise total: an unarmed trapped gathering was deliberately subjected to sustained fire.

Martial law followed in several Punjab districts. Punishments included public floggings, forced salaams, confiscation, bombing in Gujranwala and the “crawling order” on a street where an English missionary had been assaulted. Special tribunals restricted normal legal safeguards. These measures made humiliation and racial domination visible as policy rather than aberration.

Accountability and imperial response

The Disorders Inquiry Committee, usually called the Hunter Committee, criticised Dyer for continuing fire and misunderstanding his duty, but its British and Indian members differed sharply. Dyer was removed from command rather than criminally tried. The House of Commons censured him; the House of Lords defended him, and a public fund in Britain rewarded him. Michael O'Dwyer escaped equivalent immediate accountability.

This divided response mattered politically. Indians saw that metropolitan liberalism could condemn excess yet protect the structure that produced it. Tagore renounced his knighthood in a letter protesting the “badge of honour” amid national humiliation. Gandhi returned medals and moved from wartime cooperation to non-cooperation.

Khilafat: an international grievance becomes Indian politics

The Ottoman Sultan was regarded by many Sunni Muslims as Caliph. During the war, Ottoman Turkey fought Britain. Indian Muslim leaders feared that the peace settlement would dismember Ottoman territories, weaken the Sultan and remove control over Islamic sacred places.

An All-India Khilafat Committee developed under Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Hasrat Mohani and others. Initial meetings, petitions and deputations failed. The Treaty of Sèvres of August 1920 confirmed harsh territorial terms, strengthening the demand for non-cooperation.

Khilafat politics combined several currents:

- pan-Islamic concern for Ottoman authority;
- anti-imperial anger at Britain's wartime and postwar policy;
- ulema participation through bodies such as Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind;
- a younger Muslim leadership willing to join militant all-India action;

- local social grievances expressed through a religious-political language.

Gandhi supported Khilafat because justice required taking up a major Muslim grievance and because united action could deepen anti-imperial struggle. This was a strategic and ethical alliance, not agreement that India should be governed by the Caliph.

Debate over the Khilafat alliance

Supporters argue that people enter nationalism through concrete identities and injuries. Khilafat brought many urban Muslims, religious scholars and local networks into joint action; unity was practised through shared risk rather than merely proclaimed.

Critics argue that treating a religious institution as a national political demand legitimised religious mobilisation and left unity dependent on an external issue. The fairest conclusion separates solidarity from political education. Supporting a community grievance was compatible with secular nationalism, but leadership did not always translate religious loyalty into a durable programme of equal citizenship. The later collapse of unity resulted from many forces, not from Khilafat alone.

The **Hijrat movement** of 1920 showed both emotional intensity and strategic weakness. Thousands, especially from the North-West Frontier Province and Sindh, attempted migration to Afghanistan because India was viewed as unsafe for Islamic life. Afghanistan could not absorb them; many returned impoverished. The episode occurred within the wider Khilafat atmosphere but was not Congress's central programme.

Why non-cooperation became the method

Gandhi argued that empire rested on Indian cooperation: titles conferred legitimacy, schools trained intermediaries, lawyers worked colonial courts, voters entered constrained councils, consumers purchased imports and recruits served the state. If cooperation was voluntary, it could be withdrawn non-violently.

The method joined moral and political reasoning. Non-violence limited retaliation and sought to transform participants through discipline; non-cooperation made repression costly without requiring superior arms. Swaraj was linked to self-rule in both senses: political freedom and individual/community capacity.

Calcutta and Nagpur: Congress adopts mass politics

At the special Calcutta session in September 1920, Gandhi overcame opposition from leaders who doubted council boycott or Khilafat alignment. Congress approved non-cooperation until Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were redressed and swaraj achieved.

The Nagpur session in December confirmed the decision and transformed Congress organisation:

- the goal was reframed as swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means;
- provincial committees were reorganised largely on linguistic lines;
- the membership fee was reduced to four annas, widening access;
- an All-India Congress Committee and Working Committee strengthened coordination;
- local committees were expected to extend organisation below presidency towns.

This institutional change was as important as any boycott res-

olution. A periodic elite conference acquired machinery for continuous mass politics.

Programme: withdrawal and reconstruction

The programme was conceived in stages. Initial action included:

- surrender of titles, honours and honorary offices;
- boycott of government functions and foreign cloth;
- withdrawal from government schools and colleges;
- boycott of law courts by lawyers and litigants;
- boycott of elections and legislative councils under the 1919 Act;
- refusal of recruitment for imperial military service.

Constructive work was necessary to prevent boycott from becoming emptiness:

- establish national schools and colleges;
- develop panchayats and arbitration for disputes;
- spin, wear khadi and collect funds for charkhas;
- build Hindu-Muslim unity;
- remove untouchability;
- organise volunteers under non-violent discipline.

If sufficient discipline developed, the movement would move towards mass civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes in a selected area.

Implementation was uneven. Many students left institutions, especially in Bengal, Punjab and Muslim educational networks, creating Jamia Millia Islamia, Kashi Vidyapith, Gujarat Vidyapith and Bihar Vidyapith. Lawyers including C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Saifuddin Kitchlew and others suspended practice. Council elections were boycotted, but voter abstention differed by province and rival groups entered.

Khadi was simultaneously an economic, ethical and organisational symbol. It linked urban activists to rural labour and made

nationalism visible in daily dress. Yet hand-spun cloth could be costly, supply uneven and production burdens gendered. Its value lay as much in mobilisation and identity as in immediate macroeconomic transformation.

Social and geographical spread

The movement's national programme became a framework into which groups inserted local grievances.

Awadh and northern India

In Awadh, the Kisan Sabha and Baba Ramchandra mobilised tenants against high rents, illegal cesses, eviction and landlord coercion. Jawaharlal Nehru encountered peasant politics through these campaigns. The **Eka movement** later used oath-bound unity against excessive rent and revenue, sometimes exceeding Congress limits. Peasants could interpret swaraj as relief from landlords, while Congress wished to direct struggle against the colonial state and avoid class war.

Andhra and Tamil regions

In Guntur, Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya led the Chirala-Perala campaign against municipal taxation; residents left the town and established a settlement outside municipal limits. Village officers resigned in Peddanandipadu, weakening local administration. In the Tamil region, toddy-shop picketing, labour action and merchant participation gave non-cooperation distinct local forms.

Bengal and Assam

In Midnapore, campaigns opposed Union Board taxes. In Assam, plantation workers left tea gardens during strikes, imagining Gandhi Raj as freedom from labour control. Police firing at

Chandpur marked the coercive boundary of mobility. Congress had not designed a plantation exodus, illustrating how its message travelled beyond organisational command.

Punjab and Sikh mobilisation

Punjab action bore the memory of 1919. The Akali movement sought to remove corrupt, government-supported mahants from gurdwaras. It had its own religious reform goals but overlapped with non-cooperation through disciplined jathas, volunteer sacrifice and anti-government feeling.

Malabar rebellion

In Malabar, Mappila Muslim tenants faced Hindu jenmi landlords within a coercive colonial agrarian order. Khilafat and Congress activism interacted with long-standing tenancy grievances. From August 1921, rebellion attacked police, officials and landlords; severe repression followed. The conflict also produced killings, forced conversions and attacks on Hindus, while government violence and detention caused further mass death, including the Wagon Tragedy.

It cannot be reduced either to a pure peasant revolt or a purely communal riot. Agrarian, anti-colonial and religious dynamics changed across time and locality. Its violence damaged unity and exposed the inability of national leadership to control an armed rural uprising.

Workers, traders, women and students

Workers joined numerous strikes, though Congress did not consistently make class demands central. Traders supported cloth boycott and sometimes profited from swadeshi demand, while large industrialists feared labour unrest. Women raised funds, spun, picketed and entered public action in growing numbers, but leadership remained male-dominated. Students gave the

movement energy but faced loss of credentials and employment.

Government repression and the 1921 peak

Authorities initially hesitated, hoping the movement would exhaust itself. As volunteer corps multiplied and the Ali brothers challenged military recruitment, repression intensified. Meetings were banned, presses restricted and leaders arrested. By the end of 1921, most major leaders except Gandhi were in prison.

The Prince of Wales's visit in November met a powerful hartal. In Bombay, confrontation among supporters, opponents and communities caused serious deaths. The event again displayed the tension between successful boycott and crowd violence.

At Ahmedabad in December 1921, Congress authorised intensified action and preparation for civil disobedience. Gandhi selected Bardoli in Gujarat for a controlled no-tax campaign. On 1 February 1922 he demanded release of political prisoners and restoration of civil liberty before beginning it.

Chauri Chaura and withdrawal

At Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district on 5 February, police confronted a procession, beat protesters and fired. The crowd pursued the policemen to their station and burned it, killing 22. Gandhi concluded that the country lacked the non-violent discipline required for mass civil disobedience. The Working Committee meeting at Bardoli suspended the campaign on 12 February and redirected workers to constructive activity.

Many leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, were dismayed. Critics argued that one local crime should have been punished without ending a national struggle at its height; withdrawal squandered momentum and allowed the

state to recover. Supporters answer that a movement claiming non-violence could not treat it as optional and that escalation without control might produce wider reprisals and communal conflict.

The strategic dispute is genuine. Gandhi's authority depended on correspondence between means and ends, but central withdrawal also revealed the risks of making a mass movement depend on one leader's moral assessment. The subsequent arrest of Gandhi and six-year sentence, of which he served about two years, deepened the political pause.

Outcomes and limits

Non-cooperation did not obtain swaraj within a year, reverse Punjab punishment comprehensively or determine Turkey's future. The Caliphate itself was abolished by the Turkish Republic in 1924. Measured only by immediate demands, it failed.

Its structural effects were larger:

- Congress became a mass, village-linked organisation with a working executive;
- politics reached peasants, workers, women, students, traders and religious networks on unprecedented scale;
- fear of colonial authority declined and imprisonment became a credential of service;
- khadi, volunteer corps, hartal, boycott and constructive institutions created a reusable repertoire;
- Hindu-Muslim cooperation became a lived possibility, even though it proved fragile;
- local groups learned to translate nationalism into claims against nearby power.

The same localisation created limits. Peasant anti-landlord action, labour demands and religious goals did not always fit Congress discipline. Class compromise restricted agrarian radicalism; communal violence damaged unity; and abrupt withdrawal caused frustration. Mass mobilisation had been achieved,

but governing its social meanings remained unresolved.

Interpretations and debates

Was Jallianwala Bagh an aberration?

Dyer acted with personal brutality, but Punjab's recruitment regime, deportations, racial assumptions, martial-law punishments and official defence indicate a systemic coercive environment. Calling it only one officer's error obscures the institutions that enabled and partly celebrated it.

Did Khilafat communalise nationalism?

Khilafat used religious attachment, yet it also brought Muslim networks into a joint anti-imperial campaign. Taking a community-specific injustice seriously is not inherently communal. The weakness lay in inadequate conversion of temporary solidarity into durable secular organisation and socioeconomic programme. Both integration and risk should be acknowledged.

Why did local movements exceed Congress limits?

National slogans were interpreted through rent, tax, labour, caste and religious experience. Congress provided legitimacy and connection but lacked detailed control over dispersed mobilisation. This autonomy explains both the movement's reach and its violence, class conflict and divergent goals.

Was withdrawal justified?

The ethical-strategic case stresses that non-violence was constitutive, not cosmetic, and uncontrolled escalation risked catastrophe. The opposing case stresses that one incident did not represent millions, withdrawal demoralised organised participants and centralised too much authority in Gandhi. A strong answer

presents withdrawal as consistent with Gandhian method but costly for movement momentum.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
1918	Sedition Committee under Justice Rowlatt reports	Recommends continuation of extraordinary powers against revolutionary activity.
Feb–Mar 1919	Rowlatt Bills debated; one enacted	Detention and special-trial powers continue into peace despite elected Indian opposition.
24 Feb 1919	Satyagraha Sabha formed at Bombay	Gandhi creates a pledge-based body for civil resistance.
30 Mar 1919	Premature hartal at Delhi	Police firing and casualties reveal both popular response and coordination problems.
6 Apr 1919	All-India hartal	Shops close, fasts and meetings occur across cities; first broad all-India Gandhian action.
10 Apr 1919	Kitchlew and Satyapal arrested at Amritsar	Protest, police firing and attacks on Europeans deepen the Punjab crisis.

Date	Event	Why it matters
13 Apr 1919	Jallianwala Bagh massacre	Dyer's troops fire into a trapped crowd during Baisakhi.
15 Apr 1919	Martial law imposed in much of Punjab	Coercion expands through tribunals, punishments and public humiliation.
Oct 1919	Hunter Committee appointed	Official inquiry examines Punjab disorders but does not satisfy Indian demands for accountability.
Nov 1919	All-India Khilafat Conference at Delhi	Moves from deputations towards boycott and non-cooperation.
Mar 1920	Gandhi's Khilafat manifesto	Presents non-cooperation as the response if peace terms violate Muslim demands.
May–Aug 1920	Treaty settlement with Turkey develops into Treaty of Sèvres	Confirms dismemberment fears and radicalises Khilafat politics.
1 Aug 1920	Non-cooperation campaign begins; Tilak dies	Surrender of titles and boycott begin as a major older nationalist leader passes away.
Sep 1920	Special Calcutta Congress	Congress approves non-cooperation for Punjab, Khilafat and swaraj.
Dec 1920	Nagpur Congress	Confirms programme, reorganises Congress territorially and lowers membership fee.

Date	Event	Why it matters
1921	Movement reaches peak	Schools, courts, cloth, strikes, volunteer corps and local agrarian campaigns converge.
Aug 1921	Malabar rebellion begins	Agrarian and anti-state conflict acquires religious violence and severe repression.
Nov 1921	Boycott of Prince of Wales's visit	Demonstrates urban mobilisation; Bombay also experiences deadly communal and crowd violence.
Dec 1921	Ahmedabad Congress	Authorises intensified non-cooperation and preparation for civil disobedience.
1 Feb 1922	Gandhi gives ultimatum before Bardoli action	Plans mass civil disobedience and revenue refusal if repression continues.
5 Feb 1922	Chauri Chaura violence	Crowd kills 22 policemen after confrontation and firing.
12 Feb 1922	Bardoli resolution suspends mass struggle	Gandhi prioritises non-violence and constructive preparation over immediate escalation.
Mar 1922	Gandhi arrested and sentenced	Campaign loses central leadership; strategic debate intensifies.
Nov 1922–Mar 1924	Turkish Sultanate and then Caliphate abolished	Turkish republican transformation removes the institutional Khilafat demand.

High-confusion comparisons

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Rowlatt Act vs Government of India Act	Coercive security law vs constitutional reform	Repression and concession arrived together in 1919.
Dyer vs O'Dwyer	Military commander at the Bagh vs Punjab lieutenant-governor	Firing order versus administrative regime.
Khilafat vs Non-Cooperation	Ottoman-Muslim grievance vs common anti-imperial method	One issue entered a wider programme.
Hartal vs civil disobedience	Voluntary suspension of activity vs open breach of selected law	Protest closure is not necessarily lawbreaking.
Boycott vs constructive work	Withdraw cooperation vs create alternatives	Schools out; national schools in.
Council boycott vs resignation of titles	Refuse constitutional participation vs renounce honour/office	Institutional and symbolic withdrawal.
Awadh movement vs Malabar rebellion	Tenant mobilisation with Congress links vs agrarian-religious armed uprising	Different local translations of swaraj.
Chauri Chaura vs Jallianwala Bagh	Crowd killed policemen vs state troops massacred trapped civilians	Both violence, unequal actors and contexts.
Suspension vs defeat	Leadership ended campaign vs state militarily crushed it	Withdrawal was voluntary but occurred under repression.

Self-test

1. Why did the Rowlatt Act provoke opposition beyond its immediate provisions?
2. Distinguish Reginald Dyer from Michael O'Dwyer.

3. What happened at Jallianwala Bagh, and why should death tolls be qualified?
4. Name the main Khilafat demands and four leaders.
5. Why did Gandhi join Khilafat to Punjab and swaraj?
6. What organisational changes did the Nagpur Congress make?
7. Give five withdrawal and five constructive elements of non-cooperation.
8. How did Awadh peasants reinterpret the national programme?
9. Why does the Malabar rebellion require a multi-causal explanation?
10. What happened at Chauri Chaura and Bardoli?
11. Give the strongest argument for and against withdrawal.
12. Name four durable outcomes of Non-Cooperation.

Answer key

1. It extended wartime coercion into peace after Indian wartime sacrifice and promises of responsible government, while overriding united elected opposition.
2. Dyer commanded troops and ordered the firing; O'Dwyer was Punjab's lieutenant-governor and shaped the wider authoritarian regime.
3. Troops fired about 1,650 rounds into a trapped unarmed gathering; incomplete registration and disputed inquiries make 379 an official minimum rather than certain total.
4. Protect the Caliph's position, sufficient Ottoman territory and sacred places; Muhammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Azad, Ajmal Khan or Hasrat Mohani.
5. He treated Muslim grievance as a justice issue and saw joint non-cooperation as a route to unity and anti-imperial mass action.
6. Linguistic provincial committees, four-anna membership, stronger AICC and Working Committee, and local organisational expansion.
7. Withdrawal: titles, schools, courts, councils, foreign cloth. Construction: khadi, schools, arbitration, unity, anti-untouchability or volunteers.

8. They connected swaraj to lower rents, an end to illegal cesses, protection from eviction and resistance to landlords.
9. Tenancy conflict, colonial coercion, Khilafat mobilisation, anti-state rebellion and religious violence interacted differently by phase and place.
10. A crowd killed 22 policemen on 5 February 1922; the Working Committee suspended mass civil disobedience on 12 February.
11. For: non-violence was essential and escalation unsafe. Against: one incident did not justify ending a national movement and withdrawal destroyed momentum.
12. Mass Congress organisation, loss of fear, wider social participation, khadi and boycott repertoire, volunteer networks or experience of Hindu-Muslim unity; any four.

Closing perspective

The point of From Rowlatt to Non-Cooperation is not a date list. It is an explanation of how institutions, interests, and political choices changed the field for what followed.

Swarajists, Constructive Work, Socialists, and Revolutionaries

C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru founded the Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party after their council-entry proposal lost at the Gaya Congress in December 1922.

Swarajists aimed to enter councils, obstruct budgets and expose dyarchy from within; they did not accept colonial constitutionalism as sufficient.

The post-withdrawal strategic problem

Non-Cooperation had created mass expectations, a large cadre and a transformed Congress. Its abrupt suspension left three immediate questions:

1. How could nationalist workers remain politically active?
2. Should the legislatures created by the 1919 Act still be boycotted?
3. How could the next mass struggle acquire stronger social organisation and discipline?

The council-entry debate was therefore a dispute about interim strategy, not ultimate loyalty. Both Swarajists and No-Changers accepted swaraj and retained formal commitment to Congress. Their disagreement concerned where political energy could best be preserved.

Swarajist strategy: enter to obstruct

C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru argued that emptying the councils allowed loyalists and communal groups to use them unchallenged. Nationalists should enter, reject budgets, defeat government measures, demand responsible government and expose the limits of dyarchy. They called this policy “mending or ending” the councils.

The Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party formed after the Gaya defeat. Its October 1923 manifesto treated the constitutional structure as a means of maintaining British economic control. Candidates would present the national demand, block harmful policy and use debates as public platforms.

In the November 1923 elections, Swarajists won 42 of the 101 elected seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and strong positions in Bengal and the Central Provinces. In cooperation with Independents, Liberals and figures such as Jinnah, they repeatedly challenged the executive. They:

- defeated or reduced budgetary grants;
- demanded release of political prisoners and constitutional change;
- opposed repressive bills;
- exposed the “transferred” and “reserved” division under dyarchy;
- secured Vithalbhai Patel’s election as Assembly president in 1925.

Legislative victory had strict limits. The Governor-General could certify grants, restore expenditure and use special powers. Executive government was not responsible to the elected majority. Obstruction could demonstrate illegitimacy but could not compel transfer of power without mass pressure outside.

Why Swarajism declined

Several forces weakened it after 1925:

- C.R. Das died, depriving the party of its most flexible strategist;
- continuous obstruction became difficult without a coordinated street movement;
- some members accepted offices or cooperation, becoming **Responsivists**;
- communal polarisation divided Hindu and Muslim representatives;
- Bengal Swarajists failed to support predominantly Muslim tenants firmly against landlords;
- electoral bargaining and council routine reduced the image of uncompromising struggle;
- the 1926 elections produced setbacks in several provinces.

Responsivists including N.C. Kelkar, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai advocated cooperation where it could protect claimed Hindu interests. This fractured the original anti-imperial bloc. The main Swarajist leadership withdrew in March 1926, though council politics continued in changed forms. The party's best achievement was to occupy a political pause without legitimising dyarchy; its central failure was inability to join council disruption to organised action outside.

No-Changers and constructive work

No-Changers feared that legislatures would absorb leaders into speeches, patronage and office. Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, M.A. Ansari and others continued the boycott and prepared for renewed civil disobedience through:

- production and circulation of khadi;
- village Congress committees and volunteer training;
- national schools and basic political education;
- Hindu-Muslim unity work;
- prohibition and picketing of liquor;
- campaigns against untouchability;

- panchayats, sanitation and local service.

Constructive work was not meant as charity outside politics. It sought alternative economic ties, cadres embedded in everyday life and social capacity independent of the state. Workers trained in these programmes later became organisers during Civil Disobedience.

Its limits were serious. Khadi did not resolve landlessness or industrial wages; anti-untouchability work often addressed social stigma without attacking land and labour relations; village harmony could conceal class and caste conflict; routine service lacked the visibility that retained young activists. The constructive programme created organisational endurance but could not by itself satisfy demands for rapid transformation.

“Agree to disagree” and Congress unity

Unlike Surat in 1907, the factions avoided formal rupture. A 1923 compromise permitted Swarajists to contest elections while remaining within Congress. After Gandhi’s release on health grounds in February 1924, he gradually accepted their anti-imperial use of councils. The Belgaum Congress of December 1924, the only Congress session Gandhi presided over, endorsed coexistence.

This dual strategy preserved a common nationalist arena. Council members could expose constitutional limits while constructive workers maintained local networks. Because each recognised the other as anti-imperialist, they could reunite when the Simon Commission revived nationwide agitation.

Labour becomes an organised political force

Industrial growth, wartime inflation and harsh conditions produced a wave of strikes after 1918. The All India Trade Union Congress was founded in 1920 with Lala Lajpat Rai as first presi-

dent and Dewan Chaman Lal as general secretary. Nationalists, socialists and communists competed and cooperated within it.

Important actions during the 1920s involved Bombay textile mills, railway workshops at Kharagpur, Tata Iron and Steel at Jamshedpur, and Buckingham and Carnatic Mills at Madras. The Bombay textile strike of 1928 involved roughly 150,000 workers over several months; strikes across India that year involved hundreds of thousands.

Labour politics changed nationalism in three ways:

- it made wages, hours, discipline and union rights national political issues;
- collective production stoppage offered power beyond consumer boycott;
- workers could challenge Indian as well as British employers, complicating a simple nation-versus-foreign-rule framework.

The movement remained regionally concentrated and organisationally divided. Most workers were outside stable unions, women and informal labour received weak representation, and repression or employer dismissal was severe. Congress leaders often supported civil liberty while hesitating over autonomous class struggle.

Communist and socialist currents

The Russian Revolution of 1917, international anti-imperialism and Indian labour struggles stimulated Marxist study. Early communist circles developed around M.N. Roy abroad and S.A. Dange in Bombay, Muzaffar Ahmad in Bengal, Singaravelu Chettiar in Madras and Ghulam Hussain in Lahore. A communist conference at Kanpur in 1925 helped give dispersed activity an organisational focus.

Colonial conspiracy prosecutions sought to isolate this politics. The Peshawar cases targeted émigrés returning through the north-west. The Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case of 1924 convicted Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani and Nalini

Gupta. Public trials unintentionally publicised socialism and the claim that imperialism and capitalism were linked.

Workers' and Peasants' Parties formed in several provinces and operated openly within the wider national movement. They organised labour, youth and peasant activity and pressed Congress towards complete independence. The Meerut Conspiracy Case began with arrests of 31 trade unionists and communists in March 1929, including British activists. The long trial removed organisers but turned the courtroom into an exposition of labour and anti-imperial politics.

Socialism also developed inside Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were influenced by the Soviet experiment, European labour and anti-colonial movements. They criticised both narrow parliamentary obstruction and constructive work without structural economic change. Complete independence, planning, land reform and worker-peasant mobilisation entered nationalist debate before a single socialist party unified these ideas.

Youth and student politics

The withdrawal of 1922 frustrated young participants who had experienced rapid mobilisation. Educational expansion and unemployment produced a politically articulate generation less willing to accept dominion status or indefinite preparation. Youth leagues and student conferences spread after 1927, often linking anti-Simon action to complete independence and socialism.

The Naujawan Bharat Sabha, founded at Lahore in 1926 with Bhagat Singh as a major organiser, was an open platform rather than a secret bomb society. It sought youth, peasant and worker organisation, opposed communal bodies and treated religion as personal belief. The Lahore Students' Union similarly offered legal public activity.

Youth politics mattered because it connected revolutionary sacrifice to mass education. Its weakness was volatility: limited resources, police surveillance and attraction to dramatic action

could disrupt patient organisation.

Why revolutionary activity revived

Many future revolutionaries had joined Non-Cooperation.

Withdrawal convinced some that disciplined non-violence and parliamentary debate could not defeat an armed state. Earlier Bengal and Maharashtra traditions survived, but the second phase differed in interprovincial coordination and growing socialist influence.

Three influences shaped it:

- memory of wartime and Swadeshi revolutionary networks;
- disillusionment with withdrawal and constitutional politics;
- labour, peasant and Marxist ideas suggesting a social revolution beyond transfer of political authority.

“Revolutionary” must not be equated automatically with individual assassination. Organisations moved between fundraising raids, targeted violence, military plans, open youth work, courtroom propaganda and a developing theory of mass revolution.

HRA and the Kakori action

The Hindustan Republican Association was founded at Kanpur in October 1924 by Ram Prasad Bismil, Sachindranath Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee and associates. Its goal was an armed overthrow of colonial rule and a federal republic of the United States of India based on adult franchise. The manifesto *The Revolutionary* sought an organised republic rather than restoration of princes.

Lacking funds, members stopped the 8-Down train near Kakori outside Lucknow on 9 August 1925 and seized government treasury cash. It was intended as appropriation of state money, not robbery of passengers, but one passenger died accidentally. Police arrests destroyed much of the network. Ram Prasad Bis-

mil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Rajendra Lahiri and Roshan Singh were executed; others received transportation or long imprisonment.

Kakori displayed courage and Hindu-Muslim comradeship but also the vulnerability of a small clandestine organisation to surveillance and informers. Bismil's later appeals increasingly emphasised open unity and mass organisation over isolated conspiracies.

HSRA: socialism and political communication

Younger survivors reorganised at Feroz Shah Kotla in Delhi in September 1928. Under Chandrashekhar Azad's leadership, the HRA became the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Shiv Verma, Bejoy Kumar Sinha and others adopted collective leadership and socialism as the declared goal.

Lajpat Rai was injured by police lathis during an anti-Simon procession at Lahore on 30 October 1928 and died on 17 November. HSRA members sought to kill police superintendent James Scott in retaliation but mistakenly shot assistant superintendent J.P. Saunders on 17 December. Rajguru fired first, Bhagat Singh joined, and Azad covered escape, killing a pursuing constable.

This was retaliatory individual action at a moment when the group was trying to develop a broader programme. The contradiction pushed Bhagat Singh towards a different kind of dramatic act: one designed primarily for communication.

Assembly bombing and the politics of trial

On 8 April 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw low-intensity bombs into an unoccupied part of the Central Legislative Assembly while it considered the Public Safety and Trade Disputes measures. They scattered leaflets, shouted "Inquilab

Zindabad” and surrendered. The bombs were intended to avoid deaths and “make the deaf hear.”

The trial and prison became political platforms. Revolutionary prisoners demanded equal treatment with European prisoners, decent food, reading material and recognition as political prisoners. Hunger strikes generated widespread solidarity. Jatin Das died on 13 September 1929 after 63 days, and his funeral procession linked revolutionary prisoners to mass grief.

The Lahore Conspiracy Case tried Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru for Saunders’s killing. A special tribunal curtailed normal appeal. They were executed on 23 March 1931. Their popularity came not simply from violence but from lucid statements on imperialism, socialism, secularism and sacrifice.

Bhagat Singh's ideological rethinking

Bhagat Singh moved away from the “cult of bomb and pistol.” He argued that revolution meant transforming an unjust social order and had to be made by the masses. Political independence without ending exploitation by landlords and capitalists was insufficient. He studied Marxism, defended atheism and critical reason, and opposed communal organisations.

His development matters because martyr imagery can obscure his political thought. He did not regard killing as the definition of revolution; he treated selected actions and the courtroom as propaganda within a hoped-for worker-peasant movement. That mass strategy remained incomplete because execution and repression cut short organisational development.

Bengal and the Chittagong uprising

Bengal revolutionary groups such as Anushilan and Yugantar partly worked inside Congress and partly underground. Factionalism and repression weakened them, but Surya Sen organised a younger Chittagong group with participants including Ganesh

Ghosh, Lokenath Bal, Ananta Singh, Kalpana Dutt and Pritilata Waddedar.

On 18 April 1930, about 65 activists operating as the Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch, seized the police and auxiliary armouries, cut telegraph and telephone connections and disrupted rail links. They failed to secure the main ammunition, limiting military capacity. Surya Sen raised the national flag and proclaimed a provisional revolutionary government. Several days later, revolutionaries fought troops at Jalalabad hills and then dispersed into village networks.

Women played operational roles beyond symbolic support.

Pritilata led the 1932 attack on the Pahartali European Club and died by cyanide; Kalpana Dutt was arrested and sentenced. Government forces burned villages, imposed collective fines and used extensive detention. Surya Sen was betrayed, arrested in February 1933 and executed in January 1934.

Chittagong differed from individual assassination because it targeted armouries, communications and the local machinery of rule through coordinated group action. It inspired youth but could not hold territory or trigger wider revolt.

Repression, achievements and limits

The state used conspiracy law, special tribunals, press restrictions, detention, informers and collective punishment. Repression fragmented leadership and made open mass work difficult. Yet trials often magnified the ideas they sought to suppress.

Across the decade, each strategy achieved something partial:

- Swarajists exposed dyarchy and kept constitutional questions public;
- constructive workers preserved cadres and village links;
- trade unions made labour an independent political actor;
- socialists connected national freedom to class transformation;
- youth organisations demanded complete independence and secularism;

- revolutionaries embodied courage, sacrifice and a republican-socialist horizon.

None alone solved the strategic problem. Council action lacked coercive power; construction could become socially conservative routine; unions remained concentrated; communists faced division and repression; underground groups could not substitute exemplary action for mass organisation. Their interaction, however, prepared a politically broader nationalism for the crises after 1927.

Interpretations and debates

Were Swarajists collaborators?

They entered colonial institutions but aimed to wreck or expose them, rejected office under dyarchy and repeatedly opposed budgets. Some later Responsivists moved towards cooperation, validating part of the No-Changer warning. Council entry itself was a tactical use of institutions, not automatic acceptance of colonial legitimacy.

Was constructive work politically passive?

Khadi, local committees, schools and anti-untouchability work sustained cadres and reduced dependence on government. Yet activity could become routine and avoid structural conflicts over land, wages and caste power. Its political value depended on whether social service prepared struggle or replaced it.

Class politics and national unity

Worker and peasant organisation widened the meaning of freedom beyond transfer of power. It also challenged Indian employers and landlords whom Congress needed. Marxist and socialist critics regard this contradiction as central; broad-front inter-

pretations stress that anti-imperial unity and class organisation could proceed together but required careful sequencing.

Revolutionary violence and mass politics

Small-group actions could inspire courage, expose repression and turn trials into education. They could not by themselves overthrow the state and risked retaliation or isolation. Bhagat Singh’s ideological movement towards workers, peasants and secular socialism represents an internal critique of individual heroic action, not abandonment of revolution.

Bhagat Singh: martyr or socialist thinker?

Both, but memory often privileges martyrdom. His writings defined revolution as ending imperialism, capitalism and class domination through organised masses. The Assembly action was designed for propaganda, not mass casualty. Reducing him to armed bravery removes the content that distinguished his later politics.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
1920	All India Trade Union Congress founded	Creates a national federation for organised labour.
Feb–Mar 1922	Non-Cooperation suspended; Gandhi imprisoned	Produces strategic disagreement and demoralisation.

Date	Event	Why it matters
Dec 1922	Gaya Congress re-jects council entry; Swarajya Party an-nounced	Institutionalises the Swarajist-No-Change debate in-side Congress.
May 1923	Congress compro-mise permits elec-toral participation	Both strategies coex-ist without organisa-tional split.
Oct–Nov 1923	Swarajist manifesto and elections	Party wins a powerful elected position in central and provincial councils.
1923	First May Day obser-vance at Madras	Symbolises the grow-ing public identity of labour politics.
1924	Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case	Colonial prosecu-tion gives communist ideas national public-ity.
Oct 1924	HRA founded at Kan-pur	Creates an inter-provincial revolution-ary organisation with republican aims.
Dec 1924	Belgaum Congress endorses Congress unity	Gandhi reconciles council work and con-structive work within one organisation.
Mar 1925	Vithalbhai Patel elected Assembly president	Shows Swarajist ca-pacity to use institu-tional office against executive monopoly.
Jun 1925	C.R. Das dies	Removes the princi-pal strategist holding Bengal and all-India Swarajism together.
9 Aug 1925	Kakori train action	HRA seizes govern-ment treasury; ar-rests and executions follow.
1925	Communist Party conference at Kanpur	Gives dispersed com-munist groups a more visible organisational focus.

Date	Event	Why it matters
1926	Naujawan Bharat Sabha founded at Lahore	Provides an open, secular youth platform linked to Bhagat Singh.
Mar 1926	Main Swarajist group withdraws from legislatures	Obstruction strategy loses cohesion; Responsivists continue electoral participation.
1927	Simon Commission announced	Revives national agitation and youth radicalism.
1928	Workers' and Peasants' Parties expand; major strikes	Class politics enters a broader anti-imperial coalition.
Sep 1928	HRA reorganised as HSRA at Feroz Shah Kotla	Socialism and collective leadership become formal objectives.
Oct–Nov 1928	Lajpat Rai injured in lathi charge and dies	Creates the context for the Saunders action.
17 Dec 1928	J.P. Saunders killed at Lahore	HSRA retaliatory action makes Bhagat Singh a major police target.
Mar 1929	Meerut arrests	Long conspiracy trial targets communist and trade-union leadership.
8 Apr 1929	Central Assembly bomb action	Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt seek arrest and a propaganda trial.
Sep 1929	Jatin Das dies after 63-day hunger strike	Prisoners' rights campaign generates nationwide sympathy.
18 Apr 1930	Chittagong armoury raid	Surya Sen's group attempts coordinated seizure and communication disruption.

Date	Event	Why it matters
23 Mar 1931	Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru executed	Their martyrdom gives socialist revolutionary nationalism mass symbolic power.
Feb 1931	Chandrashekhar Azad killed at Allahabad	HSRA loses its principal underground commander.
Feb 1933–Jan 1934	Surya Sen arrested and executed	Severe repression breaks the Chittagong network, not its public memory.

High-confusion comparisons

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Swarajists vs No-Changers	Council obstruction vs constructive preparation	Enter institutions versus sustain boycott.
Swarajist vs Responsivist	Enter to obstruct vs cooperate and accept office where useful	Same arena, different endpoint.
Legislative defeat vs executive power	Elected vote vs governor's certification/override	Winning a division did not mean governing.
Constructive work vs social revolution	Alternative institutions and reform vs transformation of property/class	Overlap possible, not identical.
Trade unionism vs communism	Worker organisation vs a socialist political ideology	Unions contained several political currents.
HRA vs HSRA	Republican armed organisation vs explicitly socialist successor	1924 versus 1928.

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Kakori vs Assembly bombing	Fund seizure with accidental death vs planned propaganda and surrender	Organisational finance versus political theatre.
Saunders action vs Assembly action	Retaliatory assassination vs non-lethal propaganda intent	Same organisation, different logic.
HSRA vs Naujawan Bharat Sabha	Underground revolutionary body vs open youth platform	Secret and public work.
Chittagong vs individual assassination	Coordinated attack on state infrastructure vs one targeted official	Insurrectionary demonstration rather than personal retaliation.

Self-test

1. Why did the Swarajist-No-Changer debate arise after 1922?
2. What did Swarajists mean by “mending or ending” the councils?
3. Name three Swarajist achievements and three limitations.
4. List five elements and two limits of constructive work.
5. Why was Congress unity after the strategic split historically important?
6. How did trade unionism complicate a simple nation-versus-Britain politics?
7. What were the effects of the Kanpur and Meerut conspiracy cases?
8. Distinguish the HRA’s goal from the HSRA’s revised goal.
9. What happened at Kakori, and what did repression reveal?
10. Distinguish the Saunders and Assembly actions.
11. What did Bhagat Singh mean by revolution in his mature writings?
12. Why was Chittagong tactically distinctive yet militarily limited?

Answer key

1. Withdrawal left cadres without immediate struggle and raised whether to boycott councils or use them while rebuilding mass capacity.
2. Enter, obstruct budgets and policy, expose constitutional limits, and force genuine self-government or make the councils unworkable.
3. Achievements: strong 1923 bloc, budget defeats, Patel's presidency, civil-liberty debate. Limits: executive override, no outside struggle, communal/Responsivist division, electoral decline.
4. Khadi, schools, village committees, prohibition, unity, anti-untouchability or panchayats; limits included weak attack on land/wage inequality and loss of youth momentum.
5. It avoided another Surat, preserved a common organisation and allowed the strategies to combine during renewed agitation.
6. Workers challenged wages and authority under Indian as well as British employers, placing class demands inside the national coalition.
7. They removed leaders and disrupted organisation but publicised communist and labour arguments through long political trials.
8. The HRA sought an armed federal republic with adult franchise; the HSRA explicitly sought a socialist republic ending exploitation.
9. HRA members seized government cash from a train on 9 August 1925; arrests and executions showed clandestine networks' vulnerability.
10. Saunders was killed in retaliatory assassination; the Assembly bombs were deliberately low-intensity propaganda followed by voluntary surrender.
11. A mass transformation ending imperialism, capitalism, landlordism and exploitation, not personal revenge or a cult of weapons.
12. It coordinated armoury seizure, communication cuts and pro-

visional government, but failed to obtain ammunition or spark a wider uprising.

Closing perspective

The point of Swarajists, Constructive Work, Socialists, and Revolutionaries is not a date list. It is an explanation of how institutions, interests, and political choices changed the field for what followed.

From the Simon Commission to Purna Swaraj

8 November 1927: The British government appointed the seven-member Indian Statutory Commission under Sir John Simon without a single Indian member.

December 1927: The Madras Congress resolved to boycott the commission “at every stage and in every form” and also accepted independence as an objective in principle.

The statutory review became a crisis of political authority

The Government of India Act of 1919 provided for a commission after ten years to review the constitutional system. Stanley Baldwin’s Conservative government appointed it in November 1927, two years before the expected date, partly because it feared that a future Labour ministry might shape the review differently. Sir John Simon chaired seven British parliamentarians, including Clement Attlee. The commission’s racial composition was the decisive provocation: Indians were to be judged for their capacity for self-government by a body from which every Indian was excluded.

Secretary of State Lord Birkenhead had repeatedly challenged Indian politicians to produce a constitutional scheme command-

ing broad agreement. The commission thus presented a double insult. Britain claimed the authority to assess India while questioning whether Indians could agree among themselves.

Congress's Madras session in December 1927, presided over by M.A. Ansari, resolved on complete boycott. Jinnah's faction of the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and many Liberals joined, although Muhammad Shafi's League faction, Punjab Unionists and the Justice Party cooperated with the commission. "All parties boycotted" is therefore an overstatement; opposition was broad but not literally universal.

The boycott revived street politics and a radical generation

When the commission arrived in Mumbai on 3 February 1928, a countrywide hartal greeted it. Black flags, processions and "Simon Go Back" became a repeated repertoire wherever it travelled. Students and youth leagues gave the protests a militancy absent from routine council politics. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose emerged as prominent voices of this generation, while workers' and peasants' organizations and socialist ideas expanded.

Police attacked demonstrators at Lucknow, where Jawaharlal Nehru and Govind Ballabh Pant were injured. At Lahore on 30 October, police led by James A. Scott lathi-charged a procession headed by Lala Lajpat Rai. Rai died on 17 November after suffering serious injuries; nationalist memory connected his death directly with the assault. The event energized revolutionary retaliation, including the later killing of J.P. Saunders in a mistaken attempt to target Scott.

The boycott achieved more than rejection. It restored coordinated public action after the post-Non-Cooperation lull and forced Indian parties to answer Birkenhead's challenge with their own constitutional design.

The Delhi Proposals briefly opened a route to compromise

In December 1927, a broad group of Muslim leaders formulated the Delhi Proposals. They accepted joint electorates in place of separate electorates if four conditions were met: one-third Muslim representation at the centre; representation in Punjab and Bengal according to population; separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency; and constitutional reform in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Congress accepted the proposals at Madras.

This was a significant concession because separate electorates had been central to League politics since 1909. The agreement depended, however, on all components surviving later negotiation. Hindu Mahasabha resistance to Muslim-majority provinces and weightage, Sikh concerns in Punjab, and disagreements within the League made the compromise fragile.

The Nehru Committee wrote a liberal-democratic constitution

The All Parties Conference met in Delhi in February 1928 and at Mumbai in May. It appointed a committee under Motilal Nehru, with members including Tej Bahadur Sapru, Subhas Chandra Bose, M.S. Aney, Mangal Singh, Ali Imam, Shuaib Qureshi and G.R. Pradhan. Its report was finalized at Lucknow in August.

The scheme's central provisions were:

- **Dominion status:** India would possess the constitutional standing of a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth.
- **Responsible government:** A parliamentary executive would be responsible to elected legislatures at the centre and in provinces; the governor-general and governors would normally act on ministerial advice.
- **Bicameral centre:** A House of Representatives and Senate

would form the central legislature.

- **Adult suffrage:** The franchise would be universal rather than restricted by property and education.
- **Fundamental rights:** Nineteen rights included equality before law, freedom of conscience and expression, union rights, equal rights for women and free elementary education.
- **Secular state:** Government would have no official religion and cultural-religious interests would receive protection.
- **Joint electorates:** Separate electorates would end; Muslims would receive reserved seats where they were a minority, proportionate to population and without being barred from contesting other seats.
- **Provincial reorganization:** Provinces could be formed on linguistic lines; Sindh's separation was accepted conditionally.
- **Strong centre:** Residuary powers belonged to the centre rather than the provinces.

The report was a substantial indigenous constitutional achievement. It joined political responsibility to civil rights and adult citizenship well before universal franchise existed under colonial law. Yet “unanimous Indian constitution” is inaccurate. Dominion status divided Congress generations, and communal representation divided the all-party coalition.

Minority safeguards broke the all-party coalition

The report denied reservation in Punjab and Bengal, where Muslims were majorities, and assigned residual powers to the centre. Its conditional approach to Sindh also departed from the Delhi understanding. Muslim negotiators feared that joint electorates without strong safeguards would allow permanent Hindu-majority control at the centre and weaken Muslim provincial majorities. Hindu Mahasabha pressure pushed in the opposite direction.

At the All Parties Convention in Kolkata in December 1928, Jin-

nah proposed three amendments: one-third Muslim representation in the central legislature; Muslim seats in Punjab and Bengal proportionate to population until adult suffrage; and residual powers vested in provinces. Their rejection was a decisive failure of accommodation. Jinnah reportedly described this as a “parting of the ways,” though the later political division was not yet inevitable.

In March 1929, Jinnah consolidated Muslim demands into Fourteen Points. Their organizing principles matter more than memorizing their order:

1. a federal constitution with residuary powers in provinces and full provincial autonomy;
2. effective Muslim representation without reducing Muslim majorities in Punjab, Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province;
3. one-third Muslim representation in the central legislature and cabinets;
4. continuation of separate electorates unless communities voluntarily accepted joint electorates;
5. a minority veto where three-fourths of a community’s legislators considered a measure harmful;
6. separation of Sindh, reforms in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, and protection of Muslim culture, religion, education and language;
7. a fair Muslim share in services and no constitutional change without constituent units’ concurrence.

The Points did not demand Pakistan. They imagined a federal India in which provincial autonomy and constitutional safeguards prevented majoritarian domination. Their emergence nevertheless showed that the common constitutional front of early 1928 had broken down.

Dominion status divided generations inside Congress

Motilal Nehru and many senior leaders regarded dominion status as an achievable transition to self-government. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose considered it inadequate because it retained allegiance to the Crown. They formed the Independence for India League and linked complete independence to socialist and anti-imperialist currents.

The Calcutta Congress of December 1928 faced this disagreement. Gandhi brokered a compromise: Congress accepted the Nehru Report, but if Britain did not grant dominion status by the end of 1929, Congress would demand complete independence and launch non-violent non-cooperation. The grace period was reduced from two years to one under pressure from younger leaders. Bose's amendment for immediate independence was defeated.

This was not merely a contest between impatient youth and prudent elders. Dominion status asked whether British connection could be transformed into equality; complete independence treated imperial sovereignty itself as the obstacle. The one-year ultimatum postponed the decision while setting a fixed test Britain was unlikely to satisfy.

1929 radicalized the political setting

During 1929, foreign-cloth bonfires, labour unrest and revolutionary action raised expectations. The Meerut Conspiracy Case placed thirty-one trade unionists and communists on trial. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt threw non-lethal bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly on 8 April to publicize opposition to repressive legislation. Their courtroom politics attracted radical youth.

The British Labour Party formed a minority government under Ramsay MacDonald in May, producing hope of constitutional movement. On 31 October, Viceroy Irwin declared that dominion status was the "natural issue" of India's constitutional progress

and promised a Round Table Conference after the Simon Report. The statement offered no timetable and did not promise that the conference would draft an immediately operative dominion constitution.

The Delhi Manifesto of 2 November demanded that dominion status be accepted in advance, Congress have majority representation, and political prisoners receive amnesty. A leaders' meeting with Irwin on 23 December produced no guarantee. The Calcutta ultimatum had therefore expired without a satisfactory settlement.

Lahore converted complete independence into official strategy

Congress met at Lahore from 26 to 31 December 1929 with Jawaharlal Nehru as president. His selection represented generational change, international anti-imperialism and a turn toward socialism, although Gandhi retained decisive strategic authority.

The session declared that "swaraj" in the Congress constitution meant complete independence. It authorized the Working Committee to launch civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, when conditions were suitable. Congress legislators were asked to resign and participation in future elections was rejected. At midnight on 31 December, Jawaharlal raised the tricolour on the bank of the Ravi.

The objective contained unresolved meanings. For Gandhi, *purna swaraj* involved moral, social and village regeneration as well as removal of British rule. For Jawaharlal, it increasingly implied political sovereignty and socialist transformation. For peasants and workers, it could mean relief from rent, revenue, debt and workplace power. The phrase unified action without eliminating divergent expectations.

The Independence Pledge gave the resolution a popular form

The Working Committee selected 26 January 1930 for nation-wide observance. The pledge declared British rule economically, politically, culturally and spiritually ruinous; affirmed an inalienable right to freedom and the fruits of labour; and held it a duty to end rule that deprived a people of these rights. It committed participants to non-violent civil disobedience.

Meetings were instructed to avoid long speeches and to take the pledge at a common time. Flags, processions and collective recitation made independence locally visible. The ritual gave a constitutional objective a mass emotional vocabulary. From 1930 to 1947, 26 January was observed as Independence Day. When the Constitution came into force on 26 January 1950, the date preserved that earlier promise.

The Simon Report arrived after politics had overtaken it

Published in May 1930, the Simon Report recommended ending dyarchy and granting provincial autonomy, enlarging provincial councils, retaining communal electorates, and eventually building a federation. It rejected responsible government at the centre, preserved extensive gubernatorial safeguards and did not provide universal adult franchise. It also supported separating Sindh from Bombay and Burma from India.

By then, Congress had declared independence and civil disobedience had begun. A commission initially rejected for excluding Indians now offered less than the Indian-authored constitutional debate had already demanded. The constitutional initiative had shifted from imperial review to competing claims of Indian sovereignty.

Interpretations and debates

Constitutional advance or failed compromise? The Nehru Report was the first major Indian-authored constitutional framework with adult suffrage and enforceable rights. Nationalist narratives emphasize this achievement. A stronger evaluation also recognizes that the drafting process retreated from parts of the Delhi Proposals and could not reconcile Muslim-majority provincial interests with central nation-building.

Was communal breakdown inevitable? A communalist reading treats Hindu and Muslim political interests as permanently incompatible. Ayesha Jalal instead emphasizes Jinnah's search for bargaining power and constitutional safeguards within an all-India federation. The Fourteen Points support that caution: in 1929 the demand was protected participation in India, not a sovereign Pakistan.

Elite bargaining and popular pressure. Cambridge School approaches highlight negotiations among organized elites, regional brokers and constitutional interests. This explains the all-party conventions, but it cannot account fully for hartals, student mobilization, labour radicalism and the emotional reach of "Simon Go Back." Constitutional bargaining and street pressure shaped each other.

Generational radicalization. Sumit Sarkar links the 1928–29 shift to youth leagues, socialist ideas, worker action and revolutionary heroism. Complete independence gained force outside committee rooms before Congress adopted it. Yet Gandhi's control over timing and non-violent method shows that radical language did not automatically transfer organizational leadership to the left.

Gandhi's return to centrality. Judith Brown sees Bardoli and the 1928 Calcutta compromise as crucial to Gandhi's re-emergence after the mid-1920s lull. He mediated between dominion advocates and independence radicals while making constructive work the basis of future mobilization. This interpretation explains his strategic authority, though it should not erase pressure from Nehru, Bose, youth and workers.

Political education and escalation. Bipan Chandra interprets the move from ultimatum to *purna swaraj* as part of a staged anti-imperialist struggle. The year allowed Congress to demonstrate British unwillingness to concede equality before escalating. Critics may see delay, but the pledge and civil-disobedience authorization show that the compromise created a public test rather than indefinite postponement.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
Dec. 1927	Muslim leaders frame the Delhi Proposals; Madras Congress accepts key compromise terms	Joint electorates appear possible if Muslim representation and provincial demands are secured.
8 Nov. 1927	Simon Commission appointed	Premature appointment and total exclusion of Indians provoke a legitimacy crisis.
Dec. 1927	Madras Congress votes for boycott	Congress turns constitutional insult into a countrywide action programme.
3 Feb. 1928	Commission arrives in Mumbai	Hartals and black-flag protests revive mass politics and youth activism.
Feb. 1928	All Parties Conference meets in Delhi	Begins an Indian effort to draft an agreed constitutional framework.

Date	Event	Why it matters
May 1928	All Parties Conference in Mumbai appoints the Nehru Committee	Motilal Nehru chairs the principal drafting body.
Aug. 1928	Nehru Report finalized at Lucknow	Indians produce a detailed scheme for responsible government and rights.
30 Oct.–17 Nov. 1928	Lala Lajpat Rai injured in Lahore and dies	Police repression turns the boycott into a symbol of sacrifice.
Dec. 1928	Calcutta All Parties Convention rejects Jinnah's amendments	The opportunity for a Congress–League constitutional agreement narrows sharply.
Dec. 1928	Calcutta Congress adopts Gandhi's compromise	Britain receives until 31 December 1929 to concede dominion status.
Mar. 1929	Jinnah formulates Fourteen Points	Muslim safeguards become a consolidated negotiating minimum.
Mar.–Apr. 1929	Meerut arrests and Central Assembly bombing	Labour repression and revolutionary action intensify the radical political climate.
31 Oct. 1929	Irwin Declaration	Mentions dominion status as an eventual outcome and promises a Round Table Conference, but no timetable.
2 Nov. 1929	Delhi Manifesto	National leaders demand immediate acceptance of dominion principle, Congress predominance and amnesty.

Date	Event	Why it matters
23 Dec. 1929	Leaders' meeting with Irwin fails	The viceroy offers no concrete assurance about the conference's purpose or timing.
26–31 Dec. 1929	Lahore Congress	Jawaharlal Nehru presides; Congress adopts complete independence.
Midnight, 31 Dec. 1929	National flag raised on the Ravi's bank	Gives the new objective a memorable public ritual.
26 Jan. 1930	Independence Day observed	The pledge turns a Congress resolution into coordinated popular commitment.

High-confusion comparisons

Item	Nehru Report, 1928	Jinnah's Fourteen Points, 1929	Simon Report, 1930
Constitutional status	Dominion status with responsible government	Federal India; status assumed within negotiation	Provincial autonomy, no responsibility at centre
Federal balance	Residuary powers to centre	Residuary powers to provinces	Federation postponed and safeguarded
Electorates	Joint electorates with limited reservation	Separate electorates unless voluntarily abandoned	Retained and extended communal electorates
Muslim majorities	No reserved seats in Punjab and Bengal	Majorities not to be reduced	Communal protections under governors

Item	Nehru Report, 1928	Jinnah's Fourteen Points, 1929	Simon Report, 1930
Franchise	Universal adult suffrage	Adequate representation; no equivalent detailed franchise scheme	No universal adult franchise
Rights	Nineteen fundamental rights	Religious, cultural and educational safeguards	Administrative recommendations, not a rights charter
Political authorship	Indian all-party committee	League negotiating minimum	All-British statutory commission

Often confused	Correct distinction
Madras resolution, 1927 vs Lahore resolution, 1929	Madras accepted independence in principle amid boycott; Lahore made complete independence Congress's operative goal and authorized struggle.
Delhi Proposals vs Fourteen Points	Delhi Proposals offered joint electorates conditionally; Fourteen Points restored separate electorates after negotiations failed.
Dominion status vs <i>purna swaraj</i>	Dominion status retained constitutional association with the Crown; <i>purna swaraj</i> asserted complete sovereignty.
Simon Commission vs Simon Report	The commission was appointed in 1927 and toured in 1928; its recommendations appeared in May 1930.
Independence resolution vs Independence Pledge	Congress adopted the objective at Lahore; people publicly affirmed it on 26 January.

Self-test

1. Why did the composition and timing of the Simon Commission provoke opposition?
2. Which political groups did not join the commission boycott?
3. How did the boycott affect youth politics and revolutionary action?
4. What compromise did the Delhi Proposals offer?
5. List five major constitutional features of the Nehru Report.
6. Why did Muslim negotiators reject important parts of the Nehru Report?
7. What three amendments did Jinnah propose at Kolkata in December 1928?
8. What were the organizing principles of Jinnah's Fourteen Points?
9. How did the Calcutta Congress compromise manage the dominion-versus-independence dispute?
10. Why did the Irwin Declaration fail to satisfy national leaders?
11. What changed at the Lahore Congress of December 1929?
12. Why was the observance of 26 January 1930 politically important?

Answer key

1. Britain appointed the all-British review body prematurely and excluded every Indian, thereby denying Indian self-determination while claiming authority to assess fitness for self-government.
2. Muhammad Shafi's Muslim League faction, the Justice Party and Punjab Unionists were among the important cooperators.
3. Students and youth leagues led militant protests; repression and Rai's death intensified radicalization and helped inspire revolutionary retaliation.
4. Muslim leaders accepted joint electorates in exchange for one-third central representation, population-based seats in Punjab and Bengal, Sindh's separation, and reforms in the NWFP and Baluchistan.
5. Dominion status, parliamentary responsibility, a bicameral

- centre, adult suffrage, fundamental rights, joint electorates, linguistic provinces and a secular state were central features.
6. It denied reservation in Muslim-majority Punjab and Bengal, vested residual powers in the centre and made Sindh's separation conditional.
 7. One-third Muslim central representation, population-proportionate reservation in Punjab and Bengal until adult suffrage, and residuary powers for provinces.
 8. Federalism, provincial autonomy, protected Muslim majorities, one-third central representation, separate electorates, a minority veto, territorial safeguards and cultural-religious protection.
 9. It accepted the Nehru Report but gave Britain only until the end of 1929 to grant dominion status, after which Congress would demand complete independence and begin struggle.
 10. It named dominion status only as an eventual outcome, gave no timetable and did not guarantee that the Round Table Conference would enact it immediately.
 11. Congress formally defined swaraj as complete independence, authorized civil disobedience and gave the objective a national symbol through the Ravi flag-raising.
 12. Collective pledges, flags and meetings turned *purna swaraj* into popular commitment and established a date later preserved by the Republic.

Closing perspective

The Simon boycott challenged Britain's right to judge India without Indian participation and revived countrywide mobilization. Boycott support was broad but not universal; the Shafi League faction, Justice Party and Punjab Unionists cooperated.

Civil Disobedience, Negotiation, and the Poona Pact

31 January 1930: Gandhi sent Irwin eleven demands covering tax, expenditure, industry, civil liberties and prohibition; rejection cleared the way for struggle.

12 March–6 April: Gandhi and seventy-eight initial marchers travelled about 240 miles from Sabarmati to Dandi and broke the salt law.

Gandhi's eleven demands tested the possibility of negotiated retreat

After the Lahore declaration, the Working Committee authorized Gandhi to choose the timing and issue for civil disobedience. On 31 January 1930 he sent Viceroy Irwin eleven demands. Their range was deliberate:

- total prohibition;
- reduction of the rupee–sterling exchange ratio to 1 shilling 4 pence;
- a 50 per cent reduction in land revenue, subject to legislative control;
- abolition of the salt tax and government salt monopoly;
- a 50 per cent reduction in military expenditure;
- a 50 per cent reduction in salaries of the highest civil servants;

- protective tariffs on foreign cloth;
- reservation of coastal shipping for Indian vessels;
- release of political prisoners, withdrawal of political prosecutions and return of exiles, except where serious violence was involved;
- abolition or popular control of the Criminal Investigation Department;
- licences enabling citizens to possess arms for self-defence.

The list connected peasants, consumers, industrialists and civil-liberties activists without centring a demand likely to split landlords from tenants or employers from labour. Tariff protection, coastal shipping and the exchange ratio particularly interested organized business. Irwin's refusal let Gandhi present disobedience as a final resort.

Salt made sovereignty tangible

Salt was consumed by rich and poor, and its taxation fell regressively on ordinary households. Government monopoly made even collecting naturally formed salt illegal. The act was simple, reproducible and non-violent. It could mobilize coastal villagers who made salt, inland communities who sold contraband salt, women whose household labour involved salt, and urban volunteers who picketed its sale.

The choice puzzled leaders expecting land-revenue or constitutional demands. Its strength lay in avoiding a specialized grievance: a pinch of salt showed colonial sovereignty entering daily life.

The Dandi March was a mobile political school

Gandhi left Sabarmati Ashram on 12 March with seventy-eight selected satyagrahis. The route covered roughly 240 miles through Gujarat and reached Dandi on 5 April. At dawn on 6

April, Gandhi picked up saline material and breached the law. The march passed through villages where meetings, volunteer recruitment, resignations from local office, khadi and untouchability were discussed. Extensive Indian and international press coverage turned a slow journey into political theatre.

The initial party was male, despite women's requests to join. Gandhi expected women to undertake picketing and salt manufacture later. Thousands nevertheless attended route meetings and entered public protest once disobedience spread. Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Hansa Mehta and many local organizers made women visible as political actors.

The movement spread through regional repertoires

Civil Disobedience was a national campaign, not a uniform action. Its common frame was non-violent breach of colonial law; its local substance depended on social relations and geography.

Gujarat: Kheda, Bardoli, Borsad and neighbouring areas developed no-revenue action. Patidar peasants had strong organization, but confiscation and auction of land imposed heavy costs. Some families crossed into princely territory to evade coercion.

Tamil region and Andhra coast: C. Rajagopalachari marched from Tiruchirappalli to Vedaranyam. T. Prakasam and Konda Venkatappayya helped lead Andhra salt action. Coastal camps, salt manufacture, cloth boycott and picketing gave the campaign a broad urban-rural form.

Odisha: Gopabandhu Choudhury, Rama Devi and other organizers made salt at Inchudi and along the Balasore, Cuttack and Puri coast. Women's participation and village networks were notable.

Bengal: Midnapore, Arambagh and other districts combined salt action with refusal of the chaukidari tax. Factional conflict inside the Bengal Congress and communal tension constrained unity. Chittagong's armoury raid under Surya Sen belonged to

a revolutionary current, not Gandhian civil disobedience, even though the events shared an anti-colonial moment.

Bihar: Landlocked conditions made salt largely symbolic. Champaran and Saran began salt action, but no-chaukidari-tax campaigns soon became more powerful.

United Provinces: Congress called on zamindars to withhold revenue and tenants to withhold rent. Because many landlords remained loyal, agitation often became a tenant no-rent struggle. This class edge worried leaders trying to preserve a broad coalition.

Central Provinces, Maharashtra and Karnataka: Adivasi and peasant communities violated restrictions on grazing, timber and forest produce. Their claim was often about customary access rather than salt. Congress sometimes tried to contain actions that threatened landlords, forest contractors or local hierarchy.

Assam and the northeast: Students struck against the Cunningham Circular barring political participation. Chandraprabha Saikiani encouraged Kachari villagers' forest-law protest. Jadonang and later Rani Gaidinliu led a Zeliangrong religious-political resistance against taxes and colonial power; its autonomous aims should not be reduced to a Congress branch.

Peshawar and Sholapur tested the limits of non-violent control

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's reform and education work among Pashtuns produced the Khudai Khidmatgars, or Red Shirts, committed to non-violence and disciplined service. After arrests on 23 April, crowds controlled parts of Peshawar for days. Soldiers of the Garhwal Rifles refused orders to fire on an unarmed crowd. A Muslim-majority frontier mobilized under non-violent nationalist leadership, disproving claims that the movement had no Muslim participation anywhere even though aggregate Muslim participation was lower than in 1920–22.

Gandhi was arrested on the night of 4–5 May before he could lead the planned raid on Dharasana Salt Works. In Sholapur, textile workers and residents attacked liquor shops, police stations, courts and other state symbols; martial law restored government control after 16 May. Congress did not organize this violent turn.

At Dharasana on 21 May, Sarojini Naidu, Imam Sahib Abdul Kadir and Manilal Gandhi led unarmed volunteers. Police beat advancing ranks without resistance. Webb Miller's international reporting damaged Britain's moral position. Peshawar, Sholapur and Dharasana together revealed three possibilities: disciplined non-violence, spontaneous seizure of authority and spectacular state brutality.

Participation widened but remained uneven

Women entered marches, salt manufacture, prison, and picketing of liquor, opium and foreign-cloth shops. Their participation challenged domestic seclusion, although leaders often framed it as feminine sacrifice. In Bombay it was highly organized; Bengal saw particularly militant activity. Upper-caste and commercial families were prominent, but participation was not confined to them.

Merchants and petty traders financed action and enforced foreign-cloth boycott. Imported cloth value fell sharply, though the world depression also reduced trade. Industrialists were divided: some backed Congress or mediated, while firms dependent on government orders remained cautious. By late 1930, disruption, unsold stocks and fear of social radicalism reduced much big-business enthusiasm.

Peasants joined where Congress demands matched revenue, rent and forest grievances. Better-off peasants often provided leadership; poorer tenants and Adivasis could push toward no-rent, no-tax or customary-resource claims that local Congress committees feared. Workers participated at Sholapur, Nag-

pur, the Great Indian Peninsular Railway and some ports, but Congress organized no nationwide labour campaign.

Muslim participation was lower than during Khilafat–Non-Cooperation because communal polarization, League distance and local political conditions had changed. The North-West Frontier Province was the major exception; Muslim weavers and local groups also joined in Bihar, Delhi, Lucknow, Bengal and elsewhere. A precise answer avoids both “Muslims abstained” and “participation was unchanged.”

Repression and exhaustion opened the path to negotiation

Government response evolved from hesitation to extensive coercion. Congress committees were banned; leaders and tens of thousands of volunteers were jailed; presses were restricted; property and land were confiscated; crowds faced lathi charges and firing. Repression raised the cost of participation without immediately restoring legitimacy.

By September 1930, urban merchant enthusiasm and sections of richer peasant support were declining. Confiscations hurt Gujarat; class radicalism increased in parts of the United Provinces and forest regions; business sought stability. Yet the state also recognized that the first Round Table Conference, opened in London in November 1930 without Congress, could not produce an authoritative settlement. Liberals Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar mediated.

The government released Gandhi and Working Committee members on 25 January 1931. Gandhi and Irwin then negotiated as political principals, symbolically raising Congress’s status even before agreement.

The Gandhi--Irwin Pact was a truce, not a constitutional settlement

Signed on 5 March 1931, the Delhi Pact required Congress to suspend civil disobedience and attend the Second Round Table Conference. Government agreed to:

- release political prisoners not convicted of violence;
- withdraw emergency ordinances and pending prosecutions connected to the movement;
- remit unpaid fines;
- return confiscated property not already sold to third parties;
- treat officials who had resigned with leniency;
- permit peaceful, non-coercive picketing;
- allow coastal communities to make salt for personal use.

Irwin refused a public inquiry into police excesses. The agreement did not commute the death sentences of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, who were executed on 23 March, or concede independence. Confiscated lands already sold were not restored. Critics therefore called it a retreat.

The counterargument is strategic. Mass movements cannot remain at peak intensity indefinitely; the pact preserved Congress organization, released prisoners and made government negotiate with Gandhi as an equal. Peasants and youth measured success by immediate demands, and their disappointment was real.

Karachi defined the social content of freedom

The Karachi Congress met under Vallabhbhai Patel from 26 to 31 March 1931 amid grief and anger over the executions. It endorsed the pact, reaffirmed *purna swaraj*, praised the revolutionaries' bravery while rejecting political violence, and adopted two major resolutions.

The Fundamental Rights resolution promised free speech and

press, assembly and association, equality regardless of caste, creed or sex, adult franchise, religious neutrality, minority cultural protection and free primary education. The economic programme demanded reduced rent and revenue, debt relief, living wages, limited hours, labour organization and state control of key industries.

Karachi answered a vital question: independence was not only a change of flag or constitutional status. Political freedom had to protect citizenship and reduce economic exploitation. The resolutions later influenced constitutional and planning debates, though Congress practice did not always realize them.

The Round Table process produced federal outlines but no transfer of power

The First Round Table Conference met from November 1930 to January 1931 without Congress. Princes, Liberals, the Muslim League, representatives of the Depressed Classes, Sikhs, Christians, Anglo-Indians, women, labour and business attended. Participants broadly accepted a federation of provinces and princely states, but defence, finance, safeguards and minority representation remained unresolved. Congress's absence deprived the conference of the largest nationalist organization.

At the Second Round Table Conference, 7 September–1 December 1931, Gandhi was Congress's sole official representative. B.R. Ambedkar represented the Depressed Classes; Jinnah and other Muslim delegates advanced community safeguards; princes protected their autonomy; business and labour had separate representation. Gandhi demanded responsible government and claimed Congress represented political India. Other delegates rejected that exclusive claim.

Minority representation became the central deadlock. Gandhi opposed separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, whom he regarded as part of Hindu society. Ambedkar argued that caste Hindu domination made independent political protection essential. Britain retained extensive "safeguards"

over defence, finance and minority interests. No agreement on sovereignty emerged, and Gandhi returned on 28 December.

The Third Round Table Conference met in November–December 1932 without Congress and with limited participation. Its deliberations fed into a 1933 White Paper and eventually the Government of India Act of 1935, but did not settle the national demand.

The second phase faced pre-emptive “civil martial law”

Viceroy Willingdon had no interest in Irwin’s style of negotiation. Even during the truce, repression continued in the North-West Frontier Province, agrarian conflict grew in the United Provinces and detention ordinances operated in Bengal. After the Second Round Table Conference, the Working Committee decided to resume disobedience. Willingdon refused to meet Gandhi and arrested him on 4 January 1932.

Government banned Congress organizations, occupied ashrams, seized property, censored publications and arrested leaders before they could organize. Roughly 80,000 people were imprisoned in the first months. Protest continued through illegal meetings, flag-hoisting, tax refusal, salt action, forest-law breach and secret communication, but lacked the prepared momentum of March 1930.

Mass action was suspended in 1933; a restricted individual campaign followed. In April 1934, Gandhi withdrew Civil Disobedience. Superior repression, leadership detention, exhaustion, social divisions and lack of a new unifying action explain decline. Withdrawal was not a confession that independence had failed as an aim; it ended a tactical cycle.

Communal Award and Poona Pact posed representation against unity

Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald announced the Communal Award on 16 August 1932 after Indian delegates failed to agree. It retained or extended separate electorates for Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans, and created separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. Dalit voters would choose a panel through their own electorate and also participate in the general electorate, producing a form of double vote. About seventy-one provincial seats were reserved for the Depressed Classes under the original allocation.

Gandhi opposed the separate Dalit electorate but did not fast against existing Muslim or Sikh electorates. He argued that politically separating those oppressed by untouchability would divide Hindu society permanently and weaken eradication of the practice. From Yeravda prison, he began a fast unto death on 20 September.

Ambedkar regarded the Depressed Classes as a political minority subjected to caste Hindu power. Separate electorates could enable voters to choose leaders independent of dominant-caste majorities. Gandhi's fast placed him under enormous moral pressure: refusing compromise risked Gandhi's death and violence against Dalits, while accepting weakened independent electoral power.

The Poona Pact of 24 September replaced the separate electorate with joint electorates and reserved seats. It increased provincial reserved seats to 148 and provided an 18 per cent share of British Indian seats in the central legislature. Dalit voters would hold a preliminary election to shortlist candidates, after which the joint electorate chose the representative. The agreement also promised fair access to public services and educational grants.

The pact increased numerical reservation but changed who controlled selection. Gandhi's supporters saw it as preserving social unity while strengthening representation. Ambedkar later argued that joint electorates allowed caste Hindu majorities to

favour compliant Dalit candidates. The ethical assessment must acknowledge that the agreement was negotiated under the coercive pressure of a threatened death, not between equal parties.

Outcomes were political, social and incomplete

Civil Disobedience did not win independence or immediate responsible government. It did, however, make colonial law vulnerable to mass, repeated and locally adapted violation. Congress reached new villages and families; women's public participation became harder to reverse; the frontier demonstrated non-violent Muslim mobilization; peasants and Adivasis connected nationalism to material grievances.

The movement strengthened Congress's moral authority and organizational claim before the 1937 elections. It also revealed limits: weaker Muslim participation overall, selective labour engagement, tensions between richer and poorer peasants, business withdrawal, and leadership anxiety when mobilization threatened social property relations. The Round Table process exposed the inability of a single nationalist claim to dissolve minority and caste representation disputes.

The best judgment separates immediate outcome from historical effect. Constitutionally, the campaign ended without sovereignty. Politically, it delegitimized imperial rule, expanded participation and clarified competing meanings of freedom.

Interpretations and debates

Advance in radicalism. Sumit Sarkar argues that Civil Disobedience represented an advance over Non-Cooperation because it began with law violation and generated no-rent, forest and worker action beyond simple withdrawal from institutions. The movement's radical potential was real, but uneven and often restrained by Congress leadership.

Controlled mass struggle. Bipan Chandra interprets the Gandhi–Irwin Pact through a strategy of struggle–truce–struggle. A truce can conserve cadres, validate gains and prepare another phase; compromise is not surrender if the objective remains. This explains the pact’s timing, though disappointed peasants and youth judged it by unrecovered land and uncommuted death sentences.

Business pressure thesis. R.J. Moore and Sumit Sarkar assign major weight to business support in the early boycott and business pressure for settlement when disorder and losses mounted. Judith Brown, Claude Markovits and Basudev Chatterji also examine this unstable alliance. Aditya Mukherjee warns against treating business as homogeneous or able to dictate Gandhi’s choice: traders, Ahmedabad mill interests, Bombay firms and FICCI figures differed. Business pressure was one factor, not a sufficient cause.

Gandhian legitimacy and women’s agency. Some accounts emphasize how Gandhi made street politics socially respectable for women. Sujata Patel cautions that advocacy and participation cannot be placed in a simple one-way sequence. Women entered because openings existed, but once mobilized they often crossed limits set by male leaders. Agency is visible in organization, arrest and tactical initiative, not just numerical presence.

Poona Pact as unity or coerced compromise. Ravinder Kumar emphasizes Gandhi’s preservation of political unity and the subsequent anti-untouchability campaign. Ambedkar’s later criticism stresses that joint electorates denied Dalits an independent leadership accountable primarily to Dalit voters. Scholars of caste politics further note the coercive setting created by Gandhi’s fast. Numerical gains in reserved seats cannot settle the question of effective representation.

National unity and social difference. A nationalist narrative may treat the Round Table minority claims as colonial divide-and-rule. Colonial officials certainly exploited division, but caste oppression, Muslim political insecurity and regional interests were not invented from nothing. The defensible position distinguishes imperial manipulation from autonomous claims for safeguards.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
26 Jan. 1930	Independence Pledge observed	Establishes complete independence as the moral basis of civil disobedience.
31 Jan. 1930	Gandhi sends eleven demands to Irwin	Offers a final settlement spanning popular and commercial grievances.
12 Mar. 1930	Dandi March leaves Sabarmati	Carefully staged march begins with seventy-eight selected volunteers.
6 Apr. 1930	Gandhi breaks the salt law at Dandi	Converts an everyday necessity into a challenge to colonial sovereignty.
18 Apr. 1930	Chittagong armoury raid	Revolutionary action intersects with, but is organizationally distinct from, Gandhian disobedience.
23 Apr.–4 May 1930	Peshawar uprising	Khudai Khidmatgars mobilize; Garhwal Rifles soldiers refuse to fire on unarmed people.
4–5 May 1930	Gandhi arrested before Dharasana action	His detention triggers wider protest.
7–16 May 1930	Sholapur uprising and martial law	Workers and residents attack state symbols and briefly displace authority.

Date	Event	Why it matters
21 May 1930	Dharasana Salt Works raid	Sarojini Naidu and others lead disciplined protesters into brutal police assault.
May 1930	Abdul Ghaffar Khan arrested; frontier repression expands	Confirms deep non-violent participation in the North-West Frontier Province.
Nov. 1930–Jan. 1931	First Round Table Conference	Federation is discussed, but Congress absence makes settlement impossible.
25 Jan. 1931	Gandhi and Working Committee members released	Opens direct negotiation with Irwin.
5 Mar. 1931	Gandhi–Irwin Pact signed	Congress suspends disobedience and agrees to attend the second conference.
23 Mar. 1931	Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev executed	Intensifies youth anger immediately before Karachi.
26–31 Mar. 1931	Karachi Congress	Endorses the pact and adopts fundamental-rights and economic resolutions.
7 Sept.–1 Dec. 1931	Second Round Table Conference	Gandhi confronts minority, federal and imperial safeguard deadlock.
28 Dec. 1931	Gandhi returns to India	Finds intensified repression under Viceroy Willingdon.
4 Jan. 1932	Gandhi arrested	Government pre-empts a renewed mass campaign.
16 Aug. 1932	Communal Award announced	Extends separate representation to the Depressed Classes and other interests.

Date	Event	Why it matters
20 Sept. 1932	Gandhi begins fast at Yeravda	Applies exceptional moral pressure against a separate Dalit electorate.
24 Sept. 1932	Poona Pact signed	Replaces the separate electorate with joint voting and increased reserved seats.
Nov.–Dec. 1932	Third Round Table Conference	Congress absence and weak participation produce little settlement.
May–Aug. 1933	Mass campaign suspended; individual action attempted	Signals exhaustion and strategic contraction.
Apr. 1934	Civil Disobedience formally withdrawn	Ends the cycle without constitutional victory but with Congress authority enlarged.

High-confusion comparisons

Dimension	Non-Cooperation, 1920–22	Civil Disobedience, 1930–34
Official objective	Swaraj and redress of Punjab/Khilafat wrongs	Complete independence
Core technique	Withdrawal from institutions and goods	Deliberate breach of specific laws from the outset
Principal symbol	Khadi, boycott and institutional non-cooperation	Salt, tax refusal, forest and revenue law violation
Muslim participation	Broad during Congress–Khilafat alliance	Lower overall, major exception in NWFP

Dimension	Non-Cooperation, 1920–22	Civil Disobedience, 1930–34
Women	Important but relatively constrained	Much larger public presence in salt, picketing and prison
Peasants and business	Significant but uneven	Major pillars in many regions during first phase
Congress organization	Recently massified	Stronger provincial and volunteer machinery
End	Withdrawn after Chauri Chaura	Suspended by pact, resumed, then withdrawn after repression

Item	Gandhi–Irwin Pact	Poona Pact
Date	5 March 1931	24 September 1932
Parties	Gandhi and Viceroy Irwin	Ambedkar and other Dalit representatives with caste Hindu leaders under Gandhi's fast
Main problem	Civil disobedience and constitutional negotiation	Electoral representation of the Depressed Classes
Exchange	Congress suspended action; government granted limited concessions	Separate electorate abandoned; reserved seats increased in joint electorates
Central controversy	Truce or retreat	Unity or coerced loss of political autonomy

Round Table	Congress position	Main outcome
First, 1930–31	Absent during Civil Disobedience	Federal principle discussed; Congress participation shown essential.

Round Table	Congress position	Main outcome
Second, 1931	Gandhi sole official representative	Deadlock over minorities, safeguards and central responsibility.
Third, 1932	Absent	Limited deliberation fed the later White Paper and 1935 Act.

Self-test

1. Why did Gandhi frame eleven demands before beginning Civil Disobedience?
2. Why was salt an unusually effective issue for mass mobilization?
3. Give the dates, distance, starting point, destination and initial strength of the Dandi March.
4. Compare the principal forms of Civil Disobedience in Gujarat, Bihar, the United Provinces and forest regions.
5. What made the Peshawar events historically distinctive?
6. How did women, business groups and workers participate, and where were the main limits?
7. What did each side accept in the Gandhi–Irwin Pact, and what did Irwin refuse?
8. Why is the Karachi Congress important beyond its endorsement of the pact?
9. Distinguish the three Round Table Conferences by Congress participation and outcome.
10. Why was the second phase of Civil Disobedience weaker than the first?
11. What did the Communal Award provide for the Depressed Classes, and why did Gandhi oppose it?
12. What did the Poona Pact change, and why did Ambedkar later criticize it?

Answer key

1. The list demonstrated willingness to settle, united popular and commercial grievances, and made rejection the moral justification for escalating to lawbreaking.
2. Everyone consumed salt; the tax was regressive, monopoly reached daily life, and illegal manufacture or possession was simple, visible and widely reproducible.
3. Seventy-eight initial marchers left Sabarmati on 12 March 1930, travelled about 240 miles, reached Dandi on 5 April and broke the law on 6 April.
4. Gujarat emphasized land-revenue refusal; Bihar shifted from symbolic salt to chaukidari-tax refusal; the United Provinces saw no-revenue and tenant no-rent action; central and tribal regions violated grazing, timber and forest-produce restrictions.
5. A disciplined non-violent movement mobilized a Muslim-majority frontier, crowds held Peshawar for days, and Garhwal Rifles soldiers refused to fire on unarmed people.
6. Women made salt, picketed and courted arrest; traders financed and enforced boycott; workers struck in selected centres. Upper-status dominance, divided business interests and absence of a Congress-led national labour campaign limited reach.
7. Congress suspended disobedience and agreed to the conference; government released non-violent prisoners, relaxed salt and picketing rules, remitted uncollected fines and returned some property. Irwin rejected a police inquiry and sentence commutation for Bhagat Singh and his comrades.
8. It defined freedom through fundamental rights, adult franchise, equality, religious neutrality, agrarian relief, labour rights and state control of key industries.
9. Congress missed the first, which outlined federation; Gandhi represented Congress at the second, which deadlocked over minorities and safeguards; Congress missed the weak third, whose work fed later constitutional proposals.
10. Willingdon arrested leaders pre-emptively, banned organi-

zations and censored communication before momentum formed; exhaustion, social division and weaker business support compounded repression.

11. It created a separate Dalit electorate with reserved seats and a double vote. Gandhi believed this would permanently divide Hindu society and weaken abolition of untouchability.
12. It replaced separate electorates with joint electorates, raised provincial reserved seats to 148 and added a preliminary Dalit ballot. Ambedkar argued that dominant-caste voters could still determine which Dalit candidates won, weakening independent leadership.

Closing perspective

Salt succeeded because it made the abstract claim of sovereignty universal, material and easy to enact. Civil Disobedience was one national framework containing multiple regional struggles over salt, rent, revenue, forests and public authority.

Part II

Social coalitions, war, and Partition

The 1935 Act, Provincial Ministries, and Strategic Debate

The 1935 Act proposed an all-India federation of provinces and princely states, but the federation never began because sufficient princes did not accede.

Provincial dyarchy created in 1919 was abolished; provinces received autonomy under ministers responsible to elected legislatures.

The Act's federal architecture

The act envisioned a federation joining British Indian provinces with princely states. Provinces were to enter automatically; princes would join through instruments of accession. In the proposed federal legislature, princely representatives would be nominated by rulers, not elected by their subjects. Their weight could combine with communal and conservative interests to limit nationally elected representatives.

The federation required accession by states representing a specified proportion of princely population and seats. That threshold was not met, so federal provisions never operated. The central government continued under the 1919 framework, modified where the 1935 act was brought into effect.

Three lists divided legislative fields:

- **Federal List:** defence, external affairs, currency, railways, customs and other central matters.
- **Provincial List:** police, public order, agriculture, local government, public health and education, subject to qualifications.
- **Concurrent List:** fields in which both levels could legislate, with federal predominance in conflict.

Residuary power did not automatically belong to provinces or a sovereign federal legislature; the Governor-General could allocate it. This revealed the priority of imperial flexibility over federal principle.

Dyarchy moved from provinces to the proposed centre

The 1919 system divided provincial subjects into “reserved” and “transferred” categories. The 1935 act abolished that provincial dyarchy and made ministers responsible to provincial legislatures across the provincial list.

At the proposed federal centre, dyarchy would reserve defence, external affairs, ecclesiastical affairs, and tribal areas to the Governor-General through councillors. Other federal subjects would go to ministers responsible to the legislature. Because federation never began, central dyarchy remained a constitutional design rather than operating practice.

Provincial autonomy was bounded autonomy

Provinces gained bicameral legislatures in selected cases, responsible ministries, and greater legal scope. Sindh and Orissa became separate provinces; Burma was separated from India; the North-West Frontier Province gained fuller provincial status. A Federal Court began in 1937 to decide federal disputes and interpret the act.

Governors could:

- act in discretion or individual judgment;
- protect peace, minorities, services, and financial stability as special responsibilities;
- reserve bills for the Governor-General;
- promulgate ordinances;
- control key appointments through established services;
- assume government under Section 93.

The Governor-General retained analogous safeguards at the centre, control over defence and external affairs, financial powers, certification, and emergency authority. “Autonomy” therefore described routine ministerial government within an imperial constitutional ceiling.

Franchise and representation

The electorate expanded substantially but remained a minority of adults. Qualifications varied by province and included property, land revenue, rent, tax, literacy, education, office, or special status. Women entered the electorate in greater numbers but remained underrepresented.

Separate electorates continued for Muslims, Sikhs, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, and other categories; special constituencies represented landlords, commerce, industry, labour, and universities. Depressed Classes received reserved seats within the joint-electorate arrangement derived from the Poona Pact. The structure encouraged parties to calculate representation through segmented electorates rather than one equal adult franchise.

Congress election strategy

Congress rejected the act as imposed and demanded a sovereign Constituent Assembly elected on adult franchise. It nevertheless entered elections to defeat loyalist groups, use legislatures

for mass demands, release political space, and expose safeguards.

The manifesto promised civil liberties, release of political prisoners, relief from agrarian indebtedness and rent, labour protection, expansion of education, and opposition to imperial war. Candidate selection balanced organization, caste, community, local influence, and financial capacity; Congress was a broad coalition, not a uniform ideological party.

The 1937 results demonstrated broad reach but also regional limits. Congress won majorities in Madras, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces, and Orissa and was the largest party in Bombay. It later formed ministries in the North-West Frontier Province under Dr Khan Sahib and in Assam under Gopinath Bordoloi. It performed poorly in Muslim-reserved constituencies, especially where provincial Muslim parties dominated. The Muslim League did not yet command all Muslim politics; Punjab's Unionists, Bengal's Krishak Praja and other regional forces remained powerful.

The office-acceptance debate

Congress leaders agreed the act was unacceptable but disagreed over office. Jawaharlal Nehru and socialists feared ministries would tame a movement into routine administration and make Congress responsible for colonial constraints. Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, and other organizational leaders argued that office could provide relief, strengthen cadres, and demonstrate capacity without accepting the constitution.

Gandhi treated ministries as instruments subordinate to the movement. Congress initially refused office and demanded assurance that governors would not use discretionary power to defeat ministers in ordinary administration. After an ambiguous but politically usable statement from the Viceroy, the Working Committee authorized ministries in July 1937.

The compromise was strategic: enter office, implement the

manifesto where possible, preserve organization outside government, and resign if imperial safeguards made honourable administration impossible.

Civil liberties and political prisoners

Congress ministries repealed or relaxed restrictions on organizations and newspapers, released many political prisoners, restored confiscated property in some cases, and reduced surveillance or security demands. They lifted bans on nationalist flags and activity and enabled trade unions, peasant organizations, socialists, and communists to work more openly.

Not every prisoner was released. Officials classified some revolutionaries as violent or excluded cases involving princely states and other jurisdictions. Governors and services resisted. The contradiction was acute: wider liberty strengthened movements that criticized Congress ministries from the left.

Agrarian policy

Agriculture dominated provincial politics, but land relations differed. Ministries passed or proposed tenancy protection, rent reduction, debt relief, restoration of alienated land, and regulation of moneylending. Bihar and United Provinces faced strong zamindar interests inside and outside Congress; Bombay addressed indebtedness and tenancy; Madras dealt with estates and cultivator claims; Orissa and Central Provinces had distinct tenure structures.

Results were partial because:

- provincial revenues depended heavily on land and excise;
- governors could protect financial stability and property;
- courts and bureaucracy slowed implementation;
- landlord members influenced Congress;
- legislation often benefited occupancy or substantial tenants more than landless labour;

- two years was too short for deep restructuring.

Peasant organizations used the new openness to demand more than ministries offered. Congress governments sometimes faced demonstrations led by the All India Kisan Sabha and provincial bodies.

Labour policy

Ministries addressed working hours, dispute conciliation, welfare, union rights, and industrial conflict unevenly. Bombay's 1938 Industrial Disputes Act required notice and restricted some strikes; communists and unions condemned it as coercive. Congress leaders had to balance workers, Indian industrialists, public order, and production.

This exposed a persistent coalition conflict. Business financed nationalism and wanted protection and stability; labour expected the movement to defend wages and organization. Provincial office converted a general anti-imperial alliance into concrete distributive choices.

Education, prohibition, and social policy

The Wardha scheme proposed free, compulsory basic education organized around productive craft, mother-tongue instruction, and self-supporting pedagogy. Zakir Husain's committee developed the plan. Finance, teacher training, and controversy over craft-centred education limited implementation.

Ministries promoted khadi, village industries, public health, Harijan welfare, temple-entry reform in some regions, and prohibition. Prohibition reduced excise revenue needed for social programmes, illustrating how reform goals competed within restricted budgets.

Administration and bureaucracy

Indian ministers gained practical experience in departments, legislatures, budgeting, and negotiation with governors. Yet the ICS, police, district magistracy, and rules of business preserved institutional continuity. Officials could delay, narrow, or reinterpret policy. Ministers also used police against labour or peasant protest, proving that occupying colonial offices could reproduce coercive habits.

Congress established parliamentary boards and attempted discipline over ministers. Gandhi expected simplicity, low salaries, accessibility, and accountability to the organization. Tension persisted between cabinet confidentiality, legislative responsibility, party direction, and mass pressure.

Relations with minorities and the Muslim League

The League accused Congress ministries of cultural majoritarianism, discrimination, promotion of *Bande Mataram*, the Wardha scheme, and the tricolour. The Pirpur Report compiled charges; Congress denied systematic oppression and invited impartial inquiry.

Some complaints were partisan or exaggerated, but symbolic disputes mattered. Congress often assumed that its nationalist identity automatically represented all communities; the League increasingly argued that Muslims required separate political safeguards and organization. Failure to form a coalition in the United Provinces, where Congress demanded League legislators join Congress discipline, deepened mistrust. Provincial experience helped Jinnah rebuild the League from an elite organization toward mass Muslim politics.

War and resignation

On 3 September 1939, Linlithgow declared India at war with Germany without consulting the central legislature, provincial ministers, or major parties. Congress asked for a statement of war aims linked to Indian freedom and an effective national government. The Viceroy offered no transfer of substantive power.

Congress ministries resigned. The decision demonstrated that defence and external affairs remained beyond Indian control and prevented Congress from administering wartime mobilization without political authority. Jinnah called 22 December 1939 a “Day of Deliverance,” showing the depth of Congress-League antagonism.

Resignation sacrificed platforms of provincial reform but restored freedom for confrontation. The experience had trained leaders, expanded organization, exposed safeguards, and shown both the promise and danger of office under colonial rule.

Achievement and limitation

The ministries improved civil space, delivered selected relief, normalized Indian cabinet government, and demonstrated electoral reach. They also disappointed radical peasants and workers, failed to overcome communal mistrust, operated through colonial police and bureaucracy, and could not control finance, defence, or constitutional structure.

Their record should be judged against both the manifesto and their restricted authority. Safeguards were real, but they do not explain every conservative choice; Congress’s own social coalition and leadership priorities also limited reform.

Electoral geography and organizational learning

Election results reflected more than a single national swing. Congress strength depended on years of district committees, civil-disobedience memories, caste alliances, candidate reputation, peasant associations, and urban professional networks. In Punjab, Bengal, Sindh, and Assam, regional parties and local social structures limited it. Reserved constituencies required organization inside electorates Congress had not consistently cultivated. The results therefore revealed both national reach and the incompleteness of a claim to represent every Indian politically.

Ministries changed party organization. Legislators sought appointments, local projects, licences, and relief; district workers expected access; ministers needed bureaucratic cooperation; and the central leadership tried to prevent patronage from replacing movement work. Complaints of corruption, faction, or favoritism were not merely moral failures but signs that a protest organization was becoming a governing party. Congress attempted codes of conduct, ministerial salary limits, parliamentary-board supervision, and separation between party and administration, with uneven success.

Counterfactual choices and strategic cost

Refusing office would have preserved constitutional purity but left governors to assemble minority or loyalist ministries. Remaining in office after September 1939 might have protected provincial programmes but implicated Congress in war without authority. Resignation preserved the sovereignty claim while surrendering institutions and allowing governors to rule under emergency powers. No option was costless.

The experience shaped later constitutional expectations. Indian leaders learned that control of police, finance, services,

defence, and gubernatorial discretion mattered more than a numerical legislative majority. They also learned cabinet procedure, drafting, budgeting, and federal negotiation. The post-1947 state inherited personnel and procedures tested in these ministries, including some centralizing and coercive habits Congress had criticized. Provincial autonomy was therefore both a democratic apprenticeship and an encounter with the temptations of executive power.

Why the experiment mattered after resignation

The ministries ended in 1939, but their political effects outlasted their tenure. Legislators learned departmental supervision, rule-making, and negotiation with permanent officials. Provincial leaders built reputations through administration rather than agitation alone, while voters acquired concrete standards by which nationalist promises could be judged. Everyday disputes over prisoners, tenancy, policing, and finance exposed the constitutional ceiling: governors could reserve legislation, invoke special responsibilities, and rely on an executive apparatus not fully answerable to elected ministers.

The record also shaped later argument. Congress could claim that it had accepted office without accepting imperial supremacy, used available powers for relief, and resigned when the central government denied Indian consent over war. Critics could answer that administration moderated radical demands, disappointed workers or tenants, and strengthened provincial elites. Both judgments capture part of the experiment. Its deepest significance lay in converting abstract constitutional criticism into tested political knowledge. Divided authority could permit limited reform, but it could not deliver responsible self-government. That lesson connected provincial performance to the renewed struggle over sovereignty.

Interpretations and debates

Nationalist interpretation views ministries as proof of administrative competence and a “dress rehearsal” for self-government. Their resignation exposed the hollowness of autonomy.

Left critics argued that office weakened struggle and made Congress defend property and order against workers and peasants. The record in Bombay and agrarian provinces gives this criticism substance, though wider civil liberties also enabled left organization.

Cambridge-school analysis emphasizes provincial patronage, faction, caste, and local electoral calculation. These mattered, but reducing elections to patronage misses manifesto politics, anti-imperial identity, and voluntary organization.

League interpretation emphasized Muslim insecurity under Congress majorities. Some allegations were polemical, yet Congress’s difficulty in representing plural identities and the failed UP coalition had lasting consequences.

Balanced judgement: office was a constrained arena that produced real reform and learning while revealing the social and constitutional limits of Congress power.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
1930–32	Round Table Conferences	Develop the federal and minority framework later embodied in the act.

Date	Event	Why it matters
1933	White Paper on constitutional reform	Sets out proposals examined by a Joint Select Committee.
1934	Congress decides to enter legislatures	Prepares electoral strategy while rejecting constitutional finality.
Aug 1935	Government of India Act receives assent	Creates the most extensive colonial constitutional framework before independence.
1936	Congress election manifesto issued	Links election to civil liberties, agrarian relief, labour rights, and Constituent Assembly demand.
Jan–Feb 1937	Provincial elections	Tests party organization under limited franchise and communal constituencies.
Mar–June 1937	Congress delays office acceptance	Raises the “office versus struggle” strategic debate.
July 1937	Congress ministries begin in most provinces	Provincial autonomy enters practical operation.
1937	Wardha education initiative develops	Seeks basic education through productive craft and mother tongue.
1938	National Planning Committee appointed	Connects political freedom with planned economic development.
1938–39	Labour, tenancy, debt, and civil-liberty measures vary by province	Reveals possibilities and institutional constraints.

Date	Event	Why it matters
3 Sep 1939	Viceroy declares India belligerent	Demonstrates absence of Indian control over war and foreign policy.
Oct–Nov 1939	Congress ministries resign	Ends provincial experiment and opens wartime confrontation.

High-confusion comparisons

Feature	Proposed federation	Operating provincial autonomy
Participants	Provinces plus acceding princely states	Eleven governor's provinces
Status	Never implemented	Operated from 1937
Responsible ministers	Limited federal fields under dyarchy	Provincial fields, subject to safeguards
Imperial control	Governor-General controlled reserved fields and safeguards	Governors held discretion, special responsibilities, Section 93
Representation	Princes nominated representatives; communal and functional seats	Limited franchise and segmented electorates

Self-test

1. Why did the federation under the 1935 Act never operate?
2. Where was dyarchy abolished and where was it proposed?
3. What powers made provincial autonomy conditional?
4. How was the electorate structured?
5. Why did Congress contest elections while rejecting the act?
6. What divided Congress over office acceptance?
7. Name four areas of ministerial reform.

8. Why were agrarian reforms limited?
9. What contradiction appeared in labour policy?
10. How did provincial rule affect Congress-League relations?
11. Why did ministries resign in 1939?
12. Give a balanced assessment of the ministry period.

Answer key

1. Princely states representing the required population and seat threshold did not accede.
2. It ended in provinces and was proposed at the federal centre for reserved versus ministerial subjects.
3. Discretion, special responsibilities, ordinances, reserved bills, financial control, bureaucracy, and Section 93 limited ministers.
4. A minority qualified by property, tax, education, or status voted through general, communal, and functional constituencies.
5. Congress sought to defeat loyalists, implement relief, expand organization, and demonstrate that safeguards blocked real self-government.
6. Critics feared constitutional absorption; supporters saw office as an instrument for relief, training, and exposure of imperial limits.
7. Civil liberties, prisoner release, tenancy and debt relief, labour regulation, education, prohibition, and Harijan welfare are valid.
8. Revenue dependence, landlord influence, governors, courts, bureaucracy, short tenure, and weak protection of landless labour constrained change.
9. Congress claimed worker support but also protected production and Indian business, leading to strike restrictions such as Bombay's 1938 law.
10. Symbolic disputes, ministry allegations, and the failed UP coalition helped Jinnah expand League organization and Muslim insecurity politics.
11. India was declared at war without consultation and Britain re-

fused Congress demands for freedom-linked war aims and national government.

12. Ministries achieved real liberty, relief, and training but remained constrained and reproduced some colonial and class coercion.

Closing perspective

The 1935 federation failed; provincial autonomy operated. Dyarchy was abolished in provinces but proposed at the federal centre.

Social Movements and Competing Political Claims

The Kisan Sabha movement began regionally before the All India Kisan Sabha formed at Lucknow in 1936.

Baba Ramchandra and the Oudh Kisan Sabha mobilized tenants against high rent, illegal cesses, and *bedakhli* eviction.

Constituency matrix

Constituency	Internal divisions	Main objectives	Typical methods	Convergence with nationalism	Main conflict
Peasants	Landlords, rich peasants, tenants, sharecroppers, labourers; caste and crop differences	Rent reduction, revenue relief, debt control, tenure, land	Sabha, petition, no-rent/no-tax, social boycott, seizure, march	Anti-revenue and anti-imperial campaigns	Congress landlords, movement restraint, land redistribution
Workers	Mill, railway, mine, plantation, dock; permanent/casual; skilled/unskilled	Wages, hours, union rights, safety, dignity	Strike, union, picket, procession	Boycott and anti-imperial solidarity	Business interests, nationalist strike timing, communist repression
Princely-state subjects	Peasants, urban professionals, tribal groups, state employees	Civil liberty, responsible government, tax relief	Praja Mandal, petition, satyagraha	Opposition to paramountcy	Congress caution toward princes and local repression
Dalit movements	Region, caste, religion, class and strategy	Civic equality, education, jobs, representation, annihilation of caste	Satyagraha, association, press, electoral bargaining	Opposition to colonial inequality	Congress paternalism, caste Hindu domination, separate political voice
Non-Brahman movements	Landed elites, middle classes, lower castes, radical anti-caste groups	Representation, education, jobs, dignity, social reform	Party, reservation demand, rationalist campaign	Wider democratic reform	Congress Brahman leadership, colonial collaboration, internal hierarchy
Women	Class, caste, religion, region, rural/urban and ideological differences	Suffrage, education, legal equality, labour rights, national freedom	Picket, march, association, relief, underground work	Large role in mass movements	Male leadership, domestic constraints, social reform priorities

Constituency	Internal divisions	Main objectives	Typical methods	Convergence with nationalism	Main conflict
Business	Large industry, merchants, financiers, small enterprise, sectoral differences	Protection, currency stability, infrastructure, Indian control	Funding, chambers, memoranda, swadeshi investment	Opposed imperial discrimination	Labour rights, socialism, tax and regulation

Peasant politics was regionally specific

In Awadh, Baba Ramchandra and local leaders mobilized tenants against high rents, illegal dues, forced labour, and eviction. Jawaharlal Nehru connected with village meetings, but Congress leaders feared violence and landlord alienation. The Eka movement used oaths and refusal of excessive rents; leadership and control differed from the earlier Sabha.

The Moplah rebellion of 1921 grew from Malabar tenancy conflict, Khilafat mobilization, police action, and a history of agrarian outbreaks. It attacked landlords and the colonial state but also produced killings, forced conversion, and communal violence. It cannot be explained as only agrarian revolution or only religious fanaticism.

Bardoli's 1928 campaign opposed a revenue enhancement after inquiry into crop and price conditions. Patel organized village committees, information, non-payment, and resistance to auctions. Women gave him the title "Sardar." The victory restored property and revised assessment. Yet substantial Patidar cultivators were central; Adivasi tenants and labourers did not share equal power.

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha under Sahajanand Saraswati challenged zamindari exactions. Andhra movements under N.G. Ranga emphasized cultivator organization; Kerala, Punjab, Bengal and other regions developed distinct tenant, canal, share-cropper, or debt issues. The AIKS's 1936 programme demanded rent and revenue reduction, debt relief, security, and eventually stronger anti-zamindari measures. Congress socialists and communists were influential, while Congress ministries and landlord members resisted radical demands.

Workers and trade unions

Industrial labour grew in textile mills, jute factories, railways, mines, ports, plantations, and municipal services. Migrant workers retained village and caste ties; women and children were

concentrated in poorly paid work; jobbers and contractors mediated recruitment.

AITUC's founders included Lala Lajpat Rai, N.M. Joshi, and nationalist labour leaders. Gandhi's Ahmedabad model stressed arbitration, welfare, and class cooperation. Communists and the Workers' and Peasants' Parties emphasized class struggle and international labour solidarity. Moderate unionists prioritized legal recognition and negotiation.

The Trade Unions Act protected registered union activity to a limited extent. The Trade Disputes Act restricted sympathetic and public-utility strikes. The Meerut Conspiracy Case detained communist and labour organizers from 1929 and publicized Marxist ideas through a long trial.

Workers joined national protest at key moments, but Congress sometimes discouraged strikes when they threatened coalition or campaign discipline. Employers supported nationalism while using lockouts, police, and labour law against unions. Workers themselves chose action around wages and workplace dignity, not only nationalist calls.

Princely-state movements

About two-fifths of territory remained under princes subject to British paramountcy. Conditions ranged from reforming administrations to autocratic courts; no single description fits all states.

Praja Mandals demanded civil liberties, representative institutions, responsible ministries, lower taxation, and an end to forced labour. The All India States Peoples' Conference connected activists across Rajkot, Jaipur, Kashmir, Hyderabad, Travancore, Mysore, Odisha states, and elsewhere.

Congress initially treated states as internally autonomous and feared endangering all-India unity with princes. By the late 1930s it supported subjects' rights more openly, while insisting local people lead their struggles. Princes used censorship, exile, firing, and arrest; Residents could support repression while claiming non-interference. State movements proved that freedom re-

quired democratization of princely as well as British India.

Dalit politics and Ambedkar

Dalit communities faced exclusion from water, temples, schools, housing, occupations, and public office, alongside economic exploitation. Their politics varied: independent organization, Congress participation, conversion, regional caste associations, and non-Brahman alliances all existed.

Ambedkar's Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha emphasized education and representation. At Mahad in 1927, Dalits asserted the right to draw water from a public tank; the later burning of *Manusmriti* symbolized rejection of scriptural caste hierarchy. The Kalaram temple campaign targeted civic-religious exclusion.

At the Round Table Conferences, Ambedkar demanded separate political safeguards. The Communal Award of 1932 granted separate electorates to Depressed Classes. Gandhi fasted in prison, arguing this would divide Hindu society. The Poona Pact replaced separate electorates with reserved seats elected through joint electorates and increased their number.

The pact expanded reserved representation but placed Dalit candidates within electorates dominated numerically by caste Hindus. Ambedkar saw independent political power as essential; Gandhi emphasized reform within Hindu society and used "Har-ijan," a term many later rejected as paternalistic. Their conflict concerned power, not simply personal disagreement.

The Independent Labour Party linked caste oppression to workers and tenants and opposed the *khoti* system. Ambedkar did not reduce caste to class, nor treat class organization as irrelevant.

Non-Brahman and Self-Respect politics

The Justice Party represented non-Brahman claims in the Madras Presidency through education, jobs, communal reservation, and provincial office. Its leadership included substantial landed and professional groups; participation in dyarchical government gave reforms but also a reputation for elite collaboration.

E.V. Ramasamy's Self-Respect Movement attacked Brahmanism, caste hierarchy, patriarchy, religious authority, and imposed Hindi. It promoted self-respect marriages, women's rights, rationalism, and radical social equality. "Non-Brahman" did not automatically include Dalits on equal terms; intermediate castes could reproduce hierarchy.

In western India, Phule's earlier anti-caste tradition shaped later non-Brahman organization. Kerala's Ezhava, Pulaya and temple-entry struggles, and regional reservation movements, followed distinct trajectories. Anti-caste democracy could converge with nationalism but also criticized Congress for postponing social equality until after freedom.

Women's participation and autonomous demands

Women boycotted cloth and liquor, made salt, courted arrest, carried messages, sheltered activists, raised funds, and led local processions. Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Basanti Devi, Sucheta Kripalani, Aruna Asaf Ali and many local activists became visible, but famous names should not erase rural and working women.

The Women's Indian Association, National Council of Women in India, and All India Women's Conference campaigned for suffrage, education, marriage reform, inheritance, health, and legal equality. Their members debated whether reserved representation helped or isolated women.

Nationalism opened public space but often presented women as disciplined symbols of sacrifice and domestic virtue. House-

hold labour, caste restrictions, purdah, poverty, and male control limited participation. Women workers faced both gender and class exploitation; elite women's legislative priorities did not represent every woman.

Business and nationalism

Indian industrialists opposed discriminatory exchange, tariffs, procurement, shipping, and British business privilege. FICCI, founded in 1927 under figures including G.D. Birla and Purshotamdas Thakurdas, coordinated policy representation. Business financed Congress, newspapers, khadi, and negotiation while seeking tariff protection and constitutional stability.

Business was not politically uniform. Bombay textile, Ahmedabad mill, Tata, Marwari finance, merchants, and small industry had different markets and labour relations. Some supported civil disobedience; others feared disruption. The 1927 Bombay Plan belongs later, but interwar planning discussions already sought state-supported industrialization.

Industrialists could oppose imperial control and worker militancy simultaneously. Gandhi's trusteeship language offered class conciliation; socialists demanded planning, labour power, and public ownership. The National Planning Committee of 1938 brought these conflicts into a common framework.

Convergence and conflict

Anti-imperial moments created convergence: peasants opposed revenue, workers struck against imperial firms, women broke law, business funded swadeshi, Dalit activists demanded rights from the colonial state, and Praja Mandals challenged paramountcy. Yet a shared enemy did not settle who would own land, control factories, define representation, reform family law, or lead government.

Congress functioned as an umbrella because it could translate claims into a national arena. Its breadth was strength and constraint. It delayed or moderated demands that threatened coalition unity; movements outside it ensured that independence acquired social content.

Organization changed identity as well as policy

Associations did not merely aggregate interests that already existed. Kisan meetings taught cultivators to compare rents across villages and name themselves as peasants with shared claims. Unions turned workers from a mill's labour force into members of an industrial class, even while caste, gender, skill, and regional ties persisted. Women's conferences made household law a public question. Dalit newspapers and satyagrahas converted everyday humiliation into a claim to citizenship. Praja Mandals encouraged subjects to imagine themselves as rights-bearing people rather than dependants of a ruler.

Print, rail travel, conferences, flags, resolutions, fundraising, and prison experience connected local organizations. Translation remained difficult: "land to the tiller," "responsible government," "reservation," "swaraj," and "national planning" meant different things to different constituencies. Durable coalitions required negotiation rather than rhetorical unity.

Repression and co-option worked together

The colonial state registered some unions, nominated selected women or minority representatives, recognized chambers of commerce, and permitted restricted councils. It also banned organizations, prosecuted communists, fired on crowds, protected princely rulers, and used emergency law. Recognition

could stabilize moderate leadership; repression could radicalize members or destroy organizational capacity.

Congress governments reproduced this mixture after 1937. They released activists and widened association but also regulated strikes, restrained radical peasant action, and defended public order. Social movements thus confronted two linked questions: whether to enter Congress and state institutions, and how to preserve autonomous pressure after entry.

Outcomes before independence

Few movements achieved their full programme by 1939. Their deeper achievement was institutional and conceptual. Tenancy reform, union legality, reserved representation, local responsible government, women's franchise, planning, and anti-caste law became unavoidable items on the future state's agenda. Limits also endured: landless labour remained weakly represented, informal workers escaped labour law, caste hierarchy survived reservation, women remained a minority in leadership, and business retained disproportionate access to elite negotiation.

Independence would not automatically resolve these conflicts. The organizations of the interwar period created leaders, policy vocabularies, and constituencies that continued to contest the republic. Their history belongs inside nationalism because it defined what national freedom was expected to accomplish.

Internal divisions shaped every bargain

No constituency entered politics with one interest. Among peasants, tenants seeking occupancy rights could conflict with prosperous cultivators who hired labour or sublet land; tribal communities often faced forest restrictions and outsider indebtedness unlike the problems of settled tenants. Workers differed by industry, skill, employment security, region, and union align-

ment. A railway employee, a Bombay textile worker, and a plantation labourer encountered distinct employers and legal constraints. Princely-state politics also varied because a large state with an educated middle class and representative associations did not resemble a small state ruled through dense patronage.

Dalit politics contained debates over separate representation, reserved seats, conversion, class alliance, and cooperation with Congress. Non-Brahman movements ranged from demands for public employment and education to a deeper critique of caste, religion, patriarchy, and Hindi-centred nationalism. Women organized across class, caste, religion, and region; elite-led associations could secure legislative reform while leaving poorer women's labour and land claims less visible. Business groups likewise divided over tariffs, currency, labour regulation, relations with British capital, and the risks of mass agitation.

These differences explain why convergence was usually issue-specific. A group might support civil disobedience against colonial rule yet resist redistribution affecting its own advantage. Conversely, an organization critical of Congress could still cooperate in elections, constitutional negotiations, anti-repression campaigns, or planning. Strong analysis therefore identifies who mobilized, which demand united them, what internal division limited unity, and how the alliance changed over time.

Interpretations and debates

Marxist interpretation foregrounds class conflict and credits workers and peasants with pushing nationalism beyond elite constitutional politics. Class remains essential but cannot absorb caste, gender, religion, and regional authority.

Gail Omvedt and anti-caste scholarship treat non-Brahman and Dalit movements as democratic revolutions with autonomous goals, not side currents awaiting Congress leadership.

Feminist historians distinguish women's participation in nationalist campaigns from transformation of patriarchal power. Visibility in protest did not guarantee equal authority in party,

family, property, or law.

Business historians show Indian capitalists as politically active, capable of bargaining with both Raj and Congress. Labeling them simply nationalist or collaborationist misses sectoral calculation and genuine support for national economic power.

Balanced judgement: social movements widened nationalism while preserving autonomous interests. Convergence was strategic and real; conflict over the future social order was equally real.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
1917	Women’s Indian Association founded	Organizes suffrage and social reform.
1918	Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association develops	Creates Gandhian labour-union model.
1920	All India Trade Union Congress founded	Establishes national labour federation.
1920–21	Oudh Kisan Sabha and Eka mobilizations	Tenant grievances enter mass politics.
1921	Moplah rebellion	Agrarian, anti-state, and religious dynamics produce revolt and violence.
1924	Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha founded	Ambedkar builds education and organization.

Date	Event	Why it matters
1925	Self-Respect Movement begins	Attacks caste, patriarchy, priestly authority, and Brahman dominance.
1926	Trade Unions Act	Legal recognition and immunities for registered unions.
1927	Mahad satyagraha; States Peoples' Conference	Dalit civic equality and princely-state co-ordination advance.
1927	All India Women's Conference begins	National platform for education and legal reform.
1928	Bardoli satyagraha	Disciplined assessment resistance wins inquiry and revision.
1928	Major Bombay textile strike	Communist labour influence expands.
1929	Trade Disputes Act and Meerut arrests	State restricts strikes and prosecutes labour-left organizers.
1930–32	Civil Disobedience	Women, peasants, merchants, workers and regional groups participate unevenly.
1932	Poona Pact	Joint electorates with reserved seats replace separate electorates for Depressed Classes.
1936	All India Kisan Sabha founded	Links class-oriented agrarian demands nationally.
1936	Independent Labour Party founded	Ambedkar joins caste emancipation to worker-peasant politics.

1938	National Planning Committee	Business, science, labour and state planning enter nationalist debate.
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High-confusion comparisons

Pair	Shared ground	Crucial distinction
Congress and AIKS	Anti-imperialism and rural mobilization	AIKS pressed class demands Congress coalitions often moderated.
Gandhi and Ambedkar	Opposition to untouchability	Gandhi stressed Hindu reform; Ambedkar demanded independent power and caste annihilation.
Justice Party and Self-Respect	Anti-Brahman dominance	Justice used office/reservation; Self-Respect pursued deeper rationalist social revolution.
Labour and business	Interest in national industrial development	Conflict over wages, strikes, ownership, and regulation.
Women in nationalism and women's organizations	Expanded public participation	Autonomous bodies prioritized legal and gender reform beyond campaign needs.

Self-test

1. Why is “the peasantry” an inadequate single category?
2. What distinguished Bardoli from Awadh tenant mobilization?
3. How did AITUC’s internal currents differ?
4. Why were princely-state movements doubly political?
5. What did Mahad assert?
6. What did the Poona Pact change?

7. Distinguish Justice Party and Self-Respect strategies.
8. How did nationalist politics both enable and limit women?
9. Why did business support Congress?
10. Why did business conflict with labour and the left?
11. How did autonomous organizations widen nationalism?
12. Give a balanced account of convergence and conflict.

Answer key

1. Landholding, tenancy, caste, crop, region, debt and labour status created conflicting interests among rural people.
2. Bardoli centred assessment resistance among substantial cultivators; Awadh focused tenant rent, cesses and eviction under taluqdars.
3. Moderates favored legal bargaining, Gandhians arbitration, and communists class struggle and international solidarity.
4. Subjects challenged autocratic rulers while those rulers were protected within British paramountcy.
5. Dalits claimed equal civic access to a public water tank and rejected caste exclusion as a political right.
6. It replaced separate electorates for Depressed Classes with more reserved seats elected through joint electorates.
7. Justice leaders pursued office and reservation; Self-Respect attacked caste, patriarchy, priesthood, and religious authority more radically.
8. Campaigns opened public leadership, but male control, household burdens, class-caste hierarchy and party priorities constrained equality.
9. Indian control promised tariffs, infrastructure, currency influence, state protection, and an end to British commercial privilege.
10. Employers resisted wage pressure, strikes, union power, taxation, socialism, and public ownership.
11. They placed land, labour, caste, gender, representation and responsible government inside the meaning of freedom.
12. Groups genuinely united against empire but retained conflicts over property, status, representation, leadership and the fu-

ture state.

Closing perspective

No constituency was socially homogeneous. Peasant politics must distinguish landlord, rich peasant, tenant, sharecropper, and labourer.

War, Cripps, and Quit India

Viceroy Linlithgow declared India at war with Germany on 3 September 1939 without consulting the central legislature or provincial ministries.

Congress demanded a statement of war aims, postwar independence and an immediate responsible government; its provincial ministries resigned in October–November 1939.

India enters war without consent

Linlithgow's unilateral declaration made clear that provincial autonomy under the 1935 Act did not amount to national sovereignty. Congress was anti-fascist but refused to support a war for democracy while India remained colonised. Its conditions were a credible declaration of Indian freedom and an immediate responsible central government.

British statements in October 1939 offered consultation and vague postwar reconsideration, not transfer of power. Congress ministries resigned in eight provinces. The resignations expressed principle, but they also surrendered administrative positions that might have limited repression or shaped wartime policy.

The Muslim League used the new situation strategically. Jinnah called the Day of Deliverance and demanded that no constitutional advance occur without League approval. The colonial government increasingly treated Congress, League, princes

and minorities as separate claimants rather than recognising Congress as the sole national representative. War thus strengthened the League's bargaining position and intensified the constitutional veto problem.

Competing attitudes towards an anti-fascist war

Indian nationalists did not dispute fascism uniformly. Nehru regarded Nazi Germany, fascist Italy and imperial Japan as grave threats; Gandhi opposed war through non-violence; Bose sought Britain's defeat as an opportunity; many conservatives feared disorder. Congress's position combined anti-fascist sympathy with the claim that an enslaved country could not be conscripted into a democratic war.

The Communist Party initially called the conflict an imperialist war. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, it redefined it as a People's War and supported the Allied effort, opposing Quit India. This change followed international communist strategy but also a genuine assessment that Nazi victory threatened socialism and anti-colonial movements. The party was legalised in 1942 and concentrated on labour production, famine relief and anti-fascist mobilisation.

August Offer, 1940

The August Offer proposed:

- dominion status as the declared objective after the war;
- a postwar body, mainly Indian, to frame a new constitution;
- expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council and a War Advisory Council;
- no transfer of authority to a system denied by large and powerful minorities.

The minority assurance meant Britain would not impose a constitution on unwilling communities. The League could treat

this as protection against Congress majoritarianism; Congress saw an imperial veto over national advance. Nothing created an immediately responsible government, and defence remained British-controlled.

Individual Satyagraha: limited action with a precise message

Gandhi did not launch mass civil disobedience in 1940. Britain faced possible invasion, Indian society was divided and Congress had not received a direct popular mandate for paralysing war. Individual Satyagraha instead defended the right to say that participation in war without freedom was wrong and to urge non-violent refusal of support.

Vinoba Bhave was selected first, signalling disciplined moral protest rather than a bid for office. Nehru followed, giving the campaign national prominence. Satyagrahis delivered anti-war speeches at announced places and submitted to arrest. By 1941, thousands, including many legislators and former ministers, had been detained.

The campaign kept Congress active, tested cadres and asserted civil liberty. It did not aim to overthrow administration or stop all production. Critics found it too symbolic; strategically it preserved space between passive acceptance and premature mass revolt.

Why war transformed the crisis in 1942

Japanese advances changed calculations. Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma fell rapidly; the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were occupied. Refugees from Burma described racial discrimination and British evacuation failures. Air attacks on eastern coastal towns and fear of invasion made imperial defence appear both oppressive and ineffective.

Wartime economics magnified anger:

- deficit finance and scarcity drove prices upward;
- Burmese rice imports stopped;
- procurement and military demand disrupted markets;
- forced war loans, contributions and requisitions burdened households;
- “denial” policy in coastal Bengal removed boats and rice to impede a Japanese advance, damaging livelihoods;
- European and Allied military behaviour generated racial grievance.

Rumour that British authority would collapse mattered politically. People did not wait for confirmed intelligence; Japanese victories made a decisive break appear possible.

Cripps Mission: offer and failure

Britain sent Labour politician Stafford Cripps under pressure from Allied necessity, American and Chinese opinion, and the military crisis. His March 1942 draft proposed:

- dominion status after the war, with freedom to leave the Commonwealth;
- a constitution-making body elected by provincial legislatures, with princely representatives nominated by rulers;
- the right of any province not to join the new union and to receive a separate constitutional arrangement;
- a treaty regulating transfer and minority safeguards;
- continued British control of defence during the war, with Indian cooperation.

Congress objected that power was deferred, defence remained beyond responsible Indian control, and provincial non-accession could divide the country. Gandhi captured the delay by calling it a post-dated cheque. Congress also rejected princely nomination as undemocratic.

The League rejected the scheme because it did not explicitly grant a sovereign Pakistan or allow Muslims, as a nation, to determine separation; provinces rather than the League received the option. Princes feared popular constitution-making. Hindu

Mahasabha and Sikh leaders opposed partition possibilities.

Cripps's ability to modify terms was limited by Churchill, the War Cabinet, Linlithgow and Commander-in-Chief Wavell. Failure was not simply Indian intransigence. The offer tried to promise postwar self-determination while retaining immediate imperial command, a contradiction no wording could conceal.

From "orderly withdrawal" to Quit India

After Cripps, Gandhi argued that British presence invited Japanese attack and that withdrawal would allow Indians to defend themselves. He was prepared to risk disorder rather than preserve "ordered anarchy" under foreign rule. Nehru and Maulana Azad initially feared aiding Japan, while C. Rajagopalachari favoured agreement with the League and resigned from Congress positions. Gandhi prevailed.

The Working Committee adopted the Wardha resolution on 14 July. The AICC ratified it at Gowalia Tank, Bombay, on 8 August. It demanded immediate British withdrawal and authorised a mass non-violent struggle under Gandhi. His "Do or Die" call told Indians to consider themselves free and refuse submission.

The resolution did not invite Japanese rule. It affirmed resistance to aggression and envisaged Allied troops remaining by agreement if India were free. The central demand was that defence and political authority could not be separated.

Arrests and the problem of leadership

Before the movement could be formally directed, the state arrested Gandhi, the Working Committee and major provincial leaders in the early hours of 9 August. Congress was declared illegal, funds seized and offices occupied. Aruna Asaf Ali raised the flag at Gowalia Tank after leaders were taken.

Preventive arrests explain the movement's unusual form. There was no single operational command. Yet "spontaneous"

does not mean unprepared. Two decades of Congress organisation, socialist and peasant networks, student activism and circulated local plans had created capacity. Some provincial committees had discussed strikes, tax refusal and disruption of communications. Gandhi possessed symbolic authority over actions he could not supervise.

Three overlapping phases

Urban protest

Hartals, demonstrations, student strikes and clashes erupted in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Pune, Delhi, Patna and other towns. Police firing and rapid arrests suppressed open urban action within days or weeks. Industrial labour participation varied: strikes were significant in Ahmedabad, Jamshedpur and some railway centres, but wartime employment, Communist opposition and coercion limited a general strike.

Rural rebellion and communication sabotage

The centre shifted to Bihar, eastern United Provinces, Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Odisha and Andhra districts. Crowds cut telegraph wires, removed rail tracks, attacked stations, post offices, police stations, courts and revenue records. These were not random targets: communications carried troops and information, while police and revenue offices embodied local colonial authority.

In some places, destruction became violent and officials or informers were attacked. Elsewhere, protesters avoided injury and concentrated on disabling infrastructure. The movement therefore cannot be labelled wholly non-violent or uniformly violent.

Underground resistance

As open revolt was crushed, clandestine networks distributed bulletins, sheltered activists, transmitted messages and or-

ganised sabotage. Rammanohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kripalani and others operated underground. Jayaprakash Narayan escaped Hazaribagh jail in November 1942.

Usha Mehta, Vithalbhai Jhaveri, Babubhai Khakhar and colleagues ran Congress Radio in Bombay from August to November 1942, broadcasting news and messages beyond censorship. Underground organisation sustained morale but faced informers, technical limits and severe police penetration.

Parallel governments

Parallel governments varied from momentary displacement of officials to longer alternative administration.

Ballia

In eastern United Provinces, crowds freed prisoners and compelled officials to yield in August 1942. Chittu Pandey became associated with a national administration. It lasted about a week before troops restored colonial control. Its brevity shows insurrectionary energy without durable military or administrative capacity.

Tamralipta

The Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar operated from December 1942 in Tamruk and Contai areas of Midnapore. Leaders including Satish Samanta, Sushil Dhara and Ajoy Mukherjee organised arbitration, relief, local security and volunteer units. The region's cyclone disaster made relief administration central. It survived underground until Gandhi asked it to dissolve in 1944.

Satara

The **Prati Sarkar** developed from 1943 in Satara under Nana Patil and local activists. “Patri” squads punished informers and oppressive officials, while village committees, people’s courts, grain distribution, prohibition and low-cost marriages created alternative authority. Y.B. Chavan participated in the broader regional movement but should not replace Nana Patil as its principal remembered organiser. It persisted in parts of the district into 1945.

These governments did not hold large continuous territories like sovereign states. Their importance lay in demonstrating that colonial authority could be locally displaced and that rebellion could include administration as well as destruction.

Regional and social variation

Participation was strongest in Bihar, eastern United Provinces, Maharashtra, Karnataka and parts of Bengal, Odisha, Andhra and Gujarat. Madras city, Punjab, Sindh, the North-West Frontier Province and many princely states were less uniformly mobilised, though local actions occurred.

Several factors explain variation:

- density and radicalism of Congress, Socialist, Kisan Sabha and student networks;
- wartime industrial employment and government control;
- communal political competition and League strength;
- local memories of earlier movements;
- geography favourable to underground action;
- speed and severity of preventive arrests.

Students and young lower-level cadres provided leadership. Peasants attacked revenue and police institutions and sometimes settled local class grievances. Workers joined selected strikes rather than a nationwide stoppage. Women served as couriers, organisers, broadcasters and demonstrators; Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta, Sucheta Kripalani and Matangini Hazra

became prominent symbols. Hazra was shot while carrying the flag at Tamluk.

The Muslim League opposed the Congress call and expanded organisationally during wartime. The Communist Party opposed it after adopting the People's War line. The Hindu Mahasabha leadership did not join and participated in some provincial governments. B.R. Ambedkar, serving on the Viceroy's Executive Council, criticised the movement and focused on labour policy and constitutional safeguards. These positions show that Quit India did not represent unanimous organisational India, even though many individuals crossed party lines.

Repression

The government used the Defence of India Rules, censorship, detention without trial, special courts, collective fines and property seizure. Police and troops fired repeatedly; aircraft were used for surveillance and, in a few areas, machine-gunning or bombing. Villages endured searches, beatings and sexual violence. More than 60,000 people were detained; higher totals appear when short arrests are included, so exact figures require category and date.

Repression isolated districts and broke communication. By early 1943, open rebellion had largely ended, though underground and parallel-government activity continued. The state survived because the army, senior civil service and police remained institutionally intact in 1942.

Gandhi's detention and fast

Gandhi and colleagues were held at Aga Khan Palace; other Working Committee leaders were confined at Ahmednagar Fort. Mahadev Desai died soon after detention, and Kasturba Gandhi died in February 1944.

The government blamed Gandhi and Congress for violence.

Gandhi denied having planned it and undertook a 21-day fast from 10 February 1943, framing detention without trial and official accusation as moral injustice. The fast produced Indian and international concern; Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council resigned in protest. Government did not release him until ill health in May 1944.

War economy and Bengal famine

Quit India unfolded alongside a profound subsistence crisis.

The Bengal famine of 1943 arose from wartime inflation, loss of Burmese rice, cyclone and crop disease in some districts, procurement, transport dislocation, boat and rice denial, speculation and unequal access. Rural labourers, fishermen and artisans lost the income and exchange capacity to command food.

Mortality estimates differ; an approximate range of 2.1–3 million excess deaths is safer than one exact total. The famine did not cause the August revolt, which preceded its peak, but it deepened the indictment of wartime colonial government and exposed the distributional violence of military priority.

Outcomes and historical assessment

Quit India did not overthrow the Raj in 1942. Leaders were imprisoned, open revolt crushed and the wartime state continued. Organisationally, Congress suffered disruption while the League expanded. These facts prevent a triumphalist military account.

Its political impact was nonetheless decisive:

- it made immediate independence, not another instalment of reform, the minimum Congress position;
- ordinary people demonstrated willingness to act without top-level command;
- the scale of rebellion altered British estimates of the cost of postwar rule;

- officials understood that another mass movement after the war might coincide with labour, peasant or military disaffection;
- sacrifice in 1942 became central to the 1945–46 election campaign and public legitimacy.

Historians debate spontaneity. Nationalist accounts emphasise a people rising after leaders' arrest; administrative accounts alleged a planned conspiracy; later scholarship identifies both prior organisational preparation and decentralised improvisation. The best formulation is **prepared spontaneity**: networks and political culture existed, but timing, violence and local objectives were not centrally scripted.

Interpretations and debates

Was Quit India spontaneous or organised?

Immediate action after mass arrests was locally improvised and lacked central command. Yet Congress committees, Socialists, Kisan Sabha experience, students and circulated programmes provided prior capacity. "Prepared spontaneity" captures organisation without inventing a national sabotage blueprint.

Was the movement non-violent?

The resolution prescribed non-violent struggle, and many participants used hartal, procession and refusal. Communication sabotage often sought to avoid casualties, but attacks, arson and killing also occurred. Leadership arrest and the "Do or Die" atmosphere loosened discipline. It was a movement launched under a non-violent mandate that developed substantial violent strands.

Did nonparticipation make it unrepresentative?

Major organisations opposed the call, and several regions were less active. Yet breadth across students, peasants, women,

workers and local cadres made it a major national uprising. Representativeness should be assessed as wide but not unanimous, differentiated rather than absent.

Did Quit India force British withdrawal?

It did not make the state collapse in 1942. War exhaustion, British economic weakness, Labour’s election, the INA issue, military disaffection, mass politics and communal deadlock all mattered later. Quit India decisively demonstrated the coercive cost and lack of consent that any postwar restoration would face. It was a major cause within a cumulative explanation, not a solitary trigger.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
1 Sep 1939	Germany invades Poland	Begins the European war that becomes global.
3 Sep 1939	Britain and India declared at war	India’s inclusion without consultation exposes constitutional subordination.
Oct–Nov 1939	Congress ministries resign	Ends Congress provincial office and removes a constraint on colonial repression.

Date	Event	Why it matters
22 Dec 1939	League observes Day of Deliverance	Publicly marks antagonism towards Congress provincial rule.
Mar 1940	Lahore Resolution	Muslim League formally seeks autonomous and sovereign Muslim-majority units.
8 Aug 1940	August Offer announced	Gives minorities a veto-like assurance and postpones substantial transfer until after war.
17 Oct 1940	Vinoba Bhave begins Individual Satyagraha	Opens a controlled campaign for the right to oppose war.
Oct 1940	Jawaharlal Nehru arrested as second satyagrahi	Shows the action was limited in form but politically high-profile.
1940–41	Thousands offer individual protest	Maintains Congress initiative without paralysing the Allied war effort.
Dec 1941	Japan enters war; attacks across South-east Asia	War moves rapidly towards India.
15 Feb 1942	Singapore falls	Shatters claims of British invincibility in Asia.
7 Mar 1942	Rangoon falls	Cuts Burmese rice and brings refugees and military danger towards India.
22 Mar 1942	Stafford Cripps arrives	Britain offers a post-war settlement under Allied and international pressure.
11 Apr 1942	Cripps negotiations collapse	Confirms inability to combine immediate Indian power with imperial war control.

Date	Event	Why it matters
14 Jul 1942	Congress Working Committee adopts Wardha resolution	Calls for British withdrawal and prepares mass struggle.
8 Aug 1942	AICC adopts Quit India resolution	Authorises non-violent mass struggle under Gandhi.
9 Aug 1942	Congress leadership arrested	Preventive decapitation produces spontaneous and localised revolt.
Aug–Sep 1942	Urban strikes and rural rebellion	Communications and visible state institutions become principal targets.
19 Aug 1942	Ballia authority temporarily displaced	Chittu Pandey's local administration releases prisoners before suppression.
Sep 1942	Congress Radio begins broadcasts	Usha Mehta and colleagues maintain uncensored communication.
Dec 1942	Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar formed	Creates a durable parallel administration in Tamluk, Midnapore.
1943	Satara Prati Sarkar develops	Underground rural authority and “patri” squads operate into 1945.
10 Feb–3 Mar 1943	Gandhi's 21-day fast in detention	Challenges government claim that Congress caused violence; generates international pressure.
1943	Bengal famine	Wartime procurement, inflation, entitlement collapse and policy failure cause mass mortality.

Date	Event	Why it matters
6 May 1944	Gandhi released on health grounds	Leadership emerges from detention as war begins turning decisively against Axis powers.
1945	Remaining Congress leaders released	Opens the final constitutional and electoral phase.

High-confusion comparisons

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
August Offer vs Cripps Offer	Vague postwar body/minority veto vs detailed dominion constitution/provincial option	1940 versus 1942.
Individual Satyagraha vs Quit India	Selected speech protest vs mass withdrawal struggle	Controlled assertion versus final mobilisation.
“Do or Die” vs invitation to Axis	Demand for immediate freedom vs support for Japan	Quit India rejected foreign aggression too.
Spontaneous vs unprepared	Locally initiated action vs absence of prior networks	The first does not imply the second.
Underground network vs parallel government	Clandestine communication/action vs alternative local administration	Congress Radio versus Tamralipta.
Ballia vs Satara	Week-long displacement vs multi-year rural Prati Sarkar	Momentary authority versus sustained network.
Tamralipta vs Satara	Relief-centred coastal government vs village-based western underground	Both alternatives, different social geography.

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Quit India vs Bengal famine	1942 revolt vs 1943 mortality crisis	War economy connected them; chronology separates them.
Repression vs political defeat	State crushed open action vs failure to erase legitimacy	Military control survived; consent did not recover.

Self-test

1. Why did Congress ministries resign in 1939?
2. List four provisions and two limitations of the August Offer.
3. Why did Gandhi choose Individual rather than mass Satyagraha in 1940?
4. How did Japanese advance alter Indian politics by early 1942?
5. State four Cripps proposals and why Congress and League each rejected them.
6. What did the Quit India resolution demand, and what happened on 9 August?
7. Explain “prepared spontaneity.”
8. Identify the three overlapping phases of Quit India.
9. Compare Ballia, Tamralipta and Satara.
10. Name four underground leaders and one communication initiative.
11. Why did participation vary by region and social group?
12. Give a balanced judgement on Quit India’s role in British withdrawal.

Answer key

1. India was taken into war without consultation, and Britain refused immediate national government or a binding independence commitment.
2. Postwar constitution body, dominion objective, expanded executive, advisory council and minority assurance; limitations were delay and no responsible central power.

3. He wished to assert free speech and non-consent while avoiding a premature mass crisis during fascist war and internal division.
4. British defeats destroyed prestige, brought invasion fears and refugees, intensified scarcity and made imperial collapse appear possible.
5. Postwar dominion, constitution body, provincial non-accession and British wartime defence; Congress rejected delay/division, League the absence of definite Pakistan.
6. Immediate withdrawal and mass non-violent action; the government arrested central and provincial leaders before dawn.
7. Prior networks and political training enabled rapid action, but its timing, local objectives and violence were improvised without central direction.
8. Urban hartals/strikes, rural rebellion and communication sabotage, then underground and parallel-government activity.
9. Ballia lasted about a week; Tamralipta combined relief and administration to 1944; Satara's rural Prati Sarkar operated into 1945.
10. Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan or Sucheta Kripalani; Congress Radio.
11. Organisational strength, local grievances, war employment, communal competition, repression and geography differed.
12. It did not collapse the Raj in 1942, but made independence immediate and raised the expected cost of any postwar restoration alongside other decisive factors.

Closing perspective

The point of War, Cripps, and Quit India is not a date list. It is an explanation of how institutions, interests, and political choices changed the field for what followed.

Subhas Bose, the INA, and Military Loyalty

Bose won the Congress presidency at Haripura in 1938 and promoted national planning, industrialization and preparation for anti-imperial struggle.

He defeated Gandhi's preferred candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya in the 1939 presidential election but resigned after the Tripuri crisis and Working Committee deadlock.

Bose within Congress: radical but not isolated from mass politics

Subhas Chandra Bose had resigned from the Indian Civil Service in 1921, worked with C.R. Das and endured repeated imprisonment. He supported mass mobilisation, complete independence and a strong modern state capable of planning industrial transformation. As Haripura president in 1938, he helped initiate a National Planning Committee under Jawaharlal Nehru.

Bose and Gandhi differed over timing, method and political economy. Bose expected an approaching European war to create a revolutionary opportunity and wanted Congress to issue an ultimatum to Britain. Gandhi prioritised non-violent preparation and feared an undisciplined confrontation. Bose's socialism was more statist and industrialist than Gandhi's decentralised village ideal.

In the 1939 presidential contest, Bose defeated Pattabhi

Sitaramayya. Gandhi treated the result as his own defeat, and most Working Committee members resigned. At Tripuri, Bose was ill and organisationally isolated; a resolution required a Working Committee acceptable to Gandhi. Unable to form one with authority, he resigned in April and Rajendra Prasad replaced him.

This was not a simple right-versus-left referendum. Personality, federal policy, provincial ministries, impending war and Gandhi's influence all mattered. Bose had electoral support but lacked a cohesive all-India apparatus capable of replacing the existing high command.

Forward Bloc and break with the leadership

Bose organised the Forward Bloc in May–June 1939 to consolidate left forces within Congress, mobilise peasants and workers and prepare immediate anti-imperial struggle. Its base remained strongest in Bengal. Congress disciplinary action removed Bose from Bengal Congress office and barred him from executive positions.

At the Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh in March 1940, Bose opposed any wartime settlement short of independence. A campaign against the Holwell Monument in Calcutta provided the immediate occasion for his arrest in July. He undertook a hunger strike; fearing death in custody, government released him in December but confined him at his Elgin Road residence.

Escape and Axis diplomacy

During the night of 16–17 January 1941, Bose left Calcutta disguised and travelled by car and rail to Peshawar. Assisted by underground contacts including Bhagat Ram Talwar, he crossed into Afghanistan under an assumed identity, reached Kabul and

then travelled through the Soviet Union to Berlin. He arrived later in 1941, not immediately after leaving Calcutta.

In Germany he established the **Free India Centre** and broadcast through **Azad Hind Radio**. Indian prisoners captured in North Africa were recruited into the **Indian Legion**. Bose sought a formal Axis declaration for Indian independence and a military route through the Soviet or Middle Eastern theatre.

The strategy faced basic constraints. Nazi racial ideology contradicted Indian equality; Hitler considered India secondary to European and Middle Eastern aims; Germany could not reach India after its Soviet campaign stalled. The Indian Legion remained a small force under German command and did not become an army of liberation in India.

Bose's alliance should be analysed without either erasing its ethical cost or reducing it to ideological identity. He was not a Nazi theorist and pursued India's independence, but he willingly sought aid from racist dictatorships conducting aggressive war and genocide. "My enemy's enemy" was a strategy of national liberation that created dependence on powers with their own imperial ambitions.

Southeast Asian Indians and Japanese expansion

Japan's conquest of Malaya and Singapore brought large Indian civilian communities and roughly tens of thousands of Indian military prisoners under Japanese authority. Indian activists in Southeast Asia had already organised associations; Rash Behari Bose, living in Japan since the First World War era, worked to unite them through the Indian Independence League.

Japanese propaganda presented an Asian liberation war, but occupation in China and Southeast Asia displayed coercion, extraction and racial hierarchy. Indian nationalists therefore faced a double problem: use Japanese military opportunity while securing political and operational autonomy.

First INA under Mohan Singh

Captain Mohan Singh of the British Indian Army was captured during the Malayan campaign. Japanese intelligence officer Fujiwara Iwaichi encouraged him to organise Indian prisoners. At Farrer Park on 17 February 1942, captured Indian troops were addressed after British surrender; Mohan Singh began recruitment into an Indian National Army.

The Bangkok Conference of June 1942 placed the proposed army under the Indian Independence League led by Rash Behari Bose, demanded recognition of India's independence and invited Subhas Bose to East Asia. Mohan Singh insisted that:

- the INA be a large national army, not a token auxiliary;
- it enter India only under Indian political authority and favourable conditions;
- Japanese forces respect Indian civilians and property;
- training, arms and operations not reduce it to Japanese command.

Japan wanted a manageable force serving its Burma-India strategy. Disputes over numbers, deployment and the League's independence deepened. Mohan Singh refused orders, dissolved or suspended his command and was arrested in December 1942. The first INA disintegrated.

This phase matters because Subhas did not found the INA. Mohan Singh organised the first force; Rash Behari Bose and South-east Asian activists built the League framework; Subhas later revived and transformed both.

Submarine journey and transfer of leadership

In February 1943, Bose left Europe aboard a German submarine. Near Madagascar he transferred at sea to a Japanese submarine, reached Southeast Asia and travelled to Tokyo. Prime Minister Tojo publicly supported Indian independence. Bose arrived

in Singapore in July.

Rash Behari Bose transferred leadership of the Indian Independence League on 4 July. Subhas became Supreme Commander of the reorganised INA on 25 August. His charisma, Congress reputation and organisational drive attracted recruits and financial contributions from the Indian diaspora.

Second INA: organisation and political state

The reorganised force included brigades named Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and Subhas, signalling a claim to represent the entire national movement despite strategic differences. Shah Nawaz Khan, P.K. Sehgal, Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, M.Z. Kiani and others held major commands.

Captain Lakshmi Swaminathan led the **Rani of Jhansi Regiment**, an all-women formation. Many members trained as soldiers, nurses and support staff. It challenged assumptions that war and citizenship were exclusively male, though only limited elements approached front-line deployment.

On 21 October 1943, Bose proclaimed the **Provisional Government of Azad Hind** at Singapore. It claimed authority over Indians abroad, declared war on Britain and the United States, issued currency and stamps, collected revenue and received recognition from Axis-aligned states. “Chalo Delhi,” “Jai Hind” and “Give me blood, and I will give you freedom” condensed sacrifice, unity and advance.

Japan announced transfer of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to Azad Hind. Bose renamed them **Shaheed** and **Swaraj**. Authority was mainly nominal: Japanese military administration retained control, and islanders had suffered detention, torture and killings. The episode demonstrates the difference between diplomatic recognition and effective sovereignty.

Campaign towards Imphal and Kohima

INA headquarters moved to Rangoon in January 1944. During the Japanese **U-Go** offensive, INA units performed reconnaissance, propaganda, intelligence, administration and combat roles along the Arakan and Imphal fronts. They crossed the Indo-Burma border in March. At Moirang, Colonel Shaukat Malik's Bahadur Group raised the tricolour on 14 April and INA-linked administration operated briefly.

Bose expected Indian soldiers in British service and civilians to revolt once a national army entered India. Some desertions occurred, but no general military defection followed. Indian Army units fought effectively for the Allies, and local responses varied according to fear, supply and experience of Japanese conduct.

The campaign failed for interconnected reasons:

- Japanese supply lines stretched across mountainous jungle terrain;
- Allied air power resupplied Imphal while Japanese-INA troops starved;
- monsoon, malaria, dysentery and exhaustion devastated units;
- ammunition, medicine, transport and food were inadequate;
- Japanese command priorities subordinated INA needs;
- Kohima and Imphal held, then Allied counterattack forced retreat.

The retreat from July 1944 became a humanitarian disaster. INA soldiers died, deserted or surrendered; civilians accompanying the withdrawal suffered severely. Military courage could not compensate for strategic dependence and logistical collapse.

Defeat, surrender and Bose's reported death

Allied forces retook Burma during 1945. Japan surrendered on 15 August after atomic bombings and Soviet entry into the war.

INA personnel became prisoners and were transported to India for screening and trial.

Bose reportedly left Southeast Asia and died on 18 August 1945 after a Japanese aircraft crashed at Taihoku, present-day Taipei. Several official inquiries accepted the air-crash account, while disbelief and alternative claims remained powerful in public memory. A revision answer should distinguish documented official conclusion from continuing controversy rather than assert an unsupported survival story.

Why the INA trials transformed a defeated army

British authorities initially classified prisoners as loyal, misguided or most culpable and planned selected courts-martial. Holding public trials at the Red Fort turned military law into national political theatre.

The first trial, beginning in November 1945, charged Colonel Shah Nawaz Khan, Colonel Prem Kumar Sehgal and Lieutenant Colonel Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon with waging war against the King-Emperor; additional charges concerned alleged violence. Their Muslim, Hindu and Sikh identities made them a vivid emblem of unity.

The defence included Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, K.N. Katju, Asaf Ali and Jawaharlal Nehru, who appeared in barrister's robes after many years. The legal argument questioned whether soldiers serving a recognised provisional government could be treated simply as traitors and asserted a people's right to struggle for freedom.

Congress, Muslim League, Communists, Akalis, Hindu Mahasabha members, student bodies, unions and civic groups supported release to varying degrees. INA Week, processions, strikes, fundraising and newspaper campaigns reached cities, cantonments and villages. The issue became less about wartime choice than Britain's right to punish Indians for fighting for India.

The court convicted the three, but Commander-in-Chief Auchinleck remitted the sentences and released them in January 1946. The government preserved the legal verdict while retreating politically. Later trials, including that of Captain Abdul Rashid, generated further protest.

Postwar urban upsurges

INA agitation merged with unemployment, inflation, food shortage, demobilisation and anger at wartime repression. Calcutta witnessed major confrontations in November 1945 during the first trial and again in February 1946 over Rashid Ali's sentence. Students carrying Congress, League and red flags created brief anti-imperial unity; police firing and street battles caused casualties.

These upsurges were intense but geographically concentrated. They showed that a trial could unite competing parties at street level without removing their constitutional conflict over Pakistan.

Royal Indian Navy ratings' revolt

Conditions in the Royal Indian Navy included poor food, low pay, racial abuse, slow demobilisation and limited promotion. Ratings at **HMIS Talwar**, a shore signal establishment in Bombay, had protested conditions; B.C. Dutt was arrested after nationalist slogans were painted. On 18 February 1946, roughly 1,100 ratings struck.

The action spread rapidly to ships and shore establishments in Bombay, Karachi, Calcutta, Madras and other ports, eventually involving around 20,000 ratings across dozens of ships and establishments. A Naval Central Strike Committee under M.S. Khan and Madan Singh articulated demands concerning food, equal treatment, release of INA and political prisoners,

withdrawal of Indian troops from Indonesia and better service conditions.

Ratings lowered or challenged naval colours and displayed Congress, League and Communist flags. In Bombay, workers and students called a solidarity hartal; transport stopped, barricades rose and fighting with police and troops caused heavy casualties. Naval firing and shore confrontation occurred at Karachi as well.

The revolt combined service grievance and political nationalism. It was not a centrally planned INA continuation, nor was every rating committed to one revolutionary programme. Speed of spread showed shared resentment and the emotional effect of INA and Quit India.

Why national leaders urged surrender

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, after negotiating assurances against victimisation, urged ratings to surrender. Jinnah also advised Muslim ratings to end action. Congress and League leaders feared uncontrolled armed conflict, communal fragmentation and a massacre against badly provisioned ships. They also expected constitutional negotiations and wanted disciplined armed forces in the future state.

Communists and sections of the left supported the solidarity strike and criticised surrender. From this perspective, party leaders abandoned a revolutionary opening. The counterargument is that ratings lacked a national military plan, army support was uncertain and urban civilians were absorbing the violence. The revolt ended on 23 February with the statement that ratings surrendered to the people of India, not Britain. Subsequent dismissals showed that assurances did not protect all participants.

Wider armed-forces discontent

Royal Indian Air Force personnel held strikes or stoppages in January 1946 over conditions and demobilisation. An army disturbance at Jabalpur followed in February. These were not co-ordinated branches of a national mutiny, but together with INA sympathy they weakened confidence that Indian forces would remain politically insulated.

The British Indian Army had remained broadly effective during the war and crushed Quit India in 1942. By 1945–46, however, authorities had to consider whether troops would fire reliably on nationalist crowds or fellow servicemen during another mass uprising. Reliability is about expected future behaviour, not proof that the entire military had already defected.

Did INA and RIN end British rule?

A popular argument treats the INA and naval revolt as the decisive reason Britain left. They clearly mattered. INA trials created unprecedented solidarity, military sympathy disturbed officials, and the RIN revolt made coercive reliability a live question. British memoranda considered the danger of a future movement combining Congress mobilisation, labour unrest and service disaffection.

But the causal claim must remain cumulative. Britain was economically exhausted by war; Labour had committed to negotiation; Congress retained mass legitimacy; the League's Pakistan demand made governance deadlocked; international anti-colonial norms had shifted; and the Indian Army had not generally mutinied. A recollection attributed to Clement Attlee that minimised Gandhi and made INA activity decisive is contested and is not a secure substitute for contemporary policy records.

The strongest judgement is that INA mobilisation and armed-forces unrest altered the **risk calculation** of continued rule. They did not independently defeat Britain on the battlefield or make every unit unreliable, but they narrowed the feasibility of coercive

reconquest after 1945.

Interpretations and debates

Bose: fascist collaborator or anti-colonial strategist?

Neither label alone is sufficient. Bose's objective was Indian independence and his social programme was not Nazi racial doctrine. Yet alliance with Germany and Japan involved real moral responsibility and strategic dependence on aggressive dictatorships. Analyse intention, ideology, alliance constraints and consequences separately.

Was the INA autonomous?

Mohan Singh's rupture demonstrates the autonomy problem. Under Subhas, political identity, command structure and fundraising became more distinctly Indian, but weapons, transport, theatre strategy and supply depended on Japan. Azad Hind possessed symbolic sovereignty and limited administration, not full military independence.

Military failure and political success

The INA failed to trigger mass defection, hold Imphal or sustain supply. Its trials later transformed soldiers accused of treason into national heroes and made loyalty itself politically debatable. Military and political results therefore moved in opposite directions.

Did the RIN revolt present a revolutionary situation?

Rapid service spread and worker solidarity were extraordinary. Yet ratings lacked coordinated army support, supplies, an agreed political command and a national plan. Leadership calls for surrender closed one possibility, but the claim that victory

was immediately available is counterfactual. The event was a grave loyalty warning, not a near-certain seizure of power.

Armed-forces loyalty and British withdrawal

Military disaffection raised the anticipated cost of suppressing another movement. Contemporary decision-making also reflects financial exhaustion, Labour policy, mass nationalism, communal deadlock and global change. INA and RIN belong in the causal chain, but claims of exclusive decisiveness exceed the evidence.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
Feb 1938	Bose presides at Haripura Congress	Advocates planning, industrial development and a more urgent anti-imperial posture.
Jan–Apr 1939	Bose re-elected; Tripuri crisis; resigns	Electoral victory cannot overcome organisational opposition from the Gandhian leadership.
May–Jun 1939	Forward Bloc organised	Attempts to unite left forces and radicalise Congress strategy.
Jul–Dec 1940	Bose arrested, hunger strikes, then placed under house arrest	Sets the immediate context for escape.

Date	Event	Why it matters
Night of 16–17 Jan 1941	Bose escapes Calcutta	Begins clandestine journey through Peshawar and Kabul towards Europe.
Apr 1941	Bose reaches Berlin	Establishes a German-based external campaign.
Jan–Mar 1942	Azad Hind Radio broadcasts expand	Carries anti-British messages into India during Japanese advance.
15 Feb 1942	Singapore falls to Japan	Tens of thousands of Indian soldiers become prisoners of war.
17 Feb 1942	Farrer Park address and transfer of Indian prisoners	Mohan Singh gains the manpower base for the first INA.
Jun 1942	Bangkok Conference	Indian Independence League endorses an INA and invites Subhas Bose to East Asia.
Sep 1942	First INA division formed	Mohan Singh tries to create a substantial autonomous Indian force.
Dec 1942	Mohan Singh arrested; first INA disintegrates	Conflict over Japanese control ends the first phase.
Feb–May 1943	Bose travels by German and Japanese submarines	Unusual inter-Axis transfer brings him to East Asia.
4 Jul 1943	Bose assumes League leadership at Singapore	Rash Behari Bose transfers political command.
25 Aug 1943	Bose becomes INA Supreme Commander	Begins full military reorganisation.

Date	Event	Why it matters
21 Oct 1943	Provisional Government of Azad Hind proclaimed	Claims sovereign authority and declares war on Britain and the United States.
Nov–Dec 1943	Japan transfers nominal authority over Andaman-Nicobar; Bose visits	Islands renamed Shaheed and Swaraj, but Japanese military control continues.
Jan 1944	INA headquarters shifted to Rangoon	Prepares participation in Japanese offensive towards India.
18 Mar 1944	INA units cross into India	Armed campaign reaches Indian territory.
14 Apr 1944	INA flag raised at Moirang	Most visible territorial moment of the campaign.
Jul 1944	Retreat from Imphal front begins	Offensive collapses under logistical and military pressure.
15 Aug 1945	Japan surrenders	INA campaign ends; personnel become prisoners.
18 Aug 1945	Reported air crash at Taihoku	Officially reported death of Bose becomes a lasting controversy.
Nov–Dec 1945	First Red Fort INA trial	Defence agitation creates broad anti-imperial unity.
3 Jan 1946	Sentences remitted and officers released	Government retreats before political pressure, though convictions remain.
Jan 1946	Royal Indian Air Force strikes	Signals discontent within uniformed services.
18–23 Feb 1946	Royal Indian Navy ratings' revolt	Naval protest spreads across ports and receives urban solidarity before surrender.

Date	Event	Why it matters
Feb–Mar 1946	Jabalpur army disturbance and continued labour unrest	Reinforces anxiety over reliability of the coercive apparatus.

High-confusion comparisons

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Forward Bloc vs INA	Domestic left bloc vs overseas armed force	1939 political formation versus 1942–43 army.
Indian Legion vs INA	German-based POW formation vs South-east Asian force	Europe versus Japanese theatre.
Mohan Singh vs Subhas Bose	Founder of first INA vs leader of reorganised second phase	1942 versus 1943.
Rash Behari Bose vs Subhas Bose	League architect in Japan vs later supreme political-military leader	Transfer, not identity.
INA vs Indian Independence League	Military organisation vs overseas civilian-political umbrella	Army and political base.
Azad Hind recognition vs sovereignty	Diplomatic recognition vs effective autonomous control	Andaman shows the gap.
Imphal vs Moirang	Main failed strategic objective vs brief INA-administered territorial point	Campaign outcome versus symbolic high point.
INA trial agitation vs RIN revolt	Civilian campaign for prisoners vs armed service strike/rebellion	Nov 1945 versus Feb 1946.
Service grievance vs nationalist revolt	Food/pay/racial complaints vs anti-imperial political demands	RIN contained both.

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Military unreliability vs general mutiny	Increased doubt about future obedi- ence vs complete armed-force collapse	Risk changed before loyalty vanished.

Self-test

1. Why did Bose resign the Congress presidency in 1939 despite winning re-election?
2. What was the original purpose and principal limitation of the Forward Bloc?
3. Give the correct escape sequence from Calcutta to Germany.
4. What institutions did Bose create in Germany, and why did that phase stall?
5. Distinguish the roles of Mohan Singh, Rash Behari Bose and Subhas Bose.
6. Why did the first INA collapse in 1942?
7. Name four institutions or symbols created during the second INA phase.
8. Why did the Imphal-Kohima campaign fail?
9. Why did the first Red Fort trial mobilise such broad support?
10. List four material and three political grievances in the RIN revolt.
11. Why did Congress and League leaders advise the ratings to surrender?
12. Give a balanced judgement on INA-RIN influence over British withdrawal.

Answer key

1. Gandhi's supporters resigned from the Working Committee, Tripuri required a committee acceptable to Gandhi, and Bose lacked an alternative all-India apparatus.
2. It sought to unite the Congress left for immediate struggle; its base remained concentrated and Congress discipline restricted it.

3. He escaped on 16–17 January 1941, travelled through Peshawar and Kabul, crossed the Soviet Union and reached Berlin later in 1941.
4. Free India Centre, Azad Hind Radio and Indian Legion; Nazi priorities, geography and Germany's Soviet failure blocked an Indian campaign.
5. Mohan Singh formed the first INA; Rash Behari built the League framework; Subhas assumed leadership and reorganised the second INA in 1943.
6. Mohan Singh rejected Japanese demands for a small subordinate force, asserted autonomy, dissolved command and was arrested.
7. Azad Hind government, Rani of Jhansi Regiment, named brigades, currency/stamps, Shaheed-Swaraj renaming or "Chalo Delhi"; any four.
8. Overextended supply, monsoon, disease, hunger, Allied air superiority, inadequate Japanese support and battlefield defeat at Imphal-Kohima.
9. A Hindu, Muslim and Sikh officer stood together; the trial questioned Britain's right to punish an Indian liberation army and united rival parties.
10. Material: food, pay, promotion, demobilisation or racial abuse. Political: INA/prisoner release, Indonesia withdrawal, national freedom or anti-imperial solidarity.
11. They feared massacre and uncontrolled armed conflict, lacked coordinated army support and wanted disciplined forces for the future state.
12. Trials and revolt seriously weakened confidence in coercive loyalty, but war exhaustion, mass politics, Labour policy and constitutional-communal crisis also drove withdrawal.

Closing perspective

The point of Subhas Bose, the INA, and Military Loyalty is not a date list. It is an explanation of how institutions, interests, and political choices changed the field for what followed.

The Pakistan Demand and Constitutional Deadlock

Historical construction: Religious difference became communal politics when communities were represented as internally uniform groups with permanently opposed political interests.

Colonial institutions: Census categories, separate electorates from 1909, communal reservations and provincial majorities encouraged politicians to organize religious constituencies.

Communalism turned religious identity into an exclusive political interest

Religious communities existed before colonialism, and conflict occurred in earlier periods. Communalism was more specific: it treated all members of a religion as sharing the same secular interests, then treated those interests as different from, and finally incompatible with, those of other religions. This three-stage distinction prevents two errors. Religious belief was not automatically communal, and communal organizations did not speak for every believer.

Late nineteenth-century cow-protection conflict, Hindi–Urdu controversy, religious processions and revivalist polemic tightened boundaries in particular regions. Print spread allegations rapidly; municipalities and courts turned symbolic disputes into

contests over public power. Economic stress could acquire religious language where traders, professionals, landlords or workers competed through community networks.

Colonial institutions rewarded bounded communities

The census enumerated “Hindus,” “Muslims,” “Sikhs” and caste groups as comparable populations, often forcing overlapping identities into standardized boxes. The 1909 reforms created separate Muslim electorates; later reforms extended communal representation and weightage. A politician seeking a reserved seat now had reason to prove that only a member of the community could represent it.

Provincial boundaries also mattered. Muslims were a minority at the all-India centre but majorities in Punjab, Bengal, Sindh and the North-West Frontier Province. A strong centre and provincial autonomy therefore distributed security differently. Sikh anxieties in Punjab, Hindu bhadralok concerns in Bengal and Muslim minority fears in the United Provinces could not be resolved by one numerical formula.

“Divide and rule” was real but insufficient as a complete explanation. Officials recognized, classified and bargained with communities, cultivated loyalists and used vetoes to limit Congress. Yet Indian organizations actively shaped claims, and material fears could not simply be invented by decree.

Organizations competed to define Hindu and Muslim politics

The Muslim League, founded at Dhaka in 1906, initially represented landed and professional elites seeking safeguards and government access. Its history was not a straight line to Pakistan. The 1916 Lucknow Pact joined Congress and League;

sections supported Khilafat; Jinnah's Fourteen Points of 1929 still proposed federal safeguards within India.

The Hindu Mahasabha developed from provincial Hindu sabhas and became an all-India body in 1915. B.S. Moonje and V.D. Savarkar stressed Hindu political consolidation. As president in 1937, Savarkar described Hindus and Muslims as two nations in a cultural-political sense, although Mahasabha strategy sought a strong, formally undivided state under Hindu predominance. This differed from the League's later territorial demand while sharing a rejection of composite nationhood.

K.B. Hedgewar founded the RSS at Nagpur in 1925. It concentrated on disciplined volunteer training and Hindu social consolidation rather than elections or anti-colonial mass campaigns. Its pre-1947 reach was regionally limited but its idea of the Hindu nation had long-term significance.

Congress formally defended a territorial, secular nation and included leaders such as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Asaf Ali. Its claim to represent all Indians was genuine and politically important. However, Hindu cultural idioms among some workers, weak Muslim organization in many provinces and refusal to recognize the League's exclusive claim left many Muslims unconvinced. Secular declaration did not automatically create equal confidence.

The 1937 elections revealed fragmentation, not a settled two-nation mandate

The Government of India Act of 1935 retained separate electorates and a restricted franchise. Congress won majorities in several provinces and formed ministries in seven, later eight. The League won only about 109 of 482 reserved Muslim seats and performed badly in Muslim-majority Punjab, Bengal, Sindh and the North-West Frontier Province. Unionists dominated Punjab; A.K. Fazlul Huq's Krishak Praja Party led Bengal's coalition;

regional notables remained powerful in Sindh.

Congress itself won only 26 Muslim seats, fifteen in the North-West Frontier Province. The result produced two truths: the League could not yet claim Muslim monopoly, while Congress could not claim a substantial electoral base in reserved Muslim constituencies.

In the United Provinces, Congress and League explored a coalition. Congress demanded that League legislators effectively merge into the Congress legislative party and accept its discipline; the League refused. Congress leaders saw no reason to reward a party with a limited mandate. Jinnah interpreted exclusion as proof that Muslims would be subordinated wherever Congress held a majority. The dispute did not cause Partition, but it became a potent organizing memory.

Congress ministries became a battle over symbols and trust

Congress governments expanded civil liberties, released political prisoners and pursued agrarian or educational reforms within limited provincial powers. League propaganda focused instead on alleged discrimination: promotion of *Bande Mataram*, the Wardha education scheme, Hindi, the Congress flag and local administrative conduct. The Pirpur Report of 1938 and Sharif Report of 1939 assembled claims of Muslim suffering under “Congress raj.” Some allegations were exaggerated or unverified; local misconduct and culturally majoritarian practices also occurred.

The deeper issue was authority. Congress insisted its ministries represented citizens regardless of religion. The League argued that a numerical majority could not represent Muslims without their authorized political organization. Jinnah demanded recognition of the League as the sole Muslim representative and Congress as essentially Hindu. Congress could not accept the latter without abandoning composite nationalism.

Meanwhile, Hindu communal organizations used Muslim mobilization to justify Hindu consolidation. Reciprocal propaganda made each side evidence for the other. Landlords and conservative elites threatened by peasant politics could also reposition class interests as community protection.

War transformed the political balance

Viceroy Linlithgow declared India at war in September 1939 without consulting Indian representatives. Congress demanded a statement of war aims and a commitment to freedom. When these were refused, its ministries resigned in October–November. Jinnah called 22 December a “Day of Deliverance” from Congress rule.

Resignation removed Congress from provincial administration just as war enlarged state patronage, recruitment, contracts and negotiation. The League remained available to government, organized branches and student networks, and presented itself as indispensable to any settlement. The August Offer of 1940 promised that no future constitution would be imposed on a large and powerful minority, giving the League an effective veto.

At Lahore on 23 March 1940, A.K. Fazlul Huq moved the League resolution. It demanded that geographically contiguous Muslim-majority areas in the northwestern and eastern zones be grouped into “independent states” whose constituent units would be autonomous and sovereign. The wording did not mention Pakistan, specify boundaries, resolve whether “states” meant one or more, or define relations between the two distant zones. Ambiguity held together Punjab and Bengal provincial interests, minority-province Muslims seeking protection, and those imagining a centralized sovereign Pakistan.

Pakistan worked because it carried multiple promises

For minority-province Muslim professionals, Pakistan could strengthen bargaining power and provide dignity even if they would remain outside its territory. For Punjab landlords, it could preserve provincial power; for Bengal leaders, it could mean sovereignty with minimal central interference; for students and urban groups, an Islamic homeland; for peasants, relief, opportunity or rule by people closer to them. The slogan's flexibility broadened support before its institutions were defined.

League campaigns used newspapers, poetry, pirs, students, landlords, kinship networks and local organizers. "Islam in danger" rhetoric existed, but material and regional interests shaped how it was received. A vote for the League was a mandate for Muslim political unity and Pakistan as a principle; it did not reveal one agreed map or constitutional design.

Congress repression after August 1942 accelerated the asymmetry. While Congress leaders were imprisoned and organizations driven underground, the League could hold meetings, expand membership and negotiate openly. The Cripps proposals also allowed provinces not to join a future union, making a partition mechanism conceivable even though the League rejected the plan.

Negotiations from 1944 to 1945 failed on representation and sovereignty

The C. Rajagopalachari Formula proposed a post-war plebiscite in contiguous Muslim-majority districts after independence, followed by agreements on defence, commerce and communications. Gandhi used it in talks with Jinnah in September 1944. Jinnah wanted Congress to accept the two-nation principle and a sovereign Pakistan before transfer; Gandhi treated division as a possible choice after British withdrawal and insisted all inhabi-

tants vote. The talks failed over sequence, territory, electorate and the proposed common link.

The Wavell Plan sought an interim Executive Council with parity between “caste Hindus” and Muslims. At the Simla Conference of June–July 1945, Jinnah claimed the League alone must nominate every Muslim member. Congress insisted that, as a national party, it could nominate a Muslim. Wavell ended the conference rather than override the League. This strengthened Jinnah’s claim that no central arrangement could proceed without League consent.

The 1945--46 elections created rival mandates

Congress won the overwhelming majority of general constituencies and campaigned on independence and the legacy of Quit India. The League won all thirty Muslim seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and roughly 425 of 492 Muslim seats in the provincial assemblies, polling a large majority of the Muslim vote cast. The League now had the electoral authority it had lacked in 1937.

The mandates were produced inside separate electorates and a restricted franchise; they did not amount to a referendum on a precise partition boundary. Still, Britain and Congress could no longer dismiss the League as one Muslim faction. Congress claimed the national mandate; League claimed the Muslim mandate. Both were electorally defensible within different institutional compartments, and each weakened the other’s claim to sole sovereignty.

Regional complexity survived the sweep. Punjab’s Unionist ministry continued temporarily under Khizr Hayat Tiwana with Congress and Akali support. In Bengal, League leadership and agrarian politics interacted. Many nationalist Muslims, Deobandi ulama in Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, Khudai Khidmatgars, communists at different moments, and local groups rejected partition. Electoral victory was not cultural unanimity.

The Cabinet Mission designed a union with three levels

Pethick-Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander arrived in March 1946. On 16 May they rejected a sovereign Pakistan as administratively and economically damaging and unable to solve the minority problem: partitioning Punjab and Bengal would create new minorities.

Their plan proposed:

- a Union of British Indian provinces and princely states controlling foreign affairs, defence and communications, with the finances required for them;
- provinces retaining all other powers and residuary authority;
- provincial sections: Group A, mainly Hindu-majority provinces; Group B, Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan; Group C, Bengal and Assam;
- each group framing a constitution and deciding which provincial subjects to administer jointly;
- a Constituent Assembly of 389 members, including provincial and princely representatives;
- a right for provinces to reconsider group membership after the new constitutional system began.

The plan postponed the central dispute. Congress could imagine entering the Assembly and strengthening or escaping groups through provincial choice. The League could treat Groups B and C as the foundations of Pakistan within a weak union. Compulsory initial grouping was the hinge.

Acceptance collapsed because each party defended a different plan

The League accepted on 6 June because compulsory grouping and a weak centre could create near-sovereign Muslim zones. Congress accepted participation later in June but maintained that provinces should not be forced into groups and that the

Constituent Assembly would be sovereign.

At a press conference on 10 July, Jawaharlal Nehru stated that Congress entered the Assembly unfettered and could alter the scheme. The League saw confirmation that a Congress majority would destroy grouping. On 29 July, it withdrew acceptance, renewed the Pakistan demand and called Direct Action for 16 August.

Nehru's words aggravated distrust, but blaming one press conference is inadequate. The plan contained a genuine contradiction between compulsory grouping and constituent sovereignty. Britain declined to impose one authoritative reading. Congress feared a centre too weak to sustain economic and political unity; League feared any mechanism that allowed Muslim provinces to escape grouping.

Direct Action opened a cycle of organized and retaliatory violence

The League ministry in Bengal declared 16 August a public holiday. A huge Kolkata meeting and hartal occurred amid inflammatory rhetoric, administrative failure and armed preparation. Clashes expanded into several days of murder, arson and looting by Muslim and Hindu groups. Roughly 4,000 people were killed and many more injured or displaced, though estimates vary. Responsibility cannot be reduced to spontaneous ancient hatred: party mobilization, police inaction, neighbourhood organization, rumours and revenge structured the killing.

In October, violence in Noakhali and Tippera targeted Hindu communities through killing, forced conversion, sexual assault and displacement. Retaliatory massacres of Muslims followed in Bihar; Garhmukteshwar saw further anti-Muslim killing in November. Gandhi walked through Noakhali and later worked in Bihar, while local peace activists of several religions resisted violence.

League members joined the Interim Government in October 1946 but boycotted the Constituent Assembly's opening in December. Cooperation within the executive was obstructive and

distrustful. In Punjab, the League's agitation brought down Khizr Hayat's coalition in March 1947. Violence among Muslim, Sikh and Hindu armed networks then engulfed Rawalpindi and other districts. By this stage fear of future minority status was driving pre-emptive expulsion.

Communal politics narrowed choice without making the outcome timeless

By early 1947, rival mandates, armed mobilization, administrative breakdown and the absence of an agreed sovereign centre made partition a concrete solution for leaders who had previously rejected it. Yet alternative moments had existed: the Delhi Proposals, federal negotiations, regional coalitions, the 1944 formula and Cabinet Mission union.

The analytical conclusion is conditional. Colonial institutions hardened categories; organizations converted categories into mandates; war changed political opportunity; failed negotiations removed federal options; violence made coexistence appear physically unsafe. Human choices operated at every stage. That is why explanation must reject both religious inevitability and a single-villain theory.

Interpretations and debates

Communalism as ideology. Bipan Chandra treats communalism as a false political ideology that obscured common class and anti-colonial interests. He emphasizes separate electorates, elite reaction and Congress's failure to wage sustained ideological struggle against communalism. This exposes elite uses of religious claims, but "false consciousness" can understate real fears about power in a majoritarian state.

Jinnah's bargaining strategy. Ayesha Jalal argues that Jinnah used the Pakistan demand to secure parity and a powerful Muslim position at an all-India centre; a fully divided sovereign

Pakistan was a poor solution for Muslim minorities and divided Punjab and Bengal. The argument explains deliberate ambiguity. Critics note that mass mobilization changed the slogan's force and reduced Jinnah's freedom to retreat by 1946.

No Muslim consensus. Mushirul Hasan emphasizes faction, region and the many Muslims who rejected two-nation politics. Khudai Khidmatgars, Unionists, nationalist ulama and Congress Muslims demonstrate this plurality. The League's 1945–46 electoral sweep was nonetheless a major change and cannot be dismissed as pure manipulation.

Region and popular mobilization. David Gilmartin and Ian Talbot show how Punjab's landed networks, pirs, kinship and wartime change translated Pakistan into local politics. Joya Chatterji demonstrates that Bengali Hindu bhadralok mobilization helped demand Bengal's partition, reminding us that territorial division was not made by League politics alone.

Secularism and community accommodation. Gyanendra Pandey argues that a sharp nationalist opposition between secular nationalism and communal claims could delegitimize community-based anxieties instead of accommodating them. This does not make every communal demand democratic; it asks whether a composite nation needed institutional recognition of difference rather than denial.

Violence as constitutive, not incidental. Gyanendra Pandey's later work shifts attention from elite causes to how violence made identities, memories and borders. Riots were not merely the final symptom of decisions already completed. Killing and expulsion changed what populations and leaders believed was possible after August 1946.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
1871 onward	Decennial colonial census develops	Enumerated religious and caste categories become objects of political comparison.
1906	All-India Muslim League founded at Dhaka (Dacca)	Creates an all-India Muslim political organization, initially elite and loyalist.
1909	Morley–Minto reforms introduce separate Muslim electorates	Makes religious identity a formal route to legislative representation.
1915	Hindu Mahasabha established on an all-India basis	Coordinates Hindu political claims while remaining organizationally limited.
1925	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh founded at Nagpur	Builds disciplined Hindu volunteer organization outside electoral politics.
1932	Communal Award announced	Extends communal and interest-based representation under colonial authority.
Feb. 1937	Provincial elections under 1935 Act	Congress wins broad power; League's weak Muslim-seat performance reveals fragmented Muslim politics.
July 1937	Congress ministries begin taking office	Provincial governance becomes the central arena of Congress–League rivalry.
1938–39	Pirpur and Sharif reports publicized	League portrays Congress provincial rule as oppressive to Muslim culture and interests.

Date	Event	Why it matters
Sept.–Nov. 1939	India enters war; Congress ministries resign	Ends Congress office while opening political space for the League.
22 Dec. 1939	League marks “Day of Deliverance”	Converts ministry resignation into anti-Congress Muslim mobilization.
23 Mar. 1940	Lahore Resolution adopted	Gives Muslim nationhood a territorial but deliberately ambiguous programme.
Mar.–Apr. 1942	Cripps Mission	Provincial right not to join a future union gives constitutional plausibility to partition.
Sept. 1944	Gandhi–Jinnah talks	Fail over timing, territorial voting and recognition of the two-nation claim.
June–July 1945	Simla Conference	Breaks down over the League’s claim to nominate all Muslim members of the executive.
1945–46	Central and provincial elections	League gains an overwhelming mandate in reserved Muslim constituencies; Congress dominates general constituencies.
24 Mar. 1946	Cabinet Mission arrives	Final major British effort to transfer power while preserving Indian unity.
16 May 1946	Cabinet Mission Plan announced	Proposes a three-tier arrangement: weak union, provincial groups and provinces.

Date	Event	Why it matters
June 1946	League and Congress conditionally accept plan	Common acceptance conceals opposed understandings of grouping and sovereignty.
10 July 1946	Nehru comments on Constituent Assembly sovereignty	League treats the statement as repudiation of compulsory grouping.
29 July 1946	League withdraws acceptance and calls Direct Action	Constitutional bargaining gives way to mobilized confrontation.
16–19 Aug. 1946	Great Calcutta Killing	Several days of organized and retaliatory violence kill thousands.
Oct.–Nov. 1946	Noakhali, Bihar and Garhmukteshwar violence	Cycles of massacre, expulsion and revenge spread beyond Kolkata.
9 Dec. 1946	Constituent Assembly first meets without League	The united constitutional process begins without the principal League bloc.
Mar. 1947	Punjab ministry collapses; mass violence spreads	Administrative breakdown in the key mixed province makes territorial partition immediate.

High-confusion comparisons

Question	Congress position	League position	Why agreement failed
Representation	One national party could represent all communities	League alone represented Muslims	1946 elections strengthened both rival mandates.

Question	Congress position	League position	Why agreement failed
Centre	Effective sovereign centre essential	Parity or a very weak centre necessary	Majority rule looked national to Congress, domination to League.
Grouping	Provinces should choose freely	Initial Groups B and C must be compulsory	Cabinet Mission language allowed opposed readings.
Constituent Assembly	Sovereign once convened	Bound by Mission grouping safeguards	No trusted enforcement mechanism existed.
Pakistan	Division harmful and unnecessary	Muslim nation required territorial power	Pakistan's boundaries and central relations remained undefined.

Often confused	Correct distinction
Religion vs communalism	Religious practice does not automatically claim uniform and antagonistic political interests.
League victory vs plebiscite	Elections occurred through restricted separate electorates and endorsed League authority, not a precise boundary map.
Lahore Resolution vs later Pakistan	The 1940 wording used plural "states" and left centre, borders and sovereignty unclear.
Direct Action vs all subsequent violence	The call and Bengal ministry context mattered, but later Hindu, Muslim and Sikh organizations committed autonomous and retaliatory violence.
Colonial division vs Indian agency	Colonial institutions structured incentives; Indian leaders and publics still made consequential choices.

Self-test

1. What distinguishes religious identity from communal political ideology?
2. How did colonial institutions encourage communal representation?
3. Why do the 1937 election results challenge an inevitability narrative?
4. Why did the United Provinces coalition dispute matter beyond one province?
5. How did the resignation of Congress ministries alter Congress–League competition?
6. What did the Lahore Resolution say, and what did it leave undefined?
7. Why could Pakistan mean different things to different Muslim constituencies?
8. Why did the Gandhi–Jinnah and Simla negotiations fail?
9. What exactly did the 1945–46 elections establish, and what did they not establish?
10. Outline the Cabinet Mission's three-level constitutional arrangement.
11. Why did initial acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan collapse?
12. How should Direct Action and the 1946–47 violence be explained without communal essentialism?

Answer key

1. Religion concerns belief and community practice; communalism asserts that believers share uniform secular interests necessarily opposed to those of other religions.
2. Censuses standardized categories, separate electorates made community membership a route to office, and provincial boundaries converted religious numbers into majority or minority power.
3. The League won only about one-quarter of Muslim seats and was weak in Muslim-majority provinces, showing that regional

- and class-based Muslim politics remained strong.
4. Congress's refusal of League terms became proof in League rhetoric that a numerical Congress majority would deny Muslims recognized collective power.
 5. Congress left provincial office and was later repressed, while the League gained official access, patronage, time and organizational space during wartime.
 6. It called for Muslim-majority northwestern and eastern zones to form independent states with autonomous units; it left the name, number, boundaries and common institutions unclear.
 7. It could promise minority bargaining power, provincial autonomy, elite security, religious dignity, peasant improvement or a sovereign homeland without initially choosing among them.
 8. Gandhi and Jinnah differed over prior recognition, timing, territory and voters; Simla failed because Jinnah claimed sole authority to nominate all Muslim executive members.
 9. They established Congress dominance in general seats and League dominance in Muslim seats under restricted communal franchises; they did not approve a precise partition map.
 10. A weak union controlled defence, foreign affairs and communications; three provincial groups could administer common subjects; provinces retained residual powers and sent members to a Constituent Assembly.
 11. Congress treated the Assembly as sovereign and grouping as ultimately optional; the League treated compulsory grouping as the guaranteed core of Pakistan.
 12. Party calls, administrative failure, armed neighbourhood networks, rumours and revenge organized the killing; perpetrators and rescuers existed across religions, so ancient hatred explains nothing adequately.

Closing perspective

Communalism must be explained historically as political organization around supposedly uniform and antagonistic religious interests. Colonial institutions rewarded communal representa-

tion but did not eliminate Indian political agency.

Independence and Partition

2 September 1946: A Congress-led Interim Government took office under Jawaharlal Nehru; the League joined on 26 October but pursued an opposed political strategy from within.

9 December 1946: The Constituent Assembly first met without League participation, weakening its claim to frame a united Indian constitution.

The Interim Government contained two rival sovereignties

After the Cabinet Mission negotiations failed to produce a common coalition, Viceroy Wavell invited Congress to form an Interim Government. It took office on 2 September 1946. Jawaharlal Nehru, formally vice-president of the viceroy's Executive Council, functioned as head of government. Vallabhbhai Patel held Home, Rajendra Prasad Food and Agriculture, and other Congress nominees controlled major departments.

The League initially stayed out, then joined on 26 October with Liaquat Ali Khan in Finance and four other nominees. Entry did not mean acceptance of a united constitution. League ministers prevented Congress from presenting the executive as a sovereign national government. Liaquat's 1947 taxation of business profits was defended as progressive but interpreted by Congress-aligned business groups as political pressure.

Joint responsibility barely existed. Congress and League caucused separately; appointments, finance and policy became tests of parity. The government did continue administration and Indianize executive authority, but it also demonstrated that office-sharing without agreement on the state's identity could not solve the constitutional conflict.

The Constituent Assembly began as both national institution and disputed body

Provincial legislatures elected Assembly members indirectly by community under the Cabinet Mission scheme. Of a planned 389 members, 292 came from provincial legislatures, four from chief commissioners' provinces and ninety-three were to represent princely states. Congress dominated the provincial allocation; the League won most Muslim places.

The Assembly first met on 9 December 1946. The League boycotted because it no longer accepted the Cabinet Mission arrangement. Sachchidananda Sinha served temporarily; Rajendra Prasad became permanent president on 11 December. Nehru introduced the Objectives Resolution on 13 December, and it was adopted on 22 January 1947.

The body had legal continuity from the Mission but asserted popular sovereignty. It could frame a constitution for areas participating in it; it could not compel League provinces into a united framework. Once Partition was accepted, its membership was divided and it became the constitution-making and legislative body of the Indian Dominion. Pakistan's Constituent Assembly formed separately.

Violence and administrative erosion shaped British timing

Kolkata, Noakhali, Bihar and Garhmukteshwar violence had already destroyed trust. In Punjab, Premier Khizr Hayat Tiwana

led a Unionist–Congress–Akali coalition against the League. League civil disobedience and polarized mobilization forced his resignation on 2 March 1947. Sikh demonstrations and Muslim–Sikh–Hindu violence spread through Lahore, Amritsar, Multan and Rawalpindi division. Villages were attacked and minorities began fleeing before any boundary existed.

Britain after the Second World War faced debt, military overstretch, international anti-imperialism and an Indian state whose coercive reliability had weakened through Quit India, INA sympathy, armed-forces unrest and labour action. Labour's government had decided to leave; the unresolved question was how.

On 20 February, Prime Minister Clement Attlee declared that power would transfer no later than 30 June 1948. If a fully representative central constitution did not exist, Britain would consider transfer to some central authority, provincial governments or another appropriate arrangement. Paramountcy over princely states would lapse rather than pass automatically to a successor. The statement was intended to force agreement, but it also warned every actor to secure territory before British authority disappeared.

Mountbatten accelerated rather than invented Partition

Lord Louis Mountbatten arrived on 22 March and assumed office on 24 March. He consulted Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, Liaquat, Baldev Singh and others. By then the Cabinet Mission arrangement had lost consent, Punjab was burning and the League insisted on sovereign Pakistan.

An early “Plan Balkan” considered separate transfers to provinces or groups, potentially allowing Bengal and Punjab to remain united and independent. Nehru opposed such fragmentation. V.P. Menon developed an alternative: two immediate dominions using the existing Government of India Act framework until new constitutions were ready. Dominion status enabled speed and legal continuity.

Mountbatten moved the date from June 1948 to 15 August 1947. Speed reduced the period in which a deteriorating Raj bore responsibility and gave Congress rapid control over administration. It also left only weeks to draw boundaries, divide forces, organize refugees and establish two states. Acceleration was a political choice with severe consequences.

Congress accepted division for a strong centre and immediate authority

Congress rejected the two-nation theory. By spring 1947, Patel and Nehru judged the Cabinet Mission union unworkable. Compulsory grouping would leave a weak centre controlling only defence, foreign affairs and communications, while League-led groups could obstruct policy. A smaller India with a strong centre appeared preferable.

Other calculations reinforced acceptance:

- the Interim Government's paralysis suggested that forced Congress–League partnership could not govern;
- Punjab violence and retaliatory cycles raised fear of civil war and army division;
- Britain would leave by a fixed date whether agreement existed or not;
- immediate transfer placed coercive and relief machinery under Indian leaders;
- partition of Punjab and Bengal denied the League undivided provinces containing large non-Muslim populations;
- ending princely paramountcy without a central successor risked wider “Balkanization.”

Gandhi did not endorse the logic emotionally and continued to oppose hatred, but he did not launch mass resistance against the Congress decision. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgars felt abandoned because the NWFP referendum offered India or Pakistan, not autonomous Pashtunistan or continued association under the Cabinet Mission framework.

Acceptance was not proof that Partition had always been necessary. It was a judgment made under deadline, violence and institutional failure. Leaders hoped concession would stop killing; events proved that assumption disastrously wrong.

The 3 June Plan established a decision procedure

The plan announced jointly in London and India provided:

- Bengal and Punjab assemblies would meet in Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority sections; if either section chose partition, the province would divide;
- each new part would decide which Constituent Assembly to join;
- Sindh's assembly would choose its dominion;
- a referendum would decide the North-West Frontier Province;
- Sylhet district would vote on remaining in Assam or joining East Bengal if Bengal divided;
- boundary commissions would demarcate Punjab and Bengal if division was chosen;
- power would transfer to two successor dominions as soon as possible;
- British paramountcy over princely states would lapse.

Congress, League and Sikh representatives accepted. Bengal's assembly sections voted for division on 20 June; Punjab followed on 23 June. Sindh chose Pakistan. The NWFP referendum produced a large Pakistan majority among votes cast, but Congress and Khudai Khidmatgars boycotted, and only about half the eligible electorate participated. In Sylhet, a majority voted for East Bengal; the Karimganj subdivision was largely retained in Assam after boundary adjustment.

The procedure treated provinces as divisible because their internal minorities could not be transferred wholesale. It did not consult every district equally or let individuals choose citizenship before borders changed.

The Independence Act ended empire through dominion machinery

The British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act in July; it received royal assent on 18 July. It provided:

- two independent dominions, India and Pakistan, from 15 August 1947;
- partition of Bengal and Punjab;
- a governor-general for each dominion;
- full legislative authority for each dominion's Constituent Assembly;
- termination of British legislative authority and the secretary of state's special responsibility;
- temporary governance under the adapted Government of India Act of 1935;
- lapse of paramountcy and treaty obligations toward princely states;
- an end to automatic British responsibility for Indian civil-service appointments.

Jinnah became Pakistan's governor-general; Mountbatten became India's. Pakistan held its transfer ceremony at Karachi on 14 August, while the statute's legal commencement date for both dominions was 15 August. India's Assembly met at midnight, when Nehru delivered the "Tryst with Destiny" address. These constitutional moments marked genuine sovereignty, not a British gift: decades of resistance, wartime ungovernability and altered global power had made continued empire impossible.

Radcliffe drew two borders under impossible time pressure

Separate Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions each had two Muslim and two non-Muslim judges, with British barrister Cyril Radcliffe as chair. Radcliffe had never visited India before

arriving on 8 July. He had about five weeks to divide densely connected regions with nearly 90 million people.

The terms required contiguous majority areas and “other factors”: irrigation, railways, roads, administration, economic links, ports and Sikh interests. No agreed hierarchy existed. The contested 1941 census and conflicting tehsil and district patterns made clean separation impossible.

In Punjab, the line awarded Lahore to Pakistan and Amritsar to India. Gurdaspur district was divided, with Gurdaspur, Batala and Pathankot tehsils going to India and Shakargarh to Pakistan. In Bengal, Kolkata and most of the industrial west remained in India; eastern Muslim-majority districts formed East Bengal. Chittagong Hill Tracts, despite a largely non-Muslim population, went to Pakistan because of geography and access.

Radcliffe signed the awards on 12 August. Mountbatten withheld publication until 17 August, after independence ceremonies. The delay avoided placing formal British responsibility over celebrations, but left administrators, soldiers and populations acting on rumour. People raised flags and moved in the wrong assumed direction before learning their actual state.

No boundary could have avoided all minorities, but the compressed timetable, weak preparation and delayed announcement magnified danger. Partition was not only a line; it was the sudden remaking of authority on either side of it.

Administrative partition divided an integrated state

The Partition Council divided personnel, cash, debt, records, railways, posts, military stores, courts and central institutions. A rough formula often allocated four-fifths of central assets to India and one-fifth to Pakistan, but each service required negotiation.

The armed forces were divided broadly in a two-to-one ratio, with regiments, equipment and officers reassigned under a joint command during transition. Communal violence simultaneously infected units expected to keep order. Civil servants had to opt

for dominions, relocate families and rebuild departments. Punjab and Bengal divided police stations, prisons, colleges, canal administration and district records.

Pakistan was due a cash share of 750 million rupees; only part was initially transferred, and later payment became a dispute amid the Kashmir war. Currency and the Reserve Bank continued temporarily as common arrangements because a new state could not instantly reproduce every institution. Railway lines crossed new borders; irrigation headworks in India fed canals in Pakistan; Karachi replaced Delhi as a capital with severe shortages of offices and housing.

The administrative division cannot be separated from migration. Departing Muslim staff weakened Indian offices; Hindu and Sikh departures affected Pakistan. Refugees became officials and officials became refugees.

Partition violence was organized, reciprocal and regionally uneven

Punjab experienced the most concentrated 1947 catastrophe. The new line cut through a heavily militarized province with demobilized soldiers, armed Sikh jathas, Muslim League National Guards, RSS and other militias, police partisanship and collapsing district administration. Villages were cleared, refugee trains attacked, columns ambushed and urban neighbourhoods burned. Violence sought not only revenge but demographic control: creating religious majorities by terror and expulsion.

Approximately 10–15 million people crossed borders in both directions, making this one of the twentieth century's largest forced migrations. Death estimates range from roughly 200,000 to one million or more because records collapsed, bodies disappeared and definitions vary. Exact certainty is impossible; false precision should be avoided.

Migration was not one simultaneous exchange. Western Punjab, eastern Punjab and Delhi transformed rapidly in 1947. Sindhi Hindu out-migration and north Indian Muslim movement

continued later. Bengal's border remained more porous and migration occurred in repeated waves through later crises. Jammu saw extensive anti-Muslim killing and displacement in late 1947, while refugees from western Punjab altered Delhi's demography and politics.

Violence was reciprocal in aggregate but not symmetrical in every place or moment. Local state complicity, militia strength and minority vulnerability varied. Saying "both sides" should establish shared perpetration, not erase who held power in a specific locality. Thousands also sheltered neighbours, guarded convoys or organized peace committees; communal identity did not mechanically dictate conduct.

Gendered violence made women bear community boundaries

Women and girls were abducted, raped, mutilated, forcibly converted, married and killed. Families sometimes murdered their own women or pressed them to suicide in the name of "honour." Estimates of abducted women commonly range around 75,000–100,000, but underreporting was extensive.

India and Pakistan agreed to recover abducted women. Police and social workers crossed borders, and later legislation authorized compulsory recovery. The programme reunited some survivors with families, but it also treated women as possessions of religious communities. A woman who had formed a new household, borne children or refused return could be removed without meaningful consent; children were sometimes separated. Recovery defined identity by pre-Partition religion rather than a survivor's current choice.

Oral histories reveal silence, stigma and fragmented memory absent from diplomatic narratives. Gender was not an "additional" effect of Partition. Control of women's bodies was central to claims of honour, revenge, conversion and national recovery.

Refugee states emerged through relief, property and citizenship

Both dominions created camps, transport arrangements and rehabilitation departments while violence continued. India confronted massive western refugee columns and later eastern migration; Pakistan received Muslim refugees, or *muhajirs*, from many Indian regions. Camps faced disease, hunger and insecurity.

Evacuee-property laws transferred homes, shops and farms left by departing minorities into official custody and refugee allotment. Claims systems valued lost assets but produced corruption, litigation and unequal outcomes. Cultivators, urban property holders, artisans and the poor had very different documentary power. Refugees reshaped cities including Delhi, Lahore and Karachi and influenced later politics.

Citizenship was initially fluid. People moved, returned, searched for relatives and tried to recover property while states increasingly required permits and defined evacuees. Partition continued administratively after the flags were raised.

Princely lapse opened the Kashmir conflict

The Independence Act ended British paramountcy over more than 560 princely states. Legally, rulers regained authority previously ceded to the Crown; practically, geography and popular movements made lasting independence difficult. Patel and V.P. Menon urged accession to India on defence, external affairs and communications. Most rulers signed before or soon after 15 August. Hyderabad, Junagadh and Jammu and Kashmir did not follow the standard path.

Maharaja Hari Singh initially sought to remain independent. Pakistan accepted a standstill arrangement; India requested further discussion. On 22 October, armed tribesmen from the North-West Frontier, supported from Pakistan, invaded the state.

As they advanced toward Srinagar, Hari Singh requested Indian military aid and signed an Instrument of Accession on 26 October; Mountbatten accepted it on 27 October, and Indian troops were airlifted that day. Pakistan disputed the accession's circumstances and regular forces later joined the conflict.

This was the opening, not the resolution, of the Kashmir question. The accession covered a Muslim-majority state under a Hindu ruler amid invasion, internal revolt and competing national claims. It led directly to war and international dispute.

Independence was complete in sovereignty but incomplete in social repair

On 15 August, colonial paramount power ended and elected Indian leaders controlled the central state. The achievement belonged to generations of mass struggle, constitutional work, armed resistance, labour and peasant action. Partition does not nullify that achievement.

Freedom also arrived with borders unknown to those crossing them, officials unable or unwilling to protect minorities, and survivors forced to rebuild. Gandhi spent the period working for peace in Bengal and later Delhi rather than attending Delhi's celebration. His location symbolized the unresolved moral crisis.

The strongest conclusion holds two truths together. Independence was a decisive popular and political victory over empire. Its transfer through rushed territorial division produced a human catastrophe whose consequences continued through refugee rehabilitation, citizenship law, gendered silence and India–Pakistan conflict.

Interpretations and debates

Transfer or compelled withdrawal? Older imperial narratives presented 1947 as planned British statesmanship. Bipan Chan-

dra and many nationalist historians emphasize that mass struggle, post-war unrest and declining coercive reliability made continued rule impossible. The accurate synthesis recognizes a negotiated legal transfer after empire had lost the capacity and legitimacy to remain.

Why Congress accepted. Bipan Chandra describes acceptance as an unavoidable necessity after failure to draw enough Muslim masses into composite nationalism and amid communal violence. Sumit Sarkar places greater weight on Congress leaders choosing early state power over another uncertain mass struggle and accepting Partition as its price. Administrative collapse and the desire for a strong centre support both strategic elements.

Jinnah and the failed centre. Ayesha Jalal interprets Pakistan initially as leverage for Muslim power in an all-India arrangement. The final divided states represented failure of that strategy as well as success in obtaining sovereignty. This challenges accounts in which Jinnah pursued one fixed territorial blueprint from 1940.

The hurried border. Yasmin Khan and Joya Chatterji stress the contingency, administrative improvisation and regional variation of Partition. The short timetable did not alone create hostility, but it removed preparation and made rumour lethal. Bengal's longer migrations and Punjab's rapid exchange should not be collapsed into one pattern.

Violence and memory. Gyanendra Pandey argues that violence was constitutive of Partition and later national narratives often sanitized it to present orderly state birth. Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh foreground local institutions, militias and Punjab's militarized society. Their approaches shift explanation from elite documents to neighbourhoods, villages and district administrations.

Gendered Partition. Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin recover women's testimony, family violence and the coercion embedded in official recovery. Their work changes the unit of analysis: the abducted woman was not merely a victim exchanged between states, but a person whose choices could

conflict with family and nation.

The “Long Partition.” Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar argues that Partition continued through permits, evacuee property, refugee policy and citizenship bureaucracy. August 1947 was a decisive sovereignty break, not the end of displacement or boundary-making.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
16 Aug. 1946	Direct Action Day and Kolkata violence begin	Signals that constitutional deadlock can produce mass killing.
2 Sept. 1946	Interim Government takes office	Congress begins exercising central executive power without the League.
26 Oct. 1946	League joins Interim Government	Creates a divided cabinet rather than a common transfer authority.
9 Dec. 1946	Constituent Assembly first meets	League boycott leaves the body unable to represent undivided India.
11 Dec. 1946	Rajendra Prasad elected Assembly president	Establishes permanent leadership for constitution-making.
22 Jan. 1947	Objectives Resolution adopted	Sets sovereignty, rights and federal principles for territories participating in the Assembly.

Date	Event	Why it matters
20 Feb. 1947	Attlee announces withdrawal by 30 June 1948	Makes British departure unconditional on prior Indian agreement.
2 Mar. 1947	Khizr Hayat Tiwana resigns in Punjab	Collapse of coalition government precedes widespread provincial violence.
22–24 Mar. 1947	Mountbatten arrives and assumes office	Last viceroy receives wide discretion to arrange transfer.
3 June 1947	Partition plan announced	Congress, League and Sikh leaders accept a procedure for two dominions.
20 June 1947	Bengal Assembly votes in sections	Decision produces West Bengal and East Bengal.
23 June 1947	Punjab Assembly votes in sections	Decision divides Punjab and triggers boundary determination.
26 June 1947	Sindh Assembly votes to join Pakistan	Provincial legislature chooses the new dominion.
6–17 July 1947	NWFP referendum	Pakistan wins amid Congress and Khudai Khidmatgar boycott.
6–7 July 1947	Sylhet referendum	Most of Sylhet votes to leave Assam for East Bengal.
8 July 1947	Cyril Radcliffe arrives	A jurist unfamiliar with India begins the five-week boundary task.
18 July 1947	Indian Independence Act receives royal assent	Gives legal form to two dominions and the lapse of paramountcy.

Date	Event	Why it matters
11 Aug. 1947	Jinnah addresses Pakistan Constituent Assembly	Articulates equal citizenship immediately before state formation.
14–15 Aug. 1947	Transfer ceremonies and independence	Pakistan's ceremony occurs on 14 August; the Act creates both dominions from 15 August.
17 Aug. 1947	Radcliffe Awards published	Borders become public after sovereignty has transferred.
Sept.–Dec. 1947	Mass migration and Punjab violence peak	Armed expulsions and refugee columns transform both new states.
22–27 Oct. 1947	Tribal invasion, Kashmir accession and Indian troop airlift	Opens an international and territorial conflict left unresolved by Partition.

High-confusion comparisons

Item	20 February statement	3 June Plan	Independence Act
Nature	British deadline and warning	Agreed political procedure	Enforceable British statute
Date envisioned	By 30 June 1948	As early as August 1947	Two dominions from 15 August 1947
Territorial method	Multiple authorities possible	Provincial section votes and referendums	Legally partitions Bengal and Punjab
Princely states	Paramountcy to lapse	Accession expected but not fully dictated	Crown treaties and paramountcy terminate

Item	20 February statement	3 June Plan	Independence Act
Main effect	Forces urgent choice	Congress and League accept partition process	Ends British sovereignty and creates dominions

Often confused	Correct distinction
Independence vs republic	India became an independent dominion in 1947 and a republic on 26 January 1950.
Pakistan's ceremony vs legal date	Transfer ceremonies occurred in Karachi on 14 August; the Act established both dominions from 15 August.
Boundary decision vs publication	Radcliffe completed awards before independence; they were announced publicly on 17 August.
Accession vs integration	Accession transferred three core subjects; later merger and democratization absorbed princely administrations more fully.
Migration vs population exchange treaty	Most movement was forced by fear and violence; no comprehensive prior treaty safely exchanged populations.
Recovery vs restoration of agency	State recovery could return abducted women, but compulsory return could also override their present choices.

Self-test

1. Why did League participation fail to make the Interim Government a united executive?
2. How did the League boycott affect the Constituent Assembly?
3. What did Attlee's 20 February 1947 statement change?

4. Why did Mountbatten and Indian leaders accelerate transfer to August 1947?
5. Why did Congress accept Partition without accepting two-nation theory?
6. What procedures did the 3 June Plan establish for Punjab, Bengal, Sindh, NWFP and Sylhet?
7. List five major provisions of the Indian Independence Act.
8. Why was Radcliffe's boundary task structurally dangerous?
9. What did administrative partition require beyond drawing borders?
10. Give the scale and principal regional forms of migration and violence.
11. Why can the recovery of abducted women not be treated as uncomplicated rescue?
12. How did the lapse of paramountcy open the Kashmir conflict?

Answer key

1. Congress and League ministers followed separate party strategies, disputed finance and appointments, and never agreed whether the executive represented one nation or two political sovereignties.
2. The Assembly could frame a constitution for participating territories but lacked the principal League bloc and therefore could not credibly bind undivided India.
3. It fixed 30 June 1948 as the latest departure date regardless of agreement, allowed transfer to multiple authorities and confirmed paramountcy would lapse.
4. Britain wanted to reduce responsibility for collapse; Congress wanted immediate control and continuity; League wanted sovereign Pakistan; all confronted rapidly worsening Punjab violence.
5. Leaders preferred a strong central government in a smaller India to a paralyzed weak union and believed immediate transfer might prevent civil war and wider fragmentation.
6. Provincial sections voted on dividing Punjab and Bengal, Sindh's assembly chose, the NWFP held a dominion refer-

endum, and Sylhet voted on Assam or East Bengal.

7. Two dominions from 15 August, partition of Bengal and Punjab, sovereign dominion legislatures, temporary use of the 1935 Act, end of British legislative authority, and lapse of paramountcy.
8. Radcliffe had five weeks, disputed demographic data, vague “other factors,” no prior Indian experience and responsibility for economically integrated, mixed populations.
9. It divided armed forces, civil servants, cash, debt, records, railways, posts, irrigation systems, courts, stores and workplaces while staff themselves migrated.
10. Roughly 10–15 million were displaced and perhaps 200,000 to one million or more killed; rapid reciprocal expulsion dominated Punjab, while Bengal and Sindh experienced longer migration waves and Delhi became a major violent refugee centre.
11. Recovery reunited some survivors but states classified women by former religion and could forcibly remove those who wished to remain, separate mothers from children or restore them to stigmatizing families.
12. Hari Singh delayed choosing; after an October invasion he signed accession to India, Indian troops entered, Pakistan disputed the process and war followed.

Closing perspective

The Interim Government failed because office-sharing did not resolve the rival Congress and League claims to sovereignty. Attlee’s deadline made departure unconditional on agreement and encouraged territorial preparation under uncertainty.

Source note

The Modern India volumes were developed from an integrated revision project drawing on Bipan Chandra's *History of Modern India*, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay's *From Plassey to Partition and After*, and the Spectrum survey *A Brief History of Modern India*. Post-2019 coverage uses an official-source register with an evidence cutoff of 10 August 2026. The present books reorganize and independently edit that research into a continuous narrative and separate source claims from editorial synthesis.

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About the author

Gaurav Tiwari is an educator, WordPress developer, and the founder of Gatilab. His teaching work focuses on making difficult material easier to understand without flattening its debates, uncertainties, or consequences.

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