



Struggle for Independence

Third Phase (1927-1939)

The political atmosphere in the country was marked by a ferment of revolutionary and terrorist activities. Communalism was also growing as a festering wound, which erupted sporadically in riots and bloodsheds. Amidst this atmosphere came the sudden appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927.

Simon Commission

- Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India announced the appointment of a Statutory Commission under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon on 8th November, 1927. Simon Commission was officially known as Indian Statutory Commission. All the seven members of the commission were Englishmen, who were the members of British Parliament.
- The commission was appointed to review the performance of reform of 1919 and suggested further reforms.
- White Commission with no Indian representative was greeted with strong protest. The Congress, at its session at held Madras in December 1927, resolved to boycott the commission.
- However, the league led by Mohammed Safi as also Justice Party in Madras, Unionist Party in Punjab, Central Sikh Sangh and All India Achhut Federation did not oppose the commission.
- The commission paid two visits to India (February-March, 1928 and October, 1928) and April, 1929), each time it faced boycott. The report of Simon omitted any mention of Dominion Status even as a distant goal and rejected all ideas of transfer of power at the centre.

- The proposals of Simon Commission were completely rejected by the major political parties in the country, including the Muslim league.

Nehru Report

- In response to the appointment of Simon commission and challenge given by Lord Birkenhead Secretary of State for India, the All Parties Conference was called at Delhi on 12th February, 1928.
- It was presided by MA Ansari. On 19th May, 1928 at its meeting at Bombay, the All Parties Conference appointed a committee with Motilal Nehru as its Chairman. The purpose was to consider and determine the principles of the Constitution for India.
- The committee consisted of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ali Imam, MS Aney, Mangal Singh, Shoaib Qureshi, GR Pradhan, NM Joshi, MR Jayakar and Subhash Chandra Bose.

Recommendations of Report

- India must be given dominion status, which meant independence within the British Commonwealth.
- India would be a federation, having a bicameral legislature at the centre to which the ministry would be responsible.
- The Governor-General would be only the constitutional head with the same powers as the British Crown.
- There was no provision for separate electorate. Citizenship was also defined and Fundamental Rights were enunciated.
- The Annual Session of the INC held in Calcutta in December 1928, approved the Nehru Report and also served an ultimatum on the British Government to accept the Nehru Report on 31st December, 1929, failing which the party would launch another Mass Movement, with a new goal of Purna Swarajya.
- The open session of the Muslim League meeting at Delhi on 28th March, 1929, rejected the Nehru report and accepted Mr. Jinnah's Fourteen Points.

Jinnah's 'Fourteen Points'

- The Fourteen Points were announced by Jinnah in Delhi on 28th March, 1929 at a meeting of the Muslim League. It did not accept the Nehru report on the ground that it discarded separate electorates and other demands of minorities and rather presented his Fourteen Points.
 - (i) The form of the future Constitution of India should be federal with residuary powers vested in the provinces.
 - (ii) A uniform measure of autonomy should be granted to all provinces.
 - (iii) All legislatures and other elected bodies should be constituted on the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of minorities.
 - (iv) In the Central legislature, Muslim representation should not be less than one-third.
 - (v) Representation of communal groups should continue to be by separate electorates as at present, provided that it should be open to any community at any time to abandon its separate electorate in favour of joint electorate.
 - (vi) Any territorial redistribution should not affect the Muslim majority in Punjab, Bengal and the NWFP.
 - (vii) Full liberty of belief, worship and observance, propaganda, association and education should be guaranteed to all communities.
 - (viii) No bill or resolution or any party should be passed in any legislature or any other elected body if three-fourths of the members of any community in that body opposed it as being injurious to the interests of that community.
 - (ix) Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency.
 - (x) Reforms should be introduced in the NWFP and Baluchistan on the same footing as in other provinces.
 - (xi) Adequate share for Muslims should be provided in the Constitution in all services of the state subject to the requirements of efficiency.
 - (xii) Adequate safeguards for the protection and promotion of Muslim culture, education, language, religion, personal laws and charitable institutions.
 - (xiii) No cabinet, either Central or Provincial, should be formed without atleast one-third of the ministers being Muslims.
 - (xiv) No change should be made in the Constitution by the Central Legislature except with the concurrence of the state constituting the Indian federation.

Lahore Session of the Congress (December, 1929)

- Historic Lahore Session of the Congress was presided by Jawaharlal Nehru.
 - The Lahore Session of the Congress passed a series of landmark resolutions.
 - The Nehru Committee report had lapsed (i.e. dominion status was now not acceptable).
 - As per the Poorna Swaraj resolution passed at the Lahore Congress the word Swaraj in the Congress Constitution would mean complete independence.
 - All future elections were to be boycotted.
 - Round Table Conference, decided to be held in London, should be boycotted.
 - A Programme of Civil Disobedience was to be launched. The Congress Working Committee allowed Gandhi to determine the time place and issue on which CDM was to be launched. Gandhi decided to inaugurate the movement by violating the Salt Laws on the sea-coast at Dandi.
- On 31st December, 1929 Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the Congress unfurled the flag of India's independence on the banks of the Ravi in Lahore.
- The Congress Working Committee, which met on 2nd January, 1930, decided that 26th January, 1930, should be observed as the Poorna Swaraj Day (Independence Day).

Civil Disobedience Movement (First Phase)

- Gandhi placed as an ultimatum on 31st January, 1930 eleven points of administrative reform and stated that if Lord Irwin accepted them there would be no need for agitation. The important demands were as follows:
 - (i) The rupee sterling ratio should be reduced.
 - (ii) 50% reduction in land revenue.
 - (iii) Abolition of the Salt Tax and government salt monopoly. 50% cut in military expenditure.
 - (iv) Salaries of highest grade service should be reduced by half.
 - (v) Change Arms Act allowing citizens to bear arms for self-protection.
 - (vi) Protection for Indian Textile Industry.
 - (vii) Reservation of coastal shipping for Indians.
 - (viii) Release of all political prisoners.
 - (ix) Total prohibition of intoxicants.
 - (x) Carry out reforms in Criminal Investigation department.

Dandi March (Salt Satyagraha)

- On 12th March, 1930, Gandhi started the historic march from his Sabarmati Ashram with 78 followers.
- After a 24 days long march, he symbolically broke the Salt Law at Dandi on 5th April, 1930. The breaking of the Salt Law formally inaugurated the civil disobedience.
- Soon the defiance of Salt Law started all over the country. In Tamil Nadu, C Rajagopalachari led a Salt March from Trichinopoly to Vedaranniyam on the Tanjore coast.
- In Malabar, K Kelappan, the hero of the Vaikom Satyagraha walked from Calicut to Payyanur to break the Salt Law.
- As a consequence of Salt Satyagraha, the Indian National Congress was declared illegal by the colonial rulers in April, 1930.

Course of the Movement

- In United Province and Gujarat, a No Tax campaign was launched on 18th April, the Bengal revolutionaries led a seize to the Chittagong Armoury and fought a Pitched Battle on Jalabad hill on 22nd April under the able leadership of Surya Sen.
- On 21st May, with Sarojini Naidu, Imam Sahib and Gandhi's son, Manilal in front ranks, a band of 2000 marched towards the police cordon that had sealed off the Dharasana salt works.
- The Working committee in May, 1930 sanctioned; non-payment of land revenue in Ryotwari areas, non-payment of Chaukidari (village police) tax in Zamindari region and Forest satyagraha.
- The Viceroy took the initiative of releasing the Congress leaders and invited Mahatma Gandhi for talks which led to the Gandhi-Irwin pact and the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement.

Gandhi-Irwin Pact (5th March, 1931)

- During the course of Civil Disobedience movement the Simon Commission report was published and to consider its recommendation the First Round Table conference was called in London in November, 1930.
- Some of the liberal leaders like Tej Bahadur Sapru, VS Shastri and MR Jayakar on their return from the First Round Table conference tried to persuade Gandhi on the same lines.

- Gandhiji initiated a talk with Irwin on 14th February, 1931, which culminated in the Delhi pact of 5th March, 1931. The pact is popularly called Gandhi-Irwin pact.
- According to the pact, the Congress agreed to join the Second Round Table conference for drafting the constitutional reforms on the basis of (a) Federation (b) Responsibility and (c) Safeguards or reservation in the interest of India for such matters as defense external affairs, minorities and the financial credit of India.
- On behalf of the Congress, Gandhiji agreed to discontinue the Civil Disobedience movement.
- The government agreed to release all political prisoners, except those guilty of violence and restore the confiscated property of the satyagrahis.
- Gandhiji requested for remitting the death sentence on Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru was turned down by the Viceroy.

Civil Disobedience Movement (Second Phase)

- The Second Round Table conference (September, 1931) failed to satisfy Congress or provide anything substantial to the country.
- The Gandhi returned to India disheartened and disillusioned. Meanwhile Lord Wellington had succeeded Irwin as the Viceroy and had flouted many provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin pact.
- On 4th January, 1932, a fresh batch of Congress leaders including Gandhiji and Sardar Patel were arrested Gandhi was kept in Yerwada prison (Pune) during Civil Disobedience movement and at Aga Khan Place (Pune) during Quit India movements.
- The announcement of Communal award (16th August, 1932) by Ramsay MacDonald (British PM) the strength and the pace of Civil Disobedience movement began to decline.
- In the background of the Communal award and Gandhi's fast unto death, the Civil Disobedience movement lost its momentum. After the Poona pact, Gandhi lost interest in the movement and got fully involved in the anti-untouchability struggle, which led to the foundation of Harijan Sevak Sangh.

- In its place, Mahatma Gandhi launched Individual Civil Disobedience on 1st August, 1933. However, the Civil Disobedience movement continued to linger till early April, 1934 when Gandhiji decided to formally withdraw in April, 1934.

Impacts of Civil Disobedience Movement

- The Congress swept polls in most provinces in 1937.
- The left parties emerged as an-alternative in politics.
- Some Congress activist formed socialist group.
- Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose emerged as leader.

Three Round Table Conferences

First Round Table Conference

- Sir John Simon recommended British Government to call a conference consisting of the representatives of both the British India as well as the Indian States, so as to take a final decision on the issue of constitutional reforms for India and by a declaration of Lord Irwin Round Table conference was called.
- The First Session of the Round Table conference began on 12th November, 1930. The British Indian delegation comprised 58 members, rest were British officials. Some prominent members who participated were as follows :

Organisation	Leader
Hindu Mahasabha	MR Jayakar, MS Moonje
Sikh	Sardar Sampurna Singh
Christians	KT Paul
Liberal	TB Sapru, CY Chintamani, Srinivas Shastri
Muslim League	Aga Khan, Mohammed Shafi, Jinnah, Muhammed Ali, Fazlul Hag
Depressed Classes	BR Ambedkar
Princes	Akbar Hydari (Diwan of Hyderabad), Mirza Ismail (Diwan of Mysore), Maharaja of Bikaner

Second Round Table Conference

- Wellington succeeded Lord Irwin in Delhi in April, 1931. Sir Samuel Hoare, a leading conservative became Secretary of state for India.
- The Congress had suspended Civil Disobedience movement, but reiterated Poorna Swaraj as its ultimate political goal.

	Participants
Party/Ideology	Representative
Congress	Mahatma Gandhi
Muslim	Mohammed Iqbal
Depressed	BR Ambedkar
Liberals	TB Sapru
Capitalist	GD Birla
Others	Sarojini Naidu, MM Malalviya, Ali Imam

- **The Second Session made recommendation such as:**
 - The composition of the Indian federation.
 - Structure of the federal judiciary.
 - The mode of accession of states to the federation.
 - Distribution of financial resources.
- It was agreed at the conference that responsible government would be established immediately, both at the centre and in the provinces, including complete control over finance, army, defence and external relations.

Third Round Table Conference

- The Third Round Table conference was called on 17th November, 1932. The Congress boycotted it. The prominent members were TB Sapru and Ambedkar.
- The British Government, on the basis of the discussion at the three sessions, drafted its proposals for the reform of the Indian Constitution, which were embodied in the white paper published in March, 1933.
- The white paper was examined and approved by a Joint committee of the British Parliament (October, 1934) and a bill, based on the report of this committee, was introduced and passed in the British Parliament as the Government of India Act, 1935.

Communal Award and Poona Pact

- On 16th August, 1932, Prime Minister Ramsay Mac Donald announced in the British Parliament the proposal on minority representation known as the Communal Award. The award reserved a number of seats in the Provincial legislature (Lower House only). According to this award, Muslim, Christian, Anglo Indians, European and Sikh voters would elect their candidates by voting in separate communal electorates.

- The award declared the depressed classes (officially described as scheduled castes) also to be a minority community entitled to separate electorates and thus, separated them from the rest of the Hindus. They also had the right to vote in the remaining general constituencies also.
- Mac Donald, however, promised to accept any alternative scheme mutually agreed upon by the Hindus and the depressed classes.
- Gandhiji reacted strongly to the proposal and wrote to the British Prime Minister on 18th August, 1932.
- He went on fast unto death on 20th September, 1932 to enforce his demand. The 20th of September was observed as a day of fasting and prayer. Temples, wells, etc. were thrown open to the depressed classes all over the country.
- Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya summoned a conference of various castes and political parties, including Dr BR Ambedkar to sort out the issue.
- On 25th September, 1932, the sixth day of Gandhiji fast, they arrived at an agreement in Poona, popularly known as Poona pact. Poona pact between Gandhi and Ambedkar was concluded with the following terms :
 - The Principle of Joint and Common Electorate was accepted, for all Hindus.
 - 48 seats in different Provincial legislature were reserved for the depressed classes in place of 71 (as provided in the Communal award).
 - 18% of the seats in the Central legislature were reserved for the depressed classes.
 - Adequate representation would be given to the depressed classes in the civil services.

Election of 1937 and Congress Ministries

- The Lucknow Session of April, 1936, presided by Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress resolved to contest election.
- Jawaharlal Nehru in his presidential speech (Lucknow session) advocated socialism and took three socialists into the Congress Working committee i.e. Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Deo and Achyut Patwardhan.

All India Kisan Sabha

The Lucknow session was important from another point of view as well. It was during this session that the First Meeting of the All India Kisan Sabha was held under the Presidentship of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.

The Faizpur session held at December, 1936, under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal I Nehru, attacked fascism and Congress passed resolutions condemning Italian aggression of Abyssinia and Japanese aggression of China. In this session Congress demanded the formation of a Constituent assembly.

The session passed some important resolutions such as :

- The people of the princely state should have the same right of self-determination as those of the rest of the India, but the struggle for liberty was to be carried out by the people of states themselves.
- The provincial units were asked to conduct agrarian enquiries.

Elections

- The elections to the provincial legislatures were held in January- February, 1937. Congress won 715 out of 836 seats. In five provinces, it had a clear majority (Madras, United Provinces, Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa).
- In NWFP, Assam and Bombay Congress emerged as the single largest party. In Bengal, Punjab and Sind, the Congress did not have majority. The Congress could not do well in the election to upper houses as the franchise, there was limited to the upper strata only. As far as reserved seats were concerned.
- The government therefore formed Interim Ministries (e.g. Nawab Chhatari of National Agriculture party formed his ministry in United Province and Sir Dhunjishah formed his ministry in Bombay).
- In July, 1937, the Congress formed ministries in the United Provinces, Central Provinces, Orissa, Bihar, Madras and Bombay. Later Assam and the NWFP also came under the Congress rule.
- In Punjab, the Unionist party and the Muslim league formed a coalition government.

Ministries Formed in Different Provinces

Province	Ministry
Bombay	BG Kher
United Province	Govind Vallabh Pant
Madras	C Rajagopalachari
Orissa	Hari Krishna Mehtab
Central Province	Dr NV Khare
Bihar	Sri Krishna Sinha

North-West Frontier Province	Dr Khan Saheb
Bengal	Fazlul Huq of Krishak Praja party, with the support of Muslim league, but later on Muslim league was installed with HS Suhrawardy as the premier. It remained in power till August, 1947
Sind	Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah and Allah Bakhsh
Assam	Bardoli, supported by Congress
Punjab	Sikandar Hayat Khan of Unionist party (Remained in power till March, 1947)

Congress Ministries in Office (1937-1939)

- In all the Congress remained in power in eight provinces for 28 months. During this period, it made efforts to work for the benefit of Indians.
- In all the Congress ruled provinces the efforts were made to protect the peasant's from the moneylenders and to improve irrigation facilities.
- In the United Provinces and Bihar, Tenancy Bills were passed.
- The Congress Government in Bombay appointed a Textile Enquiry committee in 1937, which recommended a wage increase and health and insurance cover to worker.
- The Bombay ministry also introduced an Industrial Disputes act in November, 1938, based on the principles of arbitration, to prevent strikes and lockouts. In the field of civil liberties, all political prisoners were released and Constructive programme undertaken. The other major achievements of the Congress ministries were as follows :
 - Reduction in salaries of ministries.
 - The declaration of Fundamental Rights.
 - Welfare schemes for tribals.
 - Carrying jail reforms.
 - Carrying out commercial and economic surveys and uplift of village industries.
 - Promotion of education, especially primary education through the introduction of basic education.
- The Congress Government also joined the efforts to develop planning through the National Planning committee appointed in 1938 by the Congress President Subhash Chandra Bose.