

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT: HISTORY

PM Modi pays tributes to Quit India movement participants

The Quit India Movement (1942), also known as the August Movement or Bharat Chhodo Andolan led by Mahatma Gandhi, was a mass civil disobedience demanding immediate British withdrawal from India, marked by the "Do or Die" call and nationwide protests despite severe repression. The movement marked a turning point in India's freedom struggle, as it witnessed nationwide participation across social classes, regions, genders, and age groups.

Causes of the Quit India Movement

1.Failure of the Cripps Mission (March 1942)

The Cripps Mission offered only limited self-government after World War II, which fell short of Indian aspirations. Congress rejected the proposals, demanding complete independence instead of dominion status. The failure intensified disillusionment and triggered stronger calls for direct action.

2.Economic Hardships During World War II

Wartime inflation led to steep rise in prices of essential commodities, making life difficult for common people. Agricultural exploitation and forced procurement of resources caused food shortages. Heavy taxation and scarcity deepened public resentment against British rule.

3.Impact of World War II

Britain dragged India into the war without consulting Indian leaders or the legislature. Indian soldiers were forced to fight in Britain's war effort while denied political freedoms at home. This created a deep sense of betrayal and urgency for independence.

4.Repressive British Policies

Earlier movements like the Civil Disobedience Movement were brutally suppressed. Frequent arrests of nationalist leaders created frustration and defiance among masses.

5.Influence of Nationalist Leaders

Speeches and writings of Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Subhas Bose (earlier), Jayaprakash Narayan, and others inspired the masses. Gandhi's call for "Do or Die" became a powerful moral weapon to mobilize the country.

6.Global Inspiration

Success of other anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa inspired Indians. Defeat of British forces in Asia (e.g., Singapore 1942) exposed the weakness of colonial rule, giving confidence to Indians.

7.Role of Youth and Women

Rising political awareness among students, workers, and women created grassroots activism. Women like Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta, Sucheta Kripalani emerged as prominent leaders. Students played a key role in forming underground networks and communication systems.

Significant Events of Quit India Movement

1.August 8, 1942

At the All-India Congress Committee session at Gowalia Tank Maidan (now August Kranti Maidan) in Bombay, Gandhi delivered the famous "Do or Die" speech. This call for mass struggle set the tone for the movement. Aruna Asaf Ali unfurled the Indian National Flag at Gowalia Tank Maidan. This symbolic act marked the official beginning of the Quit India Movement.

2. August 9, 1942

The British government responded swiftly by arresting Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, and all major Congress leaders under Operation Zero Hour. This created a leaderless movement, but instead of collapsing, it spread spontaneously across India.

3. Mid-August 1942

Despite the absence of central leadership, spontaneous mass protests, strikes, boycotts, and sabotage activities erupted nationwide. Railway stations, post offices, telegraph lines, and police stations became targets of popular anger.

4. Late 1942

Underground resistance networks were formed, led by leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, and Aruna Asaf Ali. Secret radio broadcasts, underground newspapers, and guerrilla-style protests sustained momentum.

5. 1943–1944

Movement shifted to rural areas with uprisings led by peasants. Students organised demonstrations and strikes. Women took charge in many regions, leading marches and mobilising villages.

Outcome of the Quit India Movement

1. Severe British Repression

Thousands were arrested; over 10,000 people were killed in police and military firing. Strict press censorship and mass detentions were enforced. Organised leadership was crippled, but the spirit of resistance remained alive.

2. Strengthened Nationalist Sentiment

For the first time, there was unified participation across regions, classes, and communities. It created a psychological shift; people began to believe that freedom was imminent.

3. International Impact

The movement exposed British repression to the world, garnering global sympathy for India's cause. It pressured Britain diplomatically, as the US and allied powers could not ignore India's demand for freedom while claiming to fight for democracy in WWII.

4. Momentum Towards Independence

Although the movement did not succeed immediately, it created irreversible momentum towards freedom. It weakened British confidence in maintaining control, leading to negotiations that culminated in India's independence in 1947.

Conclusion

The Quit India Movement of 1942 was not just a protest but a people's revolution. Despite brutal suppression, it ignited unparalleled unity, courage, and resilience among Indians. It strengthened nationalist resolve, exposed British oppression globally, and paved the way for India's final struggle towards independence in 1947.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pm-modi-pays-tributes-to-quit-india-movement-participants/article69912579.ece>