

Historical Background of The Quit India Movement

Abstract

The 'QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT' of 1942 which was also known as the 'August Revolution' owing to its time of occurrence i.e. August, 1942 and to the very nature of this movement which can be clearly termed to be the most revolutionary Out of all the movements that took place in the India's Struggle for Independence. In this movement, the Indian people demonstrated an exemplary bravery and Enthusiasm to fight against the British. However, the British used the most repressive ways to crush this movement, who even used bomber jets to suppress this movement. But the people of India braving all odds stood together and faced their common enemy which was none other than the British. In true sense, the Quit India Movement proved to be the last nail in the coffin of the British rule in India.

Keywords: Quit India, August Revolution, Revolutionary, Exemplary, Bravery, Enthusiasm, Repressive, Bomber Jets, Suppress, Nail, Coffin, British Rule.

Introduction

The Cripps Mission of 1942 failed leaving no point of discussion between the British government and the Indian National Congress. It was now decided by the Congress leaders to force the British to accept the demand for independence of India by taking drastic steps. On 8th August, 1942 the AICC (All India Congress Committee) passed the famous "Quit India" resolution at the Gowalia Tank Ground, Bombay. Here it was proposed that in order to achieve Independence for India a movement has to be started which was to be non-violent in nature.

On the night of 8th August, 1942, Mahatma Gandhi gave the famous call of "Do or Die". In order to stop this mass struggle the British imprisoned all the important leaders of the Congress including the great leader Mahatma Gandhi. This decision of the British angered the masses and resulted in a wave of disgust and disappointment all over the country. Without their leaders the Indian people took the command of the movement in their own hands and the famous Quit India Movement, 1942 which became one of the most successful movements in India's freedom struggle.

Aim of the Study

To Study the Historical Background of the Quit India Movement, 1942. The focus of the study is on various causes which made it necessary to launch a movement in difficult conditions, when the possibility of brutal repression was a certainty and also look through the course leading to the Quit India Movement.

Methodology

The present work follows descriptive and analytical methods from a historical perspective. The present article involves a critical use of the sources both primary and secondary based on external and internal criticism to have the bird's eye view of the historical background of the Quit India Movement.

Discussion

After the Cripps Mission, 1942 was rejected both by the Congress and the Muslim League; Mahatma Gandhi framed a resolution which called for the British withdrawal from India and a non-cooperation movement of non-violent character against any Japanese invasion. The Congress Working Committee meeting which took place at Wardha on 14th July, 1942 accepted this idea of a mass struggle. This was because of several reasons such as the failure of the Cripps Mission to solve the constitutional deadlock, exposed Britain's unchanged attitude on constitutional advance and made it clear that any more silence would be tantamount to accepting the British right to decide the fate of Indians without consulting them. The



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people were unhappy due to the inflationary prices and shortage of food grains. Also, the news of British losses encouraged the people to challenge their British masters.

Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be carried only under the leadership of "Mahatma Gandhi." The All India Congress Committee was then to meet in Bombay in August to ratify this decision. This historic August meeting was held on August 8th, 1942, at the Gowalia Tank ground in Bombay. This meeting generated an unprecedented popular enthusiasm. Huge crowds waited outside as the leaders deliberated on the issue. And the feeling of anticipation and expectations ran so high that in the open session, when the leaders made their speeches before the many thousands who had assembled to hear them, there was a pin-drop silence.

Mahatma Gandhi directed various sections of the society. These instructions were general in nature issued in the form of an advisory. The farmers were advised to pay mutually agreed rent to only those Zamindars who were anti Government. The Royals of the princely states were asked to give their support to the masses and declare themselves to be part of India. The subjects of the princely states were asked to take part in the movement and support their Prince only when they allied their interests with that of their subjects and Indian people. The Soldiers in the army were advised to carry out their duties but not kill their fellow Indian brothers and sisters. The government servants were instructed to continue to carry out their duties and responsibilities but to pledge their honour and adherence to the Indian National Congress. Mahatma Gandhi gave the famous slogan of 'Do or Die' to the people of India.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, Indians have to do whatever it takes to get their motherland free in a non-violent manner. He asked the people to either do something to get the freedom or to die in an attempt to achieve it.

The government, however, was in no mood to either negotiate with the Congress or wait for the movement to be formally launched. As a consequence of which, in the early hours of the morning of August 9th, 1942; Mahatma Gandhi & all members of the Working Committee were arrested by the British Government. The All India Congress Committee and the Provincial Congress Committees were banned. But the people did not take this action of the British Government lying down. There were numerous acts of violence and destruction of or damage to public property and took place in quite a number of places, the Government machinery broke down which lead to dislocation of normal life and communications. Though the Congress leaders disclaimed any responsibility for this outbreak of violence, it is hard to believe that all of them were ignorant of such large-scale planning by the extremists. On the Government's side, severe repression went on and hundreds of Indians were put to death or were imprisoned by the British.

The general policy of the Government was to suppress the disturbances in the country and also to detain the Congress leaders until they gave a definite

assurance and guarantee of a different line of conduct. The brutal and all-out repression succeeded within a period of six to seven weeks in bringing about a cessation of the mass phase of this struggle. But in the meantime, underground networks were being consolidated in various parts of the country. All-India underground leadership with prominent members such as Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Ram Manohar Lohia, Sucheta Kripalani, Chootubhai Puranik, Biju Patnaik, R.P. Goenka, and later, after his escape from the jail, Jayaprakash Narayan had also begun to emerge. This leadership saw the role of the underground movement as being that of keeping up popular morale by continuing to provide a line of command and a source of guidance and leadership to activists all over the country.

The underground groups all over India were helped by providing them with the explosives, firearms and money that was collected by the over ground workers and the leaders. Local Self governments were established by the Indians at Satara, Ballia and Tamluk. The movement was very strong in areas such as Bombay, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Central Provinces, Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh. The movement was led by the Congress Socialists, Gandhians along with the members of the Forward Bloc and certain extremists as well. All the sections of the Indian society threw their weight in order to make this movement a memorable one.

Conclusion

The manner, in which the British acted to suppress the Indians before and after the passage of the 'Quit India Revolution', was very much the reason for the initiation of Quit India Movement, 1942. Even though, the British government crushed the Movement with its mighty force and contained the movement in a short time. But at the same time this movement had aroused the sense of nationality amongst every Indian. People from different strata and walks of life participated with full fervour and enthusiasm in this movement. They forgot all their differences and had only one goal in mind to bring the British on their knees and achieve independence for their motherland. The youth, women, farmers, workers and even the small zamindars stood against the British government. They braved all odds to oppose the British government in every possible manner they could. The British also understood that their loyalists will no longer be supporting their rule in India and majority of the Indians have stood against the British. Be it UP, Bengal or Bihar, or Maharashtra, Karnataka or Andhra all regions vociferously demanded for the British to 'Quit India'.

The Quit India Movement owes its success to the common People of India who shouldered the responsibility to make the most out of this mass struggle and as a result of which broke the backbone of the British rule in India.

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