

India's Road of Independence, from Late 1800s to 1947s

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Abstract. This essay will explain India's road to Independence from the late 1800s to 1947. It began with early nationalist leaders such as Sir Surendranath Banerjee, who supported more reforms and rights for Indian people under British rule. Early movements of Indian Nationalism started with petitions, more Indian political participation and peaceful protests. Over time, new leaders and new events pushed for a stronger reform. One of the most significant figures of the Indian Independence Movement is Mahatma Gandhi. After joining the Indian National Congress, a congress that seeks more Indian participation in Politics under British rules, Gandhi encouraged more peaceful protest and civil disobedience, such as the significant salt march and non-cooperation movement that inspired millions of Indians to fight for freedom. Gandhi successfully united people across India under different religions and social classes together and fought for independence. Some events in India pushed the independence movement more as Indians are tired of the poor treatment from British rule. The tragedies from the Bengal Famine of 1943 was an example that revealed failures in British policies of their rule of India. With the anger and dissatisfaction of Indian people, the Quit India Movement happened as people were frustrated and believed independence from British rule would be necessary. In 1947, the British passed the Indian Independence Act, finally ending the 190 years of British rule in India. However, the new nation was split into two nations: India and Pakistan, and this split created further violence and conflicts post independence. However, India's independence would also become a significant event during the decolonization, and lead to more countries in Africa and Asia gaining their independence from colonial rules later.

Keywords: Independence, Nationalism, Indian

1. Introduction

After India became a colony under British control, the nationalist movement of India was quickly developed, seeking for more rights for the Indians and more autonomy from the British Control. In the Indian nationalist movement, some of the important figures include Sir Surendranath Banerjee who believes in reform and moderate protest, and Ghandi, who seeks more independence for India. This essay will explain the causes of the Indian independence movement, and some examples of protests organized by the Indian nationalists and independence movement. The Indian independence movement was a widely discussed topic by historians and researchers. Studies of the Indian independence movement often emphasize the roots of the movement started in the late 19th

century when some highly educated Indians began to question colonial inequality. They first advocate to fight these inequalities through reform and more political participation with other Indians.

Surendranath Banerjee was described as one of the first figures to use western ideas on Indian self governance, such as the idea of creating a gradual reform or a constitution. However, his idea of a peaceful reform also conflicts with other Indian leaders who focus more on protests and non-cooperation movements.

Research about the Indian National Congress shows how the congress started from a forum for petitions to a platform for political resistance. The Indian National Congress also shows a shift from elite politics to mass politics, especially after Ghandi's presence in the congress after 1915, more normal Indian people started to participate in the political and resistance movement led by him.

Gandhi's leadership and idea of non violence protest was a force that united Indians across the entire country, whether religion or classes. Gandhi's way of protest, such as the Non-cooperation and the salt march, also inspired further protests in other colonies which shaped the later decolonization in the world.

The impact of World War 2 also plays an important role in the Indian independence movement, especially the Bengal Famine and the Quit India Movement. These crises revealed the structural failures of the British Colonial rules and made more Indians believe in independence and self rule.

Research on post-independence India focuses on the Indian Independence Act of 1947, showing the complex transition from Colonial rule to independence and the separation of India and Pakistan because of religious and culture conflicts, both the decolonization and tragedy of violence.

2. Sir Surendranath Banerjee and the Indian association

Sir Surendranath Banerjee was one of the most influential leaders of the Indian nationalist movements. Banerjee was born in Calcutta, in a Brahmin family during British colonial rule. Banerjee received English education at the Presidency college, where he learned liberalism and constitutionalist ideas. In 1869, Banerjee went to England to take the Indian Civil Service exam, which was rare at that time for Indians. However, his career at the Indian Civil Service ended after a controversial dismissal of a technology involving age limits [1]. Banerjee believes the dismissal was racially motivated. The experience of colonial injustice shaped his political ideology, and motivates him fighting for Indian self governance. After returning to India, Banerjee became an educator and a public speaker, while creating the Ripon college as a platform to spread political movement among the youth. Banerjee uses English media as a platform to spread political movement, he created "The Bengalee" as a voice to fight against discrimination from the British and colonization [2]. In 1876, Banerjee created the Indian association, one of the earliest organizations trying to unite the different voices of Indians across India. Later the Indian association merged into the Indian National Congress, where Banerjee became a prominent leader. Banerjee believes in constitution and gradual reform, Indians in the civil services, and civil liberties. Banerjee also opposed the partition of Bengal in 1905, when he led mass protests, public meetings, and boycotts, leading the Indian politics towards more nationalism. Banerjee has a more moderate stance, but he also inspired more radical leaders like Gandhi [3]. In 1909, Banerjee published "a nation in making", one of the first Indian political biography. However, Banerjee's influence declines later when more radical activists starts to rise, many disagrees Banerjee's loyalty to the constitution and the British crowns. In 1913, Banerjee was criticized because he was knighted by the British, many think hje breaks the promise

of nationalism. In his late years, Banerjee joins the Bengal Legislative council, until 1925 when he died.

3. Indian national conference

The Indian Association was started in 1876 by Surendranath Banerjee and Anada Mohan Bose. The association was one of the first political parties in India. The goal of this political movement was to unite people together from different parts of India, especially more educated Indians like lawyers and teachers. The Indian association wants to defend rights of the Indians, and push the British formaking more fair laws in India such as more civil service exams in India so more Indians will be able to work in the government [4].

The first Indian National Conference was organized by the Indian Association in 1883, Calcutta. The conference brought people from different parts of India to discuss national issues, and build the idea of a united Indian movement. The Indian Association later joined the Indian National Congress formed in 1885.

The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885, Bombay. Its first president was Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee. The purpose of the congress was for educated Indians to be able to discuss issues and send petitions to the British Government. At first, the Indian National Congress did not demand independence; instead, they sought more Indian participation in government and fair treatment. However, the congress became more active over time and less willing to settle for small reforms [5].

The turning point of the congress was after Mahatma Gandhi joined the congress in 1915. Gandhi encouraged non violent protest and civil disobedience to fight British rule. Under Ghandi's lead, several movements started in the congress. For example, the Non Cooperation Movement in 1920, when Indians started to boycott the British goods and institutions; the Civil Disobedience movement; the Salt March protest against British Salt tax; and the Quit India Movement in the 1940s when the Indians demand the British to leave India.

In 1930, the Congress declared Purna Swaraj, which means complete independence, as their main goal. This is an important shift from earlier times when the congress wanted to focus on reform, and now the congress wants to seek independence. The Congress becomes the main voice of India's struggle from different languages and religions of India.

After India finally gained independence in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru, became the first prime minister. The Congress worked to set up a democratic government, improve the economy, and unite the country.

4. The Indian independence movement

The Indian independence movement first began in the late 1800s, when the Indian National Congress was formed by educated Indians in 1885. The movement started off with small reforms and moderate protests, but over time they demanded full freedom from the British. Some of the early movements led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai boycotted British goods, such as the Swadeshi movement after the partition of Bengal in 1905.

In the early 1900s, Mahatma Gandhi became the leader of the Indian Independence movement. Gandhi believed in peaceful protests as a way to fight against the British rules. Some of his early campaigns such as the Champaran and Kheda Satyagrahas supported poor farmers who suffered from unfair taxes. After the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, Gandhi started the Non Cooperation

movement in 1919, encouraging Indians to stop working for the British. Despite this uniting many Indians from different backgrounds, the movement stopped after the Chauri Chaura violence.

5. Gandhi and Salt March

The Salt March of 1930 was one of the most iconic protests led by Gandhi. In the Salt March, Gandhi led his followers and walked 240 miles to the sea to make salt in defiance of British taxes. This protest inspired many more Indians to join the movement through peaceful protests and civil disobedience. At that time, British Law made salt a monopoly. Indians were forbidden from making or selling salt so they had to buy it from the British government with high taxes. Gandhi sees the salt tax as an example of colonial injustice because it shows how the British are using basic products like salt to create business monopolies as a way to oppress the Indians [6,7]. On March 12, 1930, Gandhi organized a small group of followers for a long march around 240 miles to the coast. On the march, many villagers on the way joined to make the size larger as time moved. The group reached the coast on April 6. At the coast, Gandhi picked up a lump of salt, breaking the law as a part of civil disobedience. This march triggers a nationwide nonviolence protest across India, protesters make salt and sell salt illegally. Tens of thousands of Indians were arrested as a result [8-10].

Later in 1942, the Quit India Movement started to fight for Indian independence from the British, but the British oppressed the movement.

6. Bengal famine

In 1943, Bengal, back then a province of British Raj, suffered a severe famine. 3 million people died from malnutrition, starvation, disease, and related causes. Normally, famines happen because of crop failures or natural disease, however, in 1943, the food production wasn't a problem and the harvest was enough to feed the population. However, the reason is "entitlement failure", which means many people did not have money to access food, even when food was present. There were several factors that turned Bengal's situation into a total disaster. First, after the Pacific war broke out and Japan captured Burma in 1942, the rice imports to Bengal were cut off. There was also a cyclone in October 1942 that damaged the autumn rice crop and forced many farmers to eat seed grain meant for farming. On the British colonial side, the policies made everything worse. Fearing a Japanese invasion, British authorities stocked food, diverted food supplies to the military, and took away boats and carts for supplies in case the Japanese captured them [11,12]. The trade and distribution system was crippled. These actions caused a sharp inflation in rice prices, hoarding and speculation, and a breakdown in ordinary market functioning. For many laborers, farmers, and the landless, wages went down but the food prices went skyrocketing, even staple diets became unaffordable. Although the colonial authorities and provincial government tried some relief by distributing over 110 million free meals, these aid were slow and wasn't enough. The consequences were enormous: mass migration from rural areas to urban areas; families forced to sell lands and properties to keep up with the food price; small farms collapse, mass amount of deaths not only from starvation but also diseases such as malarial and diarrhoeal disease, exacerbated by malnutrition and poor sanitation. Politically and socially, the famine also had deep impacts [13]. The famine exposed the failures of the British Colonial government, intensified the anger and nationalist movement of Indian people, and many were strongly dissatisfied about the colonial government's priorities during wartime. The social and economic structures in Bengal was weakened for years afterward.

7. Quit India movement

As World War 2 continues, the frustration and nationalistic currents in India lead the Quit India Movement to break out. After the British Government forced India into the war without consulting Indian leaders, reimposed wartime controls, and offered some assurances of self-rule via the Cripps Mission that were unsatisfactory, Indian nationalists rejected them as inadequate. Drawing on the momentum of the rising nationalistic movement in India, and some earlier movements, Gandhi and the Indian National Congress passed the “Quit India” resolution on August 8, 1942. On the same day, Gandhi also launched his impassioned “Do or Die” call that day. However, the British immediately arrested Congress leadership in response, suppressing the movement through censorship, detention laws, and deployment of military force. Despite the leader of INC being arrested, more protests break out both nonviolent and violent across India. Some strategies of these protesters include sabotage railways, telegraph lines, and administrative infrastructure. Peaceful protests involve strikers, marches, and local self-rule initiatives. The British also gave strong and harsh suppression: thousands died, tens of thousands arrested, and the uprising was crushed by early 1943, some remaining resistance continuing to linger in places. Despite the Quit India Movement being oppressed and did not achieve independence, the moral authority rule of Britain was significantly weakened in India, galvanized Indian unity and resolve, and continued India’s route of achieving independence [14].

8. Lahore resolution

The Lahore Resolution, later often called the Pakistan resolution, was a landmark political declaration adopted by the All-India Muslim League during its 27th annual session held in Lahore from 22 to 24 in March 1940. The resolution was first moved by the Chief Minister of Bengal, A.K.Fazlul Huq, and then supported by leaders like Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman, Zafar Ali Khan, and Sir Abdullah Haroon. By 1940, many Muslims leaders thought the existing constitutional proposals, like the Government of India act 1935, and the political dynamics like the Congress, did not assure the protections of Muslim political, religious, economic and culture. The resolution’s main demands included that no constitutional plan would be acceptable to Muslims unless it guaranteed that some parts of northwest and eastern India would be autonomous for Muslims; the constitution must protect the Muslim minorities in both Muslim and non-Muslim regions. The resolution did not use “Pakistan”, but “independent states” instead of a single state. However, over time more Muslims seek one independent state for Muslims. After the resolution was passed on March 24, 1940, it became the foundation of the Muslim League’s political platform. It shaped subsequent demands and negotiations leading up to the partition of British India in 1947.

9. Indian independence act of 1947

After World War 2, the British were weakened and India achieved independence in 1947. On 18 July 1947, the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act of 1947 and granted Royal Assent, legally ending the British sovereignty over India and splitting the Colony into two new nations: India and Pakistan, effective from 15 August 1947. The provision partitioned the provinces of Bengal and Punjab between the two dominions, existing British India laws would remain in force in the new states until superseded by their own legislatures. The Act also terminated British suzerainty over the princely states, releasing them from treaty obligations and giving them the option to accede to either dominion or seek independent status. Further, it gives full legislative power in the

Constituent Assemblies of India and Pakistan, stopping future UK legislation from applying within those dominions unless explicitly adopted. The Act also removed the British government's responsibility for governance in the territories formerly under British India, ended the use of the title "Emperor of India" and provided legal transition arrangements. Announced by the Prime Minister Attlee in February 1947, the Act was framed within the larger context of Britain's postwar decision to withdraw from India, and as part of the Mountbatten plan as well which had already proposed partition and a swift transfer in power in response to the increasing communal tensions and political deadlock. The passing of this act represents a significant increase of legislative assertion of decolonization. The debates in the House of Commons members also acknowledged both the scale of the task and the unique nature of transferring sovereignty to non-European peoples. However, the end of English colonization doesn't mean a peaceful transition of power. The partition between India and Pakistan caused a large-scale border conflict causing millions of forced migration as populations crossed newly drawn borders in fear. In the following years, both India and Pakistan moved from dominion status toward complete sovereignty and independence from British control. India adopted its own constitution in 1950, while Pakistan did in 1956. Despite the limitations and the human cost of partition, the India Independence act remains an important legal instrument that formalized the end of British rule and reshaped the geopolitics of South Asia [15,16].

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, India's route toward independence was caused by a series of mass protests both peacefully and violently, started by the mistreatment and oppression from the British colonizers, and the Indian's dissatisfaction under British rule. At first, Indian leaders like Surendranath Banerjee sought more peaceful reform and changes through education and law, such as making deals with the British. Later, leaders like Gandhi lead millions with non violent resistance, boycotts, and protests. Some examples like the Non-Cooperation movement and the Civil disobedience movement are examples of Ghandi's leadership and unifying the Indian people. Events like the Bengal Famine and British policies during World War 2 further exposed the failures of Colonial rule, upsetting more Indians participating in the protests. In the end, the Indian Independence act of 1947 finally ended the British rule in India and granted India and Pakistan independence. Although conflicts still happen between India and Pakistan after independence, the independence of India becomes a significant example of post world war 2 colony independence.

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