

8. World Wars and India

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8.3.1 First World War and India

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The first half of the twentieth century witnessed two World Wars. These were the most important events of the century witnessed two World Wars. It changed the world scenario. We are going to learn about its impact on India.

8.1 First World War (1914-1918 C.E.)

The First World War began in 1914 C.E. The main cause of it was the competition amongst the European countries, who nourished imperialistic ambitions.

Causes of the First World War : We have already seen that the latter half of the nineteenth century was marked by several industrial inventions. Machines came in use for various production processes. European countries were now equipped to increase production because of mechanisation. They needed more raw material to match the quantitative increase in production and more markets to sell their surplus products as well. Imperialistic European nations began to search for newer lands to meet these needs. This would often create warlike situations among them. Keeping this in view, more powerful nations in Europe, felt the need to continuously increase their military power and armoury.

The countries like England, France, Russia, Portugal, Holland, Belgium, etc.

had already expanded their empires in Africa and Asia. In the pre-world war Europe, England, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, France and Italy were the nations of primary importance. Among them rival groups were formed. Because of the rivalry every nation began to enhance its military and naval strength; there was a competition to produce more and more destructive weapons. This ultimately resulted in political situation akin to war.

Immediate Cause of the First World War : The Austrian Prince, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Serbia by a Serbian maniac. In Austria people believed that this whole act was manoeuvred by the Serbian Kingdom. Hence, Austria called a war against Serbia. Russia came in to help Serbia. Two distinct groups of European nations were formed, one group supporting Austria and another supporting Serbia. Austria and Hungary were trying to suppress Serbia and Germany was on their side. Belgium had a neutral policy. Even then, Germany attacked Belgium and established their supremacy there. England stood up with Belgium and called a war against Germany. Now Germany, Austria, Turkey, Bulgaria (known as ‘central powers’) were on one side and England, France, Russia (known as ‘allied nations’) were on the other. Later, Italy joined the allied powers. In the last stage of the war America joined in with the allied nations.

A naval war was fought in 1916 between Germany and England at Jutland in the North Sea and German navy was defeated. It resulted in a peace treaty in 1918, known as ‘The Treaty of Versailles’. This peace treaty put an end to the First World War.



Foundation of 'League of Nations' :

All the nations who were involved in the First World War seriously felt the need to create some solution to avoid any situation that could lead to another world war. Woodrow Wilson, the American President was a peace-loving and idealistic leader. He emphasised on the need of having an organisation of the leading nations, finding peaceful solutions for conflicts between nations and establishing peace in the world. An organisation known as 'League of Nations' was established with this objective. Germany, Austria and other defeated nations were not allowed to become members of the league. The concept of the 'League of Nations' was deliberated by America and yet it did not become a member of the league. As a result England and France retained their dominance in the league.

8.2 Second World War (1939-1945 C.E.)

The Second World War proved to be more destructive than the First World War. It was certainly more extensive than the First World War and its warfare was technologically more advanced.

Causes of the Second World War :

The 'League of Nations' intended to avoid conflicts between nations. The Nazis under the leadership of Hitler grabbed the power in Germany. Hitler began to escalate Germany's military power so as to avenge the demeaning conditions imposed on Germany by the Versailles treaty. He focused on increasing the strength of military as well as navy. Meanwhile, Soviet Russia, a communist nation was becoming more powerful. It made the nations like England, America and France uneasy. Soviet Russia and imperialist Germany viewed each other as arch enemies. Keeping this in view, England and France ignored Germany's advances, thinking that it will

keep Soviet Russia's increasing power under control. In 1938, Hitler won the Sudeten province in Czechoslovakia, which was populated in majority by people of German origin. In 1939, he attacked Poland. Actually Poland was looked upon as a neutral country by all European nations. In spite of this, Hitler attacked and conquered Poland. Therefore, England declared war against Germany.

Gradually, Germany began to grab lands of other European countries in bits and pieces. It had already won Poland at the very beginning of the war. Denmark surrendered to Germany. So did Norway. In a short time Germany conquered Holland and Belgium and its army marched towards Paris. Germany conquered France too. In May 1940, it attacked England by assaulting the British platoons present at Dunkirk. England, with great caution moved out two and half lakh of its soldiers from Dunkirk. In the world history, this instance of beating a successful retreat, is of great significance. During this period Winston Churchill had taken over control of England, as the Prime Minister after Neville Chamberlain's resignation from the post.

In 1939, Hitler violated the 'Non-aggression Pact', made with Stalin and attacked Soviet Russia. While the Nazi army was marching towards Stalingrad, Russian army was on the retreat. In the month of November 1943, on reaching Stalingrad, three lakh soldiers of the unsuspecting Nazi army, were caught in the trap set up by the Soviet army. Soviet Russia defeated the Germans under the leadership of Marshal Georgy Zhukov. Armies of the allied nations took over Berlin. Hitler went in underground exile and committed suicide. Before this happened, Mussolini was also defeated and died. The Nazi soldiers in North Africa had also surrendered.



For additional information :

Fascism : It is a political ideology, which does not believe in democracy, liberalism, individual freedom and equality. Fascism derives from the Latin word 'Fasces'. After the First World War was over, Benito Mussolini, an Italian leader and later the Prime Minister of Italy, built a movement, which he named as 'Fascism'. Opposition to democratic institutions, greater focus on action, absolute political authority, centralisation of political power, aggressive nationalism, justification of war and violence are the major characteristics of fascism.

Nazism : Nazism is in a way a slightly diverse form of fascism. Nazism gave more importance to racism. The genocide of European Jews in Germany by Hitler had its roots in racism. It may be said that Nazism was an extremely aggressive and corrupt manifestation of fascism.

Japan entered in this war, in support of Germany. In 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and destroyed the American naval base. This resulted in America declaring war against Japan. Thus, the war field of Second World War expanded further. Later, Japan went on capturing the regions of Philippines, Myanmar, Malaya and Singapore. In addition Japan even marched up to Assam, Arakan and Imphal. This drove the British to act against Japan's aggression. When Japan seemed to have been going ahead undaunted with their aggressive policies, America launched aerial attacks two Japanese cities with atom bombs, first on Hiroshima and then Nagasaki. At last, Japan surrendered on

15th August 1945. This put an end to the Second World War.

8.3 World Wars and India

8.3.1 First World War and India :

The British Government of India, compelled India, one of their colonies, to participate in the world war, without any concern for willingness or unwillingness of the Indians. India became the source of procuring help in the form of money, food, clothing and other war supplies. During the year of 1919-20 the British Government in India provided help to England worth Rs.19 billion (1 billion = 100 crores).

Indian Soldiers deployed by England	
Country Name	No. of Indian officers and soldiers sent
France	1,38,608
East Africa	47,704
Mesopotamia	6,75,391
Egypt	1,44,026
Gallipoli	4,950
Salonica	9,931
Eden	26,205
Iranian Gulf	49,198
	10,96,013

Seventeen of the Indian soldiers were honoured and decorated with 'Victoria Cross', a medal given for gallantry. India was a major source for England providing skilled human power and various war supplies such as ammunition, weapons, textiles, jute, tents, small ships, timber, railway tracks and transport goods. Till the end of 1918, British government in India sent weaponry and ammunition worth Rs. 1.4 billion.





First World War - War Memorial at Pune

World War I left significant impact on various fields including production of war supplies, civil industries, trade, economic policies, sea and land transportation, farming and agricultural production, fuel supply, defence systems, etc. This war boosted India's industrial growth. The direct and indirect impacts of the war were more evident in fields like iron industry, steel industry, coal and mining industries. After the war was over, there was considerable growth in motor transportation and the number of motor vehicles. During war times and post-war period there was decrease in the export amounting to a loss of Rs.33 crores, approximately. The prices of agricultural products reduced but the prices of industrial products increased. Indian food grains were exported to England and allied nations. It caused a shortage of food grains for the Indians. Prices of food grains in Indian markets began to rise.

The Indian involvement in the First World War had mixed impact on India. As far as the defence tactics were concerned the Indian soldiers and Indian political

leaders learnt a few things. They realised because of their experience on the European war field that the Indian weaponry was far too less sophisticated, compared to other nations. Some factors made them understand how India could be considered backward in the matters of aircrafts, mechanised war instruments and infantry, medical facilities, modernisation of the armed forces, military training, adequate storage of war supplies, etc. Considering these factors the British Government in India formed a committee to bring in effect the required changes. This committee made a report ready recommending some useful changes in the Indian military systems.

In 1917, Governor General and Viceroy Lord Chelmsford and Edwin Samuel Montagu, Secretary of State of India, together prepared a report on the administrative reforms needed in the British administration in India. Accordingly, apart from civil provisions a few promises were made with regard to military organisation in India. It was promised that Indian soldiers will be posted on various positions in the army without any concern for their caste, race and religion. A proper ratio of Indian recruits will be maintained in the army. An academy in India will be established similar to Sandhurst Academy in England. Ten seats in this academy will remain reserved for young Indian candidates. Those who were trained in the military college at Indore would be given 'King's Commission.' The Cavalry will be reduced in its strength. The strength of the provincial military units would be enhanced. In 1921, a new department for military supplies called 'Goods and Supply' was opened. Because of the war, the foundation of the Indian Air Force was widened. The Indian naval units proved their grit and bravery in the war at Persian Gulf.



Congress and Defence Policy :

Indian National Congress had a definite approach about the defence issues and right from the beginning they had formed a number of policies in that regard. It included;

- Indian citizens should be encouraged to educate themselves by providing them facilities of education and training with a view to make them capable for self-defence and defence of the nation.
- The official expenditure on defence should be curbed, if that is not possible then other official expenditures should be reduced.
- Indian men should be recruited in the regional units of army.
- In compliance with the 'Queen's Proclamation' Indian people should be appointed on the posts of higher grades.
- There should be a defence academy in India.
- Home Guards and groups of volunteers should be established.
- The British Government should share part of the defence expenditure meant for India's protection from its treasury.

With such demands, the Indian National Congress articulated their demands for defence in clear terms. However, the British Government adopted policies, suitable only to their self-interest.

Lokmanya Tilak through his editorials published in the newspaper 'Kesari' and through his speeches insisted that the Indian Navy and India's significant position in the world political scenario should be duly acknowledged and there should not be any discrimination while appointing Indian men on positions of authority. Lokmanya Tilak

and other Indian leaders showed a positive approach in helping the British Government during the First World War. They believed that the co-operation offered by the Indian people will be beneficial to them in future. We get to witness the far sightedness of Lokmanya Tilak in his approach during war times.

India was forced into this war started by the British imperial rule. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote about it in a letter written to his daughter, Indira. He said, "This was not the war of India. India did neither have anything against Germany nor Turkey. However, India did not had any voice in this regard. India was a British colony. It could not but trail its master".

India was extremely poor. There was no dearth of candidates willing to enter the Army. About 11 lakh of Hindi soldiers fought in this war. Hindi soldiers provided a considerable support to the British army. Besides, India also contributed one hundred and fifty crores of Rupees to the war expenses.

During the times of war Indian people began to migrate to Canada and America. The government of Canada was heavily under the influence of the British Government. It rejected entry to Indian migrants. It did not allow 'Kamagata Maru', a steam ship with Indian migrants aboard under the leadership of Baba Gurudit Singh, to anchor in the Canadian port of Vancouver. People on this ship returned. On their return journey, 'Kamagata Maru' reached the port of 'Bajbaj' near Kolkata. There, the British officers ordered Indian passengers to return immediately to their own towns and villages. However, the Indians did not follow the order. So, the British officers began to shoot and 30 Indian passengers died in it. This cruelty on part of the British officers created a public outcry throughout India.



First World War and TISCO :

There is a close relationship between the First World War and Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO). During World War I railways was the only option for the swift movement of the army and the transportation of artillery. England required good railway tracks in Europe as well as for military logistics in the province of Iraq. This requirement proved to be beneficial to TISCO. The company took great efforts and manufactured around 1500 miles long

tracks. Some of the senior officers in England were not sure of the capability of the Indian company for producing steel tracks. But the Indians overcame it. In 1919, after the conclusion of World War I, Viceroy Lord Chelmsford visited the TISCO factory. In his speech, he attributed their victory to the railway tracks supplied by India, the success of the Allies in Egypt, Palestine and East Africa. In his testimony, the Viceroy stated that the Indians have high potential, if they put their mind to it.

Germany was a country, which promoted nationalism. India also was greatly influenced by nationalism. However, it is important to understand the fundamental difference between German nationalism and Indian nationalism. Germans were out to conquer other countries. Their aggression was for making their own country most powerful and the biggest in the world, whereas the nationalism of the Indians was making them fight for regaining their independence. The Indian nationalism was based on a broader perspective of the spread of democracy all over the world including India. Countries like Abyssinia, Spain, China were putting up struggles for establishing democracy. Indians were sending help to those countries in the form of teams of nurses, volunteers and food grains. Germany was strongly influenced by racism. Hitler had killed innumerable European Jews. However, in India people of varied religion, race and caste were staying together from ages. This is characteristic of Indian nationalism, which confirms its magnanimity.

For additional information: Thirty one Indian soldiers and officers were honoured and decorated with ‘Victoria Cross’, the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry. Among the recipients of Victoria Cross there were two individuals from Maharashtra : Naik Yashwant Ghadge (5th Maratha Light Infantry) and Sepoy Namdeorao Jadhav (5th Maratha Light Infantry).

8.3.2 Second World War and India :

The Second World War was fought during 1939-1945 C.E. India was involved in the war episodes happening in North Africa, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Greece, Myanmar and Malaya. However, India contributed to the rehabilitation of Malaya, Indonesia and China after the war was over. Indians in the Air Force of British India participated in the war at Assam and Myanmar, while Indians in the Navy of British India fought in the naval war in Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. England exploited India and its resources heavily to achieve victory in this world war. India, by itself, did not have



anything to gain from this war but it was pulled in forcibly by the British Government. The British fought their war from the Indian land. For them India was their colony and they took it in their right to use it as a source of supplying industrial products, cloth and other commodities of daily use to their allied nations. Their war supplies from India included dynamite, tanks, material required for ship repairing, steel pipes, steel bars and other material for laying railway tracks, train bogies, wood, telegraph posts, smaller war ships and steam ships, food grains, cloth, tents, shoes, medicines, explosives and ammunition and such things. The British Government established several factories in India to meet the requirement of supply of these materials.

8.4 Impact of the World Wars on India

During wartime England felt an increasing need for manpower and money. Therefore, the British Government began recruiting army personnel from India. At times the recruitment was enforced on Indians. Extra taxes were levied on Indians for raising funds. Taxes on trade and industries were raised. During the war period prices of essential commodities went up. Along with the inflation and hike in prices, Indians also suffered because of increasing unemployment caused by industrial recession.

Indians could see that the exploitative rule of the British was responsible for this miserable state of affairs. Indians from all strata of the society, workers, farmers and the middle class, joined in large numbers in the national movement against the British rule.

September 1939 saw the emergence of Second World War. Initially it was England and France against Germany and Italy.

When England declared war against Germany, the Viceroy of India Lord Linlithgow announced that India also was joining the war, to support England.

The Indian National Congress protested against the Viceroy's announcement. The Congress was against the German and Italian ideologies, which were inclined toward aggressive dictatorship and also against England's colonialism inclined toward imperialism. England claimed that it was fighting for protecting democracy in Europe. The Indian National Congress demanded that if England was true to its words then it should immediately grant India's freedom. The Congress also made a commitment that India, as an independent nation would help England in the war against Germany. It was also announced that if the imperialistic administration of the British Government in India was to prevail, then Indians will not help the British. However, Lord Linlithgow announced that the British Government will not ponder upon any of the Indian issues till the end of the war. Reacting to this announcement the Indian National Congress decided not to participate in any of the tasks related to war.

At about the same time, Japanese army reached the eastern border of India. There were thousands of volunteers who had joined this army. They were the patriotic members of 'Azad Hind Sena'. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was their leader. His policy was to take advantage of the situation to move the Indians for intense opposition to the British, while the British were engaged in war. He felt that even enemy of the British may be approached for help, if the need be. Azad Hind Sena fought fiercely for attaining its goal, i.e. independence of India and contributed to India's freedom struggle.



In the month of August 1945 the Second World War was finally concluded. In this war England emerged victorious but it lost heavily in terms of human life and economic conditions. As a result, England grew weaker. The British Government in India, now aware that Indian soldiers and people are not meek and submissive as before, ruling them was no more easy. Also India was not going to be the perennial source of profit for them as it used to be. They decided to return home.

The two world wars caused loss of life and wealth to a great extent. The awareness that there should be an effective measure to avoid such wars in future made the victorious nations create organisations called 'League of Nations' after the First World War and 'United Nations' after the Second World War. India has contributed significantly in the work of these organisations.

In the next lesson, we shall be studying the process of 'Decolonisation' in Asia and Africa.

For additional information

Dr. Dwarkanath Kotnis :

Dr. Kotnis was born on 10th October 1910 at Solapur. He worked in China during the Second World War, helping the injured Chinese soldiers to heal and recuperate. When Japan had attacked China in 1937, the Chinese Government requested Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to send a team of doctors to attend the injured Chinese soldiers. Pandit Nehru sent a team of



Dr. Dwarkanath Kotnis

Indian doctors to China. Dr. Kotnis was the chief of the team. He attended the Chinese soldiers for years. Unfortunately Dr. Kotnis died in China on 9th December 1942 in the plague epidemic. Dr. Kotnis by the virtue of his selfless work formed the bridge of friendship between India and China. The eminent Indian film-maker, V. Shantaram made a film on his life, entitled, 'Dr. Kotnis ki Amar Kahani'. This film has immortalised Dr. Kotnis' memory.

The residence of Dr. Kotnis in Solapur has been converted in his memorial and a museum.

For additional information : During World war II Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw was sent under the 17th Infantry Division to prevent Japanese attacks in Myanmar. Sam Manekshaw was appointed as the acting Commander. The army attacked the Sittang Bridge under his leadership. It was very crucial to win over this important station. The enemy attacked Sam Manekshaw. He was hit by nine

bullets fired from the Japanese machine guns. Maj. Gen. David Cowan, senior commanding officer, witnessed Manekshaw's unmatched valour and personally came to meet him. He pinned his own Military Cross ribbon on Manekshaw. A Military Cross could be awarded only to a soldier who is alive. Manekshaw was rushed to a hospital. Later he was appointed as the first Field Marshall of independent India.



Q.1 (A) Choose the correct alternative and rewrite the statement.

- When Austria declared war against Serbia, it was , who helped Serbia.
(a) Germany (b) America
(c) Hungary (d) Russia
- The first atom bomb was dropped on the city of during the aerial attack of America on Japan.
(a) Nagasaki (b) Hiroshima
(c) Pearl Harbour (d) Stalingrad

(B) Find the incorrect pair from group 'B', and write the corrected one.

Group 'A'

Group 'B'

- | | |
|------------|-------------------|
| 1. America | Woodrow Wilson |
| 2. England | Winston Churchill |
| 3. Germany | Hitler |
| 4. Italy | Linlithgow |

Q.2 Write the names of historical places/ persons/events.

- The name of the group of nations including England, France, Russia, Italy

and America in the First World War –

- The name of the group of nations including Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria in the First World War –

Q.3 Write short notes.

- 'League of Nations'
- Dr. Kotnis

Q.4 Explain the following statements with reason.

- 'The Treaty of Versailles' had the seeds of Second World War. The Text does not have any comment to this effect.
- The British Government in India decided to return home.

Q.5 Answer the following questions in detail.

- Give the causes of the Second World War.
- Why did Indian people participate in the national movement in great numbers?

