

12. India gains Independence

During the period of Second World War, Indian freedom struggle had become more extensive. The demand for independence of India was gaining its strength. The British rulers realised that it was necessary to take a serious note of it. Accordingly, the British government started preparing various plans for granting Independence to India.

The Indian National Congress was founded on the principle of secularism. People of all caste and religion had taken part in the national struggle. To weaken this movement the British adopted the policy of 'divide and rule'. Its consequence was the establishment of 'Muslim League'.

In 1930, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, a well known poet, put forth the thought of an independent Muslim state. Later Chaudhary Rahmat Ali put up the idea of Pakistan. Barrister Muhammad Ali Jinnah put forth the two Nation theory and demanded a separate Muslim nation named Pakistan. Indian National Congress was only a Hindu organisation, the muslims have no benefit of it; such kind of propaganda was started by Barrister Jinnah and the Muslim League.

Wavell Plan : In June 1945, Lord Wavell, the Viceroy of India drew up a plan. There were different provisions in this plan. Accordingly some of its provisions were that in central and provincial legislatures Muslims, Dalits and minorities should be given proper representation and there will be equal number of Hindu and Muslim members in Viceroy's Executive Council. A meeting of all major political parties in India was organised at Simla to consider the Wavell Plan. Barrister Jinnah insisted that only the Muslim League should have the right to suggest the names

of muslim representatives to the Viceroy's Executive Council. But the Congress opposed it. Therefore the Wavell plan could not be successful.

Cabinet Mission : After the end of Second World War the British rulers were in favour of granting freedom to India. In the Parliament, British Prime Minister Attlee clarified the British policy regarding India. According to it, the right of Indian people to draft their own Constitution was recognised. It was also made clear that the issue of minorities will not come in the way of India's Independence. In March 1946, a delegation of British ministers namely Pethick Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander put forth England's plan regarding India in front of the Indian leaders. This is called 'Cabinet Mission'.

Some of the provision in the plan were not acceptable to the Congress. Similarly, there was no provision of independent state for the muslims, so the Muslim League was unsatisfied. Therefore Cabinet Mission was not fully accepted.

Direct Action Day : Since the demand for Pakistan was not being fulfilled, the Muslim League decided for direct action. Accordingly, 16 August 1946, was declared to be observed as 'Direct Action Day' by the Muslim League. The followers of Muslim League resorted to violent ways. There were Hindu-Muslim riots in various parts of the country. There were massacres in the Noakhali region in the province of Bengal. To stop this violence Gandhiji went there without giving any thought to his own life. He tried his best to establish peace there.

Establishment of Interim Government : While the blaze of violence had arisen in the country, Viceroy Wavell



established the Interim Government. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the head of this government. The Muslim League initially denied to participate in the Interim Government, but later, participated in it. But since the leaders of Muslim League adopted the policy of obstruction, hence the Interim Government could not work smoothly.

Mountbatten Plan : England's Prime Minister Atlee had announced that England would leave its dominion on India before June 1948. On the background of transfer of power in India, Lord Mountbatten was

appointed as Viceroy of India. Mountbatten held discussions with prominent leaders of India. Thereafter, he prepared a plan of creation of India and Pakistan as two independent nations. Indian National Congress opposed the plan of partition. Unity of the nation, was the basic stand of Indian National Congress, but the Muslim League remained adamant on the creation of Pakistan. National Congress was left with no option but to accept the decision of partition with complete helplessness.



Indian Independence Act : On 18 July 1947, on the basis of Mountbatten Plan, the Indian Independence Act was passed in British Parliament. On 15 August 1947, the two independent nations India and Pakistan will come into existence. Thereafter the British Parliament will not have any control over them. The British supremacy over the princely states will also come to an end. The Act provided them the right to either join India or Pakistan or remain independent.

India gains Independence : As per the Indian Independence Act, India was granted independence on 15 August 1947. A meeting of the Constituent Assembly was going on in the hall of Parliament House in Delhi in the midnight of 14

August 1947. At the stroke of midnight hour, India's dependence came to an end. The Union Jack of Britain was lowered and in its place the Indian tricolour flag was unfurled. India attained Independence from the 150 years of slavery.

The joy of attainment of freedom was not untinted. Indian people were grieved due to the partition of the country and the terrible violence during that period. Instead of joining the celebration of Independence, Gandhiji was striving hard in Bengal. Within six months of attainment of freedom of India, Gandhiji was brutally assassinated by Nathuram Godse on 30 January 1948. Gandhiji strove day and night to preserve Hindu Muslim unity and laid down his life for the same.

Exercise

1. Rewrite the statements by choosing the appropriate options.

- (1) was the head of the Interim Government.
 - (a) Vallabhbhai Patel (b) Mahatma Gandhi
 - (c) Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (d) Barrister Jinnah
- (2) The plan of creation of two independent nations, India and Pakistan, was made by
 - (a) Lord Wavell (b) Stafford Cripps
 - (c) Lord Mountbatten (d) Pethick Lawrence

2. Answer the following questions in one sentence.

- (1) Which demand was advocated by Barrister Jinnah?
- (2) Write the name of the ministers participating in Cabinet Mission.

3. Explain the following statements with reasons.

- (1) The Indian National Congress approved the partition.
- (2) The working of Interim government could not run smoothly.
- (3) The Wavell Plan could not become successful.

4. Write the events on the following timeline.



5. Answer the following questions in brief.

- (1) Why did the British took steps towards granting freedom to India?
- (2) Write information about Mountbatten Plan.
- (3) Why did Muslim League declare to observe 16 August as Direct Action Day? What were its effects?

Project

Collect information about the response of common people after gaining independence, with the help of various reference books as well as internet.

