

Key Milestones during Indian Freedom Struggle

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ABSTRACT

India is a seventh largest country in the world where people live with unity in diversity beside belonging to different caste, creed, religion, languages, script, colours live with a feeling of universal brotherhood. If we look back in the history, we can easily judge that to attain freedom from Britishers and to achieve the standard of modern India it took several years of struggle and sacrifices. History is a representation of past events or an alliance of past events. It is a term that relate to past events as well as the memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation, and interpretation of information about these events seventy-four years ago, India awaken to freedom. This period was really a bad phase for the entire nation. The people of the nation had no rights and freedom to do anything of their own choice. It was the dire need of the nation and its people to get free from the rule of Britishers. It wasn't a day's work, and took decades of strength, courage and unity from leaders, freedom fighters as well as the common man. Indian nationalism initiated to come into form in the late Nineteenth century. The revolt of 1857 indicates the conscious emergence of the struggle for independence from the British empire's colonial exploitation, Swadeshi Movement in 1905-1911 shows Boycott of foreign goods and emphasis was given on use of desi local goods and services, Gadar Movement was initiated by the Gadar party to engage in its struggle against colonial rule, and therefore it indirectly gave a stimulus to the Indian struggle for freedom. Home Rule Movement describe as the country's response to the First World War and a powerful means to express opposition to British rule, The Rowlatt Satyagraha was the popular name for the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, passed by the British Indian government, was more often known as the Rowlatt Act. The Khilafat movement and Non co-operation movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Individual Satyagrah Movement and many other more movements were came into force to ignite the both masses to oppose British rule in India and get freedom complete. The revolt of 1857 was not privileged but it provokes the fire for independence, which ultimately emerged in a series of Indian national movements with the ultimate aims of usher climax to the British rule in India.

KEY WORDS

Indian freedom struggle, British rule, social movements, diversity, Revolts

INTRODUCTION

Freedomstruggle refers to all the events and activities that had taken place in the history of India to make it an independent nation. We all are aware of the fact that the country India was under British rule for a period of more than 200 years. The struggle initiated for the same was termed as India's freedom struggle for independence and finally, the country got its independence on 15th August in the year 1947. India's first war of Independence against British is also called revolts of 1857. It was started at Meerut on May 10, 1857, and slowly spread across Delhi, Agra, Kanpur and Lucknow. It was the first significant revolution against the East India Company. Although the Revolt was failed because the revolt was eventually not successful in expelling the British from the country because of several factors. The sepoys lacked one clear leader; there were several. They also did not have a coherent plan by which the foreigners would be routed. Also, the Indian rulers who aided the revolt did not predict any plan for the country after the British were defeated. It did not involve the whole country. Only northern India was affected by this revolt. The three spots of Bengal, Bombay and Madras remained mostly unaffected. The Sikh soldiers also did not take part in the revolt. After suppressing the revolt, East India Company rule was ended. The government made many changes in the financial, military administrative policies in India. The British monarch Queen Victoria proclaimed that her 'Indian subjects' would receive similar rights to those enjoyed by the British subjects. but it had an important impression on the people and encouraged India's entire Independence Movement. This Revolt gave a fair message to the British Crown that the East India Company had failed to exercise control over the country, demonstrating its incapability. The British East India Company's control came to an end with this fight for freedom. After the British Crown grab control of India from the East India Company in 1858, it became a British colony in law.

Swadeshi Movement - 1905-1911

The Swadeshi Movement was a turning point in Indian history because it shows the nation's unity and minding people that they can defeat the Britishers if they get united. One more cause for Swadeshi Movement was to declaration for the partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon. However, the British result the division of Bengal into two region with the intention of nationalistunity. The "Boycott" resolution was adopted at a conference held at the Calcutta Town Hall on August 7, 1905, thus establishing the Swadeshi movement and bringing its previously fragmented leadership under one leadership. The goal of the Swadeshi movement was to inspire the use of local goods and services while condemn their British counterparts. This uplift India's economic standard and shows to the British that Indians can live independently. When British products were openly burnt, this movement became violent and Britishers started hold up the protesters to address problem, and ultimately Bengal was break up.

Gadhar Party Movement- 1914-1917

The Ghadar Party movement was an International Political movement comprising of emigrant Indians to overthrow British Rule in India. The official founding has been dated to a meeting on 15 July in Astoria, Oregon, United States of America and thus The Ghadar Movement was a significant turning point in India's quest for independence. Early in the 20th century, a number of rigorous immigration laws based on racial discrimination were put in place to reduce the number of Indian immigrants coming to Canada in search of employment. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 gave an impetus to the nationalist feelings in Indians. The Home Rule League by Lokmanya Tilak and Annie Besant were formed during First World War. At the same time, a revolutionary movement gained popularity. The Ghadar movement. The word Ghadar means 'revolt' The Ghadar Movement was an international political movement founded by expatriate Indians to overthrow British rule in India. The early membership was composed mostly of Punjabi Indians who lived and worked on the West Coast of the United States and Canada. The movement later spread to India and Indian diasporic communities around the world. The main leader initially was Bhagwan Singh, a Sikh priest who had worked in Hong Kong and the Malay States. Later Har Dayal took leadership and played a crucial role in the Ghadar movement. But Ghadar Party had some weakness as Ghadar leaders completely underestimated the extent of preparation needed at every level-organizational, ideological, strategic, tactical, financial strategy that was necessary before an armed revolt could be organized. An almost non-existent organizational structure; the Ghadar Movement was sustained more by the enthusiasm of the militants than by their effective organization. The movement failed to generate an effective and sustained leadership that was capable of integrating the various aspects of the movement. Har Dayal's ideas did not form a structured vision but remained a shifting amalgam of various theories that attracted him from time to time. Lacking a mass base, despite the remarkable heroism of the individual revolutionaries who operated in small secret groups, the movement could not withstand suppression by the strong colonial state. The Ghadar Movement came to an abrupt end with the arrest of Har Dayal. Similarly the Kamagata Maru incident involved the Japanese steamship Komagata Maru, on which a group of people from British India attempted to immigrate to Canada in April 1914. Most of the ship passengers were denied entry and forced to return to Calcutta (present-day Kolkata). There, the Indian Imperial Police attempted to arrest the group leaders. A riot ensued, and they were fired upon by the police, resulting in the deaths of 22 people. British Government passed orders that no passenger be allowed to disembark anywhere on the way not even at the places from where they had joined the ship but only at Calcutta. It triggered off a wave of resentment and anger among the Indian community and became the occasion for anti-British mobilization. A number of Ghadar leaders, like Barkatullah and Tarak Nath Das, used the inflammatory passions surrounding as a rallying point and successfully brought many disaffected Indians in North America into the party's fold. The episode further inspired the Ghadar party to engage in its struggle against colonial rule, and therefore it

indirectly gave a stimulus to the Indian struggle for freedom. After the brutal British repression, the Ghadar Movement started to decline. In 1917 the Ghadar Party saw split into a Communist and a Socialist faction following the end of World War I. The Ghadar movement might be characterised as a story of extraordinary bravery, labour and toil that affected every Indian living in foreign countries. The powerful speeches by its leaders gave shape the emigrant's opinion against the misrule of the British in India. It truly qualifies as a major struggle which aroused the people to fight for freedom and sowed seeds for any other future course of action.

Home Rule Movement – 1916-18

The Home Rule Movement is considered a turning point in the history of the freedom struggle in India. It is a movement that has defined the struggle for Independence and accounts to act as a stimulus for further movements in India. Home Rule Movement describe as the country's response to the First World War and a powerful means to express opposition to British rule. The Home Rule Movement under the leadership of Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak was an important political movement that set the stage for India's struggle for independence. Annie Besant, who was a proponent of Free Thought, Radicalism, Fabianism and Theosophy, had come to India in 1893 to work for the Theosophical Society. In 1914, she decided to enlarge the sphere of her activities. She started a movement for Home Rule on the lines of the Irish Home Rule League. She realized that she needs the cooperation of both Moderates and Extremists. In the annual session of the Congress 1915, it was decided that the Extremists be allowed to re-join the Congress along with the Moderates. Tilak set up the Home Rule League in the Bombay Province. The two leagues worked in different areas. Tilak promoted the Home Rule campaign which linked the question of Swaraj with the demand for the formation of linguistic states and education in the vernacular medium. Members of Gokhale's Servants of India Society, though not permitted to become members of the League, encouraged the demand for Home Rule by undertaking lecture tours and publishing pamphlets. During the Lucknow session of the Congress in December 1916, the famous Congress-League Pact was declared. Both Tilak and Annie Besant had played a role in bringing about this agreement between the Congress and the League, much against the wishes of many important leaders, including Madan Mohan Malaviya. This pact is popularly known as the Lucknow Pact where separate electorates for Muslims were accepted. The turning point in the home rule movement came with the decision of the Government of Madras in 1917 to place Mrs Besant and her associates, B.P. Wadia and George Arundale, under arrest. Montague Declaration was introduced by the British government as a sign of a conciliatory effort. Henceforth, Home Rule or self-government movement was not treated as a seditious activity. However, this did not mean that the British were ready to grant self-government. In 1920 All India Home Rule League changed its name to Swarajya Sabha. The main achievement of the Home Rule

Movement was that it created a generation of ardent nationalists who formed the backbone of the national movement. In the later years, Mahatma Gandhi led the Indian freedom struggle and it entered its truly mass phase. But many factors were there which contributed to the downfall of the Home Rule Movement like it was not warmly accepted by everyone and there were serious objections from the Muslims, Anglo-Indians and Non-Brahmin communities, the idea of Satyagraha, non-violence and Gandhian philosophy resonated more with the Indian people, ultimately dissolving this movement. One more factor for its decline was the movement was not propagated to all classes and sections of the Indian society.

Khilafat and Non- Cooperation Movement – 1920

The Khilafat movement and non-co-operation movement were both mass movements formed in 1919-1922 to oppose British rule in India. In 1919 a movement was formed led by Mohamad Ali and Shaukat Ali (Popularly known as the Ali Brothers), AbulKalamAzad,HasratMohani and others to pressure the British government to correct these injustices. The Indian Muslims were not happy with the way the British dethroned the Caliph in Turkey. So, in 1919, various protests were held against the Britishers. The Muslim League and Congress came together during this time. Both of these parties worked together to organise numerous political protests. The movement was initially introduced on August 31, 1920, when the Khilafat Committee began a campaign of non-cooperation. The Indian National Congress (INC), led by Mahatma Gandhi, began the Non-Cooperation Movement on September 5, 1920. The Non-Cooperation Movement is one of the key movements in India's independence struggle. It was initiated by Gandhi in support of the KhilafatMovement. The aim was to boycott major social programmes, events, offices and schools to resonate with India's struggle for independence. In his declaration Gandhi, wanted people to adopt Swadeshi principles and work for the eradication of untouchability from society. The open, non-violent protest against the government by thousands of Indians was a true mass movement. The Indian National Congress called for self-government or Swarajya and only non-violent methods were asked to be used while protesting. However, following the ChauriChaura incident in February 1922, where during a fight between the police and protesters a violent crowd set fire to a police station, killing 22 Policemen, Gandhiji decided to put an end to the movement.

Civil Disobedience Movement – 1930

Mahatma Gandhi led a non-violent Civil Disobedience Movement in colonial India known as the Salt March, also known as the Salt Satyagraha, the Dandi March, and the DandiSatyagraha. By 1930, the Congress Party had announced that the only goal of the liberation movement should be PoornaSwarajya or total independence. The 26 January 1930 was declared PoornaSwarajyaDay. The

movement began in 1930 after Indians became angered when the British imposed a tax on the sale and collection of salt, and Gandhiji chose to break the salt tax in defiance of the government. On March 12, 1930, Mahatma Gandhi led a large group of people from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, a seaside town in Gujarat, where they produced salt from seawater in violation of the law. More than 60,000 individuals were detained as the movement swept across the nation, including Mahatma Gandhi. When Gandhiji was finally allowed to leave prison in 1931, he met with Lord Irwin, who was keen to put a stop to the civil disobedience movement and the media attention it had garnered. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact stipulated that the civil disobedience campaign would be put an end to in exchange for allowing Indians to produce salt for household use. Lord Irwin also consented to the Indians' detention being lifted. Gandhiji participated in the London Second Round Table Conference as a "equal."

Individual Satyagraha – 1940

The leaders of the Indian National Congress (INC) were unhappy with the British government for tow India into the Second World War in 1939, without the Indian people's consent. Indians support for the war was highly desired by the British government and as a result, the Viceroy Linlithgow offered a series of suggestion known as the "August offer." After the Indian nationalists demanded an interim government in India in lieu of support in World War II, Indians' freedom to frame their own constitution was acknowledged for the first time in the August Offer, 1940. However, the August Offer said after the war, a representative Indian body would be established to draft India's Constitution, and it would be given dominion status. The INC rejected this offer at its meeting at Wardha in August 1940 and demanded complete freedom from the colonial rule. The Individual Satyagraha was then started by Mahatma Gandhi to uphold the right to free expression. Brahma Datt, Vinoba Bhave and Jawaharlal Nehru were the first three satyagrahis. The satyagrahis also started a march towards Delhi, which was called the 'Delhi Chalo Movement'. Although the movement failed to pick up steam and was aborted in December 1940, it put the Britishers under immense pressure.

Quit India Movement – 1942

The Indian National Congress called for a widespread Civil Disobedience movement when Crippes Mission which arrived in India in March 1942, was unable to promise any type of constitutional remedy for India's issues. The idea of an independence movement in India was accepted by the Congress Working Committee at its Wardha meeting on July 14, 1942. Gandhi began this movement in August 1942 in an effort to compel the British to leave India. This campaign, known as the "Bharat Chhodo Andolan," forced the British colonial authorities to consider leaving India. The outcome of the movement was that Congress was declared an unlawful association and its offices all over the country were raided. The leaders were arrested and there rose a chaotic moment with this incident. In spite of

heavy-handed conquering by the government, the people were undaunted their struggle. The movement placed the demand for complete independence at the top agenda of the freedom movement.

Conclusion

Thus the struggle for Indian Freedom was not a someday's game but it was a battle of sacrifice of life for the country. The Indian freedom movement which is also known as the Indian Independence movement was a mass movement that was initiated to rule out the British from India. And after long struggles and sacrifices India became Independent. The Indian Independence Act 1947 passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom divided British India into two new independent provinces, the Province of India which later became Republic of India and the Province of Pakistan which later became the Republic of Pakistan. This Act received Royal Assent on 18 July 1947. India and Pakistan became independent on August 15th, 1947 and India continues to celebrate August 15th as its Independence day, while Pakistan celebrates August 14th as its Independence day as per their cabinet decisions.

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