



The final phase of India's freedom struggle (1935–1947) was shaped by rising mass mobilization, global shifts due to World War II, political deadlocks, and the growing communal divide. This period witnessed both the **achievement of independence** and the **trauma of Partition**, which forever changed the subcontinent's destiny.

I. Background: Growing Momentum for Self-Rule

After decades of moderate and extremist politics, mass movements, and revolutionary activity, Indian nationalism matured into a powerful force by the 1930s.

1. GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1935

- Introduced provincial autonomy and proposed a federal structure.
- First elections under this Act were held in **1937**, where the **Congress formed ministries** in 7 out of 11 provinces.
- However, the Act was criticized as **half-hearted** and **retaining British control at the centre**.

2. WORLD WAR II (1939–1945)

- The British unilaterally involved India in WWII, which was opposed by the Congress.
 - Congress ministries **resigned in 1939** in protest.
 - **Muslim League celebrated “Deliverance Day”**, showcasing deepening divisions.
-



II. Cripps Mission and the Quit India Movement

CRIPPS MISSION (1942)

- Sent by Britain to secure Indian support during WWII.
- Offered **Dominion Status after the war** and allowed provinces to opt out.
- Congress rejected it: viewed as **too little, too vague**.
- Muslim League also rejected it—wanted immediate recognition of Pakistan.

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT (1942)

- Launched by Gandhi on **8 August 1942**.
- Called for **immediate British withdrawal**; coined slogan: “**Do or Die**”.
- Resulted in **mass arrests, violence**, and suppression.
- Demonstrated the **irreversibility of Indian demand for independence**, though the movement was crushed by 1944.

III. Post-War Developments and Constitutional Deadlock

1. INA TRIALS AND NAVAL MUTINY (1945-46)

- Public sympathy surged for the **Indian National Army (INA)** and its soldiers.
- **Red Fort Trials** turned into a nationalist rallying point.
- The **Royal Indian Navy mutiny (1946)** reflected discontent even within the armed forces.



- These events shook British confidence in retaining control.

2. 1946 ELECTIONS

- Congress emerged dominant in general seats.
 - **Muslim League swept all Muslim constituencies**, bolstering Jinnah's claim as the **sole representative of Muslims**.
-

IV. Cabinet Mission Plan (1946)

KEY PROPOSALS:

- United India with a **federal structure**.
- Grouping of provinces into **three sections** with internal autonomy.
- Constitution-making body (Constituent Assembly) to frame the Constitution.

BREAKDOWN:

- Congress accepted the idea of a Constituent Assembly but opposed **grouping of provinces**.
- League initially accepted, but later rejected the plan after **Congress's interpretation differed**.

The failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan marked the **collapse of the last effort to preserve Indian unity**.



V. Direct Action Day and Communal Violence

- **Jinnah declared 16 August 1946 as Direct Action Day** to demand Pakistan.
 - Resulted in horrific communal riots, beginning with **Calcutta killings** and spreading to **Noakhali, Bihar, Punjab**.
 - **Communal polarization** reached a point of no return, weakening all hopes for a united India.
-

VI. Interim Government and Mountbatten Plan

INTERIM GOVERNMENT (1946-47)

- Congress and League participated, but conflicts over portfolios and decisions created a **deadlock**.
- **League's obstructionist tactics** deepened mistrust.

LORD MOUNTBATTEN AND THE PARTITION PROPOSAL

- Sent to India in 1947 as the last British Viceroy to manage the transfer of power.
- Proposed **Partition of India** into two dominions: **India and Pakistan**.
- Congress, under pressure from **communal riots and administrative collapse**, reluctantly agreed.



VII. Indian Independence Act (July 1947)

- Passed by the British Parliament.
 - Provided for:
 - Creation of **India and Pakistan** as two independent dominions.
 - **Division of assets, army, civil services**, etc.
 - **Partition of Bengal and Punjab**.
 - **Power was transferred on 15 August 1947.**
-

VIII. Partition and its Aftermath

- The Partition led to **massive violence, displacement, and trauma**:
 - Estimated **1 million killed**.
 - Over **15 million people displaced**, making it the **largest mass migration in history**.
 - Women were particularly vulnerable, with mass abductions and abuse on both sides.
 - While India attained freedom, it did so at a **terrible human cost**.
-

IX. Reflections and Conclusion

India's road to independence was **not only a political journey** but also one of **moral, social, and emotional struggle**. The years 1942–1947 demonstrated:



Towards Independence and Partition.

- The **irrepressible desire for self-rule**.
- The **collapse of imperial legitimacy**.
- The **tragedy of communal division** and **failure to forge a united pluralist identity**.

Partition remains one of the **darkest chapters** in South Asian history, yet the survival of India as a **democratic, secular nation** is a tribute to the resilience of its people and leaders who chose unity in diversity over hatred.