UNIT 14: PARTITION AND TRANSFER OF POWER

UNIT STRUCTURE

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14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- discuss about the post-second world war developments in India,
- discuss about the Cabinet Mission Plan,
- analyse about the circumstances that led to the partition of India,
- analyse about the various stages that ultimately brought freedom to India.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

The Second World War provided a new impetus to the freedom movement in Asia and Africa. As in the last unit we have already mentioned that Britain was on the side of the victorious powers that propagated democracy. So, now an uneasy situation was faced by Great Britain as it was denying freedom to its colonies in Asia and Africa including India. Other great powers also started putting pressure on Britain. As a result, Britain was bound to give up its political dominance over India. But due to the communal politics which had already taken a firm grip on Indian soil, the country got freedom but at the cost of its integrity. India was partitioned.

Now in this unit we will discuss about all these developments.

14.3 POST WAR DEVELOPMENTS AND CHANGE IN BRITISH ATTITUDE

The Second World War has provided an impetus to the freedom movement in India. As a result of the war Britain lost her supremacy in the international field. America and Russia emerged as two super powers of the world. Both the countries supported India's independence and insisted that the British Government should free India.

In the meantime on July10, 1945, the Labour Party headed by Clement Atlee came to power in Britain. The Labour Government of England was anti-colonial and had a sympathetic attitude towards India. Being weakened both economically and militarily due to war, England was not in a position to have a strong hold over the colonies. There was too the rapid growth of national feelings among the Indian troops, Police forces and bureaucracy. During the years of 1945-46, many significant movements were also launched in Hyderabad, Travancore and Kashmir demanding reforms and establishment of responsible governments.

LET US KNOW



Some soldiers of the Air Force in Karachi went on strike against the British Government on January 20, 1946. Soon it spread to Lahore, Delhi and Bombay. In sympathy with the soldiers of the Air Force, some companies of the Indian soldiers of the Royal Navy too revolted against the government on February 19, 1946. Later, the Police forces also striked in Delhi and Bihar.

14.4 CABINET MISSION PLAN

Under such a situation, the Labour Government decided to resolve the Indian problem sincerely. On February 19, 1946, the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee announced a Cabinet Mission to India to resolve

the Indian deadlock. The mission consisted of three cabinet ministers- Lord Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander. They discussed with 742 Indian leaders in 182 meetings, but communal issue could not be resolved. At last, the mission announced its Plan called the Cabinet Mission Plan which was acceptable to almost all the political parties.

The Cabinet Mission Plan declared that India would have a federal government including the princely states and the provinces of British India. Representatives of both the provinces and the princely states would be there in the Executive and Legislature of the federal government. The federal government would deal with defence, foreign affairs and communication and the other subjects would be vested in the provinces. The Mission also made a provision for a Constituent Assembly for India. It was provided that in the proposed Constituent Assembly each province would be given representation on the basis of its population. Till the framing of the Constitution a 14 member interim government having the support of all the major political parties of India would be set up at the centre. In this government all the portfolios should be held by the Indian Ministers. The Mission also proposed that every communal issue would be decided by a majority vote of the representatives of both the major communities present and voting. It was decided that the provinces of British India would be divided into three groups. The first group would consisted of Hindu majority provinces, the second Muslim majority provinces and the third would be consisting of Bengal and Assam having almost the equal number of the Hindus and Muslims. Each group was to settle its own constitution. The representatives of all of them were to meet in a Constituent Assembly to draft a Constitution for the Union.

The Cabinet Mission Plan was acceptable to almost all the political parties. The Muslim League accepted it on June 6, 1946 and so did the Indian National Congress in June 1946. Elections to the Constituent Assembly resulted in the overwhelming victory of the Congress. Out of the 296 seats, the Congress captured 212 whereas the League could manage only 73.



LET US KNOW

Lord Wavell who came to India as the new Viceroy in October, 1943 prepared a plan on June14, 1945 to solve the Indian constitutional deadlock which came to be known as Wavell Plan. This plan was prepared to alleviate the widespread public resentment in India and to ascertain Indian cooperation against Japan.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Write 'true' or 'false':

a) Labour Party had a sympathetic attitude towards India.

.....

b) The Second World War enhanced the power and prestige of the British.

.....

c) The Cabinet Mission Plan declared that India would have a federal government.

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d) The Cabinet Mission Plan decided that the provinces of British India would be divided into two groups.

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Q 2: When did the Muslim League accept the Cabinet Mission Plan?

……...

Q 3: When did Labour Party come to power in England?

……...

14.5 COMMUNAL POLICIES AND PARTITION:

The Congress and the Muslim League interpreted the Cabinet Mission Plan in their own way, both seeing it as a confirmation of their stand. The League announced its acceptance of the Plan on 6th June in so far as

the basis of Pakistan was implied in the Mission's plan by virtue of the compulsory grouping.

But later on the Muslim League withdrew its acceptance of the plan and decided to adopt the path of direct struggle to achieve Pakistan. The League celebrated the 'Direct Action Day' on August 16, 1946, as a result of which the atmosphere of the country became polluted and Muslim Communalism reached its zenith. In the meantime, an interim government was formed as per the Cabinet Mission Scheme on September 2, 1946 under Jawaharlal Nehru. Out of a total 14 members of the interim government, 6 were to be from the Congress, 5 from the Muslim League and one each from Indian Christian, Sikh and Parsee communities. After some initial opposition, the Muslim League agreed to join the interim government with the effort of the Viceroy and thus it joined the government on October 26, 1946. However, despite joining the government, the League adopted a non-cooperative attitude towards the Congress. It did not accept the leadership of Nehru and often opposed the policies of the ministry.

14.6 MOUNTBATTEN PLAN AND THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE ACT 1947

The political situation of India started worsening. The activities incited communal riots and the country was on the verge of a civil war. The British Government decided to transfer the power to responsible Indian hands at the earliest. On February 20, 1947 Lord Attlee, the Prime Minister made the momentous announcement that it was the definite intention of His Majesty's Government to effect the transfer of power to responsible India hands by a date not later than June 1948.



Civil War: Internal or domestic war.

On March 24, 1947, Lord Mountbatten replaced Lord Wavell as the Viceroy. He soon realized that it was impossible to have compromise between the Congress and the League. The partition of the country was inevitable and there lies the only solution. Then he through talks successfully persuaded the important leaders of the Congress for the partition of the country. The Viceroy announced the partition of India on June 3, 1947 and

was accepted by all the political parties under the Mountbatten Plan. Under this plan India would be partitioned into two parts-India and Pakistan. On August15, 1947, the British Government would transfer the power to a government formed in accordance with the wishes of the people. The Constituent Assembly (formed in accordance with the Cabinet Mission Plan) would frame the Constitution which would be implemented only in those parts which accepts it willingly. To give effect to the Mountbatten Plan, the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act on July 14, 1947. Accordingly the British Empire in India came to an end and two sovereign states namely India and Pakistan were born.



CHECK YOUR PRORESS

Q 4: When did the Muslim League observe the 'Direct Action Day'?

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Q 5: Who replaced Lord Wavell as Viceroy of India?

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Q 6: When did the Viceroy announce the Partition of India?

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Q 7: When the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act?

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14.7 LET US SUM UP

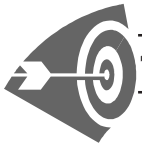
After going through this unit, you have learnt about that-

- the international pressure upon Britain helped India much to gain her freedom.
- the various stages of Indian freedom struggle towards freedom.
- development of communal policies among the Hindus and Muslims led to the partition of the country.
- the battle cry for the ouster of the British from India that first rose in 1857 bore fruit after ninety years of ceaseless struggle.



14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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14.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to the question No.1 (a) True (b) False
(c) True (d) False

Answer to the question No.2 June 6, 1946

Answer to the question No.3 July 10, 1945

Answer to the question No.4 August 16, 1946

Answer to the question No.5 Lord Mountbatten

Answer to the question No.6 June 3, 1947

Answer to the question No.7 July 14, 1947



14.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q.1: Who headed the Labour party?

Q.2: Name the members of the Cabinet Mission.

Q.3: When did Lord Mountbatten come to India?

Q.4: Under whom the interim government was formed in 1946?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)

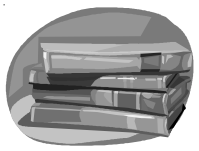
Q.1: Write a short note on Cabinet Mission Plan.

Q.2: Write a short note on Mountbatten Plan.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in between 300-500 words)

Q.1: Why India was partitioned? Discuss.





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6. N.C.E.R.T. Books of Class 12th Standard.