

History of the Indian National Congress

Indian National Congress, a political party of India was formed in 1885. The Indian National Congress dominated the Indian movement for independence from Great Britain. It in turn formed most of India's governments from the time of independence and often had a strong presence in many state governments. The Indian National Congress first assembled in December 1885, with the idea of an Indian nationalist movement that opposed British rule. During its first several decades, the Congress Party passed fairly moderate reform resolutions, though many within the organization were becoming radicalized by the increased poverty that accompanied British imperialism. In the early 20th century, elements within the party began to endorse a policy of *swadeshi* ("of our own country"), which called on Indians to boycott of imported British goods and promoted Indian-made goods. By 1917 the group's "extremist" Home Rule wing, which was formed by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant began to exert significant influence by appealing to India's diverse social classes.

In the 1920s and '30s the Congress Party, led by Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi, began advocating nonviolent noncooperation. The new change in strategies was caused by the protest over the apparent weakness of the constitutional reforms enacted in early 1919 (Rowlatt Acts) and Britain's manner of carrying them out, as well as by the widespread outrage among Indians in response to the massacre of civilians in Amritsar that April. Many of the acts of civil disobedience that followed were implemented through the All India Congress Committee, formed in 1929, which advocated avoiding taxes as a protest against British rule using protest such as the Salt March in 1930 led by Gandhi. Some people in the Party, believed in working within the existing system, and challenging Swaraj (Home Rule).

When World War II began in 1939, Britain made India's resources responsible for supporting war efforts without consulting Indian elected councils. That action angered Indian officials and prompted the Congress Party to declare that India would not support the war effort until it had been granted complete independence. In 1942 the organization sponsored mass civil disobedience to support the demand that the British "quit India." British authorities responded by imprisoning the entire Congress Party leadership, including Gandhi, and many remained in jail until 1945. After the war the British government passed an independence bill in July 1947, and independence was achieved the following month. In January 1950 India's constitution as an independent state took effect.

Name _____ Date _____

IT'S YOUR TURN TO SEQUENCE

Describe in writing or with an illustration the events and the date it occurred

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