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The interim government in 1946: A stepping stone toward Indian independence

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Abstract

Interim govt. In the year of 1946 has turned out to be last mile post towards a nation in respect to itself liberation from British colonization clutches. It will be on the model of the Cabinet Mission Plan, in which leaders to be taken from the Indian National Congress and All-India Muslim League and so many others of similar ideologies. As one who goes to take the politician under his shelter that has the ideologies between all parties up for getting picked for consideration. It shows the collective personality of the government, the road that led to the social and political streams after this, and what it learned as a movement which passed. These result in unveiling the importance of handling a coalition and the importance of the cohesiveness of the same. The legacy of Interim Government is in the structure which it aspires to build up to make present day India.

Keywords: Coalition, governance, ideological divide, representative symbol, plan of cabinet mission, communal riots, division

1. Introduction

1946 becomes the line that divides Indian history. The Interim Government came into existence on 2 September 1946. The way ahead to independence took an unmistakable step forward for India. It was for the first time that a country was being headed by an altogether Indian leadership which assumed all powers and responsibilities though however, control of Britain still remained victorious in all terms. This paper gives the background, necessity, significance, formulation, problems, and legacy of 1946 Interim Government of India. In this process, based on research, it elaborates on its part of the Indian political scenario and its lesson to Indian citizens of present times.

1. Background: Road to Interim Government

That road was quite long and bumpy, like that of overdecades of struggle, sacrifice, and negotiation for the Interim Government of 1946. Indian nationalism was born at the turn of the 20th century, nurtured under the guidance of leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose. Out of it came the Indian National Congress, increasingly vocally demanding greater degrees of autonomy and finally, independence from British domination, as the most effective instrument of the nationalist movement.

The movement reached its zenith in the years of the 1930s and the 1940s. The British government brought some constitutional amendments as a token of placating India. For instance, the Government of India Act of 1935 was granted. However, these amendments could not fulfill Indians' expectations. Then things went a good deal worse-well beyond that-with world events: in the second round, for instance, Britain made strides and brought India within a Second World War; the first effect of that was an explosion of resentment inside India which proved in the end big enough to spark off the Quit India Movement of 1942. Although the movement itself was suppressed with atrocity the British learned for all time the lesson that men of India, once and for all, had made up their minds to be free.

It is on record that as of 1945, war-weary, with pressure from the leadership in India finally convinced the British government that inevitability compelled it to start negotiating toward slow powers transfer. The new administration by Labour minister Clement Attlee proved infinitely more approachable than any administration, past. This saw the Cabinet Mission to India in 1946, with the agenda of producing a plan to take India into independence. The mission concluded that an Interim Government be formed and that the government of India

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should not be allowed to come to a screeching halt till there was in a readily available draft of a new constitution.

2. Why the Interim Government Was Formed

There were galore reasons for which the Interim Government was formed; political stability was the greatest cause of worry and near breaking point because of this eruption of civil war. The Hindu-Moslem antagonism was at the level rising grass-rootly with continuous demands coming forth from the All India Muslim League under the guise of Muhammad Ali Jinnah for a separate Muslim state which they named Pakistan. They cannot digest the verdict of a divided India by statesmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel when they were led by Congress.

The British knew their days in India were numbered. They wanted it to be done in an orderly fashion and without complete haphazardness and a proper handover. Interim Government, therefore, seemed to present itself as one inevitable step toward involving Indian leadership in governance, reducing the influence of the British, and preparing the country for full independence.

It would now continue on the path of independence in an orderly manner. It would thus act as a bridge to pass from colonial rule to self-government and the experience that India's leadership was going to receive about conducting the administration independently was accompanied by the further perspectives of bargain and adjustment between the Congress and the Muslim League.

3. The Interim Government as an Institutional Instrument

The interim government in 1946 did have some developments; among those developments, Indians now had a huge portion of the administration but was kept under rigorous observation by a British Viceroy. Those did stand well and fairly detached from those reforms instituted on constitutions and administrations since power was still considerably left vested in the hands of the British officials.

It was, in many ways, the last mile in final negotiations about independence that the Interim Government achieved. Moreover, it served as a forum for debate and discussion by which the Indian constitution of tomorrow was to take form, above all the question of partition--which was certainly troublesome. Together, those who were to take office immediately as the new governments of an independent India had deeply readied themselves.

More importantly, it took the shape of an unattainable force towards the realization of Indian freedom. The formation of the interim government marked that Indians would finally be freed from the stranglehold of the British. What had been their struggle for nearly seven decades now attained a form--something that Indians could hold onto, and was bound to fulfill their struggle towards freedom.

4. The Concept in the Interim Government

This eventually led to the theory of the Interim Government in 1946 after the Cabinet Mission Plan. Britain had sent the Cabinet Mission to India where the conditions that would lead the country to avoid civil war had been discussed. March 1946 saw three British ministers who arrived: Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps, and A.V. Alexander comprised the mission.

Hence was propounded the very sophisticated scheme, formation of an Interim Government to manage the daily

affairs till an elected Constituent Assembly came together to formulate a new constitution. Apart from that side by side came the proposal of loose federation with great autonomy between the provinces and the princely states in matters concerning the areas holding an important population share by Muslims, it formed a sop, an answer, and an appeasement of Muslim League's Pakistan-demand.

Britain's thought was of bringing on diversification within the Interim Government, that is a combination of representation of Congress and the Muslim League along with that of all smaller parties as an aggregate. Britain thus hoped that finally the broad understanding of Indians amongst themselves would permit the big parties of Indian politics to decide just what kind of government India will have.

5. The Body of Interim Government

The Interim Government was sworn in by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 2 September 1946 who also became the Vice President of Executive Council, and thereby he became the head of government. However, at that point of time, the Viceroy was still Lord Wavell and hence wasn't in his pocket. Major functionaries in this government include:

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru-Indian National Congress-Vice President and is also incharge of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel-Indian National Congress-Home, Information and Broadcasting.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad-Indian National Congress-Food and Agriculture.

Liaquat Ali Khan-Muslim League- Finance.

C. Rajagopalachari-Indian National Congress-Education and Arts.

Baldev Singh-Indian National Congress-Defence.

Jagjivan Ram-Indian National Congress-Labour.

Abdur Rab Nishtar-Muslim League-Communications.

Asaf Ali-Congress-Railways and Transport.

Interim Government will be formed by leaders of Congress, Muslim League and other minor parties. As being an acutous difference ideologically as well as politically, forming such an interim government seems rather difficult. Therefore, now and then they have seen frequently deadlocks emerging and tensions.

6. Constituting Interim Government

It followed the pattern adopted by the Government of India Act of 1935, by then already placed itself in de facto constitution status for British India till the appearance of the new constitution in the year 1950. As much as it had granted maximum autonomy to provinces within a federal form of governance, the Act clung onto control with the British officials in place.

That squarely falls within the framework. Divergence refers to a difference in shifting a power balance such that Indian leaders held dominant portfolios along with prime responsibility for country-wide day-to-day administration, but British Viceroy held the charge of defence foreign affairs with some other sources of friction rather often.

The cabinet in charge of a portfolio was the Executive Council of the Interim Government. It, theoretically, happened to be collective decision-making agency; however due to the strong contrast between the Congress and the Muslim League decisions can hardly work out through a concurrence.

7. Interim Government-Problem

It was heavily-laden enough with both of the external and the internal pressures that were to afflict the interim government. The gravest accusation that could be raised against it was that it had communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims reached an alarming proportion by 1946. It was indeed how badly things could go with the Great Calcutta Killings in August 1946, and violence in Noakhali and Bihar followed soon after.

Relations between the Congress-Muhammad Ali Jinnah Muslim League were little less than having adversarial relations. Then, Finance Minister Liaquat Ali Khan often entered into a word of war with the Congress leadership over decisions which pertained to provisions of funds for the budget, claiming that it was being prejudiced in favor of the Muslim League. It would therefore only extend the strains in the relationship between two parties to create paralysis in decision making.

However, in doing their work, the British government had its as well. Dominion over provinces and international relations under the Viceroy remained exactly as before, unless for the fact that this granted Interim Government quite a number of autonomy freedom. Though to put it in an unmistakable way though, this surely isn't the sum total that the British could grant such an apparatus; far more in the open, visible than profound.

8. Legacy of Interim Government into Modern Indian Politics

It shocked Indian politics with a shock from which it had not fully recovered. It brought to light sharp cleavages between Congress and the Muslim League, which spread wider once the possibility of united India could no longer be thought to be tenable. Working within the Interim Government has rather driven them far deeper into suspicion of each other; it has also pushed the Muslim League to commitment of another state for the Muslims.

This, in addition to a wide polarisation of Hindus and Muslims that was taking place in this period, was such an utter failure of the part of the government in checking the communal violence that was actually one of the contributory factors in the partition process. The happenings of 1946-early 1947 had, quite aptly, proved this impossibility of holding together a divided and multi-hued nation.

In short, leadership of India could develop required competencies in services for the proper governance of a government in an Interim Government. The grassroot exposure from the leadership which was seen to have had in hands on experiences with administrative working was indeed beneficial to early-day India after liberation. Interim Government also managed to give preparation ground for an ultimate constitution formed by the Constituent Assembly of India.

Important Things Indians learned from Interim government are

9. What Indians Learn from Interim Government

The Interim Government was taken to teach Indian leadership and people at large some lessons:

Coalition politics: The experience exposed the problems which coalition governance presented in a thoroughly divided society. The tensions between Congress and Muslim League showed how difficult it is to find common ground when there are fundamentally divergent political goals.

In this plural society, the failure of the interim government to keep a watch on the breakout of communal violence has left an imperative desire to maintain the rule of law and the law and order situation. It further reveals that there was only so much political will to overcome set social and religious tensions.

Indeed, the experience of the Interim Government has abundantly proved that some compromise is the very need of politics. In the context, however, the inter-government was altogether incapable of reconciling the Congress with the Muslim League, but there was exposure which found that in any pluralistic system of governance there is a call for negotiation and flexibility.

Truth Behind Power Transition: Once again, the caretaker government proved the point that the transfer of power was not so smooth as it looked. The ambiguity and the discord between the dual governments-the British and the Indians, reflected that in such transfers of power, leadership needs to be distinct and defined.

10. Aftermath of the Caretaker Government

The result was that the Interim Government turned out to be a very controversial legacy. Now, on a bright side, it was one of the omens of freedom in short; and it was only the time that Indian leaders could take control of their own government. In a way, the Indian leaders underwent essential practice about governance where they were warming up to begin running a free nation.

The Interim Government proved utterly incapable of the responsibility to end the communal disturbance and failed to bridge over between the Congress and the Muslim League. Partitioning finally came and took along all the disastrous outcomes. It then exposed deep divisions within the Indian society as well as proved how it is difficult to maintain such a diversified country's unity not so easily.

It was part of the grand Indian history process toward freedom- an absolutely necessary but imperfect step toward independence. It was a compromise, born of compromise; worked under a charged environment, almost divided into poles. The Interim Government, so far, was a failure as a move toward retaining one India, but at the same time, it would become the prime ingredient for the last stage of the fight toward independence.

11. Conclusion

It was for the first time Indian leaders were sitting in the driver's seat even as the British were in the driving seat. Interim Government 1946 passed through some colossal moments of trying as it had not only internal fights between Congress and Muslim League but also external factors coming from Britain. Midst all this, it marked a watershed for India something which would define the nation. It equips them with general education on the government and gives them a glimpse of the possible trouble spots of such a vast, divided nation: it equips them with an example of the impossible problems pertaining to the act itself-withdrawing colony status to gain independence or sovereignty for this divided national citizenry.

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