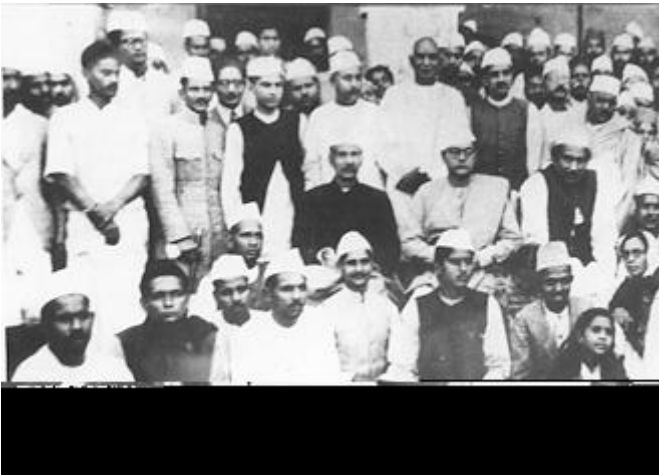


UNIT 9 – UPSC -The Congress Resigns

India's History : Modern India : Political deadlock in India as Congress ministries resign : 1939

The Congress Resigns



The Congress victory in the 1937 election and the consequent formation of popular ministries changed the balance of power within the country vis-a-vis the colonial authorities. The stage seemed to be set for another resurgence of the nationalist movement. Just at this time, the Congress had to undergo a crisis at the top an occurrence that plagued the Congress every few years.



Subhash Bose had been a unanimous choice as the President of the Congress in 1938. In 1939, he decided to stand again - this time as the spokesperson of militant politics and radical groups. Putting forward his candidature on 21 January 1939, Bose said that he represented the 'new ideas, ideologies, problems and programmes' that had emerged with 'the progressive sharpening of the anti-imperialist struggle in India.' The presidential elections, he said, should be fought among different candidates 'on the basis of definite problems and programmes.'

On 24 January, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, J.B. Kripalani and four other members of the Congress Working Committee issued a counter statement, declaring that the talk of ideologies, programmes and policies was irrelevant in the elections of a Congress

president since these were evolved by the various Congress bodies such as the AICC and the Working Committee, and that the position of the Congress President was like that of a constitutional head who represented and symbolized the unity and solidarity of the nation. With the blessings of Gandhiji, these and other leaders put up Pattabhi Sitaramayya as a candidate for the post. Subhas Bose was elected on 29th January by 1580 votes against 1377. Gandhiji declared that 'Pattabhi's defeat is my defeat'.



The line of propaganda adopted by Bose against Sardar Patel and the majority of the top Congress leadership whom he branded as rightists. He openly accused them of working for a compromise with the Government on the question of federation. The Congress leaders, labeled as compromisers, resented such charges and branded them as a slander. After Subhash's election, they felt that they could not work with a President who had publicly cast aspersions on their nationalist bonafides. Jawaharlal Nehru did not resign along with the other twelve working committee members. He did not like the idea of confronting Bose publicly. But he did not agree with Bose either.

Subhash Bose believed that the Congress was strong enough to launch an immediate struggle and that the masses were ready for such struggle. He was convinced, as he wrote later, 'that the country was internally more ripe for a revolution than ever before and that the coming international crisis would give India an opportunity for achieving her emancipation, which is rare in human history.'

He, therefore, argued in his Presidential address in Tripuri for a programme of immediately giving the British Government a six-months ultimatum to grant the national demand of independence and of launching a mass civil disobedience movement if it failed to do so. Gandhiji's perceptions were very different. The internal strife reached its climax at the Tripuri session of the Congress, held from 8 to 12 March 1939. Bose had completely misjudged the faith of Congressmen. They were not willing to reject Gandhiji's leadership or that of other older leaders who decided to bring this home to Subhash.

Bose could see no other way but to resign from the Presidentship. Nehru tried to mediate but to no avail. Bose could also not get the support of the Congress Socialists and the Communists at Tripuri or after.

At the outbreak of the World War II, the Viceroy proclaimed India's involvement without prior consultations with the main political parties. When Congress demanded an immediate transfer of power in return for cooperation of the war efforts, the British government refused. As a result Congress resigned from power.