# India’s Struggle for Independence <http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/gandhicomesalive/speech6.htm>

Background:

During India’s struggle to gain independence from Great Britain, Gandhi gave the following speech at the August 1942 meeting of the All India Conference Committee. One of the main problems facing India in its struggle for independence was finding a balance of power between the multitude of religious and cultural groups, Hindus and Muslims being the largest of the groups. In this speech Gandhi proposed an idea that would change India’s future, but that was not popular at the time.

**Quit India Speech**

… Ours is not a drive for power, but purely a non-violent fight for India’s independence. In a violent struggle, a successful general has been often known to effect a military coup and to set up a dictatorship. But under the Congress scheme of things, essentially non-violent as it is, there can be no room for dictatorship. A non-violent soldier of freedom will covet nothing for himself; he fights only for the freedom of his country. The Congress is unconcerned as to who will rule, when freedom is attained. The power, when it comes, will belong to the people of India, and it will be for them to decide to whom it placed in the entrusted. May be that the reins will be placed in the hands of the Parsis [a small, but wealthy minority living within India who practice the religion of Zoroastrianism], for instance-as I would love to see happen-or they may be handed to some others whose names are not heard in the Congress today. It will not be for you then to object saying, “This community is microscopic. That party did not play its due part in the freedom’s struggle; why should it have all the power?” Ever since its inception the Congress has kept itself meticulously free of the communal taint. It has thought always in terms of the whole nation and has acted accordingly.  
  
…paragraphs omitted…

According to Gandhi, who has power following a violent military coup? A non-violent coup?

What does Gandhi say should happen if a minority group gains control of India?

Why does Gandhi allude to the French and Russian Revolutions?

What is the democratic ideal that Gandhi refers to?

I believe that in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuinely democratic struggle for freedom than ours. I read Carlyle’s French Revolution while I was in prison, and Pandit Jawaharlal [Nehru, Gandhi’s fellow revolutionary, and future Prime Minister of India] has told me something about the Russian revolution. But it is my conviction that inasmuch as these struggles were fought with the weapon of violence they failed to realize the democratic ideal. In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by non-violence, there will be equal freedom for all. Everybody will be his own master. It is to join a struggle for such democracy that I invite you today. Once you realize this you will forget the differences between the Hindus and Muslims, and think of yourselves as Indians only, engaged in the common struggle for independence…

What is Gandhi’s message?

**Reflection Questions**

1. If you were a Muslim Indian listening to this speech, how might Gandhi’s words impact your ideas about the Indian Independence movement?
2. Why does Gandhi want his listeners to think of themselves as “Indians only?”

1. Why would it be important for Indian Independence leaders to not be influenced by religious groups?
2. How might the French Revolution have impacted Gandhi’s strategy (plan) for Indian Independence?

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**Key Terms  
coup**: a sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government

**covet**: to feel strong desire for something which belongs to another.

**reins**: used to guide a horse while riding or driving.  
  
**communal taint**: being overly influenced by religious or cultural communities.

**allude**: suggest or call attention to indirectly

Summarize the most important ideas from Gandhi’s speech:

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Write the three main ideas you find in Gandhi’s Quit India speech:

1.

2.

3.

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