Gandhi’s “Quit India” Speech

ABOUT THE READING  Mohandas Gandhi, often called the father of modern India, was dedicated to nonviolence. He delivered this speech on August 8, 1942, to the All India Conference Committee. The committee was considering a resolution to demand that British quit or leave India. At the time, there were tensions among different groups in India.

As you read the speech below, note what is most important to Gandhi. What does he mean by independence?

Ours is not a drive for power, but purely a nonviolent 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 nonviolent 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, 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

Gandhi’s “Quit India” Speech, continued

Primary Source

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 . . .

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 Resolution while I was in prison, and Pandit Jawaharlal 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 nonviolence, 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 DID YOU LEARN?

1. What is the main idea that Gandhi wants to get across in his speech?

2. How does Gandhi try to unify his audience?