

History

Lesson 1 of 4 lessons

## **Lesson 2: The War, the bookshop and the jail**

# **How did India achieve independence in 1947?**



# The British Empire and World War Two

World War Two broke out in 1939. By 1940, Britain was the only country left in Europe that had not been conquered by Germany or surrendered to Germany. Britain was now alone and needed the help of the British Empire from around the world, including India.

At the outbreak of the War, the Indian Army numbered 205,000 men. Later during World War Two, the Indian Army had grown to become the **largest all-volunteer** force in the history of the world. At its height, the Indian Army numbered over 2.5 million men.

Indians fought in tanks in North Africa, artillery (firing shells) soldiers, as sailors in the navy and as pilots in the air force.



# Indian contributions to World War Two

Indians fought across three continents in Asia, Africa and in Europe.

Britain needed help to keep German planes and bombers from attacking British cities. The Germans would fly over the English Channel and fight against pilots in the Royal Air Force. Indian fighter pilots were asked to join the RAF and these Indian pilots fought in the skies against the German air force to keep Britain safe.

By the end of World War Two, 87,000 Indians had sacrificed their lives. 164,000 Indians returned home wounded. Britain would not have won World War Two without the enormous contribution made by Indian soldiers, sailors and airmen. 30 Indian soldiers had won the **Victoria Cross**, Britain's highest award for extraordinary bravery. The VC is awarded only to those whose actions in battle would have been expected to result in death.



# Quit India!

In 1942, Gandhi wrote a book called **Quit India**. Indians were helping Britain fight World War Two. The British Government said it was a war for freedom. Gandhi wrote that India also wanted freedom. Gandhi did not hate the British. In his book, Gandhi said he hated British **imperialism**, not the British people.

Imperialism is where one powerful country uses its power to control other countries. Gandhi argued that Indians were sacrificing their lives to help Britain remain free; Gandhi wanted India to be given the same freedom.

Many Indians believed that by supporting the British, their country would achieve independence when World War Two ended.



# The bookshop during the War

In 1942, Vishnu and his father put up displays of Gandhi's book, Quit India. The bookshop was raided by British soldiers. Vishnu's family home was also raided by British soldiers in 1942. The soldiers found books that supported Indian independence and demanded that the British leave India.

Vishnu and his father were arrested and sent to prison, along with Gandhi and thousands of other Indians. Vishnu and his father remained in jail until the end of the War.

