

8th – The Making of the National Movement I



The Revolt of 1857 which was suppressed by the British. It expressed itself as revolts in different parts of the country, like rebellion of the farmers of Bihar who were forced to grow indigo. But these agitation were localized, and did not constitute a single nationalistic government against the British. Nationalism is a feeling of pride in one's country, the desire for freedom. This growing nationalism led to the birth of Nationalist Movement.

Reasons for the growth of nationalism

- **Awakening of the Indians to their rich cultural heritage:** Western scholar like Max Mueller and William Jones translated the Vedas, the Upanishads and other works of Indian literature into English. Their research and writing made Indians aware of their great cultural heritage. India was the people of India- all the people irrespective of class, colour, creed, language, or gender. And the country, its resources and systems, were meant for all of them.
- **Exposure to Western ideas of democracy and nationalism:** The British introduced English education to Indians to train them to become clerks or occupy other low-level positions in government service. They also expected the educated Indians to be loyal to them. However, the new system of education exposed the Indian leaders to western ideas of democracy and nationalism.
- **Better means of transport and communication:** The rail and road networks, and the post and telegraph systems established by the British helped to unite the Indians. People from different parts of the country were able to communicate better with each other they are thus able to see how all Indians shared the same culture and values.
- **Economic exploitation by the British:** The economic policies of the British had impoverished India. Also, the many famines that ravaged to countryside through the second half of the 19th century aggravated the pathetic condition of the peasants.
- This consciousness began to be clearly stated by the political associations formed after 1850, especially those that came into being in the 1870s and 1880s. Most of these were led by English- educated professionals such as lawyers. The more important ones were the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, the Indian Association, the Madras Mahajan Sabha, the Bombay Presidency Association, and of course the Indian National Congress.
- The name, "**Poona Sarvajanik Sabha**". The literal meaning of "sarvajanik" is "of or for all the people" (sarva = all and janik= of the people). Though many of these associations functioned in specific parts of the country, their goals were stated as the goals of all the people on India, not those of any one region, community or class. They worked with the idea that the people should be sovereign- a modern consciousness and a key feature of nationalism. In other words, they believed that the Indian people, should be empowered to take decisions regarding their affairs.
- The dissatisfaction with British rule intensified in the 1870s and 1880s. The Arms Act was passed in 1878, disallowing Indians form possessing arms. In the same year the Vernacular Press Act was also enacted in an effort to silence those who were critical of the government. The Act allowed the government to confiscate the assets of newspaper including their printing presses if the newspaper published anything that was found "objectionable".
- In 1883, there was a furore over the attempt by the government to introduce the Ilbert Bill. The bill provided for the trial of British or European persons by Indians, and sought equality between British and Indian judges in the country. But when white opposition forced the government to withdraw the bill. Indians were enraged. The event highlighted the racial attitudes of the British in India.
- The need for an all- India organization of educated Indians had been felt since



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1880, but the Ilbert Bill controversy depended this desire. The Indian National Congress was established when 72 delegates from all over the country met at Bombay in December **1885**. In 1885, AO Hume started the Indian National Congress. The early leadership- Dadabhai Naroji, Pherozeshan Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, W.C.Bonnerji, Surendranath Banerji, Romesh Chandra Dutt, S. Subramania Iyer, among others - was largely from Bombay and Calcutta.

• **Naoroji**, a businessman and publicist settled in London, and for a time member of the British Parliament, guided the younger nationalists. A retired British official, **A.O. Hume**, played a part in bringing Indians from the various regions together.

A nation in the making: The Founding of The Indian National Congress: Various political organizations came up in different parts of the country. Their demands were small. They asked for greater representation for Indians in provincial governments, reduction of taxes, etc. **Surendranath Banerjee** brought all these convened the first all-India conference in Calcutta in 1883. In 1885, Allan Octavian Hume, a retired British civil servant, founded the Indian National congress (INC).

- To seek the cooperation of all Indians.
- To eradicate prejudices of race, religion, caste, etc.
- To discuss the major problems of India and come out with suggestions to solve them.
- To request the British to involve Indians while taking administrative decisions concerning India.



• The Congress in the first twenty years was "moderate" in its objectives and methods. During this period it demanded a greater voice for Indians in the government and in administration. It wanted the Legislative Councils to be made more representative. Given more power, and introduced in provinces where none existed.

• It demanded that Indians be placed in high positions in the government. For this purpose it called for civil service examinations to be held in India as well, not just in London. The demand for indianisation of the administration was part of a movement against racism. Since British officers were sending a major part of their large salaries home, indianisation, it was hoped, would also reduce the drain of wealth of England. Other demands included the separation of the judiciary from the executive, the repeal of the Arms Act and the freedom of speech and expression.

• The early congress also raised a number of economic issues. It declared in the land revenue had impoverished peasants and Zamindars, and exports of grains to Europe had created food shortage. The congress demanded reduction of revenue, cut in military expenditure, and more funds for irrigation. It passed many resolutions on the salt tax, treatment of Indian labourers abroad, and sufferings of forest dwellers- caused by an interfering forest administration. All this shows that despite being a body of the educated elite, the congress did not talk only on behalf of professional groups, zamindars or industrialists.

• The moderate leaders wanted to develop public awareness about the unjust nature of British rule. They published newspapers, wrote articles, and showed how British rule was leading to the economic ruin of the country. They felt that the British had respect for the ideals of freedom and justice, and so they would accept the just demands of Indians. What was necessary, therefore, was to express these demands and make the government aware of the feelings of Indians.

“Freedom is our birthright”

• By the 1890s many Indians began to raise questions about the political style of the congress. In Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab, leaders such as Bepin Chandra



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Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai were beginning to explore more radical objectives and methods. These leaders came to be called extremists or radicals because they believed in adopting strong measures to achieve freedom.

- They criticized the Moderates for their “Politics of Prayers”, and emphasized the importance of self-reliance and constructive work. They argued that people must rely on their own strength, not on the “good” intentions of the government; people must fight for Swaraj. Tilak raised the slogan. “Freedom is my birthright and I shall have it!”

The Partition of Bengal (1905)

- Lord Curzon became the governor-general of India in 1898. He did his best to suppress the movement of extremist nationalism. In 1905, he partitioned Bengal. Bengal was the stronghold of the Congress. It was said that this move was undertaken for administrative convenience. His aim was to separate East Bengal with Muslim majority from the rest of Bengal to weaken the Congress.
- Contrary to what the British had imagined, the partition gave a boost to the freedom struggle. The leader in the Congress and the nationalist leaders of Bengal firmly opposed the partition. There were massive revolts in Bengal on the day of partition.

The Boycott Movement and the Swadeshi Movement: leaders of anti-partition movement decided to use Indian goods and to boycott British Goods.

- People gathered at crossroads, and burnt the imported goods that they had. People picketed shops selling foreign goods (i.e., stood outside such shops and stopped customers not to enter or buy goods). The imported sugar was boycotted. This was called the boycotted movement.
- People resolved to use only things made in India. This was called the Swadeshi movement. Swadeshi means ‘of one’s own country’. People began wearing cotton clothes made in India. This was a two-pronged attack on the British. The Boycott movement affected British trade and industry, while the Swadeshi movement helped local Indian industry to prosper. The Congress leaders supported the Swadeshi and Boycotted movements and hoped that this would bring the British to their knees.
- The Swadeshi movement sought to oppose British rule and encourage the ideas of self-help, Swadeshi enterprise, national education, and use of Indian languages, to fight for Swaraj, the radicals advocated mass mobilization and boycott of British institutions and goods. Some individuals also began to suggest that “revolutionary violence” would be necessary to overthrow British rule.

The Split in the Congress: There were many differences in opinion between the moderates and radicals. The radicals took Swaraj to mean total freedom from British domination, while for the moderates it just meant an increased role for Indians in British administration.

- The moderates accepted the Swadeshi movement, but refused to boycott British goods, feeling it would embitter relations between the British and Indians. Also, the radicals wanted to stop Western education and follow Indian education, which the moderates were against. These differences brought about a split in the Congress in 1907.

The Formation of the Muslim League (1906): The formation of the Muslim League was instigated by the British as part of their policy of divide and rule. Muslim leaders like the Aga Khan were summoned to Simla and made to believe that they should do something to safeguard their interests as the Congress was dominated by Hindus. The Muslim leaders feared that if the British did leave India, Muslims would have no share in the Indian government. As a result of this feeling, some Muslim leaders set up a separate political organization in the form of the Muslim



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League. But others like Abdul Kalam Azad and Hakim Ajmal Khan, who looked beyond religion and towards India as one nation, stayed with the Congress. The league favoured the partition of Bengal.

Morley - Minto reform (1909): Lord Curzon was recalled to England. John Morley, the secretary of state in England drew a plan to win back the good will of Indians. The number in Imperial Legislative Council was increased. Separate electorates were introduced for the Muslims. This reform sowed the seeds for division between Hindus and Muslims. This was part of the British policy of DIVIDE and RULE, using it as a medium to weaken the national movement.

Two Home Rule Leagues were started- one under the leadership of Lokmanya Tilak in Poona in 1915 and other under Annie Besant in Madras. These two Home Rule Leagues carried out intense propaganda all over the country in favour of Self Rule. The Leagues worked under the Congress. The unity between Congress and Muslim League for the demand of self-rule was brought about by signing the Congress - League Pact popularly called Lucknow Pact in December 1916.

The Government of India Act 1919: was an act of the British Parliament that sought to increase the participation of Indians in the administration of their country. The act was based on the recommendations of a report by Edwin Montagu, the then Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, India's Viceroy. Hence the constitutional reforms set forth by this act are known as Montagu-Chelmsford reforms or Montford reforms.

The Growth of Mass Nationalism: After 1919 the struggle against British rule gradually became a mass movement, involving peasants, tribals, students and women in large numbers and occasionally factory workers as well. The First World War, altered the economic and political situation in India. It led to a huge rise in the defence expenditure in turn increased taxes on individual incomes and business profits. Increased military expenditure and the demands for war supplies led to a sharp rise in prices which created great difficulties for the common people. On the other hand, business groups reaped fabulous profits from the war. The war created a demand for industrial goods (jute bags, cloth, railways) and caused a decline of imports from other countries into India.

- Indian industries expanded during the war, and Indian business groups began to demand greater opportunities for development.
- The war also leads the British to expand their army. Villages were pressurized to supply soldiers for an alien cause. A large number of soldiers were sent to serve abroad. Many returned after the war with an understanding of the ways in which imperialist powers were exploiting the peoples of Asia and Africa and with a desire to oppose colonial rule in India.

