

11. The Making of the National Movement: 1870s–1947

Lesson at a Glance

- After the Revolt of 1857, people of India became determined to root out British rule from the country.
- As awareness spread among them, they began to feel that India was the people of India and its resources were meant for all the Indians. Unless British control over the resources of India and its people was ended, India could not be for Indians. Hence, the first and foremost task of every Indian was to fight against the foreign rule unless and until it was rooted out.
- **Political associations** came into being in the 1870s and 1880s. The more important ones were the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, the Indian Association, the Madras Mahajan Sabha and the Bombay Presidency Association. The aim of all these associations was to **empower Indians** so that they might take decisions regarding their affairs.
- The British were aware of all these developments. They began to take action. In 1878, the **Arms Act** was passed which disallowed Indians from possessing arms. In the same the **Vernacular Press Act** was passed, which tried to silence all those who were critical of the government.
- The need for an all-India organisation of educated Indians had been felt since 1880. Finally in 1885 the **Indian National Congress** came into being.
- In the beginning the congress was more or less moderate in its objectives and methods. It demanded a greater voice for Indians in the government and in administration. It also demanded separation of the judiciary from the executive, the repeal of the Arms Act and the freedom of speech and expression.
- The Congress, in the early years, also raised several economic issues. It declared that increase in the land revenue had impoverished peasants and zamindars. Hence, reduction of revenue was essential.
- The Moderate leaders in the Congress published newspapers, wrote articles and showed how British rule was leading to the economic ruin of the country. All this they did in order to draw public attention towards the unjust rule of the British.

- Some leaders in the Congress such as Bipin Chandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, did not like the ideas of the Moderates. They criticised the Moderates for their 'politics of prayers' and emphasised the importance of **self-reliance and constructive work**. They argued that people must fight for **swaraj**. Tilak raised the slogan, "Freedom is my birthright and I shall have it".
- In 1905, Bengal, the biggest province of British India and included Bihar and parts of Orissa, was partitioned by Viceroy Curzon. It enraged people all over India. Both the Moderates and the Radicals unitedly opposed the British action. This led to the birth of the **Swadeshi Movement**, which boycotted British institutions and goods.
- An important development came in 1906 with the formation of the All India Muslim League at Dacca. The founder members of the League were Muslim landlords and nawabs. They supported the partition of Bengal and demanded for separate electorates for Muslims.
- However, in the year 1916, the Congress and the Muslim League decided to work together for representative government in the country.
- The growth of **mass nationalism** began to take place after 1919. Peasants, tribals, students and women became involved in the struggle against the British rule.
- **Mahatma Gandhi** emerged as a **mass leader**. He, first of all, toured the entire country in order to understand the people, their needs and the overall situation.
- Afterwards, he led to local movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad in which he got immense success.
- In 1919 Gandhiji started **Satyagraha Movement** against the **Rowlatt Act** that the British had just passed. The Act curbed fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression and strengthened police powers.
- In April 1919, there were a number of demonstrations and *hartals* in the country against this Act. The government used hartal measures to suppress them. The **Jallianwala Bagh** atrocities in Amritsar on Baisakhi Day were a part of this suppression.
- In the year 1920, the British did another wrong known as khilafat wrong. The British imposed a harsh treaty on the Turkish Sultan also known as Khalifa. This enraged the Muslims and Khalifa agitation started under the leadership of Mohammad Ali and

- Shaukat Ali. They wished to initiate a full fledged Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhiji supported their call and urged the congress to campaign against Jallianwala massacre, Khilafat wrong and demand *swaraj*.
- During the years 1921-22, the **Non-Cooperation Movement** gained momentum because it got a wide support. However, it was abruptly called off by Mahatma Gandhi when in February 1922 a crowd of peasants set fire to a police station in **Chauri Chaura**. Twenty-two policemen were killed on that day. It hurt Mahatma Gandhi because he had never thought that people would go violent. He always wished to drive away the British by non-violent methods.
- The Congress now resolved to fight for **Purna Swaraj** (complete independence) in 1929 under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Now efforts began to be made in this direction. In 1930, Gandhiji started **Dandi March** against the Salt Law. He got immense support from the people.
- The combined struggles of the Indian people bore fruit when the **Government of India Act** of 1935 prescribed **provincial autonomy** and the government announced elections to the provincial legislatures in 1937.
- In September 1939, the Second World War broke out. The Congress leaders were ready to support the British war effort. But in return they wanted independence after the war. The British refused to concede the demand.
- A new phase of movement, popularly known as **Quit India Movement** was initiated in August 1942 under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. As a result prominent leaders were jailed at once. But the movement spread.
- In between these events the Muslim League began to demand independent States for Muslims in the north-western and eastern areas of the country. Mahatma Gandhi was not in favour of this.
- The League began to think that Muslims were a **minority** and they would always have to play second fiddle in any democratic structure. The Congress's rejection of the League's desire to form a joint Congress-League government in the United Provinces in 1937 further annoyed the League.
- In 1945, the British opened negotiations between the Congress, the League and themselves for the independence of India. The talks failed because the League now wanted Pakistan.

- In March 1946, the British cabinet sent a three-member mission to Delhi to examine the League's demand for Pakistan and to suggest a suitable political framework for a free India.
- The Mission suggested that India should remain united and constitute itself as a loose confederation with some autonomy for Muslim majority areas. Neither the Congress nor the League agreed to it. Now, partition of India became inevitable.
- Finally, Pakistan came into existence. The violence of partition shook both the newly-independent countries—India and Pakistan. It marred the joy of independence.

■ TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

Let's Recall

Q. 1. *Why were people dissatisfied with British rule in the 1870s and 1880s?*

Ans. People were dissatisfied with British rule in the 1870s and 1880s due to the following reasons:

(i) The British passed the Arms Act in 1878 which disallowed Indians from possessing arms.

(ii) In the same year they passed the Vernacular Press Act. This Act snatched the freedom of speech and expression. It allowed the government to confiscate the assets of newspapers including their printing presses if the newspapers published anything that was critical of the government.

(iii) In 1883, the Ilbert Bill was introduced. 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 the white opposition forced the government to withdraw the bill.

Q. 2. *Who did the Indian National Congress wish to speak for?*

Ans. The Indian National Congress wished to speak for the entire people belonging to different communities of India.

Q. 3. *What economic impact did the First World War have on India?*

Ans. The First World War led to a huge rise in the defence expenditure of the Government of India. The government

in turn increased taxes on individual incomes and business profits.

Increased military expenditure and the demands for war supplies led to the sharp rise in prices which badly affected the common mass. They found it difficult to fulfil even their essential needs.

But the business groups earned huge profits from the war. The war created a demand for industrial goods like jute bags, cloth, rails, and caused a decline of imports from other countries into India. As a result Indian industries expanded during the war.

Q. 4. *What did the Muslim League resolution of 1940 ask for?*

Ans. The Muslim League resolution of 1940 asked for 'Independent States' for Muslims in the north-western and eastern areas of the country. The resolution did not mention partition or the name Pakistan.

Let's Discuss

Q. 5. *Who were the Moderates? How did they propose to struggle against British rule?*

Ans. The Moderates were against taking extreme actions. They had deep faith in the good intention of the government. They were of the opinion that slowly and steadily they would make the British go to their own land.

The Moderate leaders developed 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 criticised British rule in their speeches and sent representatives to different parts of the country to mobilise public opinion. They believed that the British had respect for the ideals of freedom and justice and therefore they would definitely accept all the just demands of the people of India. Their main task was to acknowledge the British government with these demands.

Q. 6. *How was the politics of the Radicals within the Congress different from that of the Moderates?*

Ans. The Radicals within the Congress cherished different opinions. They had deep faith in action and wanted to

drive away the foreigners as soon as possible. They criticised the Moderates for their 'politics of prayers' and gave emphasis on self-reliance and constructive work. They argued that people must fight for *swaraj*. Unless they fought against the British rule unitedly, they would not bring independence to their country.

Q. 7. Discuss the various forms of the Non-Cooperation Movement took in different parts of India. How did the people understand Gandhiji?

Ans. The Non-Cooperation Movement spread far and wide. It took various forms in different parts of the country:

- (i) In Kheda, Gujarat, Patidar peasants were worried about the high land revenue demand of the British. Hence, they organised non-violent campaigns against it.
- (ii) In coastal Andhra and interior Tamil Nadu, liquor shops were picketed.
- (iii) In the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, tribals and poor peasants started several 'forest satyagrahas', sometimes sending their cattle into forests without paying grazing tax. They were very much fed up with the restrictions imposed on them by the British regarding the use of forest resources. They wanted the abolition of the forest regulations.
- (iv) In Sind, now in Pakistan, Muslim traders and peasants were very enthusiastic about the Khilafat call. In Bengal too, the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation alliance gave enormous communal unity and strength to the national movement.
- (v) In Punjab, the Akali agitation of the Sikhs sought to drive out corrupt mahants, supported by the British, from the gurudwaras. This movement got closely identified with the Non-Cooperation Movement.
- (vi) In Assam, tea garden labourers left the British-owned plantations and became the followers of Gandhiji. People viewed Gandhiji as a messiah, as someone who could help them overcome their misery and poverty.

Q. 8. Why did Gandhiji choose to break the salt law?

Ans. Gandhiji was very much worried about the salt law. According to this law, the state had a monopoly on the manufacture and sale of salt. Gandhiji thought that it was sinful to tax salt because it is an essential item of our food and is required equally by the rich and the poor. Hence he decided to break this law in anticipation that people from all walks of life would extend their support. Needless to say that Gandhiji's Salt March became very successful.

Q. 9. Discuss those developments of the 1937-47 period that led to the creation of Pakistan.

Ans. From the late-1930s, the Muslim League began viewing the Muslims as a separate-nation from the Hindus. This nation might have developed because of the history of tension between some Hindu and Muslim groups in the 1920s and 1930s. The provincial elections of 1937 also might have convinced the League the Muslims were a minority and they would always have to play second fiddle in any democratic structure. Meanwhile, the Congress rejected the League's desire to form a joint Congress-League government in the United Provinces in 1937. This annoyed the League.

In 1940, the League finally moved a resolution demanding 'Independent States' for Muslims in the north-western and eastern areas of the country. The resolution did not mention partition or Pakistan.

In 1945, the British opened negotiations between the Congress, the League and themselves for the independence of India. The talks could not succeed because the League saw itself as the sole spokesperson of India's Muslims. The Congress proved this claim baseless because several Muslims still supported it.

In the provincial elections in 1946 the League got grand success in the seats reserved for Muslims. Hence it persisted its demand for Pakistan.

In March 1946, the Cabinet Mission came to Delhi to examine this demand and to suggest a suitable political framework for a free India. This Mission suggested that India should remain united and constitute itself as a loose confederation with some autonomy for Muslim-

majority areas. Neither the Congress nor the Muslim League agreed to it. The failure of the Cabinet Mission made partition inevitable. Ultimately in 1947 partition took place with the birth of a new country, i.e. Pakistan.

Let's Do

Q. 10. Find out how the national movement was organised in your city, district, area or state. Who participated in it and who led it? What did the movement in your area achieve?

Ans. Visit your school library and attempt this answer.

Q. 11. Find out more about the life and work of any two participants or leaders of the national movement and write a short essay about them. You may choose a person not mentioned in this chapter.

Ans. (a) **Dr. Rajendra Prasad**

Dr. Rajendra Prasad started his political career as a social worker. He came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi since the Champaran Satyagrahs of 1918. He came in the light when he took sincere part in Champaran Satyagraha. The Jallianwala Bagh atrocities deeply perturbed him. He was sent to jail many times. He struggled hard for the independence of the country. He was the most uncontroversial figure in the Indian politics. Under his presidentship the country made all round progress.

(b) **Jaiprakash Narayan**

Jaiprakash Narayan fully dedicated his life for the welfare of the country. In 1934, he plunged into the struggle for freedom. In the same he became the Secretary of the Socialist Party. Jawaharlal Nehru offered him the membership of the Congress Working Committee in 1946 but he rejected the offer. On Nehru's second request, he joined the Congress Committee with Ram Manohar Lohia but both of them left it soon. Shri Jaiprakash Narayan became the General Secretary of the Socialist Party which got itself separated from the Congress. He took great interest in the political development of the country. He is known for his selfless service for the nation.