

Lesson 21

INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Summary

The Indian National movement was long drawn battle against the colonial rule of the Britishers. It consisted of a series of political events and passed through different phases. The early phase of the national movement was dominated by the Moderates followed by the Extremist and the Revolutionaries. With Gandhi's entry the National movement became a mass movement. It reached out to various sections of the society and also to different parts of the country. The popularity of the national movement and the pressure exerted on the Britishers forced them to leave India.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND THE EARLY NATIONALISTS

- The Indian National Congress was formed in December 1885
 - Mr. A.O. Hume played a significant role in its formation.
- Foremost objective of this organization was to create the consciousness among the people of belonging to a single nation
 - The most valuable contribution of the so called 'moderates' was to formulate an economic critique.
- Other younger leaders who realised that colonial rule would bring no positive gains for India

SWADESHI AND BOYCOTT: THE EXTREMIST POLITIC

- The phase between 1885–1905 is known as the period of the moderates.
- In 1905, Curzon announced the partition of Bengal, an attempt to disrupt the growing national movement in Bengal and divide the Hindus and Muslims of the region
- This led rise to the Swadeshi Movement
- Formal proclamation of the Swadeshi movement was made on August 7 1905 with the passing of the 'Boycott' resolution in a meeting at the Calcutta town hall.
- This peculiar form of mass protest of 'swadeshi and boycott' attained popularity among the new members of the Congress who were more impatient than the moderates to see a positive response to their efforts.
- Extremist pressure promoted Dada Bhai Naoroji in his presidential address in Calcutta session of the Congress to say that the ultimate goal of the INC was 'self-government or swaraj.'
- For the first time in the national movement there was the use of traditional and popular festivals to reach the people.

FIRST PHASE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN INDIA AND ABROAD

- The rift between the moderates and extremists grew wider and wider within the Congress.
- The Extremists were in favour of boycott of the assembly elections
- The moderates wanted to participate in the electoral process

Finally, the rift resulted in the split in the Congress

- The extremist leaders continued to mobilise the masses while the Congress tried to influence the government policies.

- Shyamji Krishnavarma had started in 1905 a centre for Indian students in London called India House.

- Madanlal Dhingra assassinated the India Office bureaucrat Curzon-Wyllie in London in 1909.

- Sikhs began the Ghadr Movement in 1913 in the city of San Francisco.

- The First World War began in 1914, and the revolutionaries saw in this a very good opportunity in pushing through their agenda of complete independence

HOME RULE MOVEMENT

- The movement lasted around two years between 1916–1918 and it is believed to have set the stage for the independence movement under the leadership of Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
- The Home Rule movement never spelled out the goal of complete independence, however they did focus on the oppression of colonial policy through its opposition to government policy, e.g., forest laws, liquor laws etc.

THE GANDHIAN MASS MOVEMENT: THE INITIAL YEARS

- Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi's first experiment in Satyagraha began at Champaran in Bihar in 1917 when he inspired the peasants to struggle against the oppressive plantation system.
- He launched a nationwide Satyagraha against the proposed Rowlatt Act in 1919.
- On the 13th of April 1919 a Baisakhi day gathering at Jalianwalla Bagh in Amritsar invited the wrath of General Dyer who was made in charge of the city.

NON-VIOLENT NON-COOPERATION

- The non-cooperation movement was an expression of the growing resentment of all classes of the Indian people against oppressive British rule.
- The programme of "non-violent non-cooperation" included the boycott of councils, courts and schools, set up by the British and of all foreign cloth.
- Gandhi took up three specific points on which the movement was initiated: (a)

the Khilafat (b) the Punjab and (c) Swaraj.

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT: REORGANIZATION AND REORIENTATION

- The youth of the country had responded eagerly to the call of Gandhi and had participated in the non-cooperation movement.
- The sudden withdrawal of the movement was a blow to their aspirations.
- The most striking revolutionary action of the time was the murder of an Englishman, Day, by Gopinath Saha in January 1924.
- The most renowned of which was the Kakori train robbery in August 1925 that resulted in the arrest of several members of the organization.
- The aim of the revolutionaries was complete independence and they had a vision of how the State should be after the achievement of the same.

BYCOTT OF SIMON COMMISSION

- The all-white commission did not include any Indian and thus it was clear that the forthcoming reforms, if any, would not fulfil the aspirations of the Indian people.
- The announcement of the all-white Simon Commission sparked off widespread discontent and fanned the fires of the nationalist movement.
- The Indian response to the Commission was a unanimous resolution by leaders of every shade of opinion to boycott it.
- All the important cities and towns observed a *hartal* on the day that the

members of the Commission landed in India (3rd February 1928).

- There were mass rallies and processions and black flag demonstrations against the Commission. 'Go Back Simon' was imprinted on banners, placards and even kites.
- Black flags were waved at the Commission wherever it went

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

- It began with the famous Dandi March of Gandhi.
- Gandhi broke the salt law.
- The most important aspect of the civil disobedience movement was the widespread participation the youth, particularly students and also women.

INTENSIFICATION OF RADICAL AND REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS AND RISE OF THE LEFT

- The freedom struggle was never confined to the single path of Gandhian satyagraha.
- It contained the very violent and extremist revolutionary movement, it also comprised of the socialist ideology that came to India after the Russian Revolution, it would also include a military offensive.
- Socialism combined the freedom struggle with a clear cut agenda of social equality through organized mass movements that helped to mobilise the working class.
- The initiative of working out the ideology of the communist movement in India was taken up by eminent men like MN Roy who interpreted Marxism and the ideas of Lenin to fit the Indian context

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND THE CONGRESS PARTICIPATION IN LEGISLATURES

- In 1935 was passed the Government of India Act that extended some concessions to the nationalist movement

by introducing more autonomy to the elected members in the legislatures of the provinces.

- This Act also extended the voting rights to a greater percentage of the Indian People.
- After the resolution of the dilemma within the Congress, it took part in the electoral process and did very well.

TOWARDS FREEDOM

- The second world war created a new crisis for the British.
- In these circumstances a constantly declining support base of the British, Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch a final offensive against the British rule.
- Thus began the famous Quit India movement in August 1942.
- In this movement no demands were made from the British.
- They were simply asked to quit India.
- The British retaliated to Gandhi's call to 'Quit India' by arresting him and all the members of congress working committee.
- The year 1947 is a very important phase in the history of India.
- It was a year of triumph of Indian people as they achieved their freedom from foreign rule.
- But it was also the year of a great tragedy for the unity of Indian people as the country was partitioned into two separate nation-states.

Evaluate Yourself

- Q. List the concern of the early Congress.
- Q. Examine the role of Gandhi ji in the freedom movement.
- Q. On the outline of the map of India mark the places through which the Dandi march passed.

