

Imperial Rule and Indigenous Response: The Making of Indian Nationalism in Modern India

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the emergence of Indian nationalism as a historical response to the structural, social, and cultural transformations introduced under British colonial rule. Beginning with the aftermath of the Revolt of 1857, the study argues that although the rebellion failed to dislodge British authority, it marked a decisive rupture in colonial-Indian relations and initiated a sustained process of political awakening. The colonial state succeeded in consolidating its administrative and military control; however, it simultaneously generated widespread discontent through economic exploitation, cultural intervention, and political exclusion. The paper situates Indian nationalism within the broader theoretical framework of nationalism as a modern political ideology, while also acknowledging the presence of pre-colonial cultural unity in Indian society. It explores how Western education, the English language, and liberal political ideas facilitated the growth of a new Indian intelligentsia capable of articulating nationalist aspirations. The expansion of the vernacular and English-language press, alongside shared experiences of racial discrimination and administrative injustice, further contributed to the formation of collective political consciousness. Special attention is given to reactionary colonial policies and controversies, such as repressive governance and legislative discrimination, which intensified Indian resistance and fostered organized political activity. The study contends that Indian nationalism emerged not merely as a rejection of foreign rule, but as an act of self-assertion aimed at preserving cultural identity, social values, and political rights. By tracing this transition from colonial subjugation to nationalist self-assertion, the paper highlights the dynamic interplay between imperial transformation and indigenous political response in modern Indian history.

Keywords - Indian Nationalism; Colonial Rule; Revolt of 1857; Political Awakening; Western Education; Indian Press; Colonial Policies; Self-Assertion; Modern India

INTRODUCTION

The revolt of 1857 has been a huge mass uprising howsoever it had not been successful in challenging the British power and they were able to curb the revolt happening. Though Britishers very much successful in this, they could not succeed in suppressing the insurrection completely as they were not able to root out the steadily growing discontentment all over India. This dissatisfaction can be known as GROWTH OF NATIONALISM.

Nationalism which could be simply defined as ethno-cultural and geographical integration or unity had been there in India earlier as well. However, it was in the form of ideas spread out, present in not a very strong manner. Hans Kohn says, "A truer basis of unity than modern national sentiments was to be found in a common intellectual heritage, persisting through an unbroken tradition and molding and permeated Indian's whole social life to the minutest detail, and in the peculiar contemplative piety which lies at the root of all various forms of Hinduism." It was present in India in the form of culture, heritage and social life but the nationalism which we use in the modern context is the term in which European vocabularies in the 16th century.

In the French Revolution this came to fore and was spread worldwide talking about ideas like Sovereignty and self-determination of nations. There are three categories in which countries could be divided for whom each of the categories had a different perspective of Nationalism. Autocratic and despotic nations whose nationalism was to overthrow such organizations functioning. Democracy and Popular Sovereignty ruling countries referred to as nationalism as economic, industrial and social developments. The people who were in nations under colonial rule wanted liberalism, most prior and later economic advancement.

India came in the third category mentioned and the most it could aim for under the very spirit of nationalism was termination of foreign rule. Some components played a major role in igniting in Indians the spirit of revolt. Some of them being Western learning, English Language, Western Culture, Indian Press, Reactionary rule of Lord Lytton, and the Ilbert Bill Controversy.

The Nationalist sentiments which aroused to such a great extent in Indians was a result of the great changes made in the life of Indians by Britishers which they did through altering their practices, tradition, education, lifestyle and this made them feel the urge of bringing some change for protecting their culture and country's beliefs and practices.

IMPERIAL RULE AND THE GROWTH OF NATIONALISM

Western Education

The Britishers introduced the English Education Act of 1835 by Lord Macaulay that emphasized English Education System in place of Indigenous Education System. This was something which the Indians took contempt as they felt that this was an attempt by Britishers to ruin their established system of education and create a change all together. This system was brought in order to make favorable atmosphere for British to rule, as they wanted to make a group of people or a section in society which will ultimately help them in ruling smoothly and help them in understanding local customs and traditions along with having better communication with locals. As a result, a large section of Bengali English educated class were transformed and they followed Western lifestyle. Its impact was seen as the upsurge of nationalism and the English Education helped them to gather more information about other countries and the philosophies of the world.

It was during the time period of around 1861 AD that under the personal supervision of Alexander Cunningham the excavation and exploration were carried out with great zeal along with this the writing of Max Muller, Wilson, Fergusson, Rajendra Lal Mitra and other acknowledged the educated Indians about their glorious past and heritage. Till now Britishers were ruling through the White Man's Burden Theory under which they proved that white men were superior and were much more capable however through the reveal of the glorious past, people started feeling proud and understood their importance and the role which they played in the world history in the ancient times.

The European scholars put forward the idea that the origin of Hindus or Aryans is from the same group out of which originated most of the other European groups, they also glorified the important philosophies that were there in Upanishads; and also studied how efficient Emperor Ashoka had managed his kingdom which has expanded to such a vast extent; the level of influence which Buddhism had when it had originated and even continued to influence the people in such a great number. All this ignited a spirit of patriotism, love and pride among Indians for their existence. The disclosing of these hidden ideas about India's reality of existence made a very strong base on which the building of Indian Nationalism was made.

Western education was one of the most important social and cultural impacts of British rule in India. It introduced English language, European literature, and modern science to Indians. While the British claimed that their goal was to "civilize" Indian society. They used education as a tool to strengthen their political and economic control. Yet the spread of Western education also gave rise to new ideas of equality, liberty, and nationalism that later became the foundation of India's freedom movement.

Sir Charles E Trevelyan, T.B. Macaulay and Lord William Bentick (then governor general) took a momentous decision in 1835 when they inaugurated the system of English education in India.¹

Macaulay said in his speech in house of commons that It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system until it has outgrown that system, that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that having become instructed in European language, they may demand European institutions.

The English Education made Indian scholars to have a liberal outlook after studying Milton Shelley, Bentham, Mill, Spenser, Rousseau. This made them learn about the ideals of Liberty, nationality, and self-government, thus they learned about the conditions in which they were living and compared it with the condition of Europe which made them later demand for their rights. Some of them visited England for higher education and after returning witnessed the glaring differences between what was Britishers having in England and what they were doing in India. This realisation caused great discontentment which became great cause behind the boost in nationalism. The intelligent and well-informed persons formed the nucleus for the newly arising political unrest and it was this section of the society which provided leadership to the Indian political associations.²

However, the system was not free from flaws. Western education caused the decline of traditional learning and native languages, which were looked down upon as inferior. It also created a social divide between the English-educated elite and the uneducated rural masses. Education remained limited to upper and middle classes, leaving most Indians illiterate.

It was in this very same 19th Century that whole of Europe and South America were under great influence of nationalist ideas which were spreading immensely. The nationalist revolutions which took place in France and America in the last quarter of 18th Century and other happenings which were taking place in the world, most profound among these was the liberation struggle which was going on in Greece and Italy impacted the English educated Indians and aroused the feeling of nationalism. This was how Indians were not feeling alone of the great struggles which they had to face due to British's oppressive rule and were better able to relate with other countries getting an inspiration to rise against the prevailing conditions; along with this, they were now becoming aware of the working of free institutions in Europe. The first University in India, that of Calcutta was founded in 1857, and between 1857-1887 four new Universities, at Bombay, Madras, Lahore and Allahabad were added.³

PRINTING PRESS

The introduction of Press gave great vigour to the nationalist sentiments. The intervention of Printing Press made the material largely available in great numbers. This also helped in developing periodical literature which helped in awakening of masses.

It was left to James Augustus Hickey to publish the first newspaper in India entitled The Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser in the year 1780.⁴

It helped tremendously in the mobilization of the masses. It aided the nationalistic leaders in training and organizing public opinion. Press also made the work of Indian National congress easier and more convenient. The programs and resolution were easily communicated spread through the help of Press.

Interestingly nearly one-third of the founding fathers of the congress in 1885 were journalists.⁵ These were Hindus and Swadeshmitram by the editor G.Subramaniya Iyer, Kesari and Maharatta under Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bengalee by surendranath Bannerjea , Amrit Bazar Patrika Sisir Kumar Ghosh , Sudharak by G.K. Gokhale, Indian Mirror under N.N.Sen ,Voice of India under Dadabhai Naoroji, Hindu Sabha and Advocate under G P Verma and Tribune and Akhbar-i-am in Punjab, Indu Prakash, Dhyam Prakash ,Banganiyasi and Sadharani in Bengal.⁶

These works influenced not only the educated masses but also the common people. Being written in Vernacular Languages people could easily understand and comprehend, which helped in creating an atmosphere of political discussion building new ideas, being aware of the steps that Britishers were taking.

The introduction of the printing press in India was one of the most revolutionary developments during the colonial period. It transformed the way ideas, knowledge, and information spread across the subcontinent. The printing press not only helped in the growth of education and literature but also became a powerful tool in shaping political consciousness and national awakening among Indians.

The Portuguese were the first European nation who brought a printing press to India and first book Published in India was by the Jesuits of Goa in 1557.In 1684 the English East India Company set up a printing press in Bombay.⁷

The establishment of the press in India made books, newspapers, and pamphlets available at a scale never seen before. Early missionary presses published religious texts, but soon, Indian intellectuals began to use the printing press to express their opinions on social, cultural, and political issues. The British government encouraged the spread of printed material in English and vernacular languages as part of their educational policy. Printing allowed the rapid multiplication of textbooks, which became essential for schools and colleges founded under the Western education system. The new medium of print connected the English-educated elite across regions, fostering a sense of unity and shared political awareness.

In addition to its role in education, the printing press also contributed to the social reform movements that arose in the nineteenth century. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotiba Phule used printed pamphlets and newspapers to campaign against social evils such as sati, child marriage, and caste discrimination. The press gave reformers a powerful platform to spread progressive ideas and mobilize public opinion. Periodicals such as *Sambad Kaumudi*, *The Hindu Patriot*, and *Kesari* played crucial roles in creating a sense of public debate and political responsibility. For the first time, a wide section of the population could read about issues affecting them and express their thoughts through letters and articles. The growth of the Indian-language press also helped bridge the communication gap between the elite and the common people. By the late nineteenth century, the printing press had become a cornerstone of political awakening in India. Newspapers became instruments of political education and nationalism. Leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak used *Kesari* to promote Swadeshi and self-rule, while other journals like *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *The Indian Mirror* criticized British policies and exposed racial injustice. Despite the British government's attempts to suppress critical voices through censorship laws such as the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, the Indian press continued to grow rapidly. It played a vital role in uniting diverse regions and communities around the idea

of national freedom. The circulation of nationalist newspapers and pamphlets spread patriotic feelings even among those who could not attend meetings or join political organizations.⁸

To quote William Digby, “in 1875, there were 374 vernacular and Anglo-vernacular newspapers in circulation, as against 147 newspapers, out of which 102 were published in Bengal, 86 in Bombay, 65 in North-Western province (Madhya Pradesh) and Rajasthan combined”⁹

Name of paper	Year of Publication	Name of author	Place	Language
Samachar Kaumudi	1821	Raja Ram Mohan Roy	Calcutta	Bengali weekly
Mirat-ul-Akhbar	1822	Raja Ram Mohan Roy	Calcutta	Persian Weekly
Udant Martand	1826	Yugal Kishore Shukla	Calcutta	First Hindi weekly(khari and brij boli mix)
Bangadoot	1822	Raja Ram Mohan Roy	Calcutta	Bengali, hindi, persian Weekly
Samachar Darpan	1858	Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar	Calcutta	Bengali weekly
Amrit Bazar Patrika	1868	Sisir Kumar Ghosh	Jessore	Bengali weekly later switched to English to evade Press Act
Indian Mirror	1861	Keshab Chandra Sen	Calcutta	English daily
Kesari	1881	Bal Gangadhar Tilak	Pune	Marathi Weekly
Hindu	1878	G. Subramania Iyer	Madras	English Weekly
Tattvabodhini Patrika	1843	Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar	Calcutta	Bengali monthly
Bangadarshan	1836	Harishchandra Ray	Calcutta	Bengali Monthly
Kavivachan Sudha	1867	Harishchandra Ray	Banaras	Hindi Monthly
Dharma Prakash	1859 1867 1890	Mansukh	Ahemdabad Agra Roorkee	Hindi Mothly In hindi and Sanskrit from Agra and Urdu and Sanskrit from Roorkee
Suraj Prakash+ (Aftab-e-Alamtaba)	1869	Ganeshi Lal	Agra	Hindi monthly with urdu section

¹⁰ **Chronological Table of Vernacular Papers**

ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Postal:

In the 18th Century Britishers started working on the Postal Services in India. In 1764 and 1766 the Britishers established Post Office in Mumbai, Chennai, and Calcutta. It was in 1774 that Warren Hastings the then Governor General, opened the Post for the public. Howsoever the major intention behind opening this postal service was to serve the commercial needs and interests of the East India Company. However, after 1858 the affairs were directly handled by the Parliament. The first postal stamp was introduced on 1st July 1852 in the Scinde District. It was from 1854 that it was introduced uniformly nationwide and the usage also increased tremendously.¹¹

The introduction of this postal system in India helped Indian citizens in efficiently communicating in different parts of India and create a unity among them causing exchange of ideas and grievances. It was the postal system through which the different newspapers were efficiently available in different parts. The growth of Vernacular newspaper in late nineteenth century further increased the importance of the postal service. Newspapers like Kesari, Amrita Bazar Patrika and The Hindu relied on the postal network to circulate their editions across the country. Later Indian National Congress used it in organizing the protests, campaigns, petitions. Also, it was used by the educated middle class to stay connected to disputes of different parts. They were now better able to criticize the policies of Britishers.

The Indian Post Office Act of 1854, passed under Lord Dalhousie, created a uniform postal service and made postage stamps affordable, which made communication accessible to the common people. What began as an instrument of colonial control later turned into a medium for national awakening helping to transform scattered regional movements into a united struggle for Independence.¹²

In rural areas, the post office became a centre of information where villagers gathered to hear news from distant cities. The expansion of the postal service thus helped break the isolation of local communities and fostered a sense of shared national identity.

A cheap ½ anna uniform postage rate for inland letters and still cheaper rates for transmission of newspapers and parcels brought about a transformation of newspapers and parcels brought about the transformation in the social, educational, intellectual and political life of the people.¹³

TELEGRAPH LINES

The introduction of Telegraph by the Britishers during the mid-19th Century, played a crucial role in the nationalism. The purpose behind the introduction of Telegraph was to make the communication for British. However, it helped the nationalist. The Indians who were unaware of the real use of telegraph viewed this with suspicion. They thought that telegraph lines were made to hang Indians and thus provoked the masses who were filled with suspicion and fear. There was also a rumour that with these telegraph lines the white men were going to destroy their indigenous faith and traditions.

The telegraph was one of the most important modern communication systems introduced by the British in India during the nineteenth century. Initially established for military and administrative purposes, it was meant to help the British maintain control over their vast empire. The first experimental telegraph line was set up between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour in 1850, and by 1854, a network connected major cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and Delhi.¹⁴

The British used the telegraph to transmit official orders quickly and to maintain law and order. However, over time, this technology became a means for spreading political awareness.

RAILWAYS

The Britishers soon realised that bullock carts, camels, and packhorses would not be sufficient to supply and carry on the material in Indian market in a large amount. Thus, they built highways, built railroads, and connected key towns and ports with roadways and roads to ease their transportation of raw materials. Railways were developed first, followed by the installation of telegraph and post networks. It helped in aiding Britishers to gain their interests in terms of administration, commerce, and defence.

The first railway line was laid from Bombay to Thane on April 16, 1853. It was started by Governor General Lord Hardinge in order to have better connectivity benefiting their commerce and military control. This was done so that they could easily extract and transfer Indian resources like -Cotton, Indigo etc.¹⁵

The positive impacts of it were better connections, growth of trade and flow of goods, relief during famine. The negative impact of the growth of roads and Railways was that it speeded up Drain of Wealth, the expenditure was hugely incurred from Indian purse and was portrayed that it will help India however the linkages which were developed hugely helped Britishers in their economic benefits.

In fact, remarked G.V. Joshi, expenditure on railways should be seen as Indian subsidy to British industries. Or as Tilak put it, it was like 'decorating another's wife.'¹⁶ These realizations even increased the existing resentment among Indians.

It was a symbol of colonial exploitation which was transformed into a tool of political unity. People from various provinces began to travel, trade, and communicate more easily. This increased interaction led to greater cultural exchange and mutual understanding among Indians. Railways thus helped people realize that they were part of a single nation under the same colonial rule with similar problems and grievances. A huge role was played by the rail in the spread of political movements across India. Leaders and activists used trains to travel across the country, hold meetings, and mobilize support for causes such as Swadeshi Movement, Non- Cooperation movement and Civil- Disobedience Movement.

ECONOMIC CRITIQUE

It was in the first half of 19th century that Indian intellectual thought that the British being advanced in industries and advancement of discoveries will be a boost for India's Economy. However, this disillusionment got over. They noticed that the Britishers were making very slow progress towards benefitting their colony (India) from where they were draining maximum wealth for their prosperity and enrichment. The contemporary educated businessmen and scholars like Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade and Romesh Chandra Dutt also emphasized the act of British drain of wealth through their writing. They understood that Free Trade and Foreign Capital Investment were the mechanisms through which the Britishers were exercising their trade motives.¹⁷

Several steps were thus taken by the learned men; they started organizing intellectual agitations against all the economic policies launched by Britishers. Through these agitations they were learning more and more about the true and deeper motives and essence of the Britishers. The agitation was done in a bold, hard hitting, and colourful language.

Poverty was also understood as a problem related to increasing the productive capacity and energy of the people. In other words, it was viewed as an issue of national development. This way of thinking treated poverty as a major national concern, which brought different regions and sections of society together rather than creating divisions among them.

However, this was recognized by the leaders that it could become a tool for the growth of the national unity. Surendranath Bannerjea's newspaper the Bengalee made the point on 18 January 1902: 'The agitation for political rights may bind the various nationalities of India together for a time...'¹⁸

Despite the intentions of the British, modern capitalist enterprise began to emerge in India during the 1860s. This growth worried British textile manufacturers, who began demanding changes in Indian tariff policies to protect their own interests. A clear example of this was the debate over cotton duties, which were repeatedly altered due to pressure from British capitalists. The exchange ratio between the rupee and foreign currency was also adjusted in ways that harmed Indian industry and foreign trade. These actions showed that whenever British economic interests conflicted with India's economic development, India's interests were sacrificed.

Periodical famines became a regular feature of Indian economic life. During 19th Century 24 famines occurred various parts of India taking an estimated toll of million souls. What is worse is that even during those times of famine, export of foodgrains from India continued.¹⁹

In 1899, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, said that foreign capital was 'a sine qua non to the national advancement' of India.²⁰ However, the early nationalists completely rejected this fact. They took it as an evil that was found to be responsible for the exploitation of resources. Similarly, it has been described in the Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar as 'a system of international depredation'.

DECLINE IN HANDICRAFTS

During the first half of the 19th Century or even upto 1880s India's Economy witnessed a strange phenomenon While Western countries were experiencing industrialization. India suffered a period of industrial decline. This process has been described as 'de- industrialization'. "In fact, remarked G.V. Joshi expenditure on railways should be seen as Indian subsidy to British industries." This rose nationalist sentiments among the common people and the people whose Indigenous occupation was marred.²¹

The main reason for this decline was the introduction of British factory-made goods into India after the Industrial Revolution. Cheap machine-produced textiles from Manchester and Lancashire flooded Indian markets, leading to the destruction of local crafts and industries. The British used India both as a source of raw materials like cotton and as a market for its ready goods.

The British also imposed high taxes and unfair trade practices that favoured British manufacturers. Indian craftsmen were unable to compete with the mass-produced British goods. Moreover, the decline of princely courts and Indian rulers, who were major patrons of art and crafts, further reduced demand for handmade products. Many artisans were forced to shift to agriculture, increasing the pressure on land and contributing to rural poverty et for their finished goods. As a result, Indian artisans and weavers lost their livelihoods.

The destruction of Indian handicrafts not only caused economic loss but also affected India's cultural and social structure. Skilled craftsmanship, which had been a source of pride and identity, gradually disappeared. This exploitation and economic suffering later became one of the causes of political awakening and the rise of Indian nationalism, as people realized the need for economic self-reliance.

Dr. D. R. Gadgil has laid down the important reasons which brought about rapid decline in the Indian handicrafts: The fancy indigenous art and handicrafts were patronized earlier by the courts. However, the disappearance of the courts led to the deprivation of such salaries provided by the rulers. The new rule with Western philosophy and thinking was more interested in patronizing English made products and the new educated class influenced by the British way of thinking preferred the same. The handlooms and village cottage works had now to compete with the highly developed form of machinery industries

However, the period in which different regions faced decline were different in different areas. For example, Rajasthan was opened by railways after 1911, hence decline occurred after that.²²

In conclusion, the decline of Indian handicrafts was not just a result of technological change but a deliberate outcome of colonial economic policies. The British turned a prosperous and self-sufficient economy into a dependent and impoverished one, sowing the seeds of resentment that ultimately fuelled India's struggle for independence

RURALISATION OF ECONOMY

Millions of cottage industries and handlooms were closed and uprooted due to the factory-made goods from Britain and it eventually caused people to lose their jobs and move towards villages for livelihood and thus increasing dependence on agriculture. This was a deliberate action on the part Britishers as they wanted to eradicate the competition.

R. c Dutt has rightly pointed out, "It effectively stamped out many of the national industries of India for the benefits of English manufacturers".²³

Industrial Britain wanted to use India as a source of agricultural raw materials for its industries, but it faced the problem of poor quality and insufficient supply of Indian raw materials. To solve this issue, the British felt that their nationals should be allowed to settle freely in India and invest capital in agriculture. The Charter Act of 1833 removed earlier restrictions on European immigration and land ownership in India. As a result, many British investors came to India and invested money in developing plantation agriculture. Plantations producing Tea, Coffee, Indigo, and Jute expanded rapidly, especially in Assam. The colonial government supported this development by providing facilities and granting large areas of land under the Assam Land Rules, which allowed planters to obtain up to 3000 acres of land as freehold property with very low taxes. However, the tea planters in Assam exploited labourers by recruiting them through force and deception and forcing them to work under harsh conditions. The government also legalized this exploitation through laws such as Act XIII of 1859 and the Indian Immigration Act of 1882, which made the breach of labour contracts a criminal offence and even allowed planters to arrest runaway labourers without a warrant. Thus, the plantation system in colonial India developed with strong government support but relied heavily on the exploitation of Indian workers.

Alice and Daniel Thorners in their book Land and Labour in India have rightly guessed that the major shift from industry to agriculture in India happened between 1815 and 1880. Unfortunately, no statistical record is available before the first census of 1881. R.P. Dutt, after close examination of the census from 1891 to 1921, has calculated the increase in the percentage of the population dependent on agriculture thus:²⁵

YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION DEPENDENT ON AGRICULTRE
1891	61.1%
1901	66.5%
1911	72.2%
1921	73.0%

R.P. Dutt's Examination of growth in rate dependence on population. (B.L Grover, p.203)

The excessive dependence on agriculture created serious imbalances in the Indian economy and caused many problems in the rural sector. As a number of people began to depend on agriculture for their livelihood, it did not lead to a rise in agricultural production. Instead, it resulted in the increasing poverty of the rural population because the land and resources remained limited. Several other factors for example political, economic, and social prevented the modernization and development of the agriculture. These obstacles acted as constant barriers that kept agricultural productivity low. At the same time, the population continued to grow, which increased pressure on agricultural land. Agricultural production remained stagnant while the number of people depending on it kept rising, India frequently experienced famines and widespread poverty during the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century.

However, it was around latter half of 19th Century that commercialisation of the agriculture started. Crops like cotton, jute, groundnuts, oilseeds, sugarcane, tobacco, etc. were more profitable than foodgrains and these fulfil the demand of wider market.

The effect of commercialisation on the Indian process seemed to be harsh. Farmers were forced to grow such cash crops, and they had to sell the crops in huge rush to meet the demand of tax collectors. Even the boom that came in cotton in 1860s led to benefit of the intermediaries while slump in prices in 1866 had the worse effect over the cultivators causing heavy indebtedness, it also caused riots in places in Deccan during 1870s.²⁶

Daniel Thorner rightly speaks of the 1890- 1947 decades a period of agricultural "stagnation".²⁷

Dadabhai Naoroji was the first person who estimated through rough and ready methods during 1867-68 the national income was Rs 20 per annum. "The average was just enough either to feed two men in every three of the population ,or

give them all two in place of three meals they need, on condition that they all consent to go naked, live out of the doors all the year around, have no amusement ,or recreation and want nothing else but food, and the lowest and coarsest and the least nutritious.”²⁸

SOCIAL AWAKENING

According to G.W.F.Hegel ,no reformation is possible without Renaissance. In the eighteenth Century, Europe had gone through a novel enlightening spirit based on rational thinking which brought dynamism in Europe and a scientific outlook in each and every sphere of life political, economic, religious etc. For some time, it appeared to be a complete blow for the Indian minds as they now started having opinion of giving up interest in Hindu religion and traditions. The main change howsoever was brought by the reformers like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Jyotirao Phule, etc....these were certainly stimulated by the Western ideas and values but had refused to separate from the Hinduism. They laid more emphasise upon refining the Hindu religion and society and saw a path of progress by adopting the best of the two beliefs, thinking rationally these reformers laid down motive of rooting out the evil practises prevailing in the Indian society which were responsible for holding back the upliftment of the society. One of the main important things was that they denied the superiority of Western culture and prevented the fading of diversity and richness of the cultures that exist in India. This neo- Hinduism preached that Europe had much to learn from India’s spiritualism.²⁹

Secularization emerged as a new concept, which gave an expansive touch to Indian culture. Thus, the new knowledge and wisdom led towards the scrutinization of the issues that were prevailing in the society and pushing it backwards. Once it was recognised by reformers they courageously stood and formed societies and organizations aiming to eradicate the evils of the society. “In the religious sphere, the reform movements combat religious superstition and attacked idolatry, polytheism, and hereditary priesthood. And in the social sphere, the movement attacked caste system, untouchability, sati and other social and legal inequities.”³⁰

Some of the major movements are:

BRAMHO SAMAJ

It was the earliest movement of its type greatly being inspired from the Western ideas. Founded by Rajaram Mohan Roy who was a well-read man, knowing various languages such as English, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew. Because of the extensive studies which he has done, he became free from the bigotry mindset that characterized Bengali. He was a versatile genius. One of the main motive of his life was religious reform. He proved to be the champion of Hinduism. While he saved the Hinduism from the criticism done by the missionaries, at the same time he also sought to reform many of the practices which were done in Hinduism. He studied Vedas and Upanishads and interpreted them rationally. He started a campaign for the abolition of sati, condemned polygamy and concubinage, denounced casteism, advocated the right of Hindu widows to remarry. He rejected Christianity, denying the divinity of Jesus Christ, but accepted the humanism of Europe. Thus, Raja Ram Mohan Roy sought to affect a cultural synthesis between the East and West.³¹ The belief of Raja Ram Mohan Roy was on the concept of one God. According to him, the God was shapeless, invisible, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He founded the Brahma Sabha in 1828, which was later named as Brahma Samaj. Brahma Samaj opposed idol worship. They did not follow the priesthood. Prayers, meditations and readings from the Upanishads were the ways through which worship was done. It could be understood that Raja Ram Mohan Roy was never trying to establish a new religion. After the death of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Debendranath Tagore was the next to take over the leadership of Brahma Samaj and give the theist movement a definite form and shape. Keshab Chandra Sen became the member of Brahma Samaj in 1858 and was soon appointed by Tagore as the acharya of Brahma Samaj. It was the energy of Keshab Chandra Sen which led to the growth of the branches of Brahma Samaj in various parts of the country, that is UP, Punjab, Bombay, Madras and other towns. Around 54 branches were opened in 1865 in Bengal in itself. However, because of the liberal and cosmopolitan view of Keshab Chandra Sen, there occurred a split in the Samaj. On one hand, Keshab opposed caste differences and promoted inter-caste marriage. On the other hand, it was taken by Devendranath Tagore to be very radical development and therefore he was dismissed from the office of acharya and thereafter he formed a separate body called the Brahma Samaj of India and the Brahma Samaj which was held by Devendranath came to be known as Adi Brahma Samaj. The role which was played by Brahma Samaj was immense. It worked for uplifting the status of women for removing different practices such as sati, purdah system. discouraged child marriages, thus bringing a great revolution in the society.³²

PRARTHANA SAMAJ

In Maharashtra, Prarthana Sabha was founded in 1849. Under the guidance of Keshab, it was in 1867 that Prarthana Samaj got established in Bombay. They believed in the service of God’s children. The methods they adopted were education and persuasion. They focused on the social reforms such as disapproval of caste system, to raise the age limit for the marriage of girls and boys, widow re-marriage, and women education. Mahadev Govind Ranade and R.G. Bhandarkar were some of the prominent leaders.³³

ARYA SAMAJ

Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand who rejected western thoughts and focused on the ancient religion. His motive was the revival of Vedas. He established first Arya Samaj unit in Bombay in 1875. After some years, a headquarter was also established at Lahore. He, most of his life, travelled from one place to another for the propagation of his ideas. His idol was the unification of India based on religion, nationality, and social beliefs. Socially, he wanted religion to be the common religion for all. He wanted a classless and caste-less society. He wanted India to be free from foreign rule. His motto was Go back to Vedas. He was against the practices of idol worship. His work was published, named Satyarth Prakash. He attacked various practices such as idolatry, polytheism, belief in magic, charms, animal sacrifices, feeding the dead through Shraddha, etc. The most important phenomenal effect which was related to our society was social reform and spread of education³⁴

WAHABI MOVEMENT

Wahabi or Waliullah Movement was the first Muslim movement started by Shah Waliullah. He was the first Muslim leader of 18th century. He had deep concern about the degeneration that had set to happen. He was focusing on the departure of the purity of Muslims. He wanted to create brotherhood and harmony among the four schools of Muslim jurisprudence. He preached the philosophy about the belief that One could make his own decisions on the basis of his own judgment and concerns. The original of popularized by Shah Abdul Aziz and Syed Ahmed Bareilvi. The British were elected against the Britishers. However, this was later crushed by the British in 1870s. This playing a nationalistic role in the family against the Britishers. The Britishers were prepared to fight against the British supremacy.³⁵

SIKH MOVEMENT

In the 19th century, Sikh movement also evolved that was known as Singh Sabha movement. It had major two objectives. First, it had wanted to uplift the Sikh community through the Western education and at the same time, countering the proselytizing activities that were held by the Christian missionaries or the Hindu revivalists. They opened many Khalsa schools and colleges throughout Punjab. The Akali movement was a sub-part of the Singh Sabha movement. Its aim was to oppose the Mahant system and to liberate the Gurdwaras from the Mahants. This, however, was tried to be suppressed by the government, but they could not do so. These movements focused on removal of the practices such as sati, child marriage, caste discrimination, purdah system, which helped in modernizing the Indian society and make it more humane and just. Some reformers focused on women's education, widow remarriage, and better social status for women. This helped women to get strengthened and helped in their development and national consciousness, which later on played a key role in promoting them to take active participation in the national movement of India. These movements criticized rigid caste system and helped in eradicating or bridging the deep divisions which were caused due to these beliefs and helped in promoting unity among Indians. These were the movements which helped people come together and work for a common goal, thus helped them to come and fight against social problems. Thus, these movements removed backward practices, promoted equality and rational thinking, and united people. Therefore, they are held to be very much necessary or efficient in promoting integrity and nationalistic feelings. Similarly, some other associations were also established. The Bombay Association was founded in 1852 by Indian businessmen and lawyers like Jagannath Shankar Sheth represented the interest of urban middle class in western India. Petitions were filed to the British Parliament on administrative reforms and equality in the judicial system. Madras Native Association was formed in 1852. These experiences the problems of educated elite in southern India. Although these leaders were restricting their methods to petitions and memorials, these associations created a precedent for organized public opinion.³⁶

Nationalist Organizations (1857–1905): The Precursors of the Indian National Congress

The phase between 1857 to 1905 had a very crucial role in the history of Indian nationalism. This was the time where political awakening and organization happened in India, where the revolt of 1857 shook, the people were exposed to the new Western ideas through the Western education. They now were able to express their demands, political aspirations through organizations and societies. These organizations were mostly formed by the educated Indians. Though in the beginning, their main motive was to perform the constitutional role in moderately preparing their demands and placing in front of the government. However, it later played a very crucial role in shaping the organized national movement. The Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885, was not a sudden event. It was an outcome of great efforts which have been made, nurturing the sense of unity, political awareness, and national identity among Indians. The first important step which was taken in direction of the formation of the organization was British Indian Association, which was formed in 1851 in Calcutta. Though this organization was established before the revolt, its influence extended beyond the revolt and continued after the revolt of 1857. Its main aim was to advocate for the Indian rights. It was formed by leading zamindars and educated Indians such as Radhakant Dev and Devendranath Tagore. Petitions to the British Parliament were sent demanding the inclusion of Indians in the civil services. They demanded for the reduction of land revenue and protection of Indian industries. They tried to reform through loyalty and persuasion rather than confrontation. The methods were moderate, through lawful ways. While its membership was limited to landed elites, the British Indian Association marked the beginning of organized political expression in India.

Associations such as Bombay Association established in 1852 by Indian businessman Jagannath Shankar Seth and Madras Native Association founded in 1852 expressed the grave problems through the educated elite. Although their activities were limited to petitions, memorials, and this, then also the associations played a crucial role in laying a foundation stone for the greater movements in the later phase of national movement of India. During 1860 and 70s, East India Association was founded by Dadabhai Naoroji in London. This caused the Indians to come together to fight against common cause and be sympathetic towards the problems of Indians. East India Association played a crucial role in creating international awareness about the India's plight under colonial rule. The next Sabha was founded by M.G. Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1870. These represented the Marathi-speaking middle class and demanded for administrative economic reforms. Indian Association was formed in 1876 in Calcutta by Surendranath Banerjee and Anand Mohan Bose. The association opposed repressive measures such as Vernacular Press Act and Arms Act, which laid down discrimination against Indians. It also organized Indian National Conference in 1883 and 85, bringing together political workers from different provinces. Later, these conferences got merged with the Indian National Congress. Surendranath Banerjee conducted nationwide tours and lectures, which were responsible for popularizing the nationalist ideas.³⁷

CONCLUSION

Indian National Congress, established in 1885 by Allan Octavian Hume, was the key organization which led the movements leading to independence of India. The combined contribution of moderates and extremists caused the transformation of the Indian situation, and it became the central force of Indian nationalism. It helped in uniting social and regional groups for a common political goal as it provided a platform for dialogue and helped in providing a single entity to them. The early Congress was a foundation of nationalism, while the extremists gave it emotional depth and mass participation.

The achievement of nationalistic struggle was that it created ability to have a sense of belongingness, before this it was more of a geographical expression which eventually turned into having a political identity. It was through the continuous efforts and sacrifice made over such a long period of time which turned out into an emotional homeland.

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