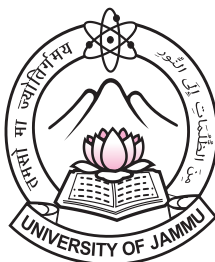


CENTRE FOR DISTANCE & ONLINE EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU
JAMMU



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL
SESSION 2026 ONWARDS
M. A. HISTORY

SEMESTER –I

Unit-I, II, III, IV
Lesson Nos 1-21
Credit : 6

COURSE NO. HIST 103

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<http://www.distanceeducationju.in>

Printed and Published on behalf of the Centre for Distance & Online Education,
University of Jammu, Jammu by the Director, CDOE, University of Jammu, Jammu

Course Title : Nationalist Movement (1885-1919)

Course no. HIST 103

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We duly acknowledge the reference books/web/interest sources from where the material has been taken for the academic benefit of the learner.

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Printed by: A-Won Printers August 2026 / 100 Books

**SYLLABUS FOR THE EXAMINATION TO BE HELD IN THE
YEARS DECEMBER 2026, DECEMBER 2027 AND DECEMBER 2028.**

DETAILED SYLLABUS

COURSE NO. HIST 103

SEMESTER : FIRST

COURSE TITLE : NATIONALIST MOVEMENT (1885-1919).

Credit : 06

Maximum Marks:100

- (a) Major-Test Examination:70
- (b) Minor-I:10
- (c) Minor-II:10
- (d) IAA= 10

Duration of Examination: 3.00 Hours.

Objective : To make students understand the events relating to India's Freedom Struggle till 1919.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Unit-I | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Recent perspectives on the concepts of Nationalism; The Indian uprising of 1857.2. Emergence of the Indian National congress, Early Phase of Congress- Activities Achievements and failure.3. Rise of Extremists. |
| Unit-II | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Partition of Bengal and Swadeshi Movement;2. Rise of Economic Nationalism, Revolutionary Movements;3. Genesis of and Reactions to the Morley-Minto Reforms. |
| Unit-III | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Deoband Movement: Origin, aims, activities and impact;2. Aligarh Movement and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and his relations with Congress;3. Emergence of Muslims League and its role till 1919. |
| Unit-IV | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Montague's Declaration.2. Genesis of and reactions to the Act of 1919;3. Rowlatt Satyagrah and Jallianwalla Bagh. |

SYLLABUS FOR THE EXAMINATION TO BE HELD IN THE YEARS

DECEMBER 2026, 2027 & 2028.

DETAILED SYLLABUS COURSE NO. HIST 103

SEMESTER: FIRST

COURSE TITLE : NATIONALIST MOVEMENT (1885-1919)

NOTE FOR PAPER SETTING FOR MAJOR TEST

- The question paper will be divided into two sections i.e. Section-A and Section-B. It will contain short and long answer type questions.
- **Section-A**, This section will contain four short answer type questions (100 words per question) and will be compulsory. These short answer type questions will be from all the units. Each short answer type question will carry 2.5 marks. 2.5x4=10 marks
- **Section-B**, There will be a total of eight long answer type questions (two questions from each unit with internal choice.) and the candidates will be required to answer one question from each unit. Each long answer type question will carry 15 marks. 4x15=60 marks.

The students shall be continuously evaluated during the conduct of each course on the basis of their performance as follows:-

Theory	Syllabus to be covered in the examination	Time allotted for the examination	Weightage of marks
Minor Test-I	Unit-I and Unit-II	Sixty Minutes	10 marks
Minor Test-II	Unit-III and Unit-IV	Sixty Minutes	10 marks
IAA	Home assignment		10 marks (two questions of 5 marks each)
Major Test	Unit I-IV	Three hours	70 marks

PRESCRIBED READING:

1. Anil Seal: Emergence of Indian Nationalism.
2. S.R Mehrotra: Emergence of Indian National Congress.
3. M.N Dass: Congress versus the British Vol.I.

- 4 Briton Martin: New India 1885.
- 5 P. C. Ghose: Indian National Congress.
- 6 B. B. Misra: Indian Political Parties.
- 7 Pattavi Sitaramayya: History of the Indian National congress Vol.I.
- 8 Daniel Argov: Moderates and Extremists in the Indian National Movement.
- 9 J. N.Vajpai: Extremist Movement in India.
- 10 G. S. Doel: The Gadhar Party and the Indian Nationalist Movement
- 11 D. Rothermond.: Three Phases of Indian Nationalist and other Essays.
- 12 S. R Wasti: Lord Minto and Indian Nationalism.
- 13 M. N. Das: India under Morley and Minto.
- 14 British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Vol.X Part-II (Bhartiya Vidhya Bhawan)
- 15 Faruqi: Deoband Movement and Demand for Pakistan.
- 16 Shan Mohammad: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, a Political Biography
- 17 Ram Gopal: Indian Mussalmans-A Political History.

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NATIONALIST MOVEMENT (1885-1919)

SEMESTER-I

UNIT-I

COURSE NO. HIST 103

LESSON 1

RECENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM

STRUCTURE

- 1.0 Learning objectives and outcomes**
- 1.1 Introduction**
- 1.2 Renewed Focus on Reinventing the Nation and National Identity.**
- 1.3 Consensus among Historians on the Definition of Nation**
 - 1.3.1 Emergence of the Concept of Nation**
- 1.4 Pre-Colonial History of State Formation**
- 1.5 Diverse Observation of Historians**
- 1.6 Reassessments in Contemporary Historiography**
 - 1.6.1 In what ways Indian nationalism could claim its difference from the Western model.**
- 1.7 Spiritual Visualizing of Nation: Iconography of Bharat Mata**
- 1.8 An Alternative Model of Nationalism: Different from Europe**
 - 1.8.1 Two Critical Questions**
- 1.9 Pre-Colonial Roots of Indian Nationality**
- 1.10 Dissident Voices**
- 1.11 Let us sum up**
- 1.12 Glossary**
- 1.13 Examination oriented questions**
- 1.14 Lesson End Exercises**
- 1.15 Answer key**

1.16 Suggested Readings

1.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to-

- understand the contested nature of the concept of nationalism
- discuss the emergence of the concept of Nation
- examine how Indian nationalism is different from western nationalism
- understand the civilizational concept of the nation.
- study the ideas developed by Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru on the concept of the nation.

Learning Outcomes

After going through the lesson, you will have a clear understanding of

- assessment of the resurgence of nationalism in contemporary politics
- nationalism as dynamic ideology.
- an interdisciplinary perspective on cultural and social identity.
- the alternative model of nationalism adopted by India.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learner, in this age of globalization, recent debates over nation and national identity reveal the inner contradictions of present-day nation-states. Anthony D. Smith in his work *Theories of Nationalism: Alternative Models of Nation Formation* have defined populations possessing a historic similarity, shared myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members, which are legitimized by the principles of nationalism’.

Anthony D. Smith further observes that in the post-colonial context, the project of nation formation becomes considerably more complex, as ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversities are deeply entrenched and historically sedimented. Under such conditions, the pursuit of “congruence” between political and cultural boundaries may prove not only impracticable but also counterproductive if pursued with excessive rigidity. It can exacerbate social cleavages and generate new forms of exclusion rather than fostering cohesion. Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore alternative conceptual frameworks of the nation that move beyond homogenizing imperatives and instead accommodate plurality, layered identities, and negotiated forms of belonging.

1.2 RENEWED FOCUS ON REINVENTING THE NATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY.

In the contemporary era, the notion of fixed national boundaries has become increasingly blurred, as the intensified

mobility of consumer goods and labour across borders has facilitated transnational flows that tend to homogenize patterns of consumption while simultaneously reconfiguring the ethnic composition of national communities. In this context of globalization, there has emerged a renewed, albeit contested, emphasis on rearticulating the “congruence” between the nation, and national identity.

However, the historical trajectories of postcolonial societies are more productively understood when one abandons the futile pursuit of an artificially constructed “congruence.” Instead, analytical attention should be directed toward the contingent, negotiated, and plural forms of identity and belonging that more accurately reflect the complex and heterogeneous character of these societies.

Nationalism, indicating that different readings of the history of India can suggest a number of alternative ways of conceptualizing the nation. However, these alternative possibilities were lost in the modernist project of the western-educated elites of colonial India who were more attracted to the nation-state model of the West.

1.3 CONSENSUS AMONG HISTORIANS ON THE DEFINITION OF NATION

Now that nation is a collective mental construct, it is not something naturally given. Benedict Anderson has given us a powerful definition of nation by calling it an ‘imagined political community’ living in a ‘homogenous empty time’. It is constructed through the influence of print capitalism, that is newspapers and novels, and by such other politico-cultural apparatus of modernity as census, maps, and museums.’

Eric Hobsbawm and Anderson, and others have connected the history of nationalism with that of modernity. Nationalism is now widely recognized as a ‘modern’ phenomenon, inspired by Enlightenment and Romanticism, developed in an economic environment enriched by industrial capitalism. It was the product of particular historical processes in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which led to the transformation of the absolutist dynastic empires into democratic nation-states.

1.3.1 Emergence of the Concept of Nation

Nations and nationalism in Europe thus came to be integrally associated with the notions of absolute sovereignty and fixed territorial boundary. This post-Enlightened European modernity travelled to Asia and Africa through the pathways of empires. But these elements of nation were not able to fit in Asian and African colonies as their pre-existing lines of ethnic, racial or religious community. Thus, process of nation building started here. Afro-Asian nationalism was born essentially through anti-colonial resistance movements. But there were problems in imagining nations in these regions, as their own histories differed from those of the European empires.

First of all, Pre-colonial India contained varied groups of people. In the British Indian Empire, for example, there were diverse languages and castes and two major religious groups, the Hindus and the Muslims, besides a host of other minor religions. Other colonies of British like Burma or Malaya, Dutch East Indies or French Indonesia had equally diverse populations.

1.4 PRE-COLONIAL HISTORY OF STATE FORMATION

If we look at the pre-colonial history of state formation in these regions, what we find is that unlike Europe, sovereignty was not conceptualized as centralized absolute power. It was always shared with the periphery. In the Mughal Empire, the Emperor negotiated and shared his power with the regional polities. Sugata Bose has recently argued that pre-colonial India had loose political structures with layered and shared sovereignty with lower-level leaders. Hence, they envisioned incorporation, not subordination of lesser sovereigns.

In such a political system, it was difficult to imagine firm territorial boundaries of states drawn across the maps. There were of course maps in pre-colonial Asia, but the political boundaries were fuzzy and porous and ever changing. Irfan Habib, the modern cartographer of Mughal India, admits that the administrative and political boundaries of the Mughal Empire were altered so frequently that it gives 'a false picture of exactitude', and therefore, it was hard for peoples to think of themselves as territorially fixed populations which could become core groups for imagining modern nations.

1.5 DIVERSE OBSERVATION OF HISTORIANS

As for India, Valentine Chirol believed that India was a 'mere geographical expression. It was, as Chirol wrote in 1910; inhabited by a great variety of nations and there were far more absolutely distinct languages spoken. Further, racial differences between the Maratha and the Bengalee ... and that caste has deeper cleavage. Some of the early Indian nationalists, like Surendranath Banerjee described India as 'a nation in making' This 'making' process, as Benedict Anderson would suggest, was facilitated by the colonial regime, which brought to the colony Western education and print capitalism and created an intelligentsia who had been crucial to the process of imagining a nation. In this process they were helped by several institutions of the colonial state. The colonial cartographers drew their territorial boundaries; the census operations counted them, transforming the 'fuzzy communities' into 'enumerated communities and the colonial museums reinvented their antiquities. Benedict Anderson formulated his theory of western influences behind Asian nationalisms in his 1983 work.

1.6 REASSESSMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORIOGRAPHY

Many historians of Indian nationalism had been writing in this same vein has considerably contested the subject. Partha Chatterjee in his 1993 book observed with sarcasm that if the West has done everything- like our colonial subjection, imagined our anti-colonial resistance, and designed our postcolonial misery, then what was left for us to do?

1.6.1 In what ways Indian nationalism could claim its difference from the Western model ?

In India the working classes did not internalize the ethos of capitalism and the peasants, even when they participated in nationalist events, had very different understandings of those events derived from their dissimilar life experiences. Politics here does not mean the same thing to all people. In a situation like this where the vast majority of the population were so unevenly touched by modernity, hence as envisaged by Anderson or before him by Ernest Gellner, the education and print capitalism did not play the same role in nation building.

How did it differ from Anderson's modern rational process of imagination? Secondly, how did this Indian concept of nation relate to fixed territorial boundary and absolute sovereignty- the main plank of western nationalism

Partha Chatterjee has sought to answer it by dividing the nation's space into two parts -an inner spiritual space and the outer public space. In the inner space colonized nation seeks its sovereignty in spite of subjugation but in the outer public space it surrenders to Western modular influences.

As another postcolonial historian Dipesh Chakrabarty argues, "Nation is thus spiritually experienced in this inner sphere, rather than mentally or rationally imagined." According to these historians, it was through such modes of spiritual imagination that Indian nationalism could permeate across various levels of popular consciousness.

1.7 SPIRITUAL VISUALIZING OF NATION:ICONOGRAPHY OF BHARAT MATA

This can be illustrated by looking at the nationalist iconography of Bharat Mata or Mother India. Perhaps the first time the idea of Bharat Mata appeared in the public space was through the performance of a play at the Hindu Mela on 19 February 1873, by a group involving Jyotirindra Nath and Satyendra Nath Tagore, Kiran Chandra Banerjee, and Sisir Kumar Ghosh.

Then in 1882 Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in his Bengali novel *Ananda math* more directly introduced the powerful imagery of the mother goddess into the discourse of nationalism. He wrote a song 'Hail Mother' (*Bande mataram*) that eventually became the anthem of Indian nationalism. The nationalists in the first decade of the twentieth century extensively used this imagery of mother goddess in both these two forms for appealing to the masses. Further, in 1905 Abanindranath Tagore, the illustrious nephew of Rabindranath Tagore, drew the famous water colour image entitled 'Bharat Mata', thus introducing a new form of mother goddess now expressly representing the motherland.

In the subsequent years this image of Bharat Mata was represented in multiple forms, but most importantly, she was inserted into a map of India, thus explicitly connecting her to the territory and thus transforming as Sumathi Ramaswamy has argued, the cartographic space of India, into a sacred geo-body of the nation. Her devotees were now expected to give their lives for her protection. In the subsequent years these images were reproduced in millions in various art forms, and almost in all regional language songs were written in her praise.

In India a significant amount of literature has been produced on this nationalist icon. Tanika Sarkar has called Bharat Mata a 'cultural artefact' of nationalism. In Tagore's representation -mother appears to be more vulnerable—she is no longer the protector but requires protection by her patriotic sons.

For Dipesh Chakrabarty, this spiritual visualizing of nation is different from the rational or 'mentalist' process of imagination that Anderson speaks of. This iconic representation of nation bridged the gulf between the literate elites and illiterate masses in a way that no print capitalism could ever achieve.

Check your progress (CYP)-I

Q 1 What do you understand by the cultural artifacts of nationalism?

Q 2 What do you understand by spiritual visualization of a nation?

1.8 AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF NATIONALISM:DIFFERENT FROM EUROPE

The cradle for an Indian civilization that flourished over centuries. In 1931 the ‘national flag’, the most modern symbol of national sovereignty, challenged the legitimacy of the Union Jack.

Indian nation’s broad universalist concept was spelled out more clearly in the early twentieth-century in writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru who offered an alternative model of nationalism and nationhood. In the poem Geetanjali, he described India as a civilization—a meeting ground for various kinds of humanity—rather than simply a country or a territorial unit. In another seminal essay called ‘History of India’, written in 1902, he argued that India had been subjected to a series of foreign invasions by Greeks, Scythians, Parthians, Shakas, Hunas, Arabs, Persians, Afghans, and Mongols. But many of the foreign invaders eventually embraced this land and in course of time were themselves ‘Indianized’ and left their mark on Indian art and culture and further enriched its immense diversity. It was in this assimilative power of Indian civilization that India could claim her difference from Europe. Here the idea of ‘India’ developed more as an inclusive civilizational community, rather than as a political-territorial state.

Indeed, the whole of India was never politically unified until the late seventeenth century as the various regional groups continued to maintain their political autonomy, local patriotism and continuously fought with each other. Tagore argued that it was in this assimilative spirit the true essence of Indianness and national identity was to be found. This essence could not be rationally defined or described.

Mahatma Gandhi was also developing the idea of a civilizational nation in Hind Swaraj (1909) in response to the question ‘Who is the nation?’ Gandhi wrote: ‘It is only those Indians ... who conscientiously believe that Indian civilisation is the best’.

This civilization flourished in a geographical space that was linguistically differentiated. But we learned each other's language, he argued, and visited each other's regions as pilgrims and this civilization was not exclusive, as he went further: "The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation, they merged in it." In this sense Tagore's and Gandhi's concept of nation was certainly different, because here the core of the nation was civilization. Ashis Nandy has therefore described them as 'counter-modernist critic(s)' of the imperial West, who offered an alternative model of nationalism and nationhood. However, both Tagore and Gandhi never rejected modernity as a package, but made a case for an alternative modernity, which would be modern but not Western. Both suggested alternative ways to conceptualize it outside the political exclusivity of territorial states.

Nandy is however right when he asserts that the educated Indian middle classes and their party, the Indian National Congress, did not accept Tagore and Gandhi's universalist concept of nationhood, and adopted instead the narrower western political model of nation-state.

1.8.1 Two Critical Questions

However, this civilizational concept of nation also raises two uncomfortable questions, one about the antiquity of the putative nation, and the other about the limits of the assimilative power of this civilization.

However, one may argue that what Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru were looking for in the past was not a modern territorial nation, but a pre-modern civilizational core that could transform itself into nationhood. Moreover, in 1999, Anthony Smith who published a new book *Myths and Memories of the Nation* which explored what he called 'the pre-modern bases of nationhood in the earlier manifestations of ethnic community'.

1.9 PRE-COLONIAL ROOTS OF INDIAN NATIONALITY

A new set of books came out in India questioning the modernity of the Indian nation and trying to trace the pre-colonial roots of Indian nationality. The discussion on the 'pre-history' of Indian nationalism was initiated by C.A. Bayly in his 1998 book, where he argued that "nationalism in India was not a derivative discourse from the West, but rather it was built on a pre-existing sense of territoriality, a traditional patriotism rationalized by indigenous ideas of public morality and ethical government." This thread of discussion has been further developed in two recent books; Rajat K. Ray's *The Felt Community: Commonality and Mentality before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (2003) and Irfan Habib (ed.), *India—Studies in the History of an Idea* (2004), reveals the process by which this civilization effected its transition to nationhood. An important watershed in this process of transition was the revolt of 1857, when the rebels constantly referred to the people of India as the 'Hindus and Mussulmans of Hindustan'.

This was not a modern post-Enlightenment concept of nationalism, Ray agrees. but in it he sees the inchoate ideas of a confederate nation. In his own words, 'It signified a confederation of two separate peoples bound together as one political unit by the shared perception of Hindustan as one land'. In this idea of confederate nation Indian nationalism could also claim its difference.

David Lelyveld has shown, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan visualized India as a confederate nation of *Quam*’or communities based on common descent, where entitlements and rights would be determined by community identity rather than by the western notion of individual citizenship. He conceptualized the idea of a confederate nation as a political arrangement envisaging a union of two distinct peoples, bound within a single political framework by their shared perception of common territorial and civilizational space. Furthermore, in his 1930 address, Iqbal did not articulate a demand for a separate sovereign nation-state for Muslims, nor did he explicitly advocate the partition of India; rather, he sought the recognition of a confederated political structure that would accommodate the distinctiveness of Muslim identity within a broader unified polity.

From 1922 onwards, the Indian National Congress increasingly and unequivocally adopted a Western conception of nationhood grounded in the principle of individual citizenship. Within this framework, the primary objective of nationalist politics was the attainment of sovereignty for a unified Indian nation-state. This model further presupposed the articulation of a singular, cohesive national voice, which was deemed essential for conferring legitimacy upon the emergent state. Consequently, alternative and heterogeneous expressions of identity—such as those accommodated within civilizational or confederate conceptions of the nation—were progressively marginalized and rendered politically illegitimate.

1.10 DISSIDENT VOICES

Dissident trends—such as the separatist tendencies within sections of Muslim politics after 1937, and the assertions of the so-called “Untouchables” or Dalits; the rise of regional and linguistic mobilizations in South India—posed significant challenges to the dominant nationalist discourse.

In this context, the Dalit leader B. R. Ambedkar, in his incisive 1936 treatise ‘Annihilation of Caste’, fundamentally interrogated the purported inclusivity of Indian civilization. He argued that, historically, its foundational principle rested upon caste-based exclusion, institutionalized through the framework of *varnashrama dharma*, which relegated millions of Untouchables to the position of social outcasts within their own society.

Both Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi acknowledged untouchability as a profound blemish on Indian civilization that required urgent eradication. However, they interpreted it as a social aberration or distortion rather than as a foundational feature of the civilizational order. In contrast, B. R. Ambedkar rejected such reformist interpretations, characterizing them as attempts to obscure the structural realities of caste oppression and to defer the question of substantive empowerment of the Dalits.

In his forceful 1945 work, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, Ambedkar advanced a trenchant critique of the nationalist leadership. While he did not oppose the idea of *swaraj* or self-rule, he foregrounded the crucial question of representation and participation, asking pointedly: “Tell me what share I am to have in the Swaraj.” Thus, his critique did not entail a rejection of Indian nationhood or a demand for a separate sovereign state for the Dalits; rather, it was centred on securing their rights as equal citizens and redefining their position within the emergent power structures of the modern Indian nation-state.

Parallel concerns were also articulated by non-Brahman movements in Western and Southern India, which

advanced a critical reinterpretation of Indian civilization as predominantly reflective of a Brahmanical cultural order rooted in North India. From this perspective, the historical expansion of this cultural framework into the South was viewed as a process of domination that subordinated indigenous Dravidian traditions and marginalized the Tamil language. However, despite the radical rhetoric occasionally associated with the *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam*, Tamil separatism did not consistently articulate a concrete demand for an independent sovereign state. Rather, its central political claim was the recognition and accommodation of distinct linguistic and cultural identities within the broader “nation-space.”

Taken together with other dissenting strands, these perspectives underscore the plurality of voices that characterized the Indian nationalist movement. Such diversity renders the application of a standard, homogenizing modern definition of the nation analytically inadequate.

Check your progress (CYP)- II

Q I. What do you know about the pre-colonial roots of Indian nationalism?

Q 2. Examine the civilizational concept of the nation.

1.11 LET US SUM UP

This brings us back to the foundational question with which we began. In a society marked by profound linguistic diversity, widespread illiteracy among a predominantly agrarian population, and the limited reach of print capitalism as an effective medium of ideological transmission, the homogenization of an elite conception of the nation posed significant challenges. Under such conditions, the dissemination of a unified nationalist discourse remained necessarily uneven and mediated.

So, we need to conceptualize nation in a different way—as a nation with many voices. This allows us to recognize the multiple voices of a nation. This recognition will not endanger the state as Gyan Pandey has argued, to talk about the fragments is not to advocate the fragmentation of India. Not all of these voices articulate claims to

separate sovereignty rather they seek recognition, accommodation, and equitable representation within the framework of the broader nation-state. In other words, instead of search in for a homogenous nation or its underlying unity, we should celebrate its diversity.

1.12 GLOSSARY

Fragments - Broken pieces

Metaphoric - relating to metaphor

Cultural artefacts - object, idea, or practice that reflects culture and tradition

Shared sovereignty - power distributed among different individuals

1.13 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. In what ways Indian nationalism could claim its difference from the Western model.?

Q 2. Throw light on the assimilative power of Indian civilization

Fill in the blanks

1. Imagined Political community was written by_____

2. _____ in his work *Annihilation of Caste*, questioned the very inclusive nature of Indian civilization.

1.14 LESSONS END EXERCISES

Q 1. What do you understand by the idea of a Confederate nation?

Q 2. Who were the Indian dissident voices?

1.15 ANSWER KEY

CYP-II.

Q1 See Section 1.7

Q 2 See Section 1.7

CYP II

Q1. See Section 1.8

Q2. See Section 1.8

1.16 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Shekhar Bandyopadhyay (ed.); *National Movement: A Reader*; Routledge, London/New York, 2008.
- Benedict Anderson; *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*; Verso, London, 1983 (revised editions 1991, 2006).
- Anthony D. Smith; *Nations and Nationalism*; Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.

INDIAN UPRISING OF 1857, NATURE AND PERSPECTIVES

STRUCTURE

- 2.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 2.1 Introduction**
- 2.2 Indian Uprising of 1857**
 - 2.2.1 Causes of the Revolt of 1857**
 - 2.2.2 Impact**
 - 2.2.3 Causes of failure of 1857 Revolt**
- 2.3 Nature and Perspectives**
- 2.4 Let us sum up**
- 2.5 Glossary**
- 2.6 Self-Assessment Questions/Examination Oriented Questions**
- 2.7 Lesson End Exercises**
- 2.8 Answer Key**
- 2.9 Suggested Readings**

2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Learning Objectives

Dear learners, the objective of this lesson is to enable you to:

- Understand the major causes of the Revolt of 1857.
- Analyze the political, economic, social, religious, and military factors behind the uprising.
- Examine the role of different sections of society in the revolt.
- Interpret the nature and significance of the Revolt of 1857.

Learning Outcomes

Dear learners, after going through this lesson, you will have a clear understanding about:

- The complex and multi-dimensional nature of the revolt.
- The role played by rulers, sepoys, peasants, and common people.
- The importance of the revolt as an early expression of resistance against British rule.
- Different interpretations and debates regarding the Revolt of 1857

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, the Revolt of 1857 was a landmark event in Indian history, marking the first large-scale challenge to British authority. Its nature has been widely debated by historians because it cannot be confined to a single definition. What began as a revolt of sepoys soon spread to involve rulers, peasants, and common people in many regions, especially in northern and central India. Therefore, it had multiple dimensions—military, political, social, and even national—making it a complex and significant uprising against the rule of the British East India Company. Let us discuss in detail.

2.2 INDIAN UPRISING OF 1857

Dear learners, the Revolt of 1857, often termed the First War of Indian Independence or the Sepoy Mutiny, was a pivotal turning point in the history of the Indian subcontinent. The Revolt of 1857 stands as a watershed moment in the history of modern India, marking the first major organized challenge to the authority of the British East India Company. While it began as a military mutiny, it rapidly evolved into a widespread popular uprising that united diverse social groups—from disenfranchised royals to disgruntled peasants—under a common cause. It represented the first large-scale, organized resistance against the British East India Company's rule, shaking the foundations of colonial administration.

First of all, the Revolt was sparked off on March 29, 1857 when a section of Indian soldiers mutinied at Barrackpore and Berhampur in Bengal. This initial act of defiance was led by a Brahmin soldier Mangal Pandey, a sepoy of the 34th Native Infantry. Mangal Pandey's refusal to use the controversial greased cartridges and his attack on two British officers, which led to their deaths, made him one of the earliest martyrs of the Indian freedom struggle. Although he was executed on April 8, 1857, his sacrifice ignited a spirit of resistance and became a rallying cry for soldiers across northern India. The incident at Barrackpore was quickly suppressed, but it set the stage for a much larger uprising, which finally erupted on May 10, 1857, at Meerut, where Indian soldiers rose in open defiance against British authority.

The main centres of the Mutiny were Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Rohilkhand, Central India and Bundelkhand.

Key Leaders of the 1857 Revolt

Region	Leader(s)	British Officer who Suppressed the Revolt
Delhi	Bahadur Shah II Zafar ad Bakht Khan	John Nicholson, Hudson
Kanpur	Nana Sahib, Tatya Tope, and Azimullah Khan	Colin Campbell
Lucknow	Begum Hazrat Mahal	Colin Campbell
Jhansi	Rani Laxmibai	Hugh Rose
Arrah/Jagdishpur (Bihar)	Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh	William Taylor and Vincent Eyre
Bareilly	Khan Bahadur Khan	Colin Campbell
Faizabad	Maulvi Ahmadullah	Colin Campbell
Allahabad & Banaras	Liaquat Ali	Colonel Onslow / James Neill
Gwalior	Tatya Tope	Hugh Rose

Check Your Progress (CYP) I

I. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. Where did the Revolt of 1857 first start?

Q2. Who was the Mughal ruler during the Revolt of 1857?

Q3. Who was the leader of the revolt in Kanpur?

Q4. Who was Mangal Pandey?

Fill in the blanks

- a. Nana Sahib led the revolt in _____.
- b. Kunwar Singh led the revolt in _____.
- c. The revolt at Bareilly was led by _____.
- d. Tatya Tope was an important leader associated with _____.

2.2.1 Causes of the Revolt of 1857

The Revolt of 1857 was not a sudden event but the result of **long-standing grievances** against British rule. These discontented feelings had developed over nearly a century, beginning from the Battle of Plassey (1757). Continuous political, economic, and social exploitation created widespread resentment, which finally erupted in the uprising sparked by the incident involving the sepoy Mangal Pandey. Thus, the Revolt of 1857 was not the result of a single cause, but a culmination of political, economic, social, religious, and military factors that united diverse sections of Indian society against British rule.

A. Political Causes

- **British Territorial Expansion:** After the decisive Battle of Plassey, the British East India Company steadily extended its control through a series of wars and annexations. Powerful Indian states such as the Maratha Confederacy, Punjab under the Sikhs, regions of the Deccan, and the kingdom of Mysore were brought under British dominance. These conquests not only destroyed the political independence of Indian rulers but also displaced many princes, nobles, and soldiers who lost their positions, privileges, and sources of livelihood. As a result, a strong feeling of resentment developed, especially in northern and central India, where many of these dispossessed rulers and their supporters later became active participants in the uprising against British rule.

- **Subsidiary Alliance system:** Under this system introduced by Lord Wellesley, the then Governor-General of India, Indian rulers had to accept British protection and keep a **British army (subsidiary force)** in their territory. Its **main features were:**
- The ruler had to maintain a British force and **pay for its expenses**
- The ruler could not **form alliances or declare war** without British permission
- A **British Resident** was placed at the ruler's court
- The ruler had to **dismiss his own army** or reduce it
- In case of non-payment, part of the ruler's territory could be taken

Several Indian states accepted the Subsidiary Alliance at different times:

- Hyderabad – **1798**
- Mysore – **1799**
- Tanjore – **1799**
- Oudh – **1801**
- Peshwa Baji Rao II (Poona/Maratha state) – **1802** (Treaty of Bassein)

These alliances gradually reduced the independence of Indian rulers and strengthened British control over India.

- **Doctrine of Lapse:** The Doctrine of Lapse was introduced by Lord Dalhousie during his tenure as Governor-General (1848–1856). According to this doctrine, if an Indian ruler died **without a natural (biological) heir**, his kingdom would **"lapse" (pass)** to the British. Some important states annexed under this policy were:
- Satara (1848)
- Jaitpur (1849)
- Sambalpur (1849)
- Baghat (1850)
- Udaipur (1852)
- Jhansi (1854)
- Nagpur (1854)
- **Annexation of Oudh:** The British, under Lord Dalhousie, annexed Oudh on the grounds of misgovernance. They accused Wajid Ali Shah, the Nawab of Oudh of failing to administer the state

properly. Wajid Ali Shah, was removed from power and exiled to Calcutta. This action deeply hurt the sentiments of the people.

- **Dishonour of Mughal Dynasty:** The name of the Mughal king was removed from the coins minted by the Company and from seal of the Governor General. In 1849, Governor-General Dalhousie announced that after the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the royal family would have to vacate the Red Fort and Bahadur Shah's descendants would not be recognised as kings - they would just be called princes. This caused widespread dissatisfaction against British rule.
- **Grievances of Indian rulers:** Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, was denied his pension and was pensioned off to **Bithoor (near Kanpur)** by the British East India Company. The Marathas lost their political power and prestige after successive defeats at the hands of the British East India Company, and were further humiliated by constant British interference in their internal administration and matters of succession. Similarly, the titles and privileges of traditional rulers such as the Nawabs of Carnatic and Tanjore were abolished, reducing them to mere pensioners under British control.
- **Disbanding of Pindaris, Thugs and irregular soldiers:** The policy pursued by the British during the past four decades had led to the disbanding of *pindaris*, *thugs* and irregular soldiers who formed the bulk of the native armies. These people had lived mostly on plunders and when deprived of the means of livelihood by the British, they became discontented and turned into anti-social elements, many of whom joined the rebels during the Revolt of 1857, thereby strengthening the uprising.

b. Social and Religious Causes

The social and religious causes of the Revolt of 1857 were among the most sensitive and explosive, as they directly affected the personal lives, traditions, and deeply rooted beliefs of the Indian people. During this period, a growing number of Indians came to believe that the British East India Company was not merely exercising political control but was also intent on transforming their social structure and interfering with their religious practices. This perception created widespread fear that their age-old customs and cultural identity were under threat, leading to deep suspicion and resentment against British rule.

The activities of Christian Missionaries grew significantly under British protection, particularly after the **Charter Act of 1813**, which allowed missionaries to enter India. Missionaries began teaching Christian doctrines in schools, hospitals, and even prisons. Many Indians believed the government was funding these missionaries through tax money to systematically convert the population to Christianity. Christian missionaries criticized Hindu and Islamic practices, opposed customs like caste system and purdah, and ridiculed religious beliefs. The government also imposed taxes on temple and mosque lands, which earlier were tax-free. In **1850**, British passed **The Religious Disabilities Act**, which changed Hindu inheritance rules, allowing a person who converted to another religion (specifically Christianity) to still inherit their ancestral property. Many Indians saw it as an attempt to promote conversion to Christianity and interfere in their religion and traditions, which increased suspicion and resentment against British rule.

The British introduced several legal reforms aimed at “civilizing” Indian society. For instance:

- **Abolition of Sati (1829):** Led by Lord William Bentinck and supported by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the banning of the practice of Sati (widow self-immolation) caused an outcry among conservative sections of society.
- **Widow Remarriage Act (1856):** The legalization of remarriage for Hindu widows was seen as a violation of ancient family traditions.
- **Ban on Female Infanticide:** Laws against the killing of female infants further contributed to the feeling that the British were overstepping their bounds into domestic affairs.

Although many of these reforms were progressive, a large section of Indians felt that the British were **interfering in their religion and traditions**. This created fear, suspicion, and resentment among orthodox Indians and became one of the social causes of the Revolt of 1857.

The introduction of the western (English) Education System by Lord Macaulay was intended to create a class of Indians who were “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste and intellect”. This led to the decline of traditional *pathshalas* (Hindu schools) and *madrasas* (Muslim schools). The Brahmin and Maulvi classes, who were the traditional custodians of education and religion, felt their authority was being systematically eroded.

The British officers often displayed a “White Man’s Burden” complex, treating Indians with open contempt. Indians were excluded from high-ranking government positions and social clubs. Cases of British officers assaulting Indian civilians were common, and the judicial system almost always favoured the British, leading to a deep sense of injustice. In a move that shocked the clergy, the British began collecting land revenue from lands traditionally held by temples and mosques, which had been tax-exempt for centuries.

The British East India Company introduced railways and telegraphs in India. Many Indians did not understand these new technologies and feared they were linked to attempts to change their religion. The people of lower castes were permitted to sit side by side with the upper caste people. This was something intolerable to the upper castes. The telegraph seemed mysterious, and rumours spread that it was used to control or harm Indians. Due to growing distrust of British rule, it was seen as another tool of domination.

Thus, the social and religious factors created an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, and deep resentment among the Indian people. These anxieties, combined with other grievances, played a crucial role in uniting different sections of society and ultimately contributed to the outbreak of the Revolt of 1857.

c. **Economic Causes**

Before British rule, India was famous for its fine textiles (muslin, silk) and metalwork. After the Battle of Plassey, the British East India Company gained decisive control over Indian trade and gradually reshaped it to serve British interests. The British East India Company used surplus revenues from conquered territories to purchase raw materials and goods at very low prices and exported them to England, earning huge profits. As a result, India

was reduced to a supplier of cheap raw materials and a market for British finished products. The introduction of a so-called policy of free trade led to the decline of Indian industries, as British goods entered India with almost no duties, while Indian textiles exported to Britain faced heavy tariffs. This led to the rapid decline of traditional handicrafts, unemployment among artisans and weavers, and the collapse of indigenous industries. This economic pattern supported the Industrial Revolution in Britain while severely damaging Indian handicrafts and traditional industries, and the loss of royal patronage under British rule further worsened the condition of artisans and weavers. They were paid so poorly that survival became difficult. The influx of cheap British machine-made goods further ruined their livelihood. Moreover, the British forced the Indian farmers to grow “cash crops” like indigo, opium, cotton, and tea instead of food grains. This shift made the Indian population highly vulnerable to famines. When the monsoons failed, there were no food reserves, leading to catastrophic loss of life in the mid-19th century. This created widespread economic distress and contributed to the discontent leading to the Revolt of 1857.

The British East India Company introduced land revenue systems such as the Permanent, Ryotwari, and Mahalwari settlements with the primary aim of maximizing revenue, placing a heavy burden on peasants and landlords. Revenue had to be paid in cash and was often fixed at high rates without considering fluctuations in agricultural output. This rigid system ignored natural calamities like droughts and poor harvests, forcing cultivators to meet demands even in times of distress. As a result, harsh revenue policies led to heavy taxation, exploitation by landlords and moneylenders, and pushed peasants into debt, land loss, and extreme misery. Failure to pay land revenue resulted in confiscation of land and growing indebtedness. Frequent famines occurred in India under Britain due to heavy land revenue demands, neglect of agriculture, and lack of relief measures, leading to widespread starvation and loss of life. These exploitative conditions caused widespread suffering among farmers and landholders, generating deep resentment that became a significant factor in the outbreak of the Revolt of 1857.

The selfish economic policies of Britain destroyed India’s village economy, handicrafts, and agriculture, leading to widespread poverty and unemployment, while the drain of wealth and neglect of public welfare reduced India to a poor and underdeveloped country.

d. Military Causes

The military causes of the Revolt of 1857 played a crucial role, as the discontent among Indian sepoys of the British East India Company army had been growing for a long time.

Indian sepoys, despite helping the East India Company build its empire, were subjected to racial discrimination, insults, and disrespect by British officers, which deeply hurt their self-respect and created strong resentment. They faced discrimination in pay, allowances, and promotions, with higher ranks reserved almost entirely for British officers. They were often paid less than their European counterparts and were denied opportunities for advancement despite their experience and service. The **General Service Enlistment Act of 1856** passed during the Governor-General ship of Lord Canning further angered sepoys, in which the newly recruited sepoys were required to give an undertaking to serve anywhere in India or out of India across the sea. This Act was

looked upon with great disfavour by the sepoys, particularly by the high-caste Brahmans of Bengal army who dreaded a sea-voyage on religious grounds. According to another act, the Indian soldiers lost allowances like *bhatta*, forcing them to bear their own expenses and serve far from home without extra benefits, leading to great dissatisfaction. They were also required to pay for the postage expenses from which they had been exempted previously. This lowered their morale and increased resentment.

The East India Company hurt the religious sentiments of sepoys by interfering in their customs—banning *tilak*, forcing Muslims to shave, and making soldiers fear loss of caste through overseas service—while incidents like the Vellore Mutiny and Barrackpore refusal (1824) increased resentment, along with fears of forced conversion to Christianity.

The Afghan war also caused Indian officers to express their disaffection against the British. The Muslims were displeased because they were employed against another Muslim power. The Hindus were offended by living in the foreign country and under conditions which offended the rules of their caste like having food prepared by Muslims or wearing jackets made of sheep skin. Additionally, sepoys often felt that they were being used to fight unnecessary wars that did not concern Indian interests. Also, a large number of Indian soldiers in the British East India Company army came from peasant families of Oudh and the North-Western Provinces and maintained close ties with their villages. As a result, the economic hardships and grievances faced by their families—such as heavy taxation, land loss, and exploitation—deeply affected them, intensifying their discontent and making them more receptive to the uprising of 1857.

The defeats of Britain in the First Anglo-Afghan War and Crimean War broke the belief that the British were unbeatable, encouraging Indian sepoys to revolt.

When England was involved in the Crimean War of 1854-56 against Russia, a large number of European troops were withdrawn from India to serve in the war. As a result, the number of Indian soldiers rose to nearly five times that of the British troops. By 1857, there were around 45,000 European soldiers and about 2,32,000 Indian sepoys serving under the British East India Company. This numerical superiority gave Indian soldiers a sense of strength and confidence, encouraging them to challenge British authority and play a leading role in the outbreak of the Revolt of 1857.

The Immediate Cause: The New Enfield Rifle: The **Enfield Rifle** was a new weapon introduced in the army of the British East India Company before 1857. It used greased cartridges that had to be bitten off before loading. Many Indian sepoys believed that the grease was made from cow and pig fat, which hurt the religious feelings of both Hindus and Muslims. Both Hindu and Muslim sepoys refused to use these greased cartridges. This created fear, anger, and became an immediate cause of the Revolt of 1857. The sepoys were joined by the aggrieved princes and the people who had been wronged at the hands of the British. They all resolved to get rid of the English tyranny and began the people's war of independence or war of Indian freedom.

Check Your Progress (CYP) II

I. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. Why did the General Service Enlistment Act of 1856 create resentment among Indian sepoys?

Q2. Define Subsidiary Alliance System.

Q3. What was Doctrine of Lapse?

Q4. What was the Religious Disabilities Act of 1850?

Fill in the blanks

- a. Mangal Pandey attacked British officers at _____.
- b. The Indian state annexed by the British on the ground of maladministration was _____.
- c. The immediate cause of the revolt was the use of _____.
- d. The first Indian state to enter into the Subsidiary Alliance System was _____.

2.2.2 Impact

The impact of the Revolt of 1857 (also known as the Indian Rebellion of 1857) was far-reaching and marked a turning point in Indian and British history.

- **End of East India Company Rule:** The revolt led to the abolition of the rule of the East India Company. By the Government of India Act of 1858, the administration of India was directly taken over by the British Crown. This marked the beginning of direct British rule in India. India came under direct control of the British monarch, and the Governor-General was now called the Viceroy. Lord Canning became the first Viceroy, representing the Crown.
- **Reorganisation of the Army:** The British reorganized the Indian army to prevent future revolts. The ratio of British to Indian soldiers was increased. In the Bengal Army, the ratio was set at 1:2, while in Madras and Bombay, it was 2:5. Important positions were reserved for British troops. Recruitment policies were also changed, favoring certain communities.
- **Economic Exploitation:** The cost of suppressing the revolt—roughly £40 million—was transferred onto the Indian tax payer. Also, the military and administrative expenses increased, leading to heavier taxation and economic exploitation of Indians. This marked the beginning of a more systematic economic “drain of wealth”, as India was integrated more tightly into the British imperial economy as a source of raw materials and a market for finished goods.
- **Socio-Religious Neutrality:** The Crown issued a proclamation promising non-interference in the religious beliefs and social customs of Indians, largely ending the era of state-sponsored social reforms.
- **Withdrawal of the Doctrine of Lapse:** Under Lord Dalhousie, the Doctrine of Lapse had allowed the British to annex states without a natural heir. After 1858, this policy was withdrawn, and Indian rulers were given the right to adopt heirs, ensuring the continuation of their kingdoms.
- **Recognition of Princely States as Subordinates:** Indian rulers were assured that their territories would not be annexed, and their rights would be respected. British treated them as subordinate allies under British supremacy. These states were expected to remain loyal and support the British administration. The British shifted from annexation to cooperation, using princely states as supportive allies to strengthen and secure their empire in India. This won the support of princes for British rule.
- **Policy of Divide and Rule:** The British began to follow a deliberate policy of dividing Indians on the basis of caste, religion, and region to weaken unity and prevent collective resistance.
- **Rise of Modern Nationalism:** Although the revolt was suppressed, it left a lasting legacy on the Indian psyche. Figures like Rani Lakshmibai, Nana Sahib, and Kunwar Singh became symbols of resistance for later generations of the Indian independence movement. The failure of the traditional armed uprising led Indian intellectuals to realize that modern organizational methods, unified resistance and political

agitation would be necessary to challenge British rule in the future. Thus, it sowed the seeds of nationalism and inspired future movements for independence.

Check Your Progress (CYP) III

I. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. What was the most important political impact of the Revolt of 1857?

Q2. What change was made in the administration of India after 1857?

Q3. How did the Revolt of 1857 change British attitude towards Indians?

Q4. How did the Revolt of 1857 affect the policy towards Indian princes?

2.2.3 Causes of Failure of 1857 Revolt

The Revolt of 1857 began with great intensity and widespread enthusiasm but ultimately ended in complete failure. Some of the important factors responsible for its failure are described as under:-

- **Lack of unity and common purpose:** The rebels were not united. Different groups—sepoys, peasants, *zamindars*, and rulers—had their own interests. There was no single national goal, so the revolt lacked a strong foundation.
- **Absence of central leadership:** There was no effective, unified leadership to guide the movement. Leaders like Bahadur Shah II were symbolic, not powerful organizers. As a result, coordination and planning remained weak.
- **Limited geographical spread:** The revolt was mainly confined to north and central India (Delhi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, and Gwalior). Large parts of South India, Bombay and Madras Presidencies did not join the struggle. Many powerful Indian rulers, including the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Gulab Singh of Kashmir, Bhopal, Kapurthala and the Sikh Princes, actively supported the British or remained neutral.
- **Premature outbreak of revolt:** The revolt began earlier than planned at Meerut on 10 May 1857 instead of the fixed date (31 May). This sudden start disrupted coordination and prevented a well-organized uprising.
- **Military superiority of the British:** The Britain had a well-trained, disciplined, and experienced army. In contrast, the rebels lacked proper military organization and strategy.
- **Lack of modern weapons and resources:** The British had advanced weapons, better ammunition, and strong financial resources, while the rebels mostly depended on outdated arms and limited supplies.
- **Efficient communication and transport:** The British used modern means like railways and telegraph to move troops quickly and share information, helping them suppress the revolt effectively.
- **Control of the Seas:** Because Britain controlled the naval routes, they could easily bring in fresh reinforcements and supplies from Britain and other colonies like Crimea and China.
- **Weak participation of educated and middle classes:** Many educated Indians and merchants did not support the revolt, as they feared instability and preferred British rule for economic reasons.
- **Localised and uncoordinated actions:** Due to poor communication and planning, many revolts were spontaneous and isolated. Leaders in different regions did not act together, reducing the overall strength of the movement.
- **Lack of long-term vision:** The rebels did not have a clear plan for governance after overthrowing British rule. This made the movement less organised and less appealing to many sections of society.
- **Efforts of British officials and Lord Canning:** The English had the advantage of having very capable leaders and tried generals like the Lawrence brothers, Nicholson, Outram, Havelock, Neil and Edwards. They were far superior to the Indian leaders in military and political qualities, and no less heroic than them. All of them had only one aim before them and that was the defence of the British government in

India. They were able to suppress the revolt strategically and skilfully.

The Revolt of 1857 failed mainly due to lack of unity, weak leadership, limited spread, and the superior strength and organisation of the British, making it an uncoordinated and short-lived uprising.

Check Your Progress (CYP) IV

I. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. Write any two major causes of the failure of the Revolt of 1857?

Q2. Why did the Revolt of 1857 lack leadership?

Q3. Why is the absence of a common goal considered a cause of failure?

Q4. How did the superior military strength of the British affect the revolt?

2.3 NATURE AND PERSPECTIVES

The nature of the 1857 Revolt is one of the most debated topics in Indian historiography. Because it involved

such a diverse cross-section of society—from sepoys to peasants and royalty—historians view it through several different lenses.

1. The British Perspective: “Sepoy Mutiny/Military Revolt”.
2. That it was a Radical or Religious War
3. The Nationalist Perspective: “The First War of Independence”.
4. The Marxist Perspective: “A Feudal-Peasant Uprising”.

1. The British Perspective: “Sepoy Mutiny/Military Revolt”.

The primary goal of these historians was to emphasize that the revolt lacked a “national” character and was devoid of popular support. Their arguments usually focused on:

- They maintained that the issue of the greased cartridges (suspected to contain cow and pig fat) was the sole cause, making it a “religious panic” among soldiers rather than a political movement.
- argued there was no central organization or pre-planned conspiracy.
- them, the “civilian” participation in places like Oudh was merely an opportunistic reaction by “lawless elements” rather than a genuine struggle for freedom.

Perspectives of Specific Historians

The scholars you listed each offered a slightly different nuance to this “Mutiny” narrative:

- **Sir John Lawrence:** He famously stated that the revolt was “**nothing more than a sepoy mutiny**” and that its primary cause was the cartridge affair. He believed that if the greased cartridges hadn’t been introduced, the revolt would never have occurred.
- **Sir John Seeley:** He described it as a “**wholly unpatriotic and selfish Sepoy Mutiny with no native leadership and no popular support**”. His view was influential in framing the British narrative for decades, suggesting that India was not yet a “nation” capable of a national revolt.
- **P.E. Roberts:** He viewed the uprising as a military outbreak which was taken advantage of by displaced princes and landlords to settle personal scores.
- **Dr. Alexander Duff:** As a missionary, he often viewed the event through a religious lens, seeing it as a providential challenge to British Christianity in India, though he still categorized it fundamentally as a rebellion of the armed forces

Criticism of this View

While this perspective dominated textbooks for a long time, later historians (both Indian and Western) pointed out its flaws:

- **Ignoring the Peasantry:** It fails to explain why thousands of civilians and peasants in the North-Western

Provinces and Oudh took up arms and stayed in the fight long after the sepoys were defeated.

- **Overlooking Administrative Grievances:** It ignores the deep-seated resentment caused by the Doctrine of Lapse, heavy land revenue, and the destruction of local handicrafts.
- **The Scale of the Response:** If it were a mere mutiny, the British wouldn't have needed to declare martial law over vast territories or engage in such prolonged, brutal warfare to regain control.

2. Second View: A Radical or Religious War

Some European historians have called the revolt, “a war of fanatic religionists against Christians” (L.E.R Rees);

- **For Captain J.G. Medley**, it was “**a war of races**”,
- **For T. R. Holmes** it was “**a conflict between civilization and barbarism**”;
- **For Sir James Outram and W. Taylor** 1857 revolt was “**a Mohammedan conspiracy making capital of Hindu grievances**” etc.

These views characterize the revolt as a religious war or a racial struggle for the supremacy between the Indians and the Europeans, a struggle between the Indian and western civilization, or a Hindu-Muslim conspiracy to overthrow the British rule. However, such views are too simple and inadequate, as they are often based on ideas of racial superiority and fail to explain the true complexity of the revolt. They ignore the many political, economic, social, and military causes behind it, and therefore give an incomplete and unsatisfactory explanation.

3. The Nationalist Perspective: “The First War of Independence”

Some historians regard the Revolt of 1857 as the **first War of Independence** or a **national rising** against British rule. This view was strongly supported by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who described it as a planned and patriotic struggle to free India from foreign domination.

The following arguments have been put forward to support the contention that the Great Rising of 1857 was the first war of independence, and not merely a sepoy mutiny:

- **Wide participation of people:** The revolt was not limited to soldiers. Peasants, artisans, *zamindars*, and common people actively joined in many regions. This broad involvement shows it had the character of a **mass uprising**, not merely a military rebellion.
- **Leadership by Indian rulers:** Many dispossessed rulers and local leaders took part, such as Rani Lakshmibai, Nana Sahib, and Kunwar Singh. The rebels shared a **common objective**—to drive out the British. This unified purpose gives the revolt a national character.
- **Role of Bahadur Shah Zafar as a symbolic leader:** The rebels declared him the emperor of India, which shows an attempt to establish a **central political authority** and unite different regions under one leadership.
- **Hindu–Muslim unity:** People from different religions fought together against a common enemy. This

unity strengthened the idea that the revolt was not sectional but **collective and national in spirit**.

- **Spread over a large area:** The revolt covered many parts of North and Central India—like Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Jhansi, and Bihar—indicating it was not a localized mutiny but a **widespread uprising**.
- **Nationalist interpretation by historians:** Historians like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar described it as the **First War of Independence**, emphasizing its patriotic and anti-colonial nature.

Criticism of the View: “War of Independence”

The idea that the Revolt of 1857 was the *first War of Independence* has been criticized on several grounds:

- **Lack of national unity:** The revolt was not supported by all parts of India. Many regions like Punjab, Bengal, and South India remained largely unaffected or even loyal to the British. This weakens the claim of it being a truly **national movement**.
- **Limited participation:** Although many groups joined, large sections of society—such as educated Indians, merchants, and some rulers—did not participate. Some even supported the British, showing that it was **not a united mass uprising**.
- **Absence of a clear national goal:** The rebels did not have a well-defined idea of a modern nation-state. Many leaders, like Nana Sahib and Rani Lakshmibai, were mainly fighting to **restore their own lost power**, not to establish a unified independent India.
- **No central leadership or coordination:** There was no single, strong leadership guiding the revolt. Even though Bahadur Shah Zafar was declared the emperor, he had little real control over the rebels. This lack of coordination made the movement fragmented.
- **Different and conflicting interests:** Various groups had different motives—sepoys had military grievances, peasants had economic issues, and rulers wanted political restoration. This diversity of aims meant there was **no common national programme**.
- **Not modern nationalism:** The concept of nationalism, as understood today, was not fully developed in 1857. The revolt lacked the ideological unity and political vision seen in later movements like the Indian National Movement.

These arguments suggest that the Revolt of 1857 had features of a **national struggle against foreign rule**. Although it lacked modern organization and unity, it was more than a sepoy mutiny and can be seen as an **early attempt at India’s independence**

4. The Marxist Perspective: “A Feudal-Peasant Uprising”

The statement is **only partly correct**. The Revolt of 1857 did include feudal unrest because many rulers like Rani Lakshmibai and Nana Sahib joined to regain their lost kingdoms and privileges. This shows a **feudal reaction** against British policies. But it was **not just feudal**. peasants, soldiers, and common people also

participated due to heavy taxes, economic problems, and dissatisfaction with British rule. In many areas, it became a **mass uprising**.

It can be said that the Revolt of 1857 was not merely feudal unrest; it was a **combined revolt of rulers, soldiers, and common people** against British rule with elements of nationalism, making its nature **complex and multi-dimensional**.

Check Your Progress (CYP) V

I. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. What is meant by the nature of the Revolt of 1857?

Q2. Why is the Revolt of 1857 called the First War of Independence?

Q3. How was the Revolt of 1857 a military uprising?

Q4. Was the Revolt of 1857 a unified movement? Give a reason.

Fill in the Blanks

- a. _____ called the Revolt of 1857 the First War of Independence.
- b. J.G. Medley described the Revolt of 1857 as a _____.
- c. The Marxist perspective describes the Revolt of 1857 as a _____.
- d. The British perspective describes the Revolt of 1857 as a _____.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

Dear learners, the Revolt of 1857 was the result of combined political, economic, social, religious, and military grievances under the rule of the British East India Company. Though it began as a sepoy mutiny, it soon turned into a wider uprising involving different sections of society. It changed the character of British rule marking the end of the rule of the East India Company and bringing British India directly under the British crown. The **nature of the** Revolt of 1857 has been widely debated by historians. It had **multiple dimensions**, and cannot be explained by a single viewpoint. Though it did not succeed in ending British rule, it transformed the nature of governance in India and laid the foundation for the growth of Indian nationalism in the years to come.

2.5 GLOSSARY

Zamindar: refers to a landholder in India during the Mughal and British periods who collected land revenue from peasants and paid a fixed amount to the government, often acting as an intermediary between the ruler and the cultivators.

Bhatta: was an **additional allowance or cash payment** given to Indian sepoys in the British army, especially when they were posted on campaigns or outside their home regions.

Pindaris: were irregular, mercenary bands in early 19th-century India who plundered villages and territories, often accompanying or operating alongside Indian armies but without formal allegiance to any ruler.

Thugs: were secret bands of robbers and murderers in India who strangled travellers and plundered them, and were later suppressed by the British in the 19th century.

Tilak: refers to a traditional mark made on the forehead in Hindu culture, symbolizing religious identity, devotion, or auspiciousness.

Pathshalas: Hindu schools.

Madrasas: Muslim schools.

2.6 Self-Assessment Questions/ Examination Oriented Questions

- Q1. Discuss the political, social and religious, administrative, economic and military causes of the Great Revolt of 1857.

Q2. Discuss the causes responsible for the failure of the revolt of 1857.

Q3. Discuss the nature of the Great Revolt of 1857.

Q4. Discuss the impact of Revolt of 1857.

2.7 LESSON END EXERCISES

Q1. Analyze the role of different sections of Indian society—rulers, peasants, sepoys, and artisans—in the Revolt of 1857.

Q2. Explain the impact and significance of the Revolt of 1857 on British policies in India.

Q3. Evaluate the reasons for the failure of the Revolt of 1857.

Q4. Critically examine the different interpretations given by historians regarding the Revolt of 1857.

2.8 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

Q1. See Section: 2.2

Q2. See Section: 2.2

Q3. See Section: 2.2

Q4. See Section: 2.2

Fill in the Blanks

a. Kanpur

b. Bihar

c. Khan Bahadur Khan

d. Kanpur

CYP II

Q1. See Sub-Section: 2.2.1

Q2. See Sub-Section: 2.2.1

Q3. See Sub-Section: 2.2.1

Q4. See Sub-Section: 2.2.1

Fill in the blanks

a. Barrackpore

- b. Oudh
- c. Greased cartridges
- d. Hyderabad (1798)**

CYP III

- Q1. See Sub-Section: 2.2.2
- Q2. See Sub-Section: 2.2.2
- Q3. See Sub-Section: 2.2.2
- Q4. See Sub-Section: 2.2.2

CYP IV

- Q1. See Sub-Section: 2.2.3
- Q2. See Sub-Section: 2.2.3
- Q3. See Sub-Section: 2.2.3
- Q4. See Sub-Section: 2.2.3

CYP V

- Q1. See Section: 2.3
- Q2. See Section: 2.3
- Q3. See Section: 2.3
- Q4. See Section: 2.3

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar
- b. war of races**
- c. *feudal-peasant uprising*
- d. *Sepoy Mutiny / Military Revolt*

2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Ishita Banerjee Dube, *A History of Modern India*, Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983.
- Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2004.

**1857 – DEBATE-WHETHER IT WAS-THE FIRST WAR OF INDEPENDENCE
OR MILITARY MUTINY?**

STRUCTURE

- 3.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 3.1 Introduction**
- 3.2 1857 - Divergent perspectives.**
- 3.3 Swadeshi Historiography of 1857.**
- 3.4 Arguments endorsing 1857 as a broad-based popular uprising.**
- 3.5 The Dispute over the Description**
- 3.6 Rivalry between military and civil services, Mallett–Raikes dispute**
- 3.7 Phrase ‘sepoy war’**
- 3.8 Parallel drawn between France and India**
- 3.9 Concept of Peasant in Uniform**
- 3.10 Bukhari Thesis**
- 3.11 True Nature of East India Company**
- 3.12 Let us sum up**
- 3.13 Examination oriented questions**
- 3.14 Lesson end Exercises**
- 3.15 Answer Key**
- 3.16 Suggested Readings**

3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to-

- understand varied interpretations of the upheaval of 1857
- examine the roles of various social groups including soldiers' peasants and rulers.
- develop critical thinking by engaging with competing historical narrative and sources
- assess the debates surrounding the characterization of 1857.

Learning outcomes

- After going through the lesson, you will have a clear understanding about-
- multiple historical frameworks.
- formulation of independent, evidence-based interpretations of the upheaval of 1857.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learner, in this lesson you will learn about the mighty uprising of 1857 which broke out across northern and central India; marked one of the most significant uprisings against the British rule. It was not a sudden eruption, but the outcome of accumulated grievances shared by different sections of society including peasants, artisans, soldiers all of whom were adversely affected by colonial policies

The immediate trigger came with the mutiny of Indian soldiers at Meerut in May 1857, which rapidly spread to other regions. What initially began as a military rebellion soon developed into a widespread agrarian rising and a broader popular upsurge drawing diverse social groups and transforming it in to a major challenge to British authority.

3.2 1857 - DIVERGENT PERSPECTIVES.

There has been a long-standing dispute over the appropriate description of the revolt of 1857. Just after the uprising interpretations especially by the civil and military officials of the British described it merely as mutiny, limiting it to a rebellion of Indian soldiers against their officers. This view was later supported by colonial apologists who sought to downplay its broader social political character. In contrast nationalist historians challenged this interpretation and argued that it was not just a military mutiny but a war of independence.

In the early 20th century radical nationalists strongly contested colonial historiography. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's polemical work *The Indian war of independence*, came out in a charged political atmosphere shaped by rising nationalism and revolutionary activities, described the uprising as the first war of Indian independence, drawing parallels with the American war of independence. Before him works of thinkers like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's *Asbab-e-Bagawat-e-Hind* (cause of the Indian rebellion), Dorabhoj Franjee's *The British rule contrasted with its Predecessors* and *The Mutinies and the People* by Sambhu Chandra Mukherjee had appeared within two years of the upheaval.

However, by the late 19th century alternative perspective began to emerge. Rajanikanta Gupta, writing between 1870 and 1900, *Sipahi Juddher Itihasa* (History of the Sipahi War) published in five volumes offered a view

that differed from British historians and hinted at more complex and wide-spread character of the revolt. This work was based on John William Kaye's *History of the Sepoy War in India* (1864–1876). This shift in interpretation coincided with the changing political climate in India particularly with the rise of national consciousness and emergence of the Indian national congress which encouraged a re-evaluation of the revolt as part of a broader struggle against colonial rule.

3.3 SWADESHI HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE REBELLION.

The swadeshi historiography of the revolt of 1857 marked a decisive shift from colonial interpretations to a nationalist understanding of the event. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar played a pioneering role in its transformation by daring to reinterpret the revolt at a time when such views were politically sensitive. Interestingly, he relied heavily on British sources, but re-read them from nationalist perspectives, thereby inaugurating a new phase of swadeshi historiography. In his analysis the uprising was not a mere mutiny but a coordinated and patriotic struggle against colonial rule. The rebels who had earlier been dismissed as disloyal or disorderly, were instead accorded the status of national heroes, symbolizing sacrifice, unity and resistance. This reinterpretation laid the foundation for later nationalist writings and helped reshape the historical memory of 1857 as a significant step in India's struggle for independence.

3.4 ARGUMENTS ENDORSING 1857 AS A BROAD- BASED POPULAR UPRISING.

Historians have advanced arguments to establish that the revolt was not merely a military mutiny but a broad – based popular uprising.

Edward John Thompson emphasised in his work *The Other Side of the Medal* (1925)—included few passages that despite his broader colonial perspective, strengthen the argument that the movement had significant popular support. His account acknowledged the participation of civilians and highlighted the wider social dimension of the revolt

Similarly, *The Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* co-authored with G.T. Garrett in 1934 revealed with unusual frankness that went beyond the official colonial narrative. Although his writings were primarily directed towards British audience, it inadvertently exposed the depth and spread of discontent among the Indians. Such interpretations contributed to a gradual shift in understanding, encouraging historians to move away from a narrow military explanation. Over the time this led to change in academic language and approach when the revolt was analysed in terms of social participation and popular involvement. This shift helped reframe 1857 as a complex and widespread movement.

3.5 THE DISPUTE OVER THE DESCRIPTION

There has been a persistent dispute over the appropriate description of the revolt of 1857. While early British accounts often reduced it to a mere military mutiny, some officials within the colonial establishment offered a more nuanced interpretation. George Bruce Malleson, General of the Bengal army, published from Calcutta a pamphlet

titled, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*. His account of the events at Barrackpore, Danapur, Meerut, Delhi and Kanpur between March and June 1857 had one basic point to make-that although the uprising began as military mutiny, it gradually changed its character and developed into national insurrection. Importantly, Malleson did not fully accept the usual colonial explanations that attributed the revolt to hindu orthodoxy or Muslim fanaticism. Instead, he placed significant responsibility on the functionaries of the east India company, arguing that their policies and administration during nearly hundred years of rule had generated widespread discontent. He went so far as to suggest that the civil service, rather than the sepoys were the real authors of the mutiny due to their misgovernance and insensitivity.

However, many British writers and officials like Charles Raikes, often referred to as an apologists continued to represent the revolt in a way that suited colonial interests. Even when they acknowledged that it began as a revolt, their tone tended to minimize its broader significance and avoid recognizing it as a unified national movement.

Check your progress (CYP)-I

Q1. Discuss the multiple perspectives on the uprising of 1857.

Q2. Highlight the arguments endorsing 1857 as a broad- based popular uprising

Q3. Discuss the works which transformed the mutiny into a popular national character.

3.6 RIVALRY BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVIL SERVICES

Malleson–Raikes Dispute

The differences of opinion among the civil and military wing of the company regarding the character of the

upheaval reflects a significant dispute within the British circles over the interpretation. The military wing tended to absolve themselves of the responsibility by pointing to the general state of discontent among the population, suggesting that it could not be reduced to mere indiscipline within the army. The root of this rivalry lay in the evolving role of company's army which had conquered the territory with great risks. Hence Malleson strongly criticised hundred-year failure of civil service, arguing that administrative shortcomings had alienated the population. Interestingly, there are similarity in conclusions of those of Savarkar and Malleson. Both in different ways interpreted it was a war of independence. However, Malleson accused the government of failing to secure the loyalty of even one section of the population, while Savarkar went further, arguing that not just the civil service or policies of Lord Dalhousie but the very presence of British rule itself was the fundamental cause of the broad-based uprising.

This blame game gradually settled in mid 1860s especially in the aftermath of the revolt when the British crown replaced the East India company and established its direct rule under the new and relatively stabilized peace of the Raj, when there was little incentive to emphasize revolt's national character.

3.7 THE PHRASE 'SEPOY WAR'

This phrase is closely associated with John William Kaye particularly through his work *The History of the Sepoy War in India*, published the first volume in 1864. As the Secretary in the Secret and Political Department of the government, he occupied important official position which influenced his interpretation of the revolt. He used the term *sepoys war* which represented a compromise between the two schools of thought

One that viewed the event as merely a sepoy mutiny and the other that saw it as a broader war. While the word war hinted at something much larger than a simple mutiny; the emphasis on sepoy still reflected a somewhat monocausal explanation, centering primarily on the role of soldiers.

However, Kaye's analysis was not entirely narrow. In his work he also acknowledged the wide-ranging failure of a hundred years of British rule, suggesting that deeper administrative and political issues contributed to the outbreak. This marked a shift in his thinking. In his 1851 book *The Administration of the East India Company*, he had largely glorified the company's achievements but in *History of Sepoy War*, his tone became more critical and nuanced, recognising the complexities behind the uprising. The work shows how the 'progress of English language in government, education, technology and social reform were fundamentally responsible for the rebellion.

He had argued against the liberal-utilitarian ideas and philosophic radicalism inspired by Bentham and James Mill, which had through the decades argued for more significant changes in India. Kaye was of the view that the British authorities must seek to return to a more conservative and cautious approach to Indian society and politics.

Further, in his authoritative work Kaye detailed various causes of the rebellion emphasising that dissatisfaction was rooted in broader social disruption including the imposition of new land revenue system.

3.8 Parallel drawn between France and India

Moreover, the first volume of *The Sepoy War* actually discloses a hidden similarity between the company's

activities in India that of France. Company's misrule produced the reign of terror that affected all classes in the north Indian countryside. Kaye wrote that the privileges of the old nobility was affected which created dissatisfaction. A revolution in landed property, brought about by means of English policies threw up 'disaffected classes who bided their time for the recovery of what they had lost, in some revolutionary ways. The westernized systems ignored traditional tenures resulted in systematic dispossession of many landed gentry and influential families in northwestern province and newly annexed Awadh. The annexation of Awadh in 1856 and subsequent land revenue policy dissatisfied the sepoys who were often drawn from landed gentry of that region. They lost their privileges due to the new land revenue system. The Indian regime' returned to claim its lost rights and privileges. However, in seeking to forestall a future popular outburst he proposed of timely reforms.

3.9 CONCEPT OF PEASANT IN UNIFORM

Kaye and in other contemporary accounts highlighted that sepoys were largely peasants in uniform, with deep ties to the villages. Aggressive land policies affected their families and that discontent reflected in the army. Later research by Eric Stokes sought to shift the focus to the social composition of the rebels and the variety of tensions leading up to the uprising of 1857. His work *Peasants Armed* and *The Peasants and the Raj* has explored the extent to which the agrarian society changed during the British rule which created agrarian explosion that formed the backbone of the upheaval of 1857. The work by Sulekh Gupta *Agrarian relations and early British rule in India* has examined the impact of British land revenue policies on rural society causing severe peasant exploitations. Peasants participated in the upheaval due to their own grievances.

The mass character of the revolt was explored in the work of Rudranshu Mukherjee, *Rebellion in Awadh*. He argued that 3/4th of the population of Awadh participated and even when the talukdars withdrew from the resistance, the mass of peasantry continued to protest and faced the risk of death.

Tapti Roy in her work on Bundelkhand, *The politics of Indian uprising: Bundelkhand in 1857*, has tried to show the mass character of revolt in the Bundelkhand region where there were several layers of action operating during the 1857. The symbols of government authority were attacked. She has argued against the territoriality component of 1857. Peasants did not confine to local boundaries and welcomed rebel leaders from out- side and even they moved to the urban areas.

3.10 BUCKLER THESIS

You have seen the debate over the appropriate description in the writings of both the supporters and opponents of the mutiny thesis shows how history could be represented by different interests.

Though Malleson did speak about a hundred-year-old background of British misrule, and Savarkar about the lack of principle underlying British rule in India, neither had fully unpacked the implications of their claims.

The first critique of the grounds on which terms such as mutiny or national war made sense appeared in a 1922 article by Francis W. Buckler, who was then Muir professor of History at Allahabad University.

He in his work '*the Political theory of the Indian Mutiny*', which appeared in the Royal Asiatic Society, had

discussed the implications when the East India Company began to change its character from a mercantile company to a territorial power in the late eighteenth century.

3.11 TRUE NATURE OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

While the company was itself appointed as the governor, or subedar, of the province of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa in 1764, with a well-trained mercenary army. As subedar, the company had to pay the emperor not only a due portion of the revenue from the territories it held on behalf of the emperor but also had to pay homage and tribute in the annual ceremonial visit to Agra or Delhi to the emperor in *darbar* for which the emperor in turn offered his servant - the subedar, gifts, robes of honour and his blessings.

The company continued this practice until 1833, annually confirming its subordination to the emperor at a public ceremony. When the Mughal empire fell apart through the eighteenth century, the company began to pursue its own interests and ambitions, which were mercantile, military and political, though not always in that order.

Throughout the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, the company's territories grew rapidly, eating into other erstwhile subas and provinces such as Awadh, the Deccan and Central India even then it kept up the appearance of its original constitutional obligation to the emperor.

For Buckler, the company was perhaps the most sustained and draining enemy of the Mughal state, and from 1772, the company even began to keep for itself the revenues of Bengal, the richest of the Mughal provinces, instead of tendering it to the Imperial treasury. In the British Parliament, where its trading charter was renewed every twenty years, the company kept up another pretence - that it was the protector, on behalf of Britain, of territories of the Mughal empire, and that the tribute the governor general paid annually at Delhi was only a pension for an improvident monarch.

After 1764, the company had thus two masters to serve, one in Delhi and the other in London. As Buckler demonstrates through a close reading of Mughal *farmans*, while the company was given the right to trade in India by Parliament, all its territorial rights and the right to administer justice and collect revenue came neither from the English Crown or Parliament, nor from military strength, but from the *farmans* of the Mughal emperor. It was as subedar that they were recognised by the other territorial powers in India.

Buckler's following point was brilliantly discussed that how the act of high treason reached when Dalhousie and Canning attempted to tamper with the right of succession.

With a close reading of the Proceedings of the Trial of the King of Delhi showed that in 1857, the soldiers of the Bengal army, along with the traditional elite and the people at large, turned against the insubordinate company-subedar on behalf of their master, the Mughal emperor.

The essay ends with the claim that: 'if there was any mutineer in 1857, it was the East India Company', and the use of the word 'mutiny' in subsequent writing was a wilful obfuscation of the constitutional basis of British power in India. But this obfuscation had a long history. Buckler showed how aided by a propaganda machine run by its historians and publicists, the company 'evolved a fictitious history of India until in the first half of the nineteenth

century, side by side there existed a politically effective Empire with an accepted history of its non-existence.

Buckler added that emperor's difficulties arose mainly from the Company's intrigues and from the fact that after 1772, the Company abandoned its obligation to submit the revenue of Bengal'. For Buckler, it was this hundred-year-old story of insubordination and betrayal by the Company which never made a treaty that was not broken', or that 'there is not a single prince, state, great or small, in India, with whom they [the Company] have come in contact, whom they have not sold'.

At the end of his essay, Buckler described the state of Delhi in the summer of 1857 as one marked by deaths, financial collapse and widespread disorder, resulting in a condition of temporary administrative chaos. He suggested that if the outbreak had been successful, recovery might have been impossible. However, after the centenary of 1857 in 1957, scholarly interest in the broader causes of the rebellion declined and attention shifted towards resistance at particular localities. Historians such as S.B. Chaudhuri and Gautam Chakravarty in their works, *Civil Disturbances During British Rule in India*, and *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies* respectively focused on the discontent in the urban areas which culminated in mass uprising. Another trend further developed with the micro-economic details in the studies of rural revolt by Eric Stokes, and later by Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Gautam Bhadra and Tapati Roy, which aimed at the recovery of fragmented voices of local/ regional groups. Later subaltern historiography shifted the focus towards popular resistance and replaced the older Imperialist - Nationalist debate.

Check your progress (CYP)-II

Q1. What is meant by the phrase "Peasant in uniform"

Q2. Examine the Historiography of Rural Revolt

3.12 LET US SUM UP

The revolt of 1857 embodied multiple characteristic of a traditional society in transition. Rather than viewing the uprising through a single explanatory framework, it is more appropriate to recognize the convergence of diverse elements- like expropriated elites, religious idioms of resistance and widespread social discontent. In this light it

is perhaps necessary to revisit the uprising through an aggregate and integrative perspective, relocating it as broad-based mass uprising against the British., instead limiting it to narrow interpretations.

3.13 GLOSSARY

Farman - A royal decree issued by ruler in Mughal period

Peasant in uniform - Phrase used in colonial context to describe soldiers were originally peasants

Fragmentary voices - scattered expressions of marginalized

Subaltern- marginalized section

3.14 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Write a note on the debate regarding the character of the upheaval of 1857.
Q2. Discuss the arguments made by Francis W. Buckler.

3.15 LESSON END EXERCISES

Fill in the blanks

- Q1. Civil Disturbances during British Rule in India was written by _____
QII. Peasants Armed and The Peasants and the Raj was written by _____
QIII. The History of the Sepoy War in India in 1864 was written by _____

3.16 ANSWER KEY

CYP- I

- Q1. See Section 3.2
Q2. See Section 3.4
Q3. See Section 3.3

CYP- II

- QI. See Section 3.9
Q2. See Section 3.11

3.17 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Crispin Bates; *The Mutiny at the Margins, Vol. 4*; Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2013.
- Vinayak Damodar Savarkar; *The Indian War of Independence, 1857*; first published London (underground press), 1909.
- Syed Ahmad Khan; *Asbab-e-Bagawat-e-Hind (The Causes of the Indian Revolt of 1857)*; 1859.
- Rajanikanta Gupta; *Sipahi Juddher Itihas (History of the Sepoy War)*, 5 vols; Calcutta, 1879–1900.

EMERGENCE OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

STRUCTURE

- 4.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 4.1 Introduction**
- 4.2 Early Political Associations**
- 4.3 Emergence of Indian National Congress**
- 4.4 Social composition of the Indian National Congress**
- 4.5 Let us sum up**
- 4.6 Glossary**
- 4.7 Self -Assessment Questions/ Examination Oriented Questions**
- 4.8 Lesson End Exercises**
- 4.9 Answer Key**
- 4.10 Suggested Readings**

4.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Dear Learners, the objective of this lesson is to enable you to:

- Learn about the pre-Congress political organisations in India.
- Examine the emergence of the Indian National Congress.
- Understand the nature of the Indian National Congress.

Learning Outcomes

Dear learners, after going through this lesson you will have a clear understanding about:

- The political situation of India under the control of the British.
- The role played by the Indian National Congress in creating political awareness in the initial years.

- The social composition of the Indian National Congress.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Learners, the initial political bodies that were formed in different part of India prepared the ground for the formation of Indian National Congress. Various social, political and economic reasons were responsible for the emergence of the Indian National Congress in the second half of the nineteenth century. Towering intellectuals of India realized that an Indian political organization was needed that would work towards fulfilling national interests. Initial membership of the Congress came from educated people.

4.2 EARLY POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Learners, the western modern education introduced by the British created a generation of English educated Indians who had been exposed to liberal European thought. They had been influenced by the liberal and radical ideas of writers like John Locke, Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, Milton Shelley, John Stuart Mill, Rousseau and Voltaire. Notions of liberty, equality, patriotism, and self-government were instilled in the minds of Indians. As a result of the exposure to such ideas, Indians began to recognize the need for political change. In the 1860s and 1870s number of political organizations arose as a response to western education and culture, increasing influence of free press, and progress of railways, posts and telegraph, in pre-Congress period. These political organizations made an important contribution in terms of arousing the political consciousness amongst the Indians. However, most of them had limited objectives and their influence remained confined to their respective regions only. They mainly dealt with local issues and their members and leaders also came from local areas.

Lead was taken by Raja Ram Mohan Roy who was the pioneer of political movement in India. He was the first one to focus the attention of the Englishmen on the grievances of India and to ask for remedial measures. He demanded civil rights, spread of western system of education, liberty of press, codification of laws, appointment of Indians on higher posts etc. The first political association called BangabhashaPrakashika Sabha was formed in 1836 by the associates of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

The Zamindari Association, also known as the Landholders Society was established by Dwarkanath Tagore in Calcutta in 1838 to safeguard the interests of the landlords. It was the beginning of organized political activity and used constitutional methods for agitating and redressal of their grievances. In 1843, another political body called the Bengal British Indian Society was founded with the objective to create public awareness about the state of governance and civil rights of Indians. They were loyal to the government and promoted use of peaceful methods for achieving their requests.

The Landholders Society and the Bengal British India Society merged IN 1851 to form the British Indian Association. A list of grievances was submitted to the British government, which later became a part of the Congress objectives. These included: relaxation of pressure of the revenue systems, the improvement of judicial administration, protection of the life and property of the people from molestation, relief from the monopolies of the East India Company, encouragement of indigenous manufacture, education of the people and the admission of the Indians to the higher administrative services. Another plea was that in future two-thirds of Indian Legislative

Council's representatives should be the Indians.

Dadabhai Naoroji established the East Indian Association in 1866 in London with an aim to providing correct knowledge about India and voicing grievance. A year later Mahadeva Govinda Ranade formed the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha for social reforms and national awakening. One of its main objectives was to act as a bridge between the government and the people of India. In 1875, the Indian League was founded by Sisir Kumar Ghose with the object of promoting nationalism among the Indians as well as providing political education and awareness.

Under the leadership of Surendra Nath Banerjee and Anand Mohan Bose the Indian Association in 1876, was formed. It aimed at forming a strong public opinion against the unjust policies of the British government. It opposed the Arms Act and the Vernacular Press Act of Lord Lytton and also the reduction of the qualifying age for appearing in the Indian Civil Service Examination from twenty-one to nineteen. A number of peasant demonstrations demanding reduction of the rate of revenue were organized.

The Madras Mahajan Sabha was founded by M. Veeraraghavachariar, P. Anandacharlu, and B. Subramania Aiyer in 1884. The Sabha's goal was to free India from the clutches of British rule and redress the grievances of Indians. They strongly expressed this idea in the Theosophical Society Conference held at Adyar, which was attended by many patriots and leaders. In 1885, the Bombay Presidency Association was formed under the leadership of persons like K.T. Telang, Ferozeshah Mehta, and Badruddin Tayabji as a result of the reactionary policies of Lytton and the Ilbert Bill controversy.

All the above-mentioned bodies failed as their base was regional outlook and there was a lack of coordination and unity. To establish effective coordination amongst all the organizations a need was felt to have a national body. The Hindu asserted, that the time was right for the people of India to demand their rights. Thus, an attempt was made to bring in representatives from all over India to a common platform by the Indian Association that organized an All-India National Conference in 1883 and 1885. Need for an all-India body was keenly felt for putting forth the national interests of Indians to the British.

4.3 EMERGENCE OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Learners, the foundation of the Indian National Congress was the culmination of political work carried out by various organisations in the past. Indians had gained experience as well as confidence from the large number of agitations that they had organized on national issues. For example, in 1875 there had been a continuous campaign regarding the import duties which Indians wanted to favour indigenous textile industry. Again in 1877-80, a large campaign was organized demanding the Indianization of the civil services and they also opposed Lord Lytton's expensive Afghan adventures, the cost of which had been borne by the Indian tax payers. The Indian press and associations also organized a campaign against the Vernacular Press Act of 1878. Indians had also opposed the effort to disarm them through the Arms Act. In 1881-82, they organized a protest against the Plantation Labour and Inland Emigration Act, which had reduced the plantation labour to serfdom. In July 1883, a massive all India effort was made to raise a National Fund to be used for promotion of political agitation in India as well as in England. In 1880's, Indians fought for the right to join the Volunteer Corps restricted to Europeans, and then they

also appealed to the British voters to vote for those candidates who would support Indian demands.

The Ilbert Bill was passed in 1883-84. This bill allowed the Indian judges to try Europeans accused of crime. This bill was opposed in Britain and also faced opposition from the British settlers in India. All the British as well as Europeans had united on this issue. Lord Ripon had to modify the bill and once again the Europeans could be tried by the members of their own race. The Ilbert Bill controversy proved to be an eye-opener for the educated Indians. This made them realize that they had failed because of lack of support. It became clear that justice and fair play could not be expected where the interests of the European community are involved. The Indians realized the value of a planned and organized agitation.

Thus, the foundation of an all-India political organization became a necessity. Such an organization would streamline the geographically vast and diverse country to bring about the end of British rule. The nationalist stated that India was a nation in the making and needed to be continually developed and consolidated. A national body was required to fulfil this desire. The year 1885 was a turning point in this process, as political minded, modern intellectuals of India interested in politics, came together and formed the Indian National Congress. The Congress an all-Indian national body was to be the platform, headquarters and the symbol of the new national spirit.

When the Indian nationalist leaders in the different parts of the country were planning the formation of an all-India political body, Hume's (a retired English civil servant) support helped in the formation of the Congress. In March 1883, Hume wrote a letter to the graduates of the Calcutta University asking for fifty volunteers to join in a movement to promote the social, moral, mental, and political regeneration of the people of India. He encouraged them 'to form a Union, to organize and to follow a well-defined line of actions with sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient love and pride in their country, who would be willing to devote the rest of their life to the cause'. Additionally, he emphasized that, 'scattered individuals however capable and however well meaning, are powerless'. He warned that if such men did not come forward there would be 'no hope for India'. In 1884 the Indian National Union was formed that would be affiliated with the British government and would be a platform for Indian ideas.

Hume went to England for the support of people who were the well-wishers of India. Assured of their help, he returned to India, to participate in the conference convened by the Indian National Union at Poona from 25-28 December 1885. On the suggestion of Dadabhai Naoroji, its name was changed to 'Indian National Congress'. The venue of the meeting was shifted to Bombay as Poona faced the problem of cholera. The first session of the All India Congress began on 28 December 1885 at Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College. Womesh Chandra Banerjee, the barrister from Calcutta presided over it. Seventy-two invited delegates from different parts of India attended this first session. Hume was elected as the first General Secretary of the Indian National Congress.

There are many theories regarding the birth of the Indian National Congress. The role of the Englishman A.O. Hume an ex-civil servant of the British government, in the foundation of the Congress has given rise to many speculations. Many theories about the origin of the Indian National Congress have emerged. The popular and debated theory is the 'safety valve' theory. It has been suggested that while in service Hume had come across information that suggested that due to the growing sufferings of masses and alienation of educated Indians, there

was discontentment among the population. This was regarded as a threat to the continuance of British rule in India. He also felt that the government was not aware of the problems of the Indian people and there was no channel of communication between the rulers and the ruled.

Hume did not want a repeat of the Uprising of 1857. Thus, he felt the need of a 'safety valve' through which any rebellion would be caught in time. Therefore, Hume met Lord Dufferin, the then Governor-General of India, in Shimla in early 1885 and decided to form an all-India association. He was of the opinion that this association could be consulted by the British government to assess the Indian public opinion on various issues of national interest. Hume convinced Lord Dufferin not to obstruct the formation of all-India association.

This theory has been rejected by modern Indian historians. According to them the formation of Indian National Congress was not a 'sudden' or an 'isolated' event as many political associations like Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, Indian Association, Madras Mahajan Sabha, Bombay Presidency Association had already prepared the ground for the formation of the Congress. Leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Ferozeshah Mehta, and Surendranath Banerjee also worked with Hume because they too felt the need for such a body that would put forth the demands of the Indians. The early Congress leaders used Hume as a catalyst to safely bring together all the Indians under the umbrella of Indian National Congress, an all-India body that stood for national interests. Significantly, the Indian National Congress may have been acting as a 'safety valve' but at the same time the Indians with the help of the British formed a platform to fight against the British in an organized manner.

Check Your Progress (CYP) I

Q1. What do you know about the Zamindari Association?

Q2. What was the Ilbertt Bill?

Q3. Who was A.O. Hume?

Q4. Who founded the Madras Mahajan Sabha?

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Womesh Chandra Banerjee, the barrister from Calcutta presided over the ____ session of the Congress.
- b. The Indian press and associations also organized a campaign against the Vernacular Press Act of ____.
- c. ____ formed the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha for social reforms and national awakening.
- d. The first political association called Bangabhasha Prakashika Sabha was formed in ____.

4.4 SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Learners, the Indian National Congress was formed at a national convention held in Bombay in December 1885. The circular sent out in March 1885 to inform the members that the purpose of the Congress was to 'enable all the most earnest labourers in the cause of national progress to become personally known to each other'. W.C. Banerjee, the first President of the Congress, declared the goal of the Congress to be the 'eradication, by direct friendly personal intercourse, of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices amongst all lovers of our country', and to strive for national unity. The Congress was organized in the form of a Parliament. Its sessions were conducted democratically on the basis of discussions and votes on all issues.

The Indian National Congress faced a limitation. There was an uneven representation and total exclusion of the non-elite groups of Indian society in the Congress party initially. The composition of the delegates at the first session of the Congress reflected the changing patterns of organised political life in India with the western educated urban professional groups taking the lead over the landed aristocrats. Only seventy-two delegates attended the first session of the Indian National Congress. Dufferin described the all-India Congress as the body representing only a 'microscopic minority', of the population of India. He pointed out that only the English-educated categories of the Indians in which more than half were lawyers, and the remainder consisted of journalists, businessmen, landowners, and professors were the members of the Indian National Congress. Therefore, the early Congress was mainly composed of urban elites, professional middle classes and some landed gentry, who were mostly high-caste Hindus. Bombay superseded Calcutta in leadership, and professionals replaced landed aristocrats. The regional distribution of the seventy two members of the Congress who attended the first session was: 38 from Bombay, 21 from Madras, and only four from Bengal as the Indian Association had organized its

own annual convention in Calcutta around the same time and leaders from Bengal were apprised of the Congress session at the very last moment. Three towns of Punjab sent a representative each, and the four principal towns of the North-Western Provinces and Awadh sent seven members. In other words, it was a gathering of professionals, some landlords and businessmen, representing primarily the three presidencies of British India. In their social composition too, the members of the early Congress belonged predominantly to the high caste Hindu communities. The disparity in representation and social composition had a serious impact on the programme and performance of the Congress. It ultimately also resulted in the split between moderates and extremists.

Importantly, the composition of the Indian National Congress changed in the next year. In the second session of the Congress 434 representatives belonging to different classes and different parts of India attended in 1886. To broaden the base of the Congress, leaders of different communities were invited to preside over its annual sessions. The first President of the Congress was an Indian Christian, W.C. Banerjee; second was a Parsi, Dadabhai Naoroji; third was a Muslim, Badruddin Tyabji; and the fourth and fifth were two Englishmen, George Yule and William Wedderburn. This enabled the Congress to acquire a national character that represented almost all communities and regions of India. The Muslims were divided and a large number under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan actively opposed the Congress after 1886. Even then, the number of Muslim delegates increased from 2 at Bombay to 33 at Calcutta and 81 in Madras. In 1890, at the sixth session, there were 156 Muslims out of 702 delegates or 22 percent.

Women too became members of the Indian National Congress. In 1890, Kadambini Ganguli, the first woman graduate of the Calcutta University, was the first female speaker in the Congress session. This was symbolic of the fact that India's struggle for freedom would raise Indian women from the degraded position. In 1917, Annie Besant became the first woman President of the Indian National Congress, followed by Sarojini Naidu in 1925 and Nellie Sengupta in 1933. Thus, emphasis its national character in every sense.

Many critics did not accept the claim of the Indian National Congress that it was a national organization. Some labelled it as 'Bengali Congress', others as 'Hindu Congress' or 'Seditious Brahmins'. It was also called the organization of the 'Educated minorities' in the country. But the nature of its membership and its aims and objectives clearly signifies that the Congress was a cosmopolitan organization. The early resolutions and programmes of the Congress show that it stood for the betterment and upliftment of all classes of Indians. By the turn of the twentieth century, its message reached every almost every part of India and it gradually gained importance and recognition. Even though its leadership was confined to middle-class intellectuals, the Congress spoke for the masses of India. Therefore, the base of the Congress was broad based and was liked and supported by the masses. A.R. Desai, in his book *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* refers to the national character of the Indian National Congress. Even, Gandhiji, at the time of the Second Round Table Conference expressed the national character of the Congress. He pointed out that the Congress represented no particular class or interest, rather it stood for the promotion of the interests of all Indians.

The Indian National Congress right from the start tried to eliminate regional differences among its members. It gave representation to the people of different parts of India belonging to different walks of life. The decision to

hold the Congress session every year in different parts of the country and to choose the President belonging to a region other than the one where the session was being held, was meant to dissolve regional barriers.

Check your Progress (CYP) II

Q1. Who was Kadambini Ganguli?

Q2. Name two Presidents of the Indian National Congress.

Fill in the Blanks

- a. _____ became the first woman President of the Indian National Congress.
- b. _____ superseded Calcutta in leadership, and professionals replaced landed aristocrats

4.5 LET US SUM UP

Learners, the emergence of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was a landmark in the history of national movement. It was the culmination of a long process of evolution of political ideas that took the shape of a formal all-India organisation that aimed at fulfilling national interests. Initially the leadership of the Congress only aimed at getting political rights and self-government under the British dominion. Their method involved prayers and petition. They believed in adopting peaceful and constitutional methods to fulfil their requests. They remained loyalist to the British and showed great faith in the British sense of justice and fair play. The social base of the Indian National Congress consisted of western educated intellectuals mostly Hindus from the upper castes initially.

4.6 GLOSSARY

Zamindar : Big landlord

Sabha : a society or an organised group in India.

4.7 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS/ EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Examine the causes that led to the foundation of the Indian National Congress?
- Q2. Throw light on the role of A.O. Hume in the formation of the Indian National Congress.
- Q3. Evaluate the role of the pre-Congress political organisations in the creation of the Congress.
- Q4. Assess the social composition of the members of the Indian National Congress.

4.8 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. Discuss the role of early Indian Political Associations in the formation of Indian National Congress.
- Q2. 'In its origin, Congress was an officially sponsored body, intended to act as a safety valve for the growing discontent in India'. Comment.
- Q3. Analyse the various theories put forward to explain the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

4.9 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

- 1. See Section 4.2
- 2. See Section 4.3
- 3. See Section 4.3
- 4. See Section 4.2

Fill in the Blanks

- a. First
- b. 1878
- c. Mahadeva Govinda Ranade
- d. 1836

CYP II

- 1. See Section 4.4
- 2. See Section 4.4

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Annie Besant
- b. Bombay

4.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Irfan Habib, *A People's History of India: The National Movement: Origins and Early Phase, to 1918*, vol. 30, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2017.
- Ishita Banerjee Dube, *A History of Modern India*, Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983.
- Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2004.

EARLY PHASE OF THE CONGRESS, ITS ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES STRUCTURE

- 5.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 5.1 Introduction**
- 5.2 Early Phase of the Congress: Its Achievements and Failures**
- 5.3 Let us sum up**
- 5.4 Glossary**
- 5.5 Self-Assessment Questions/Examination Oriented Questions**
- 5.6 Lesson End Exercises**
- 5.7 Answer Key**
- 5.8 Suggested Readings**

5.0. LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Learning Objectives

Dear learners, the objective of this lesson is to enable you to:

- **illustrate** the ideology and methods of the Moderate leaders.
- explain the major achievements of the Moderate phase of Indian National Congress.
- examine the limitations and failures of the early Congress phase.

Learning Outcomes

Dear learners, after going through this lesson, you will have a clear understanding about:

- the ideology and methods of the Moderate leaders.

- the major achievements and limitations and failures of the early Congress phase.
- the significance of this phase in the growth of India's national movement.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, the early phase of the Indian National Congress, spanning from its inception in 1885 to 1905, is known as the Moderate Phase. During this period, the Congress was led by figures like Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who believed in a slow, constitutional path toward reform. The early years of the Congress witnessed the beginning of organized nationalist activity under British rule. These leaders adopted a cautious and constitutional approach, seeking reforms through dialogue, petitions, and legislative measures. This phase was significant not because it achieved immediate political freedom, but because it **introduced Indians to modern political ideas, methods, and institutions**. It helped in building a sense of unity among diverse sections of society and laid the groundwork for future mass movements. Dear learners, let us now discuss in detail.

5.2 EARLY PHASE OF THE CONGRESS: ITS ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES

In the first stage of its existence (1885-1905), the vision of the Indian National Congress was dim, vague and confused. The party grew in strength and size under the inspiring leadership of the founding fathers like Dadabhai Naoroji, P.N. Mehta, D.E. Wacha, W.C. Banerjee, S.N. Banerjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Congress started as an organization of the country's elite and educated middle class, with the sole aim of securing constitutional reforms from the British government and made an appeal to the principle of democracy. But they did not ask for the immediate fulfilment of their goals. They believed in constitutional methods and favoured the policy of 3 P's, i.e., Protest, Prayer and Petition. This period is referred to as the period of Moderate politics.

During early years of the Congress there was no revolutionary fervour in its speeches, resolutions or activities as the early Indian nationalists or moderates believed that a direct struggle for the political emancipation of the country was not yet possible. Accordingly, phraseology of the Congress was one of prayer and petition rather than of challenge, force, violence and defiance. They sent regular deputations to Britain to educate the British public opinion in India's favour. Congress only claimed a share in the government of the country, and not freedom from the British rule. Loyalty to the British Crown was loudly and repeatedly declared. However, the Congress aimed at: fundamental constitutional changes, expansion of the central and the local councils, larger proportion of elected members, enlargement of the powers and functions of the Legislative Councils, Indianization of the higher administrative services, Indian representation in the Executive Council and in the Indian Council in London and substitution of irresponsible government by the responsible government run by the representatives of the people.

Apart from their demands for increased share in the British administration, they also demanded an end to economic drain of India by the British, removal of poverty by the rapid development of agriculture and modern industries, reduction of military expenditure, tax, tariffs and excise duties, permanent fixation of the rent paid by peasants to their landlords, change of forest laws, salt tax, and abolishing duty on sugar for the benefit of the poor, freedom of speech and press for the defence of their civil rights, repealing the Arms Act of 1878, freedom to form associations, improvement of education, administration of law and justice, separation of executive and judicial functions, and removal of defects of local self-government.

Achievements

- i. **Economic Critique of Colonialism:** The early Indian nationalist leaders initially believed that British rule would modernize and improve India. However, the worsening condition of the Indian economy made them realize the harmful effects of British policies on the people. As a result, moderate leaders developed an economic critique of British rule, which became an important part of early Indian nationalism. Dadabhai Naoroji, often called the "Grand Old Man of India", was the first to provide a systematic economic critique of British imperialism. His "Drain Theory", primarily detailed in his 1867 paper and his 1901 book *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, shifted the nationalist narrative from political grievances to economic exploitation'. Dadabhai Naoroji calculated that out of the revenues raised in India, nearly **one-fourth** went to England. He estimated the annual drain to be roughly £30 million at the time. Naoroji used data to show that India was being bled white. "The British rule is a 'bleeding' to the country... the wealth of India is continuously drained away to England, and India is being reduced to a state of utter destitution". The theory argued that a large portion of India's national wealth and resources were being exported to Britain without any equivalent economic or material return. Naoroji described this as a "moral and material drain" that kept India in a state of perpetual poverty.

In 1899, M.G. Ranade in his book *Essay on Indian Economics* also highlighted the 'drain of wealth' from India and emphasized that India was becoming more agricultural than it had been in the past. He pointed out that the British were systematically turning India into a "plantation"—a source of raw materials and a market for finished British goods. This "unbalanced" economy, where too many people depended on land, was the root cause of poverty and famine. He advocated for the establishment of agricultural banks and modern financial institutions to provide low-interest loans, which would help break the cycle of rural indebtedness and the "drain" caused by high-interest payments to foreign lenders. He wanted India to move away from rigid traditional structures and develop into a modern, dynamic, and industrial society where progress depended on merit, industry, and cooperation rather than birth and social hierarchy. By emphasizing these ideas, Mahadev Govind Ranade laid the intellectual foundation for the later Swadeshi Movement. He believed that true political freedom would have little

value if India remained economically weak and dependent on foreign goods. Therefore, he stressed the importance of economic self-reliance, industrial development, and the promotion of Indian industries to make the nation strong and independent.

In 1901, R.C. Dutt also made ‘drain theory’ the major theme of his *Economic History of India* and provided the most exhaustive and data-driven documentation of the “Drain Theory”. While Naoroji was the pioneer and Ranade the theorist, Dutt was the historian who used British colonial records to prove that Indian poverty was a direct consequence of British policy. He provided the historical evidence needed to prove that India’s poverty was not accidental but a direct result of British policy. He argued that the British government’s “extravagant” land taxes (often 50–60% of produce) were the primary cause of frequent famines. He proved that famines were caused by high taxes, not just a lack of rain. By highlighting the plight of the peasants, he forced the Congress to look beyond the urban elite. He documented how the British used political power to crush India’s world-famous textile industry through high tariffs on Indian exports and zero duties on British imports. British policies aimed to turn India into a supplier of raw materials and consumer of the British manufactured goods. He quantified the “Drain” as an annual tribute that India paid to Britain, roughly half of India’s net revenue, which left the country with zero capital for investment or growth. His work became the “Economic Bible” for Indian nationalists, providing the logical basis for the Swadeshi Movement (boycotting British goods in favour of Indian ones).

The drain theory was a revolutionary tool for the Indian National Movement for several reasons:

- The economic critique theories given by Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and R.C. Dutt destroyed the British myth that they were “civilizing” India and providing “good governance”. It exposed the economic exploitation of India by the British.
- It explained the main cause of India’s poverty and economic backwardness.
- Economic demands by the Congress started with a call for the reduction of ‘home charges’. It said that large parts of Indian capital go into the salaries and pensions of British officers. Other resolutions called for the reduction of military expenditure, condemned the Third Anglo-Burmese War, demanded a cut in administrative expenses and urged re-imposition of import duties on the British manufactures. They demanded the promotion of Indian industries through tariff, protection and direct economic aid.
- By focusing on poverty and taxes—issues that affected everyone from the merchant to the farmer—it helped create a common ground for national unity.
- It provided an economic basis for the demand for self-government and independence.

Thus, it can be said that this economic critique of the British policies in India was perhaps the

most important contribution in arousing the national consciousness amongst the Indians. The 'drain theory' was easily understood even by common peasants and thus, became the staple of nationalist political agitations during the Gandhian era. The 'drain theory' thus, laid the seeds for the modern Indian national movement to flower and mature in future. They believed that development of India would happen only when the political power would be in the hands of the Indians.

ii. The early nationalists—Naoroji, Ranade, and Dutt—stripped away the “benevolent” facade of British infrastructure projects like building up of railway networks, roads, telegram and postal services. They enlightened Indians that these modern developments were not “gifts” of progress, but strategic tools of exploitation. Railways were designed to connect the interior raw-material-producing centers to the ports (like Bombay and Calcutta) to facilitate the export of cotton, grain, and coal to Britain. They were used to carry finished British manufactured goods back into the remote corners of India, effectively killing off local village handicrafts. The railways were built using British capital, and the Indian taxpayer was forced to guarantee a 5% profit to British investors, even if the railways made a loss. It was a “private profit, public risk” model. These institutions and infrastructures have drained Indian economy. British officers used them to easily mobilize troops and communicate in times of any rebellion by the Indians and crush them. It enabled the British government to maintain tight, centralized control over a vast colony, ensuring that the British administration worked like a well-oiled machine for extraction. Infrastructure was built to serve imperial interests, not to improve the standard of living for the Indian masses. The Moderates pointed out that the development of railways, telegraph, and postal services in India was funded through heavy taxes imposed on Indian peasants. However, the profits and major benefits from these systems went mainly to the British rulers, not to Indians. These early nationalists believed that widespread poverty in India was not natural but created by human actions, especially British policies. Therefore, they felt it could be understood, explained, and ultimately removed through reforms and self-rule.

iii. Political Education: The Moderates played an important role in spreading political awareness in India. Through the Indian National Congress, they created a common platform where people from different regions, languages, and communities could meet and discuss national issues. This helped Indians realize that their problems were similar across the country and were linked to British rule. As a result, it encouraged unity among people and helped develop a sense of Indian national identity.

iv. Legislative Reforms: The Moderates demanded political reforms through constant pressure on the

British government. The British government, feeling the pressure and wanting to appease the elite without giving up real power, passed this Act as a compromise. The Indian Councils Act of 1892 was the first significant political victory for the early Indian National Congress. Although it did not provide self-government as the Moderates had hoped, it was an important first step toward representative democracy in India by slightly increasing Indian participation in the legislative councils. The Indian Councils Act of 1892 was an important step in India's constitutional development. It expanded the functions of the Legislative Councils by allowing members to discuss the budget (a right not given under the Indian Councils Act of 1861) and other matters of public interest, although a six-day notice was required and supplementary questions were not allowed. The Act also introduced the principle of representation through an indirect system of election via local bodies, universities, and chambers of commerce. Though its powers were limited, it marked the beginning of Indian participation in governance and laid the foundation for a parliamentary system in India, making it a significant milestone in constitutional history. This Act laid the foundation of the parliamentary system in India and also was the landmark in the constitutional development of India. For the first time the election principle was accepted and introduced by the Act of 1892. Even though the Act of 1892 was a minor reform, yet it became a milestone in the history of the Congress. The Congress became the symbol of new India, and as time passed it became the embodiment of India's hopes and aspirations, and instrument of India's struggle for independence.

- v. **Administrative Successes:** At the time, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was the "Steel Frame" of British rule, and it was almost exclusively British. The Moderates demanded its "Indianisation" so that more Indians could join the civil services, which would reduce the economic drain caused by high salaries paid to British officials. Leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji and Surendranath Banerjee saw this as a fight for both racial equality and economic survival.

They argued that a foreign bureaucracy could never understand India's needs and problems, and the exclusion of Indians from top positions was a form of injustice and "moral degradation". They also pointed out practical barriers: ICS exams were held only in London, had a very low age limit (sometimes as low as 19), and focused on subjects like Greek and Latin, making it difficult for Indians to compete.

Therefore, they demanded that the exams be held both in India and London and that the age limit be raised to 23 years. Due to Congress pressure, the Public Services Commission (1886) was set up, which led to some reforms like the creation of Provincial Civil Services, though real power still remained with the British ICS.

The Moderates played a crucial role in the early phase of Indian nationalism. Through petitions, speeches, and writings, they succeeded in creating political awareness and a sense of national unity among Indians. They exposed the economic exploitation of British rule and laid the intellectual foundation for later movements. Although their achievements were limited in terms of direct political power, they secured some constitutional reforms and introduced Indians to modern political ideas. Overall, the Moderates prepared the ground for the more assertive phase of the national movement that followed.

Failures

The Early Congress faced significant criticism, particularly from the rising Extremist wing, for several reasons:

- **Narrow Social Base:** The Congress remained an “urban, elite club”. It was composed primarily of Western-educated lawyers and professionals and failed to involve the peasants, workers, or the common masses. The moderate leaders were unaware of the change the mass movement could create. The Extremists argued that the movement could never succeed if it remained confined to the “upper-story” of society. They wanted to involve the masses—the students, the middle class, the workers, and the peasantry—to turn the movement into a true national struggle.
- **Ineffective Methods and results:** Despite 20 years of “constitutional” struggle, the actual political gains (like the 1892 Act) were minor and did not grant any real power to Indians. The British government often ignored their politely worded resolutions. The Extremists famously labeled the Moderates’ methods as “Mendicancy” (begging). They argued that Prayers and petitions were useless against an imperial power that only understood strength. Lala Lajpat Rai famously said, “The British government will never grant any concession unless it is forced to do so”. They believed that “Rights are to be snatched, not begged for.”
- **Faith in British government:** Their belief that the British would voluntarily hand over power or reform themselves proved to be an illusion. The British government generally treated their petitions with contempt. The Moderates believed the British were fundamentally just and would reform India if they knew the “truth”. The Extremists saw this as a delusion. They pointed out that British interests in India were purely economic and exploitative or British and Indian economic interests were fundamentally contradictory. Tilak argued that there was no such thing as “benevolent” colonial rule and that Swaraj (Self-rule) was the only solution.
- **Failure to Address Communalism:** While secular in ideology, they were unable to effectively counter the “Divide and Rule” policy, which eventually led to the birth of communal politics in the early 1900s.

- The moderates did not demand complete independence.

The criticism peaked in 1905 when Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal despite years of Moderate petitions. This event proved to the younger generation that the Moderate approach had failed to protect Indian interests, leading to the Surat Split of 1907 where the two wings finally parted ways.

To a modern observer, their vision might seem timid, but it was strategic. The early leaders knew the Congress was a fragile organization. If they had demanded total independence immediately, the British would have crushed the movement in its infancy. They chose to be "the safety valve" or the "loyal opposition", building a foundation of political awareness that the later, more radical movements would eventually stand upon. During this phase, the Congress worked for limited objectives and concentrated more upon building up its organization. The early demands of the Indian National Congress may seem weak or slow today, but they were suitable for that time because India was a **large, diverse country with different languages, religions, and regions**. So, it was not easy to suddenly unite people for mass rebellion or radical change. The Moderates believed that **awareness had to be built first** among educated Indians, people needed to be **politically united gradually**, change could be achieved through **constitutional methods** like petitions, debates, and reforms. Therefore, their slow and peaceful approach was actually a **practical strategy** to lay the foundation of nationalism in a divided society. Even though their methods were slow, they helped create political unity and national consciousness in a diverse India. Moreover, Indian National Congress didn't have a ready-made ideology to follow and they were their own teachers and learners. Growing from the humble beginnings in 1885 to biggest mass movements in the 20th century, Indian National Congress was successful in wielding different regions into one nation, training people about new political methods, developing an anti-colonial ideology, exposing the misrule of the British. It established the political truth that **India should be governed for the benefit of Indians, not for British interests**.

Check Your Progress (CYP) I

- I. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. Why is the early phase of Congress called "the moderate phase"?

Q2. Name two limitations of the early Congress.

Q3. What were the main demands of the early Congress leaders?

Q4. Why did the early Congress fail to gain mass support?

Q5. What was the main method used by early Congress leaders?

Q6. How did the Act of 1892 satisfy Indian nationalists?

Q7. Explain 'drain theory'.

Fill in the Blanks

- a. The Indian Councils Act was passed in the year _____.
- b. The Act was passed to satisfy the demands of the _____ Congress.
- c. The demand for _____ of Civil Services was an important issue raised by early Congress leaders like Surendra Nath Banerjee.
- d. 1901, _____ wrote the book *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*.

5.3 LET US SUM UP

Dear learners, in this lesson we have learnt that the Congress in its first phase came to be dominated by the Moderates also called as Early Nationalists, who were not against the British rule in India, but they were against the 'Un-British' character of the British rule in India. They only aimed at getting political rights and self-government under the British dominion. Their method has been called 3P's – Prayers, Petition and Protest or they believed in peaceful and constitutional methods to demand and fulfil those demands. They remained loyalist to the British and showed great faith in the British sense of justice and fair play. The Moderates were the first in the 19th century to develop an economic critique of colonialism. During this phase, Congress was deeply rooted in an understanding of the nature and character of colonial economic domination and exploitation. However, their approach faced criticism for being **elitist and slow**, which later gave rise to more assertive nationalist methods under Extremist leaders. Thus, this phase laid the **foundation of India's national movement**, despite its limitations.

5.4 GLOSSARY

Swaraj: means **self-rule or self-government**, and it became an important goal of the Indian national movement against British rule.

Home Charges: **Home Charges** were the expenses that India had to pay to Britain for administrative costs, pensions of British officials, interest on loans, and other charges related to British rule in India.

Drain theory: first proposed by Dadabhai Naoroji to explain how Britain was draining India's wealth through taxes, trade, salaries, pensions, and other economic policies during colonial rule.

5.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS/ EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the various channels through which wealth was drained from India to Britain.
- Q2. Why did the early nationalists criticize British economic policies through the Drain Theory?
- Q3. Discuss the achievements of the Moderates in the early phase of the Indian National Congress.
- Q4. Examine the failures and limitations of the Moderate leaders.
- Q5. Evaluate the role of the Moderates in the growth of Indian nationalism.

5.6 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. Examine the contribution of Dadabhai Naoroji to Indian economic nationalism.
- Q2. Discuss the methods and objectives of the Moderates.
- Q3. "The Moderates laid the foundation of the Indian national movement". Explain.
- Q4. Critically examine the achievements and failures of the Moderates between 1885 and 1905.

5.7 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

- Q1. See Section 5.2
- Q2. See Section 5.2
- Q3. See Section 5.2
- Q4. See Section 5.2
- Q5. See Section 5.2
- Q6. See Section 5.2
- Q7. See Section 5.2

Fill in the Blanks

- a. 1892

- b. Indian National
- c. Indianization
- d. *Dadabhai Naoroji*

5.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Irfan Habib, *A People's History of India: The National Movement: Origins and Early Phase, to 1918*, vol. 30, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2017.
- Ishita Banerjee Dube, *A History of Modern India*, Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
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RISE OF EXTREMISM, ITS BASES AND ACTIVITIES

STRUCTURE

- 6.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 6.1 Introduction**
- 6.2 Rise of Extremism**
- 6.3 Base of the Extremists**
- 6.4 Activities of the Extremists**
- 6.5 Let Us Sum Up**
- 6.6 Glossary**
- 6.7 Self-Assessment Questions/Examination Oriented Questions**
- 6.8 Lesson End Exercises**
- 6.9 Answer Key**
- 6.10 Suggested Readings**

6.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Learning Objectives

Dear learners, the objective of this lesson is to enable you to:

- examine the role of the Partition of Bengal (1905) in strengthening Extremism.
- explain the factors responsible for the rise of Extremist ideology.
- discuss the ideas, methods and activities of extremist leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Lala Lajpat Rai.
- discuss the socio-economic groups that supported it.

Learning Outcomes

Dear learners, after going through this lesson, you will have a clear understanding about:

- the meaning and emergence of Extremism in the Indian national movement.
- the main activities of the Extremists i.e., *swadeshi*, boycott, and mass mobilisation.
- the role of Extremism in broadening and strengthening the Indian freedom struggle.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, the rise of Extremism in the Indian national movement marked a significant shift from moderate methods of prayer, petition, and dialogue to more assertive and mass-based political action. It emerged in the early 20th century, particularly after the Partition of Bengal (1905), which deeply angered Indians and exposed the limitations of moderate politics. Leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghosh played a key role in shaping this new phase of nationalism. Extremism emphasized *swaraj* (self-rule), *swadeshi*, boycott of British goods, and mass mobilisation of the people, including students and women. Dear learners let us discuss in detail.

6.2 RISE OF EXTREMISM

The period from 1905 to 1918 in the Indian National Movement is characterized by the “Rise of Extremism”. The rise of extremism in the Indian national movement during the early 20th century was not a sudden event but a cumulative result of several socio-political and economic factors. It represented a shift from the “politics of petitions” to the “politics of agitation”. Let us discuss the primary factors responsible for this transition.

One of the main causes for the rise of extremism in Indian politics can be attributed to the deteriorating economic condition of India under the British rule. The recurring famines (1896–1900) coupled with plague that broke out in Maharashtra and the inaction of the British government created a congenial atmosphere for the growth of extremism. Along with this, week-long celebrations were organized in Delhi Darbar held in 1903 when people had not fully recovered from the horrific effects of the famine that killed lakhs of people drew widespread condemnation.

By the end of the 19th century, the political work of the Moderates had unintentionally educated the masses about the exploitative nature of colonialism. The **”Drain of Wealth” theory**, popularized by Dadabhai Naoroji, showed that British rule was systematically transferring India’s wealth to Britain, making colonial rule a major cause of India’s poverty. This economic critique made many Indians aware of the exploitative nature of British policies. At the same time, the younger generation of nationalists realized that the British government was not willing to accept even moderate and reasonable demands for administrative reforms. This disappointment with constitutional methods strengthened the belief that stronger and more direct forms of resistance were necessary, thereby contributing to the rise of Extremism in India.

Leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati, and Aurobindo Ghosh played a vital role in reviving

pride in Indian culture. Their teachings inspired Indians to regain confidence in their own traditions, values, and identity, and helped build a strong sense of national pride. This cultural revival became an important foundation for the growth of extremist nationalism in India.

Several global events during this period shattered the myth of European invincibility, inspiring Indian nationalists. The younger generation became convinced of the fact that a united fight by the Indians will easily defeat the British imperialism. For instance:

- **Abyssinia (Ethiopia) vs. Italy (1896):** Ethiopia defeated a European power, showing that colonial armies could be defeated.
- **Boer Wars (1899–1902):** exposed the weakness of the British army, proving it was not invincible.
- **Japan vs. Russia (1905):** Japan's victory over Russia inspired Asians, including Indians, by proving that an Asian nation could defeat a powerful European empire.

Lord Curzon's seven-year Viceroyalty (1899–1905) acted as a catalyst for extremism. His following policies were seen as a deliberate attempt to suppress Indian political consciousness and weaken the growing intelligentsia.

- **Official Secrets Act (1904):** This Act imposed strict restrictions on the freedom of the press and access to government information. It aimed at preventing Indians from publishing or circulating materials that could expose British policies. Nationalists saw it as an attack on free expression and political awareness, which further intensified resentment against colonial rule and strengthened extremist sentiments.
- **The Indian Universities Act (1904):** This Act brought Indian universities under stricter government control by increasing official supervision over their administration and reducing their autonomy. It aimed to curb the spread of nationalist ideas among students by tightening control over education. Nationalists strongly opposed it, as they saw it as an attempt to suppress intellectual freedom and restrict the growth of political awareness among Indian youth.
- **The Partition of Bengal (1905):** This was the “final straw”. The partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon, provided a spark for the rise of extremism in the Indian National Movement. The official reason given for the decision was that Bengal with a population of 78 million (about a quarter of the population of British India) had become too big to be administered. Under this pretext, British were trying to play their old-time card of ‘Divide and Rule’.

The Extremists (or Radicals/Garam Dal) emerged as a reaction to the “Moderate” phase of the Indian National Congress, which they believed had failed to secure meaningful concessions from the British through its method of the “Three P’s” (prayers, petitions, and protests) and had also failed to respond effectively to policies such as the Partition of Bengal (1905). A new group of extremists leaders—Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Bipin Chandra Pal (Lal-Bal-Pal) and Aurobindo Ghosh—emerged with a different philosophy. They challenged the “white man’s burden” narrative and the myth of European cultural superiority. This created a new generation of activists who felt they were no longer “subjects” but “citizens” capable of governing themselves. They had deep

faith in the strength of the masses. They shifted the focus from “administrative reform” to “Swaraj” (Self-Rule). They argued that constitutional methods were too passive and ineffective against colonial rule.

These militant nationalists wanted the movement to be taken outside Bengal to other parts of the country and go beyond the boycott of foreign goods to become a full-fledged political mass struggle with the goal of attaining *swaraj*. But the Moderates, dominating the Congress at that time, were not willing to go that far. This led to the sharp criticism of the ideology and constitutional methods of moderate congressmen. The achievements of the Congress during this period were described by the radicals, otherwise called as extremists as the ‘political mendicancy’ of the moderate leaders or the ‘old guards’. They criticized the limited demands of the moderate leaders for *swaraj* within the colonial rule. Instead, they advocated the adoption of complete *swaraj* as the goal of the Congress to be achieved by more self-reliant and independent methods. Tilak remarked “Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it”. Aurobindo Ghose said, “Political freedom is the life breath of a nation”. The extremists rejected the technique of the moderates and gave up the policy of prayer and preaching. The new leadership sought to create a passionate love for liberty, accompanied by a spirit of sacrifice and a readiness to suffer for the cause of the country. It wanted a faster pace of reforms leading towards the end. As Gandhiji put it in 1909, they were an “impatient party”. This attitude marked the beginning of the era of extremism.

The differences between the moderates and the extremists became official in the Surat session of the Indian National Congress in 1907. The session was initially supposed to be held in Nagpur (an Extremist stronghold). The Extremists wanted Lala Lajpat Rai or Bal Gangadhar Tilak as President. The Moderates shifted the venue to Surat, a Moderate stronghold in the Bombay Presidency. According to Congress rules of the time, a leader from the host province could not be President. Tilak’s home province was Bombay Presidency in which Surat was also situated, which effectively disqualified Tilak from the presidency. The Moderates proposed Rash Behari Ghosh, while the Extremists vehemently opposed him, demanding a leader who favoured a more aggressive policy against the British. Rash Behari Ghosh became the President in the session which was held at Surat. Tilak was not even allowed to speak and this angered the extremists, who wanted to cancel the session. Both sides were firm on their demands, and neither was willing to find a common path. The Extremists insisted that the resolutions on **self-government, boycott, and national education**, which had been passed at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in 1906, should be **reaffirmed with stronger and more forceful language** to intensify the struggle against British rule. However, the Moderates were unwilling to adopt such an aggressive tone. They preferred a **cautious and constitutional approach**, fearing that strong language and mass agitation might provoke severe British repression. This difference in attitude deepened the conflict between the two groups and contributed to the split at the Surat session in 1907. Unfortunately, the Surat session was marred by the use of sticks and *chappals* by the members of both the wings of Congress. The Moderates then held a separate meeting in which they reiterated the Congress goal of self-government within the British Empire and to adopt only constitutional methods to achieve their goals. The Extremists were openly and strongly opposed to British rule, believing that India could not achieve self-rule through petitions or constitutional methods. In contrast, the Moderates had faith in British justice and believed that reforms could be secured through dialogue, appeals, and cooperation with the colonial government.

While the Moderates spoke of “Constitutional Reforms”, the Extremists popularized powerful, emotive slogans that became the heartbeat of the movement:

- “**Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it!**” — **Tilak**
- “**Vande Mataram**” — Derived from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s *Anandamath*, it became the national anthem of the resistance.

Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) after 14 years of upbringing in England returned to India in 1893 and became the Vice-Principal of the state college in Baroda. He was motivated by the aggressive nationalist thoughts of Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal. In 1906, in the wake of partition of Bengal, he resigned his job and became the first Principal of the Bengal National College, where he aimed to create a national system of education rooted in Indian culture and independent of British control, inspiring students to serve the motherland. Alongside this, he edited the English daily *Bande Mataram*, through which he provided strong intellectual and spiritual support to the idea of passive resistance, presenting independence as a sacred duty. His powerful writings deeply influenced the youth and alarmed the British authorities. During this period, he also outlined a four-point programme of passive resistance, including economic, educational, judicial, and social boycott, which became a key strategy of the Extremist movement.

Aurobindo Ghosh was influenced by the concept of **shakti (power and energy)** found in certain Hindu traditions, which strengthened his belief in courage, strength, and self-reliance in the freedom struggle. This influence also led him to show interest in revolutionary ideas, including the formation of secret societies and the possibility of armed resistance against colonial rule. However, his central argument for India’s freedom was based on the **inherent and natural right of every nation to be free**, rather than solely on British misrule or oppression.

Check Your Progress (CYP) I

I. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. Name any four leaders of the Extremists in the Congress?

Q2. Which issue created conflict between Moderates and Extremists?

Q3. Who presided over the Surat Session of 1907?

Q4. Who presided over the Surat Session of 1907?

Q5. Write two reasons that led to the rise of the Extremists?

Fill in the Blanks

- a. "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it", the famous slogan was given by _____.
- b. *English daily Bande Mataram* was edited by _____.
- c. In 1904, to curb the spread of nationalist ideas among students, Lord Curzon passed the _____ Act.
- d. The failure of the _____ to achieve major political reforms led to the rise of the Extremists.
- e. The Partition of _____ in 1905 strengthened extremist nationalism in India.

6.3 BASE OF THE EXTREMISTS

Dear learners, the "base" of the Extremist movement refers to the socio-economic groups that supported it. The social base of the Moderates was dominated by the **urban, Western-educated elite**, including professionals

such as **lawyers, doctors, and journalists**. The early nationalists or moderate wing lacked political faith in the “uneducated masses”. They feared that involving the peasantry and laborers would lead to chaos, violence, and a breakdown of law and order. These heterogeneous elements have first to be welded into a nation before they enter into the political sphere. But they failed to realize that it was only during the freedom struggle and political participation that these diverse elements were to come together. Because of the lack of mass participation, the Moderates politics often reflected **elite concerns rather than mass issues**. Therefore, later nationalists differed from the moderates precisely on this point.

Aurobindo Ghosh was indeed one of the first major nationalist leaders who criticized the Congress for narrowing down its social base to the elite section of the society and excluding the ‘*proletariat*’, by which he meant the masses. In a series of famous articles titled “New Lamps for Old” published in the journal *Indu Prakash* (1893–1894), he argued that the Congress was failing because it was disconnected from the soul of India. Aurobindo argued that the Congress was a “middle-class organ” composed of western-educated lawyers, doctors, and journalists. He believed that since these leaders primarily spoke in English, the movement remained inaccessible to the vast majority of Indians who spoke regional languages, and therefore failed to inspire widespread participation. Since the leadership largely came from an educated and elite background, their demands remained confined to **minor administrative reforms**—such as increasing representation in the Legislative Councils—rather than striving for complete independence rather than striving for complete independence.

Long before Marxist terminology became common in Indian politics, Aurobindo identified the proletariat—the peasants, artisans, and laborers—as the “real” strength of the nation. He famously stated that the Congress was “unnational” because it represented only a tiny fraction of the population. He believed that no movement could succeed against the British Empire unless it tapped the “*shakti*” (power) of the masses. He warned that as long as the proletariat was ignored, the movement would remain “hollow”. Aurobindo ridiculed the Moderate method of “Prayers and Petitions” as a sign of *bourgeois* weakness. He argued that the elite were too afraid of losing their social status or professional standing to truly challenge British authority. He advocated for a movement that was “democratic” in the sense that it should involve the common man through passive resistance and self-sacrifice.

The Extremists drew their strength from groups that were feeling the direct brunt of British economic exploitation and administrative arrogance. They requested people to come forward and do sacrifices for the freedom of the country. He asked the people to prepare themselves for the passive resistance. They were mainly:

- **The Lower-Middle Class:** This was the backbone of the movement. It included shopkeepers, clerks, and small-scale businessmen who were frustrated by the lack of economic opportunities.
- **Students and Youth:** The “new generation” was the most active component. They provided the energy for picketing foreign shops and organizing mass processions.
- **The Educated Unemployed:** By the early 1900s, many western-educated Indians found that degrees did not guarantee jobs. This created a pool of “discontented intellectuals” who turned toward radical politics.

- **Artisans and Local Traders:** These groups supported the Swadeshi movement because it aimed to revive local industries that had been crushed by British imports.
- **The Rural Masses (Limited):** While the movement remained largely urban, the Extremists (especially Tilak) began to reach out to the peasantry by linking political demands with religious and cultural symbols.

Aurobindo's critique was revolutionary because it shifted the definition of "The People" in Indian politics. By insisting that the *proletariat* was the true heir to the nation, he paved the way for the later Extremist phase and provided a theoretical foundation for the Mass Movements of the 1920s and 30s.

Check Your Progress (CYP) II

II. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. What is meant by the term "proletariat"?

Q2. Which social classes mainly supported the Extremist movement in India?

Q3. Which social group strongly supported Swadeshi activities?

Q4. Why artists and traders supported the Extremists activities?

6.4 ACTIVITIES OF EXTREMISTS

The activities of the Extremists (the Garam Dal) between 1905 and 1918 were designed to move the Indian National Movement from a “politics of petition” to a “politics of mass action”. Their methods were rooted in the philosophy of passive resistance and self-reliance (*atmashakti*).

Swadeshi and the boycott of foreign goods was the most powerful economic weapon used to strike at the root of British commercial interests. Public meetings were held where foreign-made clothes (especially Manchester cotton), salt, and sugar were burned in huge bonfires. Volunteers, including many students, stood outside shops selling foreign goods and persuaded people not to buy them. This period saw the rise of indigenous enterprises, such as the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company started by V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and various Indian-owned banks, textile mills, and tanneries. It would provide the people with more opportunities for work and employment.

The Extremists believed that the British education system was a “machine for manufacturing clerks”. They sought to replace it with a system that was “National in spirit and control”. Bengal National College was founded with Aurobindo Ghosh as its first principal. Several other national schools were set up across India to provide education that focused on Indian history, culture, and vocational training, encouraging students to boycott government colleges.

Long before the Gandhian era, the Extremists advocated for the total withdrawal of Indian cooperation. They urged Indians to resign from government services and refuse to serve in the British military or police. They encouraged people to settle disputes through local arbitration courts rather than using British judicial systems. In certain areas, they even experimented with the refusal to pay land revenue.

The Extremists realized that to engage the masses, they needed to use familiar symbols and emotional appeals. Bal Gangadhar Tilak used religious revivalism for mass contact. Tilak’s campaign of cow protection, organization of the Ganpati festival in 1893 and Shivaji’s festival in 1895, aimed at spreading the message of boycotting westernization in India. All this projected him as a leader of Hindu orthodoxy. In 1897, Mr. Rand who was supervising the anti-plague campaign, and other English officials were murdered by the Chapekar brothers, who were hanged. Tilak was arrested on the charge of inciting the violence, particularly because early in the same month, in his newspaper *Kesari*, he had justified the murder of Afzal Khan at Shivaji’s hand. Therefore, Tilak was sentenced to 18 months jail, the first nationalist leader to suffer imprisonment for a political cause.

The slogan “Vande Mataram” became the war cry of the movement. Folk theatre (*jatras*) and patriotic poems and songs, were used to spread revolutionary ideas in rural areas. During the anti-partition struggle, the act of tying *rakhis* on each other’s wrists was used to show that no political line could divide the brotherhood of Bengalis.

We have another example of the Extremists' proneness to rally support on the basis of communal approach. Lala Lajpat Rai demanded in 1901 that Congress should openly base itself on Hindu support and not seek unity with the Muslims when the issue surfaced on the ground that the Congress has refused to take sides on Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900, which was ardently supported by the Muslim landed interests and vehemently opposed by the Hindus. The extremist leaders and advocates of social reforms spoke of Hindu nation only. These factors divided the Hindus and the Muslims.

Between 1907 and 1911, the British government passed several repressive laws to curb the activities and influence of the Extremists and revolutionary nationalists in India. These laws were aimed at suppressing political agitation, controlling the press, and preventing mass mobilisation. Key laws included:

- **Seditious Meetings Act (1907):** it restricted public meetings and allowed authorities to prohibit gatherings that were considered seditious or anti-government.
- **Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act (1908):** it empowered the government to confiscate printing presses and suppress newspapers that published inflammatory or anti-British content.
- **Explosive Substances Act (1908):** it aimed at preventing revolutionary violence by regulating the manufacture and use of explosives.
- **Indian Press Act (1910):** it imposed strict censorship on the press, required security deposits from publishers, and gave the government wide powers to ban publications.

These laws reflected the British strategy to weaken the Extremist movement and suppress growing nationalist sentiments in India.

In 1908, the revolutionary nationalists Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki attempted to assassinate Magistrate Kingsford, a judge notorious for delivering harsh punishments to Indian nationalists. However, the bomb thrown at his carriage missed its target and instead struck another vehicle, resulting in the deaths of two British women, the wife and daughter of barrister Kennedy. Following this incident, the British government launched a crackdown on revolutionary activities, and Aurobindo Ghosh was arrested on charges of planning and overseeing the attack and imprisoned in solitary confinement in Alipore Jail. This period of imprisonment saw Aurobindo's transition from a political rebel to a spiritual leader. Bipin Chandra Pal was also imprisoned for six months on the grounds of his nationalist writings and speeches that were considered seditious by the British government, as they were seen as inciting opposition to colonial rule and encouraging extremist activities. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was also sentenced to six years imprisonment at Mandalay (Burma) for writing in support of revolutionaries who were involved in the killing of two British women and calling for immediate *swaraj*.

Thus, the militant nationalist movement gradually declined with the arrest of its main leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the later withdrawal of Aurobindo Ghosh and Bipin Chandra Pal from active politics. While Lala Lajpat Rai remained active, he gradually shifted his focus toward social reform and later joined the Swaraj Party, moving away from the "militant" methods of the 1905–1908 period. However, the Extremists achieved some important

successes. The Partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911, and the British introduced constitutional reforms through the Indian Councils Act of 1909, which Tilak described as a sign of growing mutual confidence between the rulers and the ruled. After his release from Mandalay jail, Tilak realized that violent methods slowed down political progress rather than accelerating it. He then moved towards reconciliation with the Congress, accepting constitutional agitation, a stance earlier supported by Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Tilak later reunited with nationalist leaders and re-joined the Congress during the Lucknow Pact of 1916. Gradually, the demand for *swaraj* was no longer seen as radical, and after 1918 the Congress moved towards Gandhian ideals, ultimately aiming for “*poorna swaraj*” or complete independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Thus, the rise of Extremism marked the end of the “age of petitions” and the beginning of the “age of mass struggle”, setting the stage for the Gandhian era.

Check Your Progress (CYP) III

III. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. What were the main activities of the Extremists in India?

Q2. Which festivals were used by Extremists for political mobilization?

Q3. How did Extremists promote national education?

Q4. What were two reasons for the decline of Extremism in India?

Fill in the Blanks

- In 1908, the revolutionary nationalists Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki attempted to kill Kingsford, but instead they killed _____.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak reunited with other nationalist leaders and re-joined the Congress during the _____ Pact of 1916.
- In 1910, British government passed the _____ Act, which imposed strict censorship on the press, required security deposits from publishers, and gave the government wide powers to ban publications.
- In the year **1897**, the Chapekar brothers killed _____.

6.5 LET US SUM UP

Dear learners, the rise of Extremism gave a new direction and energy to the Indian freedom struggle. It transformed nationalism into a mass movement by involving wider sections of society and encouraging active resistance against British rule. Though it led to differences within the Indian National Congress, it succeeded in making the struggle more assertive and self-reliant. The ideas and methods of Extremism laid a strong foundation for later phases of the national movement and significantly strengthened the demand for *swaraj*. For attaining this goal, they believed in self-reliance as a weapon against the British domination. Therefore, they promoted four principles of *swarajya*, *swadeshi*, boycott of foreign goods and national education to make Indians self-reliant and mainly to hard hit the British economically. They favoured the use of force and revolutionary methods to achieve their aims. They inculcated pride in India's glorious ancient culture to generate the spirit of nationalism. This militant nationalist movement gradually faded with the arrest of its main leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak and with the retirement of Aurobindo Ghosh and Bipin Chandra Pal (1920) from active politics. After his release from the Mandalay jail, Tilak realized that acts of violence actually diminished, rather than hastening the pace of political reforms. Therefore, under the Lucknow Pact of 1916, Tilak rejoined the mainstream of the Indian National Congress and abandoned his demand for direct action and settled for agitations 'strictly by constitutional means' – a line that had long been advocated by his rival Gokhale.

6.6 GLOSSARY

bourgeoisie: refers to the middle or upper-middle class in society, especially those who are **educated, economically secure, and often involved in professions or business.**

proletariat: the **working class (labourers/workers)**.

swadeshi: use of **indigenous (home-made) goods**.

poorna swaraj: **complete independence (full self-rule)**.

6.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS/ EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the causes responsible for the rise of Extremism in Indian nationalism.
- Q2. Explain the main features and ideology of the Extremist leaders.
- Q3. Evaluate the activities and methods adopted by the Extremists during the national movement.
- Q4. Extremism gained strength from diverse socio-economic groups in Indian society.” Explain.

6.8 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. “The failure of the Moderates led to the rise of Extremism”. Explain.
- Q2. Critically examine the achievements and limitations of the Extremist movement in India.
- Q3. “Extremism emerged as a reaction to political frustration and colonial exploitation”. Explain.

6.9 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

- Q1. See Section 6.2
- Q2. See Section 6.2
- Q3. See Section 6.2
- Q4. See Section 6.2
- Q5. See Section 6.2

Fill in the blanks

- a. Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- b. Aurobindo Ghosh
- c. The Indian Universities Act (1904)
- d. Moderates
- e. Bengal

CYP II

- Q1. See Section: 6.3
Q2. See Section: 6.3
Q3. See Section: 6.3
Q4. See Section: 6.3

CYP III

- Q1. See Section: 6.4
Q2. See Section: 6.4
Q3. See Section: 6.4
Q4. See Section: 6.4

Fill in the Blanks

- a. *Mrs. and Miss Kennedy*
b. *Lucknow*
c. Indian Press Act (1910)
d. *R. C. Rand (British Plague Commissioner of Pune)*

6.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Ishita Banerjee Dube, *A History of Modern India*, Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983.
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PARTITION OF BENGAL

STRUCTURE

- 7.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 7.1 Introduction**
- 7.2 Partition of Bengal**
- 7.3 Response**
- 7.4 Annulment of Partition of Bengal in 1911**
- 7.5 Let us sum up**
- 7.6 Glossary**
- 7.7 Self-Assessment Questions/Examination Oriented Questions**
- 7.8 Lesson End Exercises**
- 7.9 Answer Key**
- 7.10 Suggested Readings**

7.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Learning Objectives

Dear learners, the objective of this lesson is to enable you to:

- discuss the background and reasons behind the Partition of Bengal (1905).
- examine the role of Lord Curzon and British administrative policies.
- explain the political motives behind the partition, especially the policy of divide and rule.
- examine the significance of the partition in the growth of Indian nationalism.

Learning Outcomes

Dear learners, after going through this lesson, you will have a clear understanding about:

- the real motives behind the partition, including the policy of divide and rule.
- the significance of the partition in strengthening Indian nationalism.
- how to critically interpret historical events and their long-term impact.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, the Partition of Bengal in 1905 was a landmark event in the history of India's national movement. It was carried out by Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India, who divided the large Bengal Presidency into two parts—Eastern Bengal and Assam, and Western Bengal. The British government justified this decision on administrative grounds, stating that Bengal was too vast to be efficiently governed. However, the move was widely perceived by Indians as a deliberate attempt to weaken the growing nationalist movement by dividing people along religious and regional lines, particularly between Hindus and Muslims. The partition sparked widespread protests and gave rise to the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements, marking an important phase in India's struggle for independence. Dear learners, let us discuss in detail.

7.2 THE PARTITION OF BENGAL

Before 1905, Bengal was the largest and most populous province of British India. It included present-day West Bengal, Bangladesh, Bihar, Odisha and Assam. Viceroy Lord Curzon argued that the Bengal Presidency had become too large to govern effectively. The province covered nearly 1,90,000 square miles with a population of approximately 78 million. Eastern districts of Bengal (now Bangladesh) were neglected due to poor infrastructure and their distance from the capital, Calcutta. The British claimed that Bengal was too large for a single lieutenant-governor to administer effectively, leading to neglect of the eastern districts. So, division was necessary for better administration. Therefore, in 1905, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, announced the partition of Bengal. The partition was meticulously planned to create two distinct demographics:

- **Eastern Bengal and Assam** was designed to have a Muslim majority with capital at Dacca.
- **Western Bengal** was designed to have a Hindu majority, but more importantly, the Bengali speakers were made a minority in their own province by including large numbers of Hindi and Oriya speakers from Bihar and Orissa. Its capital was Calcutta.

The decision was officially announced in July 1905. It was formally carried out on October 16, 1905. This day was observed as a day of mourning throughout Bengal. People fasted, walked barefoot, and famously tied Rakhi on each other's wrists (a move popularized by Rabindranath Tagore) to symbolize the unbreakable unity of Bengalis.

While the British colonial government maintained that the Partition of Bengal was a purely administrative necessity, the Indian nationalists and historians have long identified deeper political motives. The causes can be categorized into official administrative claims and the underlying "divide and rule" strategy. Under the leadership of Lord Curzon, the decision was seen as a calculated attempt to weaken the growing nationalist movement in Bengal as Calcutta was the home of the educated middle class (the *bhadralok*), who were increasingly vocal in their demands for self-rule. It had become a center of anti-colonial activity. Partition was intended to curb their

political reach.

The British sought to win the support of the Muslim community in the East by promising them a province where they would be the majority. By dividing the province along communal lines, the British aimed to implement their policy of divide and rule, creating divisions between Hindus and Muslims. As Home Secretary Herbert Risley famously stated, "Bengal united is a power; Bengal divided will pull in several different ways". In simple terms, Risley meant that when Bengal remained united, its people—regardless of religion or region—could stand together strongly against British rule. A united Bengal had already become a center of political awareness and nationalist activity, which the British saw as a threat. However, if Bengal were divided, especially along religious lines (Hindu-majority West and Muslim-majority East), the unity of the people would weaken. Different groups would focus on their own interests instead of collectively opposing the British. This statement exposes the "divide and rule" policy of the British, showing that the partition was not just for administrative convenience but a deliberate strategy to break the growing strength of Indian nationalism. Thus, what was presented as an administrative reform was widely interpreted as a strategic move to maintain colonial control and suppress the rising demand for self-government.

Check Your Progress (CYP) I

I. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. What caused the partition of Bengal in 1905?

Ans. _____

Q2. Which regions were created after the partition?

Ans. _____

Q3. What was the official reason for the partition?

Ans. _____

Q4. What was the real motive behind the partition?

Ans.

Fill in the Blanks

- i. The partition was announced by _____.
- ii. The capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam was _____.
- iii. The real motive behind the partition was to follow the policy of _____.
- iv. The Partition of Bengal was formally carried out on _____ 1905.

7.3 RESPONSE

The response to the Partition of Bengal in 1905 was unlike anything the British Raj had seen before. It transformed a localized administrative grievance into a nationwide mass movement, marking the transition of the Indian national struggle from elite petitions to popular resistance.

The most immediate and powerful response was the Swadeshi Movement, which formally began with a massive meeting at the Town Hall in Calcutta on August 7, 1905. Public bonfires were lit to burn British-made textiles (especially Manchester cloth) and Liverpool salt. People were encouraged to use only *swadeshi* (indigenously produced) goods. This led to the rise of Indian-owned industries, such as the Bengal Chemicals factory founded by Prafulla Chandra Ray, and various indigenous spinning mills and soap factories. Priests refused to perform ceremonies where foreign salt or sugar was used, and washermen refused to wash foreign clothes.

The day the partition took effect (October 16, 1905) was declared a Day of Mourning. On the suggestion of Rabindranath Tagore, Hindus and Muslims tied *rakhis* (sacred threads) on each other's wrists to symbolize the unbreakable unity of the Bengali people. Thousands walked barefoot in the streets of Calcutta, singing *Vande Mataram* (composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay), which became the anthem of the movement almost overnight.

To protest the British-controlled education system, the National Council of Education was established in 1906 as part of the Swadeshi Movement that followed the Partition of Bengal (1905). Its aim was to promote national education free from British control and to encourage scientific and technical learning rooted in Indian values. This initiative led to the establishment of the Bengal National College in Calcutta, with Aurobindo Ghosh as its first principal. Under his leadership, the college became a centre for nationalist thought and played an important role in inspiring young students to participate in the freedom struggle.

The Partition of Bengal (1905) created a deep divide within the Indian National Congress over the appropriate response to British policies. This rift led to the emergence of two distinct groups—**Moderates** and **Extremists**. The **Moderates**, led by figures like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, believed in constitutional methods such as petitions, prayers, and peaceful protests. They aimed to achieve reforms through dialogue with the British government. In contrast, the **Extremists**, led by Lal-Bal-Pal trio leaders i.e., Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Bipin Chandra Pal, advocated for more assertive methods such as boycott, *swadeshi*, and mass mobilization. Thus, the partition not only intensified the nationalist movement but also exposed ideological differences within the Congress, eventually leading to a split in 1907 (Surat Split).

The Partition of Bengal in 1905 acted as a catalyst for a more militant form of nationalism. When peaceful protests and the Swadeshi movement failed to move the British government, a section of the youth, influenced by the failures of “moderate” politics, turned toward revolutionary methods to achieve *swaraj*. The revolutionary movement was fuelled by a desire for complete independence and a belief that “force must be met by force”. Revolutionaries drew inspiration from the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the unification of Italy, and the writings of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (specifically *Anandamath*). The idea of the “Motherland” as a deity (Bharat Mata) became central, and dying for the country was seen as the highest form of worship.

Secret societies emerged across Bengal to recruit and train youth in physical culture, the use of arms, and the manufacture of explosives.

- **Anushilan Samiti:** Founded in 1902 but gaining massive momentum after 1905, it was one of the most prominent secret societies. Its Calcutta Branch was led by Pramathanath Mitra, it included figures like Jatindranath Banerjee and Barindra Kumar Ghosh. Its Dhaka Branch was led by Pulin Behari Das, it was exceptionally well-organized with hundreds of units across East Bengal.
- **Jugantar Group:** This was an inner circle within the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti. They started the weekly journal *Jugantar* (New Age), which openly preached sedition and revolutionary ideas. Aurobindo Ghosh provided the philosophical and strategic backbone, while his brother, Barindra Kumar Ghosh, managed the operational side.

The period between 1906 and 1911 saw several high-profile attempts to destabilize British authority through targeted assassinations of oppressive officials.

- **The Muzaffarpur Bombing (1908):** Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki attempted to assassinate Kingsford, a judge known for his harsh sentences against nationalists. Although they mistakenly killed two British ladies instead, the event electrified the nation. Khudiram Bose became a folk hero after his execution at the age of 18.
- **The Alipore Conspiracy Case:** Following the Muzaffarpur incident, the British raided a bomb factory in Manicktala. Aurobindo Ghosh, Barindra Ghosh, and others were arrested. The trial became famous when the ‘approver’ (informant) Naren Gossain was shot dead inside the jail by fellow revolutionaries Kanailal Dutt and Satyendranath Bose.

- **The Assassination of Curzon Wylie (1909):** Although it happened in London, it was carried out by Madan Lal Dhingra, showing the global reach of the revolutionary spirit sparked in Bengal.

The press played a crucial role in spreading radical ideas and intensifying the struggle against British rule in the early 20th century. Newspapers like *Jugantar (The New Age)* and others were not simply reporting events—they actively **shaped public opinion and inspired action**. For instance:

- ***Jugantar (The New Age)*:** Founded in 1906 by Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Abhinash Bhattacharya, and Bhupendranath Dutt (brother of Swami Vivekananda), *Jugantar* was the most influential radical weekly of its time. Unlike the moderate newspapers of the time, which often used cautious and indirect language to avoid British censorship, ***Jugantar*** adopted a bold and uncompromising tone. It openly criticized British rule and called for active resistance. When it argued that the “force of the bayonet” could only be countered by the “force of the soul” and physical weapons, it was conveying two key ideas. First, the **“force of the soul”** referred to inner strength—courage, determination, and patriotic spirit needed to resist oppression. Second, the mention of **physical weapons** suggested that moral strength alone was not enough; it justified the use of armed struggle against colonial authority. It published bold articles that directly challenged the 30 crore Indians of the time. By stating that if every Indian raised their arms, British rule could be overthrown instantly, it aimed to **awaken confidence, unity, and a spirit of resistance** among the masses. Its writings subtly encouraged the formation of secret societies, raising funds (sometimes through revolutionary means like “political dacoity”), and even suggested ways to prepare for armed struggle. This reflected the shift toward **extremist and revolutionary nationalism**. The newspaper’s popularity grew rapidly, with circulation reaching around 20,000 copies—a remarkable figure at that time. It was often **read aloud in public spaces like village squares and student hostels**, allowing even those who could not read to engage with its ideas. This helped spread nationalist and revolutionary sentiments widely across Bengal. Overall, *Jugantar* played a crucial role in **radicalizing the freedom movement**, inspiring many young Indians to move from passive resistance to active struggle against British rule.
- ***Sandhya (The Evening)*:** edited by Brahmandhab Upadhyay, used **simple Bengali and sharp sarcasm** to criticize British rule, making its message easy for common people to understand and connect with. For his seditious writings against the British government, he was prosecuted under sedition laws, which were often used by the British to suppress the press and silence voices opposing their rule. He famously declared in court that he was not responsible to a “*mlechha*” (alien/foreigner) government for what he wrote. The death of Brahmandhab Upadhyay during his sedition trial made him a **martyr of the nationalist movement**. His sacrifice strengthened anti-British feelings, and the influence of his newspaper *Sandhya (The Evening)* continued to trouble the colonial government even after his death.
- ***Bande Mataram*:** was an English-language nationalist newspaper, edited for a time by Aurobindo Ghosh, and it served as the intellectual bridge between the Bengali revolutionaries and the rest of India. Aurobindo used the paper to outline the theory of passive resistance, which included boycotts of schools, courts,

and British goods. It promoted the belief that **nationalism was not merely a political agenda, but a sacred duty or “religion given by God,”** encouraging people to serve the nation with deep devotion and spiritual commitment. This gave the movement a spiritual gravity that made the youth willing to face the gallows.

The British authorities viewed these journals as more dangerous than the bombs themselves because they “poisoned the minds” of the youth. These papers argued that British law was merely a tool of exploitation and had no moral authority over Indians. When editors were arrested or papers were banned, the press reported on the trials in a way that turned the accused into national heroes, inspiring a fresh wave of recruits. The law Newspapers Incitement to Offences Act (1908) was specifically enacted to crush papers like *Jugantar* and *Sandhya*. It allowed the government to confiscate printing presses if they published content that “incited violence”.

The Partition of Bengal triggered a powerful and widespread series of protests known as the **Swadeshi Movement**, during which Indians boycotted British goods (especially Manchester cloth and Liverpool salt), promoted indigenous products, and actively participated in nationalist activities. The movement was significant because it **brought new sections of society into politics**, especially **students and women**. Students were the backbone of the boycott, picketing shops selling foreign goods. The British responded with the Carlyle Circular (1905), threatening to withdraw grants and scholarships from schools whose students participated in politics. Women for the first time, women in large numbers left their homes to join processions, participate in picketing, and donate their jewellery to the national fund. This made the freedom struggle broader and more inclusive.

The partition sparked a massive outpouring of Bengali art, literature, and music. Rabindranath Tagore wrote *Amar Shonar Bangla* to inspire unity. Patriotic songs and plays became a primary medium for spreading the message of resistance to the rural masses. In 1907, the Indian Society of Oriental Art was founded by Abanindranath Tagore, the nephew of Rabindranath Tagore, broke the hegemony of Western art styles, creating the famous “Bharat Mata” painting, which depicted the nation as a mother figure to be protected. The painting depicts a saffron-clad woman, portrayed as a four-armed deity, standing on green earth. Each of her four hands holds an object representing a different aspect of national identity and self-reliance (*swadeshi*):

- **A Book (Vedas):** Represents the wealth of Indian knowledge, education, and spiritual heritage.
- **Sheaves of Paddy (Rice):** Symbolizes the agricultural richness of the land and the need for food security.
- **A Rosary (Akshamala):** Represents spiritual power, devotion, and the religious fabric of India.
- **A Piece of White Cloth:** Symbolizes the *swadeshi* textile movement—the push for Indian-made cloth (*khadi*) to gain economic independence.

This painting marked the birth of the Bengal School, which sought to decolonize Indian art by looking back at traditional roots and Asian aesthetics.

The response to the partition proved that the British could no longer ignore organized Indian public opinion. While the partition was eventually annulled in 1911, the movement had already succeeded in radicalizing a new

generation of leaders and establishing self-rule (*swaraj*) as the ultimate goal of the freedom struggle.

Check Your Progress (CYP) II

I. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. Which movement started as a reaction to the Partition of Bengal?

Q2. Name two newspapers that supported the anti-partition movement.

Q3. On which occasion was *Amar Sonar Bangla* composed?

Q4. Who painted the first famous image of *Bharat Mata* and in which year was it created?

Fill in the Blanks

- a. In 1907, the Indian Society of Oriental Art was founded by _____.
- b. The Partition of Bengal led to the _____ in the Congress.

- c. Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Abhinash Bhattacharya, and Bhupendranath founded the radical newspaper _____.
- d. The Carlyle Circular was part of the British attempt to control the _____ movement in Bengal.

7.4 ANNULMENT OF PARTITION OF BENGAL IN 1911

The annulment of the Partition of Bengal in 1911 was a monumental event in British Indian history. It was a rare instance where the British government bowed to the pressure of public opinion and the persistent unrest caused by the Swadeshi movement. The announcement was made by King George V himself during the Delhi Durbar on December 12, 1911. The British realized that the 1905 partition had backfired. Instead of “dividing and ruling”, it had:

- Unified nationalists across India.
- Given rise to militant revolutionary activities.
- Caused a significant economic hit through the boycott of British goods.
- Made Bengal almost ungovernable due to constant strikes and protests.

The “annulment” didn’t simply restore the status quo of 1904. Instead, the British redrew the map of Eastern India entirely to achieve administrative efficiency without the communal “split” that had caused the uproar.

- **Reunification of Bengal:** The Bengali-speaking districts of the East and West were reunited into a single province.
- **Separation of Bihar and Orissa:** To keep the province at a manageable size, Bihar and Orissa were carved out of Bengal to form a new, separate province.
- **Assam:** Reverted to being a separate Chief Commissioner’s province.

It marked the transition of the Indian National Congress from ‘Moderate’ petitions to “Extremist” mass agitations.

Perhaps the most significant part of the 1911 announcement was the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi. The British wanted to move the seat of government away from the “seditious” atmosphere of Calcutta, which had become the heart of revolutionary activity. Delhi was the traditional seat of power for the Mughal and other Indian empires. By moving there, the British aimed to project themselves as the legitimate successors to those imperial traditions. Delhi was more centrally located than Calcutta, making it easier to administer the vast territories of north and west India.

Nationalists celebrated the annulment as a major victory. It proved that organized mass protest could force the Raj to retreat. Many Muslim political leaders in Eastern Bengal felt betrayed. They had supported the 1905 partition because it gave them a majority province and better educational/employment prospects. To appease them, the British promised the establishment of a University at Dacca (now University of Dhaka).

Although the physical borders were erased in 1911, the political division between communities had been deepened,

eventually contributing to the atmosphere that led to the final partition of 1947. By creating a Muslim-majority province in Eastern Bengal, the British successfully sowed seeds of suspicion between the two major communities. Encouraged by the British and the prospect of a separate political identity, the All-India Muslim League (1906) was formed in Dacca. This provided a platform for separate communal interests, which eventually evolved into the demand for a separate nation decades later.

Check Your Progress (CYP) III

II. On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. What was the main reason behind the annulment of the Partition of Bengal?

Q2. Which districts were reunited during the reorganization of Bengal?

Q3. Why were the Bengali-speaking districts reunited?

Q4. Which movement demanded the reunification of Bengal?

Fill in the Blanks

- a. The Partition of Bengal was annulled in the year _____.
- b. The annulment of Bengal Partition was announced at the _____ Durbar.
- c. The decision to cancel the Partition was made by King _____.
- d. The capital of British India was shifted from _____ to _____ in 1911.

7.5 LET US SUM UP

Dear learners, the Partition of Bengal (1905) introduced by Lord Curzon under the pretext of administrative convenience was widely recognized as an attempt to divide Indians and weaken the growing unity among them. It shifted the political landscape from moderate petitions to radical mass mobilization. Instead of achieving its objective, the partition intensified nationalist feelings and united people across regions. It led to the rise of the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements, encouraged self-reliance, and marked the beginning of mass participation in the freedom struggle. Ultimately, the strong opposition forced the British to annul the partition in 1911, highlighting the power of organized public resistance and strengthening the foundation of India's fight for independence. However, the communal seeds sown during this period remained. The 1905 partition is often viewed as the "dress rehearsal" for the final Partition of India in 1947. It showed how dividing people on religious and regional lines could be used as a political strategy.

7.6 GLOSSARY

Swadeshi: means the use and promotion of Indian-made goods and boycott of foreign goods to support national self-reliance.

Khadi: is a hand-spun and hand-woven cloth made from cotton, promoted as a symbol of self-reliance and Swadeshi during India's freedom movement.

Rakhi: is a sacred thread tied on the wrist during the festival of Raksha Bandhan, symbolizing love, protection, and the bond between brothers and sisters.

Mlechha: (alien/foreigner)

7.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS/ EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Explain why the Partition of Bengal is considered a turning point in India's freedom struggle.
- Q2. How did the Partition of Bengal lead to the rise of extremist nationalism in India?
- Q3. "The Partition of Bengal was more political than administrative." Discuss.

7.8 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. Discuss in detail the causes and objectives of the Partition of Bengal (1905).
- Q2. Examine the reaction of the Indian people to the Partition of Bengal.
- Q3. Describe the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements that followed the Partition of Bengal.
- Q4. Evaluate the statement: “Bengal united is a power; Bengal divided will pull in several different ways.”

7.9 ANSWER KEY

CYP I

- Q1. See Section 7.2
- Q2. See Section 7.2
- Q3. See Section 7.2
- Q4. See Section 7.2

Fill in the Blanks

- i. Lord Curzon
- ii. Dacca
- iii. divide and rule
- iv. October 16

CYP II

- Q1. See Section 7.3
- Q2. See Section 7.3
- Q3. See Section 7.3
- Q4. See Section 7.3

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Abanindranath Tagore
- b. Surat split (1907)
- c. Jugantar
- d. Swadeshi

CYP III

Q1. See Section 7.4

Q2. See Section 7.4

Q3. See Section 7.4

Q4. See Section 7.4

Fill in the Blanks

a. 1911

b. Delhi Durbar

c. George V

d. Calcutta to Delhi

7.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Nityapriya Ghosh and Ashoke Kumar Mukhopadhyay (ed.), *The Partition of Bengal: Significant Signposts (1905–1911)*, Kolkata: Sahitya Samsad, 2005.
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SWADESHI MOVEMENT

STRUCTURE

- 8.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 8.1 Introduction**
- 8.2 Swadeshi Movement**
- 8.3 Let us sum up**
- 8.4 Glossary**
- 8.5 Self -Assessment Questions/ Examination Oriented Questions**
- 8.6 Lesson End Exercises**
- 8.7 Answer Key**
- 8.8 Suggested Readings**

8.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Dear Learners, the objectives of this lesson is to enable you to:

- Learn about the spread of the Swadeshi movement.
- Examine the nature of the Swadeshi movement.
- Learn about the ideology and activities of the participants of the Swadeshi movement.

Learning Outcomes

Dear learners, after going through this lesson you will have a clear understanding about:

- The role, ideology and spread of the Swadeshi movement

- The reaction and retaliation of the British government
- The spread of swadeshi movement to other part of India.
- The part played by the extremists in the Swadeshi movement.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Learners, the Swadeshi movement that started in 1905 in opposition to the partition of Bengal proved to be a major turning point in the national movement. This was in a sense the first effort at a mass participation by the Indian population. The Moderates and the Extremists both inspite of their differences initially came together to oppose the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon. The British wanted to drive a wedge between the Hindus and the Muslims and also wanted to isolate the educated middle classes of Bengal who were leading the nationalist movement against them. This movement spread to different parts of India.

8.2 SWADESHI MOVEMENT

Learners, Lord Curzon's scheme of partitioning Bengal was aimed at weakening Bengali nationalists who he believed controlled the Indian National Congress. However, the announcement of partition of Bengal backfired as it revitalized the Bengali leadership. Already the petitions that had been sent by the Congress leaders had been ignored by the British. This had angered the Bengali leaders. The famines and epidemics of the 1890s and the rising prices due to bad harvests in the first years of the twentieth century had made life difficult for the people of Bengal. So economic difficulties along with political disappointments created an anti-British sentiment among the people. The Indians also faced numerous incidents racial discrimination and arrogance that received publicity and were highlighted by the Indian newspapers. Additionally, the regional identity of the Bengalis was very strong as in the past they had long periods of regional independence. This Bengali identity was boosted by cultural developments of the nineteenth century that included language, literature, birth of vernacular journals and newspapers that discussed issues of importance, and several associations that created awareness and worked for the benefit of the community. There was a sense of community that cut across class, caste and numerous barriers. All this along with economic problems that affected all sections of population in Bengal united the Zamindars, professional middle classes and the working class at least for a short period of time.

This unity was complemented by international events such as the British defeat in the Anglo-Boer wars in 1880-81 and 1899-1902 against the Boers (the Dutch colonial settlers) in the Transvaal region of South Africa, which tarnished the image of British power. The unexpected victory of Japan over Russia in 1904-05 destroyed the myth of European supremacy and made the Asian proud of their success. Such events were hailed and publicized

by the Bengali press. The Bengali newspapers Sanjibani and Hitavarta in June 1905 praised the Chinese boycott of American goods in protest against immigration laws. This was just before the boycott movement in Bengal. Thus in the beginning of the twentieth century British domination came to be questioned and search for indigenous alternatives began.

Along with the threat of partition of Bengal, Lord Curzon who was prejudiced against the educated middle classes of India and went on to say that they did not have much regard for truth. This angered the politically conscious Indians. Further, he made changes in the Calcutta Corporation Act, reducing the public representation in the Corporation by half and gave representation to the European community in Calcutta.

Lord Curzon was also responsible for getting the Indian Universities Act, passed in 1904. This Act placed all decisions on crucial matters such as affiliation and disaffiliation of colleges in the hands of government officials and increased the official representation in the governing bodies of the universities. It was his way of ensuring that college authorities would discourage any political activity and agitation among their teachers and students. The Act resulted in open protest in the colleges, mainly of Bengal. In such a situation the British government's decision to move ahead with the partition of Bengal, despite petitions, meetings, conferences and demonstrations against it, confirmed the need for action.

The Partition of Bengal was a political maneuver to divide the Bengalis. Curzon's idea was to divide the existing province of Bengal by creating a full-fledged province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, with Dacca as its capital. He suggested that this division, which no Indian group had asked for, would serve the interests of Muslims who formed a Majority of the population in Eastern Bengal. This was said to drive a wedge between Hindus and Muslims. Curzon also expected that the influence of nationalist in Calcutta, by promoting Dacca as an alternative centre, would weaken. Many big zamindars settled in Calcutta had their estates in Eastern Bengal and they could now be expected to shift to Dacca, thereby depriving Calcutta politicians of their patronage and support. Curzon himself left India for Britain in 1904, but the Partition of Bengal was announced on 19 July 1905, before his term of viceroyalty had formally ended.

The announcement of the partition of Bengal caused anger not only in Calcutta but in the whole of Bengal, and led to the first real large-scale agitation launched under the nationalist. In Bengal the Partition was seen not as a simple administrative arrangement but as an act of humiliation for the Bengalis. It aroused revulsion and anger among the educated classes of Bengal, including especially students and among the section of people in towns and villages that the educated classes could influence.

Soon after the announcement of partition in July, spontaneously organized meetings of protest were held, with students in the lead. Moderate and extremist leaders like Surendranath Banerjee and Bipin Chandra Pal came together, and there was agreement that the protest should have an effective weapon. This was found in the 'Boycott' of British products, especially cotton cloth and woollens, Britain's main items of export to India, in order to hurt Britain as well as promote Swadeshi or Indian home industry. On 7 August 1905, the Boycott resolution was passed at a meeting in the Town Hall of Calcutta. It was hoped that the Boycott movement would also spread to other parts of India. On the appeal made by Rabindra Nath Tagore and Ramendrasundar Trivedi, secretary of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad (Literary Council of Bengal founded in 1894, and headed by Trivedi between 1904 and 1911), on 16 October 1905, Rakhi Bandhan was observed, Rakhis of coloured threads were exchanged as a symbol of brotherhood and unity. This was a symbol of unity of Bengal as a whole and the rest of India – unity of the nation against the British rule. On 18 October, when the Partition was to come legally into effect, fasting was organized throughout Bengal, a *hartal* (market closure) being also observed in Calcutta. Nationalist leaders addressed large meetings and Bankim Chandra's *Bande Mataram* became the national song of Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore composed his most stirring song, *Amar Sonar Bangla* (now the national anthem of Bangladesh), that helped to inspire protest wherever Bengali was spoken or understood.

A large number of students, mostly Hindu from both parts of Bengal and some Muslims of western Bengal started the process of boycott which was quite effective for some months. Bonfires of imported cotton textiles and British educational institutions and law courts was common. The Indian National Congress took charge and the boycott spread to other parts of India, mainly Punjab, Maharashtra and Telugu speaking areas of the Madras Presidency in solidarity with Bengal. Gopalkrishan Gokhale, a Moderate leader from Maharashtra, supported and paid tribute to the Bengalis for their role in the Swadeshi movement. In December 1906 in Calcutta he held *swadeshi* to be equivalent to avoidance of 'foreign articles' or, in effect, boycott, in which all Indians should join. Between August 1905 and September 1906, there was a twenty two percent fall in the quantity of imported cotton piece goods, forty four percent in cotton twist and yarn, eleven percent in salt, fifty five percent in cigarettes and sixty eight percent in boots and shoes. It is relevant to point out the significance attached to cloth as a commodity. Analyses has shown that cloth and clothing articulated colonial power and authority in the nineteenth century and that is the reason why the nationalists tried to use cloth in their challenge to colonial rule. Boycott of British textiles was the main force of the boycott movement and the aim of Swadeshi was to reconstitute social taste of the locals from the foreign made cloth to coarse Indian cloth. Boycott boosted the effort to promote local goods thereby giving a push to indigenous economy. Cloth became the element through which resistance to the

British was enforced. This element was taken over and given great importance by Mahatma Gandhi.

The British came down hard on the students and the government threatened to withdraw grants, affiliation and scholarships from nationalist dominated institutions. This led to the movement for boycott of British educational institutions and the founding of National schools. A large contribution of one lakh rupees by Raja Subodh Mullick aided this effort. A national council of education was set up in 1906 and the Bengal National College was established. Even more important was the setting up of more than a dozen national schools in Bengal and Bihar also in districts of East Bengal. The primary schools established in Mymensingh, Faridpur and Bakharganj that had large number of Muslim and low caste students. This alarmed the British as they were worried that nationalist and anti-British ideas would spread to the children and youth by means of primary education. Unfortunately, these schools did not survive for long.

The movement opposing the partition of Bengal slowed down in 1906. The Nationalists were divided over how the struggle was to be continued. A large group preferred a long-term perspective of mass awakening through a programme of national education and cultural uplift, led by Rabindranath Tagore, who, under the principle of *atmashakti* or 'self-power', set forth a scheme of rural awakening and village-oriented education. The Tagore family also took the initiative in establishing national industries. The idea of popularizing Indian products had been gathering momentum since the 1890s. Members of the Tagore family and some other leaders had been organizing fairs and setting up stores to promote production and sale of Indian handicrafts. Rabindranath's Swadeshi Bhandar (1897) and Jogesh Chandra Chaudhary's Indian Stores (1901) along with Sarla Debi's Lakshmir Bhandar (1903) are such examples. The Swadeshi gave boost to such efforts. Bengali intellectuals like Satish Chandra Mukherjee criticized the industrial revolution and supported Indian handicrafts as Indian alternatives to large-scale industry. He had pioneered the National education movement by founding the Bhagabat Chatuspathi in 1895. By adopting this path of growth in artisanal products and national education, he asserted that Indian would have a modern but ethical life.

Many Bengali leaders sought to promote industry by providing technical education. One result of this was the establishment of the Technical College at Jadavpur, Calcutta, in 1907, built and maintained through private donations. Another feature of the movement in Bengal was the formation of societies with their 'volunteers' for various causes, directly or indirectly connected with the anti-Partition Struggle. This reflected much unrest among the youth without there being a central organization to coordinate activities.

Another important development of the Swadeshi movement was the industrial unrest. A walk-out of 247 Bengali

clerks in the Burn Company in Howrah in protest against derogatory work regulations was followed by strikes in some Jute mills, railway workshops and government presses. It was at this time that the first proper labour union. The Printers Union was formed in October 1905. Similarly, there was a strike by clerks of East India Railway in 1906 that resulted in the formation of a Railwaymen's Union. Bengali barristers like Aswini Coomar Banerji, PrabhatkumRoychaudhari and Premtosh Bose worked with the labourers and this was reflected in the Anglo-Indian journal Pioneer in August 1906. However, this effort was limited to clerks and jute-mill worker in and around Calcutta. The plantation and mine workers remained mainly unaffected. Also by 1908 nationalist interest in affairs of labour had declined.

In Maharashtra, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar popularized Swadeshi through the ideas of DadabhaiNaoroji and Ranade. His work titled Desher Katha spoke against colonial mindset and was banned in 1910. But by then it had sold over fifteen thousand copies and inspired swadeshi street plays and folk songs and was revered by Swadeshi activists. The cause of Swadeshi and boycott was supported in Telegu-speaking regions of Madras Presidency in meetings organized in Rajamundhry, Kakinada and Masulipatnam from 1906 onwards. Bepin Pal also visited this region in April 1907 and students attended his talks. The state repressed the students and this resulted in attempts to set up schools in present Andhra Pradesh and Telengana.

In the directly politically political sphere throughout 1906 the Moderates and the Extremists largely kept together, though tension between them was clear. Both groups took care to keep Muslim opinion sympathetic or at least neutral, but the Extremists' used Hindu religion as a mobilizing force. The 'Shivaji utsav' (May 1906), which the Extremists held with much fanfare, involving the worship of goddess Bhavani – strongly endorsed by Tilak – seemed to show little concern for the Muslims who constituted the majority of the Bengal-speaking population.

The differences between the Moderates and the Extremists were temporarily covered up at the Congress session in Calcutta in December 1906, presided over by the veteran DadabhaiNaoroji. Both moderates and extremists agreed to work on an effective common platform. They denounced the partition of Bengal and demanded that the British government 'reverse or modify Partition in such a manner as to keep the Bengali-speaking community under one undivided administration'. On the issue of boycott of British cloth, the Congress set forth the Moderate view. The boycott 'was held to be legitimate' in Bengal, but here was no call to extend it to the whole country. A third resolution endorsed the Swadeshi Movement with the aim of promoting Indian industry and for that purpose advocated preference of indigenous over foreign products, even at some 'sacrifices'. The resolution on 'Self-Government' set for India the goal of dominion status but the immediate proposals were moderate: the old one of

competitive examinations for civil service being held in both India and England; adequate Indian representation in executive Councils and the expansion of Legislative Councils 'allowing larger and truly effective representation of the people'; and larger powers for local bodies. The interests of the middle-class constituency of the Congress were reflected in every specific demand.

At this session it was also decided that provincial committees would be formed and district conferences held. Surendranath Banerjee organized a series of successive district conferences in Bengal in 1907. The extremists were largely excluded from these activities.

With passing time popular mobilization became more and more difficult on the basis of the same slogans, differences between the Moderate and Extremist leaders again came into the open. In 1906 Bipin Chandra Pal, the Extremist leader of Bengal started a daily, *BandeMataram*, of which Aurobindo Ghose became editor. They began to raise the movement's level of militancy by propagating the desirability of passive resistance' (an Irish formula for peaceful violation of laws) and an extension of the boycott of foreign cloth to a boycott of all activities of the government. The Extremists wanted these measures to be propagated in regions outside Bengal as well and so Pal went on a tour not only of Bengal, but also of Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Madras, during 1907. Another even more radical voice was the weekly *Yugantar* launched in April 1906. By the second half of 1908 it was selling over 15,000 copies; it regarded even passive resistance insufficient and called for violent revolution.

Moderates rejected this open defiance of the British government. They felt that these methods of agitation would annoy the Liberal government in power in Britain. Thus, no favours or concessions would be granted to Indians. It was decided by the moderates to purge the Congress of the extremists. The venue of the Congress annual session in 1907 was shifted from Nagpur to Surat. The moderates and extremists disagreed on most issues and no compromise could be reached. As the moderates outnumbered the extremists delegates they prevailed and the Extremists retreated to another venue, and the split in the Congress was complete.

The British government came down hard on the extremists. On 21 June 1908 Tilak was arrested, charged with disloyalty and enmity towards the British Crown, and on 28 July he was sentenced to transportation for six years. In protest against the sentencing there was a general *hartal* in Bombay for a week from 22 July (the day he was convicted), while the city's industrial workers went on strike for six days. The government called out the army, and about 200 men were reputedly killed in police and army firing. Tilak was to remain in prison until 1914, at Mandalay in Burma. At Tuticorin in Madras Presidency, a similar incident had occurred in March. When two local Extremist leaders and sweepers and carriage-drivers went on strike; and there were police firings on crowds at Tuticorin as well as Tinnevely.

In Bengal nine leading nationalists had been 'deported' already in December 1907. In May 1908, the police arrested Aurobindo Ghose with thirty-eight others accused of conspiracy and armed actions. Aurobindo Ghose was defended by the lawyer and future nationalist leader C.R. Das (1870-1925), who won acquittal for him in May 1909. But Aurobindo's political career had ended. Bipin Chandra Pal was put in prison for eight months (1907-08) for refusing to give evidence in a sedition case against Aurobindo Ghose in 1907. He left India in August 1908 for a three year stay in England.

A peasant agitation in the canal colonies had taken place in the Punjab in 1907. Lala Lajpat Rai who participated in this agitation had been deported to Burma in the same year. His preference for the Moderates was not accepted by Tilak's supporters and Lajpat Rai decided voluntarily left, going abroad in 1908 to return only twelve years later. Another exile was the famous radical nationalist poet in Tamil, Subramania Bharati (1882-1921), who too escaped to Pondicherry in 1908. Not only by trials and imprisonments did the government try to suppress the Extremists. In June 1908 it started seizing printing presses. These powers were further strengthened by the Vernacular Press Act passed in February 1910. The *Yugantar* was among the first to be closed down by the police in 1908. Other nationalist papers too were closed down.

Students let us look at certain drawbacks in the Swadeshi movement. The Bengali intellectuals had failed to get the support of Marwari traders and Saha merchants of Calcutta. It is true that there was decline in the sale of Manchester cloth, but this was due to a dispute between Marwari traders and British manufacturers and once the dispute was resolved the Marwari traders started to sell the British cloth. This aroused the anger of Swadeshi volunteers whose call for boycott of foreign cloth was ignored by the Marwari merchants. Boycott was also not taken up with much zeal in other parts of India. The Swadeshi movement was led by intellectuals who came from landholding and professional classes not traders and merchants. Therefore, their experiments with industries and labour unions resulted in limited success.

According to the eminent historian Sumit Sarkar, the Swadeshi movement led to two important impressions – one is 'a sense of richness and promise', an outpouring of 'national energies bursting out in diverse streams of political activity, intellectual debate and cultural efflorescence'. And the second, 'a feeling of anti-climax, at the blighting of so many hopes'. It is true that the partition was revoked in 1911 but by then it had become a minor issue in the face of a clear divide in the Congress leadership, a worsening of Hindu-Muslim relations and a turn towards Muslim separatism fanned by the British.

Check your Progress (CYP) I

Q1. Who was Aurobindo Ghosh?

Q2. What was Tilak's role in the Swadeshi movement?

Q3. What was Rabindranath Tagore's contribution to the Swadeshi movement?

Q4. What were the drawbacks of the Swadeshi movement?

Fill in the Blanks

- a. The- _____ was among the first newspapers to be closed down by the police in 1908.
- b. Aurobindo Ghose was defended by the lawyer and future nationalist leader _____ (1870-1925), who won acquittal for him in May 1909.
- c. A national council of education was set up in _____ and the Bengal National College was established.
- d. _____ composed his most stirring song, *Amar Sonar Bangla* that helped to inspire protest.

8.3 LET US SUM UP

Learners, the Swadeshi movement started as a reaction to the partition of Bengal against the British. The Partition of Bengal by the British aroused large-scale anger and reaction from the educated intellectual Bengalis. There were various other social as well as economic reasons for this movement. Boycott was the most important tool adopted by the participants. National education and indigenous factories were set up as part of the protest. Along with Bengal, there was protest in other regions like Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu also. Use of press and literature was made to create consciousness and also for promoting the Swadeshi ideal. The Swadeshi movement was successful to a certain extent but also had its weaknesses.

8.4 GLOSSARY

Hartal: strike

Atmasakti: Self-power

Swadeshi: use of indigenous goods and services

Zamindar: landlord

8.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS/ EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Examine the causes leading to the Swadeshi movement.
- Q2. Throw light on the evolution of the Swadeshi movement.
- Q3. Was the Swadeshi movement a success? Comment.

8.6 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. Analyse the role played by the moderates and extremists in the Swadeshi movement.

Q2. Evaluate the methodology and the programme of the leaders of the Swadeshi movement.

Q3. Highlight the spread of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal as well as other parts of India.

8.7 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

1. See Section 8.2
2. See Section 8.2
3. See Section 8.2
4. See Section 8.2

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Yugantar
- b. C.R. Das
- c. 1906
- d. Rabindranath Tagore

8.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Irfan Habib, *The National Movement- Origins and Early Phase, to 1918*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2017.
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RISE OF ECONOMIC NATIONALISM**STRUCTURE**

- 9.0 Learning objectives and outcomes**
- 9.1 Introduction**
- 9.2 Persistent Scholarly Debate**
- 9.3 Leading Exponents of Economic Critique of Colonialism**
 - 9.3.1 Key characteristics of their Argument**
 - 9.3.2 Interrelated Economic Concepts and Themes.**
 - 9.3.3 Foreign capital Investment**
 - 9.3.4 Ruin of Traditional Handicrafts**
 - 9.3.5 Policy of Free Trade**
 - 9.3.6 Drain Theory**
- 9.4 Standard Imperialist Defence**
- 9.5 Let us sum up**
- 9.6 Glossary**
- 9.7 Examination Oriented Questions**
- 9.8 Lesson End Exercises**
- 9.9 Answer Key**
- 9.10 Suggested Readings**

9.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOMES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to-

- explain the Ideological basis of the formulation of economic critique of colonialism.
- understand the Key economic concepts like drain of wealth, de- industrialization, free trade, foreign capital investment, pattern of trade etc.

- explore how economic nationalism contributed to the growth of Indian national political thought.
- analyse the impact of economic critique on India's freedom struggle

Learning Outcomes

After going through the lesson, you will have the clear understanding about-

- the economic policies of the colonial government and how it impoverished the country.
- the economic critique of colonialism generated the consciousness of nationalism.
- the contribution of the moderate leadership which laid the foundation for the mass movement for independence.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learner, in this lesson you will understand the colonial economic policies and its impact on the nation. From around 1870s British India began to suffer repeated famines and persistent Indian poverty became more evident. Indian intellectuals expected that British rule would help modernize India and develop India's productive forces through the introduction of modern technology and capitalist economic organization. They were in favour of continuation of the British rule as they expected it to contribute to the reconstruction and modernization of India. However, disillusionment set in gradually after 1860s as the reality failed to confirm to their hopes as the country was regressing and under developing. they began to probe deeper in to the economic policies of the British rule and its impact on India. Thus, the section of Indian intelligentsia began to develop a powerful critique of economic consequences of British rule.

9.2 PERSISTENT SCHOLARLY DEBATE

These intellectuals propagated it through newspaper pamphlets, speeches and patriotic literature. Important spokespersons were Dada Bhai Naoroji, R.C. Dutt. They led persistent academic debate which had occupied the core of modern Indian historical research. The analytical framework of economic nationalism was some what constricted as it posited an oversimplified opposition between colonial oppression and Indian suffering ignoring the instances of the collusion between Indian elite and colonial power. They pointed out the fundamental questions regarding the objectives of British rule in India. Ultimately, they examined the process of the colonisation of the Indian economy and concluded that colonialism constituted the principal impediment to India's economic development.

9.3 LEADING EXPONENTS OF ECONOMIC CRITIQUE OF COLONIALISM

Among the large number of Indian thinkers who undertook an economic critique of British rule during 1870–1905, among them three figures are particularly prominent. The most notable among them was Dadabhai Naoroji, often referred to as the “Grand Old Man of India.” A successful businessman, he devoted his life and resources to the Indian national movement. He is best known for formulating the theory of the “drain of wealth.”

Another prominent figure in this intellectual tradition was Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, who, along with his contemporaries, critically assessed colonial economic policies and consistently advocated for modern industrial

development. Romesh Chunder Dutt, a retired Indian Civil Service officer, authored *The Economic History of India*, in which he systematically and in great detail examined the economic trajectory of colonial rule from 1757 onwards.

Together with these thinkers, Dadabhai Naoroji, G. V. Joshi, G. Subramanian Iyer, G. K. Gokhale, P. C. Ray, and numerous other political leaders and journalists subjected various dimensions of the colonial economy and its policies to rigorous and detailed analysis.

They recognized that the essence of British imperialism lay in the subordination of the Indian economy to the interests of the British economy. They analysed the colonial structure in its three interrelated dimensions—trade, industry, and finance. They further observed that colonialism had moved beyond the overt mechanisms of plunder and mercantilism and now operated through more subtle and complex processes such as free trade and foreign capital investment thereby, transforming India into a supplier of food grains and raw materials for the metropolis, a market for British manufactured goods and a field for the investment of British capital.

These nationalist leaders functioned simultaneously as learners and educators. They organised a sustained and influential intellectual critique of major colonial economic policies.

9.3.1 Key Characteristics of their Argument

Dadabhai Naoroji and R. C. Dutt transformed poverty into a broad national concern, thereby contributing to the articulation of a shared consciousness that helped unite diverse regions and sections of Indian society.

Economic development was seen as rapid development of modern industries. They were unanimous that a complete transformation of the country depends on modern technology and capitalist enterprise. Ranade put emphasis on modern industry as a key force capable of fostering economic integration and thereby contributing to the unification of India's diverse population into a cohesive national entity.

They also looked up all other issues such as foreign trade, railway tariffs, currency and exchange, finance and labour legislation

9.3.2 Interrelated Economic Concepts and Themes.

Drain of wealth, deindustrialization, excessive land revenue burdens with forced commercialization kept the country poor and backward. Some measures taken by the British government by encouraging foreign capital investment, and unfair tariff policy were also for economic exploitation of India. The early nationalists were unequivocal in their assertion that India's industrialisation should be based upon indigenous capital rather than foreign capital.

9.3.3 Foreign Capital Investment

The Britishers claimed that the early nationalists saw foreign capital as an unmitigated evil which exploited and impoverished the country. Foreign capital represented exploitation of Indian resources. Kayasth Samachar described the use of foreign capital as system of international depredation. They further argued that rather than fostering and expanding indigenous capital, foreign capital tended to displace and suppress it. Moreover, they maintained that the political implications of foreign capital investment generated vested interests that sought guarantees for investors, thereby reinforcing and perpetuating colonial rule.

9.3.4 Ruin of Traditional Handicrafts

Another major issue highlighted by them was the decline and destruction of traditional handicrafts, which they attributed to a deliberate policy aimed at suppressing indigenous industries in the interest of British manufacturers. This interpretation was contested by British officials, who cited the rapid expansion of India's foreign trade and the extensive construction of railways as evidence of economic progress and increasing prosperity. In contrast, the nationalist critique held that foreign trade and railway development did not signify genuine economic advancement but rather reflected the processes of colonial exploitation and the structural underdevelopment of the Indian economy.

The crucial issue in foreign trade, they argued, was not merely its volume but the pattern and composition of goods exchanged internationally as well as their impact on domestic industry and agriculture. They observed that during the nineteenth century this structure had undergone a profound transformation. India increasingly becoming an exporter of raw materials and an importer of manufactured goods.

Furthermore, the nationalists maintained that the railways rather than being aligned with India's industrial requirements were primarily designed to facilitate commercial and colonial interests rather than indigenous industrial development. Railway lines were applied where they needed to take raw materials for export and the railway tariffs were also in coordination with the British commercial interests.

Check Your Progress- (CYP)-I

Q1. Who were the leading exponents of economic critique of colonialism?

Q2. What do you understand by foreign capital investment?

Q3. Discuss the causes which led to the ruining of traditional handicrafts.

9.3.5 Policy of Free Trade

The early nationalists further argued that a major impediment to rapid industrial advancement was the policy of free trade, which they believed undermined India's traditional handicraft industries and subjected both handicrafts and nascent modern industries to premature, unequal, and adverse competition with the highly organized and advanced industries of the West.

They also contended that the tariff policy was primarily shaped by the interests of the British capitalist class. In addition, the early nationalists offered a strong critique of the colonial fiscal system, arguing that taxation was structured in a manner that disproportionately burdened the poorer sections of society while allowing the affluent classes to remain relatively unaffected.

Under the expense heading, they observed that financial resources were predominantly allocated to serve the British imperial interests, while developmental and welfare-oriented sectors were systematically neglected and underfunded. They also strongly criticized the disproportionately high military expenditure, which was directed towards the expansion and consolidation of British territorial control in Asia and Africa.

9.3.6 Drain Theory

The central element of the nationalist critique of colonialism was the "drain theory." Nationalist leaders argued that a substantial portion of India's wealth and capital was systematically transferred to Britain through various channels, including the salaries and pensions of British civil and military officials serving in India interest payments on government loans, and profits repatriated by British capitalists operating in India. They also highlighted the "Home Charges," which comprised expenditures incurred by the Indian government in Britain, such as pensions to British Indian civil and military personnel, the purchase of military supplies and stores, and guaranteed interest on railway investments. Additionally, they noted that costs related to army training, transportation, and military campaigns conducted outside India were also charged from Indian revenues.

The drain manifested itself in the form of an excess of exports over imports for which India received no corresponding economic or material return. It also included remittances by British officials stationed in India and the transfer of profits generated by British private investments within the country. From Naoroji onwards, nationalist economists consistently emphasized this phenomenon, often identifying it in India's persistent export surplus. According to their estimates, the drain constituted nearly half of government revenues and more than one-third of India's national income.

Dadabhai Naoroji, regarded as the principal exponent of the drain theory, argued that Britain was systematically "bleeding" India of its wealth. He maintained that this drain was the fundamental cause of India's poverty and represented one of the central evils of colonial rule. Naoroji further contended that the resources being siphoned off constituted a potential surplus that, if retained and productively invested within the country, could have significantly enhanced India's income and overall economic development.

R.C. Dutt had also made drain the major theme of his economic history of India. The drain theory incorporated all the threads of the nationalist critique of colonialism, for the drain denuded India of the productive capitals intensely required for its agriculture and industrial development. The comprehensive economic analysis of the colonial situation constituted a central plank of the nationalist leaders. Through this concept, the exploitative character of British rule was rendered visible and analytically demonstrable.

Moreover, it was easily grasped to the wider masses. The idea of their wealth being transferred to another country was easily understood, and few other arguments proved more effective in mobilizing public opinion. Further, the realization that Indians were being taxed in order to sustain the comfort and prosperity of people in distant lands touched the heart of the populace.

Hence, the contradiction between the Indian people and British imperialism was seen as insoluble. It was inevitable that the drain theory remained the main staple of nationalist political agitation.

9.4 STANDARD IMPERIALIST DEFENCE

However, the imperialist defence regarding the economic critique was articulated by Strachey, who argued that England derived nothing from India except in exchange for services rendered by English personnel or capital invested. The remittance of profits on British capital employed in railways, plantations, mines, and mills was similarly justified on the grounds that such investments contributed to the development and modernization of India.

This mobilization on economic issues contributed significantly to the erosion of the ideological hegemony of the colonial rulers over Indian minds. The primary tenets for any political regime to remain secure is only based on a basic belief in its moral legitimacy and benevolent intent, namely that the rulers are motivated by a genuine concern for the welfare of the governed. Such a belief generates support for the regime and provide it with legitimacy. It is in these perceptions that the moral foundations of authority reside.

The strength of British power in India rested not only on its coercive apparatus but also on its perceived moral authority. The nationalist economic critique gradually weakened these moral foundations by eroding public confidence in the purportedly benevolent character of colonial rule. Economic development in India was advanced by imperialist authorities and their spokesmen as a primary justification for British rule. However, Indian nationalists forcefully contested this claim, arguing instead that India's economic backwardness was a direct consequence of colonial domination.

Check your progress (CYP)-II

Q1. What do you understand by Deindustrialization?

QII Write about the imperialist responses towards the economic critique by the moderates

9.5 LET US SUM UP

The colonial economic policies impoverished India for the interest of British trade and industry. The economic backwardness in India emerged as inevitable consequences of colonial rule. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's newspaper *Kesari* remarked in 1896 that India was treated as a vast pasture for Europeans to exploit. The young intellectual from Bihar, Sacchidananda Sinha, succinctly articulated the Indian critique in *The Indian People* (27 February 1903), noting that, in Lord Curzon's own testimony, the work of administration functioned merely as an instrument of exploitation. Moreover, Naoroji, consistently reiterated this critique of economic policies from various platforms.

While speaking at the International Socialist Congress in 1904, he further advocated for self-government and urged that India be treated at par with other British colonies.

During the Benares Session of the Indian National Congress in 1905, Naoroji pointed out that self-government constituted the only viable remedy for India's political and economic problems. Subsequently, as President of the 1906 session of the Indian National Congress held at Calcutta, he explicitly defined the objective of the national movement as the attainment of self-government on the model of the United Kingdom and other self-governing colonies.

Although most nationalist leaders were moderates in their political outlook and methods, their critique of colonial rule nevertheless fostered a growing sense of disaffection, political dissent, and even sedition. Consequently, the period from 1875 to 1905 came to be characterized by intellectual ferment and the gradual expansion of national consciousness, often described as the formative or "seed time" of the Indian national movement.

They laid a strong and enduring foundation upon which the later national movement could develop by implanting the seeds of nationalism deeply and systematically, grounding it in a rigorous and analytical critique of the complex economic mechanisms of modern colonialism and in their identification of the fundamental contradictions between Indian interests and British imperial rule.

These economic and political ideas percolated gradually and resonated in towns, and villages. On this intellectual foundation, the nationalists subsequently organized powerful mass agitations and popular movements.

9.6 GLOSSARY

Deindustrialization - decline in industrial activity due to economic policies

Free trade- an economic policy that allows goods and services to be exchanged across borders with minimal or no tariffs foreign capital

Investment - Foreign resources into country's economy for infrastructural production and development

Pattern of trade - The structural arrangement of country's import and export.

9.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. What do you understand by the policy of free trade?

Q2. Discuss the Concepts and themes of Economic Critique of Colonialism.

9.8 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. Write a short note on Dada Bhai Naoroji.
- Q2. Name the books written by R.C. Dutt on economic policies of the British.

9.9 ANSWER KEY

CYP-I

- Q1. See Section 9.3
- Q2. See sub section 9.3.3
- Q3. See sub section 9.3.4

CYP- II

- Q1. See sub section 9.3.4
- Q2. See Section 9.4

9.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Shekhar Bandyopadhyay; *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.
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REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

STRUCTURE

- 10.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 10.1 Introduction**
- 10.2 Bengal**
- 10.3 Maharashtra**
- 10.4 United Provinces and Punjab**
- 10.5 Let us sum up**
- 10.6 Glossary**
- 10.7 Self -Assessment Questions/ Examination Oriented Questions**
- 10.8 Lesson End Exercises**
- 10.9 Answer Key**
- 10.10 Suggested Readings**

10.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Dear Learners, the objectives of this lesson is to enable you to:

- Learn about the spread of revolutionary activity in the region of Bengal.
- Examine the nature of revolutionary movements in Maharashtra.
- Learn about the ideology and activities of the revolutionaries in the United Provinces and Punjab.

Learning Outcomes

Dear learners, after going through this lesson you will have a clear understanding about:

- The role, ideology and spread of revolution in Bengal.
- The actions and reactions of the revolutionaries as well as the British in Maharashtra

- The spread of revolutionary activities in Delhi along with United Provinces.
- The part played by Bhagat Singh as well as the Babbar Akalis in the Punjab.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, the revolutionary movement played a significant role in India's struggle for freedom. The revolutionary activity represented a distinct phase in the anti-colonial struggle. It was different from liberal nationalism of moderate leaders of the Indian National Congress. Their aims, objectives, and methods had merits as well as demerits. The main centres of revolutionary activity were Bengal, Maharashtra, United Provinces and Punjab. At times revolutionaries from different regions collaborated to hatch plans to end British rule. The colonial rulers harshly repressed the revolutionaries by sending them to jail as well as putting them to death. The contributions of important revolutionaries like Chandra Sekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Pulin Das, Aurobindo, Khudiram Bose and Chapekar brothers shows the regional diversity of revolutionary action in India.

10.2 BENGAL

Students let us now trace the revolutionary movements in Bengal. In Bengal the ideological background for revolution was provided by two novels of Bankim Chandra (*Ananda Math* and *Devi Chaudhurani*), which were inspired by Vivekananda's stirring call 'Arise, Awake'. Some journals like *Bande Mataram* edited by Aurobindo Ghosh, *Sandhya* edited by Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya encouraged and advocated the 'cult of the bomb'. Revolutionary activity developed since the 1860s and 1870s when the physical culture movement became popular and Akharas were set up to develop what Swami Vivekananda had described as strong muscles and nerves of steel. This was an attempt to break away from the colonial stereotype of effeminacy imposed on the Bengalis. Their recovery would be to achieve mastery over body and development of national pride along with a sense of social service, on the basis of ideals preached by Bakim and Swami Vivekanand.

The Partition of Bengal (1905) provided the push needed for revolutionary activity in Bengal. It was mainly led by Aurobindo Ghosh, C.R. Das, Bhupendranath Dutta, younger brother of Swami Vivekananda, Pulin Behari Das. The revolutionary movement took the forms of assassinations of officials and traitors. There were Swadeshi dacoities to raise funds and conspiracies were made with expectations of help from foreign enemies of Britain.

In 1902, a first secret society named Anushilan Samiti was established in Calcutta by Promotha Mitter and Aurobindo's supporters from Baroda, Jatindranath Banerji and Barindrakumar Ghosh. In the same year another branch was opened in Dacca under Pulin Das. Initially their activities remained confined to physical and moral training of members. It gained a powerful impetus from the Partition of Bengal (1905). In the aftermath of Partition of Bengal, there was considerable anger amongst the revolutionaries of Bengal. Their newspapers—*Yugantar* (End of the Era), a weekly newspaper published from April 1906 by Barindrakumar Ghosh and Bhupendranath Dutta, and the evening daily *Sandhya* of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay, as well as the *Bande Mataram*, began to write about the need for political independence, without which national unity and economic and social progress could not be achieved.

On 6 December 1907, members of the Anushilan Samiti made an abortive attempt to blow up the train of Lieutenant Governor of east Bengal by Barindrakumar Ghosh and Bhupendranath Dutta and on 23 December, Mr Allen, a former District Magistrate in Dacca, was shot in the back. Terrorism of a more efficient variety meanwhile developed in east Bengal, spearheaded by the much more tightly organized Dacca Anushilan of Pulin Dās, with the Barrah dacoity (2 June 1908) as its first major venture.

Hemchandra Kanungo, probably the most remarkable figure among this first revolutionary generation, went abroad to learn the art of making bombs. After Kanungo's return in January 1908, a combined religious school and bomb factory was set up at a garden house in the Maniktala suburb of Calcutta. The British cracked down hard on the activists and the conflict came to a head on 30 April 1908, when Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki attempted to kill sadistic Magistrate Kingsford of Muzaffarpur district. However, the bomb thrown at his horse carriage missed its target and instead landed in another carriage and killed two British women, Mrs and Miss Kennedy (Kennedy's murder). When chased by the police, Prafulla Chaki shot himself dead while Khudiram Bose, Aurobindo Ghosh and his brother Barindrakumar Ghosh and others, were immediately arrested by the British officials. Their trial was held at Alipore Session Court, Calcutta. Khudiram Bose was tried and hanged. The Maniktala Bomb Conspiracy case and the hanging of Khudiram Bose was publicised by the press and folk songs were composed about it. The Bengali population was revitalized. Aurobindo was acquitted but Barindra and Ullaskar Dutta were sentenced to death and ten others were deported for life. The revolutionary movement went underground and became decentralised but did not die down. Praising the sacrifice of Khudiram, Chitral called him a martyr and a hero. Students mourned his death and schools were closed for two-three days as a tribute to his memory. His photographs had become popular with the youth and they took to wearing Dhotis with Khudiram Boses' name woven on it.

This first phase of 'elite' revolution made a substantial contribution to the national movement. On many occasions the British were frightened by the actions of these revolutionaries. There were rare examples of death-defying heroism in the cause of freedom. Efforts were also made to seek world-wide contacts in search of shelter and weapons. Some of these revolutionaries acquired new ideological leanings. For example, Hemchandra came back from Paris as an atheist and interest in Marxism. Revolutionary heroism evoked admiration from educated Indians.

The importance given to religion by the early secret societies kept the Muslims aloof. Additionally, the action and participation of elite in these revolutionary activities postponed the inclusion of the masses in this political struggle. Social limitation of Bengali revolutionary action was noticed as in the 1918 list of convicted and killed revolutionaries, 165 were from the three upper castes, Brahmans, Kayastha and Vaidya.

Second phase of revolution in Bengal started after the failure of the Non-Cooperation Movement. From 1922 onwards Bengali journals like *Atmasakti*, *Sarthi* and *Bijoli* published articles extolling the sacrifices made by the old revolutionaries. *Bandi-Jivan* by Sachin Sanyal circulated in Bengali, Hindi and Gurmukhi influenced the younger generation. Similarly, the path of urban middle-class revolution was glorified by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee in his novel *Pather Debi*, that was banned by the British government. The revolutionary groups started reorganizing

and developing their underground activities once again. Among the several actions of the reorganized groups was an attempt to assassinate Charles Tegart, the hated Police Commissioner of Calcutta, by Gopinath Saha in January 1924. By an error, another Englishman named Day was killed. Saha was hanged despite massive popular protest. This was followed by large scale arrests under Bengal ordinance of October 1924 which stopped revolutionary action.

Bengal Volunteers Corps was an underground revolutionary group organized against the British rule in India. Most prominent members were Subhas Chandra Bose, Benoy Basu, Badal Gupta, and Dinesh Gupta. They mainly worked around Chittagong, Midnapore etc. The Bengal Volunteers Corps decided to launch 'Operation Freedom' in the early 1930s, primarily to protest against the police repression in different jails in Bengal. In August 1930, one of the members Benoy Basu assassinated Lowman, the Inspector General. The next target was Col. N.S. Simpson, the Inspector General of Prisons, who was infamous for the brutal oppression of the prisoners in the jails. In the encounter, Benoy and Dinesh shot themselves, while Badal consumed cyanide. In Midnapore district, 3 District Magistrates were assassinated one after another by the Bengal Volunteers Corps members: Bimal Das Gupta, Jyothi Jibon Ghosh assassinated James Peddy, and Pradoot Bhattacharya, and Probhansupal assassinated Robert Douglas.

Surya Sen and his associates including Ananta Singh, Ganesh Ghosh, Ambika Chakravarty, Loknath Baul, Tegra (Tiger) Baul as well as women like – Kalpana Dutt and Pritilata Waddadar, organized the Chittagong Armoury Raids in 1930. They seized arms from the two main armouries in Chittagong on the night of 18 April 1930. They also succeeded in dislocating telephone and telegraph communications and disrupting movement by train. In all, sixty-five raids were undertaken in the name of Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch. They were proclaimed as a Provisional Revolutionary Government under Surya Sen. To evade police action, they left Chittagong town and marched towards the Chittagong hill ranges. It was on the Jalalabad hill that several thousand troops surrounded them on the afternoon of 22 April. A fierce fight took place between the two, in which over eighty British troops and twelve revolutionaries died. Surya Sen took shelter in the neighbouring village and continued conducting raids on government personnel and property. He adopted guerrilla warfare techniques to fight the British. Despite several repressive measures and combing operations by the authorities, the villagers, most of whom were Muslims, gave food and shelter to the revolutionaries and enabled them to survive for three years. Surya Sen was finally arrested on 16 February 1933, tried and hanged on 12 January 1934. Many of his co-fighters were also caught and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Chittagong Armory Raid is said to be the first organized armed struggle for independence after 1857. The Chittagong Armory Raid inspired many other militants in Bengal. In Midnapore district alone, three British magistrates were assassinated. During 1930-33, twenty-two officials and twenty non-officials were killed.

An important aspect of this revolutionary activity in Bengal was the large-scale participation of young women. Under Surya Sen's leadership, they provided shelter, acted as messengers and custodians of arms, and fought with guns. Pritilata Waddadar, an underground activist of Surya Sen, died while conducting a raid, while Kalpana Dutta was arrested and tried along with Surya Sen and was given a life sentence. In December 1932, two

schoolgirls of Comilla, Santi Ghosh and Suniti Chowdhary were shot dead in Bengal. In 1932, Bina Das attempted to assassinate the Bengal Governor Stanley Jackson in the Convocation Hall of the University of Calcutta.

Check your Progress (CYP) I

Q1. What were the ideals preached by Bankim and Swami Vivekanand?

Q2. Who was Khudiram Bose?

Q3. What was the contribution of Hemchandra Kanungo?

Q4. Who was Surya Sen?

Q5. Name three revolutionaries from Bengal.

Fill in the Blanks

- a. _____ authored two novels, *Ananda Math* and *Devi Chaudhurani*.
- b. A bomb factory was set up at a garden house in the _____ suburb of Calcutta.
- c. Kalpana Dutt and Pritilata Waddadar, organized the _____ Armoury Raids in 1930.
- d. The path of urban middle-class revolution was glorified by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee in his novel _____.

10.3 MAHARASHTRA

Learners let us now trace the evolution of the revolutionary movement in Maharashtra, in western India. In Maharashtra as well as in India, the first one to use militant methods was Vasudev Balwant Phadke. He is known as ‘the father of the armed struggle for India’s independence’. In 1876-77, a famine severely hit Maharashtra and on seeing the indifferent attitude of the British government towards the plight of the poor farmer community, Phadke decided to uproot the British rule from India. Phadke believed that Swaraj was the only remedy for their ills. He failed to gain converts to his cause among the educated Maharashtrians but the famine conditions enabled him to find a following among the Kolis, Bhils and Dhangars communities in Maharashtra, and soon formed a revolutionary group called Ramoshis. The group started an armed struggle to overthrow the British Raj. He provided his followers with arms and weapons to launch raids on English businessmen, and oppressive moneylenders to obtain funds for their liberation struggle. He also had plans of disrupting communications and freeing prisoners. Phadke came into limelight when he got control of the city of Pune for a few days in 1879, when he caught the British soldiers off guard during one of his surprise attacks. Pursued by the British, Phadke fled to Hyderabad where he made another effort to raise an army. He was captured in 1879, sentenced to life imprisonment and transported to Aden where he died in 1883. According to R.C. Mazumdar, Vasudev Balwant Phadke was the first person to establish a secret society in Maharashtra, which aimed at overthrowing the British Empire in India by an armed revolt.

In 1896, bubonic plague broke out in Bombay and Poona, in which thousands of people died. The British government quickly moved to control the spread by appointing a Special Plague Committee under the chairmanship of W.C. Rand. As soon as the operations to curb the plague began, W.C. Rand began his reign of terror too. Instead of employing doctors, the commission employed 800 officers and soldiers. The troops stripped men, women and children naked for ‘check-ups’, sometimes even in public, and evacuated them to hospitals or quarantined them. At times they also indulged in vandalising personal property including religious symbols in the name of controlling the epidemic. Such regular harassment caused lots of frustration and anti-government sentiments among the people. Therefore, on 22 June 1897, the Chapekar brothers (Damodar Hari Chapekar and Balkrishna Hari Chapekar) assassinated W.C. Rand and his military escort Lieutenant Ayerst at Poona, Maharashtra.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak organized the Ganpati festival in 1893 and

Shivaji's festival in 1895, which aimed at spreading the message of boycotting westernization in India and to spread the feelings of nationalism. In 1897, Tilak was arrested on the charge of inciting the Chapekar brothers for killing W.C. Rand, particularly because early in the same month, in his newspaper *Kesari*, he described Rand as 'suspicious, sullen and tyrannical'. Therefore, he was sentenced to eighteen months jail, the first nationalist leader to suffer imprisonment for a political cause.

The cause of anti-partition movement of Bengal (1905) was taken up by Tilak in Maharashtra and tried to make it a full-fledged political mass struggle with the goal of attaining Swaraj. Through his newspaper *Kesari*, he advocated his militant views, made the Indians aware of their glorious past and encouraged the masses to be self-reliant. Bonfires of foreign clothes were organized (as at Poona on 8 October 1905), and a Swadeshi VastuPracharini Sabha was set up in Bombay city. Tilak preached non-cooperation and advocated abstaining from cooperating with the government directly or indirectly. Tilak was sentenced to six years imprisonment at Mandalay (Burma) for writing in support of revolutionaries who were involved in the Kennedy's murder case and calling for immediate Swaraj.

After the arrest of Tilak, revolutionaries again took the path of individual heroism, with the Nasik based Abhinava Bharat group as the most important. In 1907, this had emerged out of the Mitra Mela founded in 1899 by the Savarkar brothers. Abhinava Bharat was a secret organization founded by Ganesh Savarkar in Maharashtra. It called for an armed struggle against the British Indian state. This was inspired from Mazini's 'Young Italy'. It was he, who really made militant nationalism a political force in Maharashtra. His aim was to secure the country's independence—if necessary, by an armed revolt. Its programmes included the purchase and storage of weapons in the neighbouring countries, the opening of secret factories for the manufacture of weapons, and the secret import of weapons from other countries in merchant ships. A member of the organization, P.N. Bapat went to Paris to learn the art of bomb making. It also established secret societies in different parts of Maharashtra like Bombay, Poona, Kolhapur and Satara, etc. It came to highlight after its members were tried under the Nasik Conspiracy Case, a chain of investigations which were initiated after the assassination of Mr. Jackson, Collector of Nasik, by one of its members, i.e. Anant Laxman Kanhere by using the pistols sent secretly from London by V.D. Savarkar in December 1909. However, revolutionary activity in Maharashtra was never as formidable as in Bengal.

10.4 UNITED PROVINCES AND PUNJAB

Students, it is important to take into account similar trends in revolutionary activity that were emerging in other parts of India like Delhi, Kanpur and Lahore. In 1912, Ras Behari Bose and Sachin Sanyal made an abortive attempt on the life of Viceroy Lord Hardinge, when he was making his official entry in Delhi, the new capital of British India.

Militants of northern India met at Kanpur in October 1924 under the leadership of Ram Prasad Bismil, Jogesh Chatterjee and Sachindra Nath Sanyal and founded the Hindustan Republican Association (or Army) to organize an armed revolution to overthrow the colonial rule. Most important action of the HRA was the Kakori Robbery. On 9 August 1925, ten men looted cash from an official train by holding it at Kakori, a village near Lucknow. The

reaction of the government was quick and hard. In the Kakori Conspiracy Case, Ashfaqulla Khan, Ram Prasad Bismil, Roshan Singh and RajindraLahri were hanged, four others were sent to Andamans for life and seventeen others were sentenced to long term of imprisonment.

The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army was founded by Chandra Shekhar Azad, a well-known revolutionary from Uttar Pradesh and a member of the Hindustan Republican Association who had escaped imprisonment in the Kakori Conspiracy case in 1925 along with Bhagat Singh the Punjabi revolutionary. The younger men who joined the HSRA were Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Shiv Verma and Jaidev from Kanpur in UP, Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Sukhdev from Punjab. All of them showed a strong commitment to socialist and communist ideology. They dreamt of transforming India into an independent socialist republic. All of them met at the FerozeshahKotla ground in Delhi in December 1928 and reorganized the Hindustan Republican Association to HSRA. This group did not favour use of pistol and bombs or religious ideology. Revolution for them meant a total change of society which would bring an end to foreign and Indian capital and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The revenge of death of Lala Lajpat Rai was taken on 17 December 1928 by Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad and Rajguru by assassinating Saunders, a police official at Lahore. On 8 April 1929, Bhagat Singh and BatukeshwarDutt, threw a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly against the passage of the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill, which would reduce the civil liberties of citizens in general and workers in particular. The aim was not to kill, for the bombs were relatively harmless, but as the leaflet they threw into the assembly hall proclaimed, 'to make the deaf hear'. The objective was to get arrested and use the trial court as a forum for propaganda so that people would become familiar with their movement and ideology. In December 1929, another abortive attempt was made to blow up Lord Irwin's train near Delhi by some members of the HSRA. The British came down heavily on the members of the HSRA and arrested or killed most of its members. Bhagat Singh and BatukeshwarDutt were tried in the Assembly Bomb Case.

Later, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru and other revolutionaries were tried in a famous Lahore Conspiracy Case. The revolutionaries used the court for propagating their ideals through long speeches. They protested against the horrible conditions in jails. They demanded that they be treated not as criminals but as political prisoners. Hunger strike was observed and Jatin Das died on the 64 day of the epic fast. A two-mile long procession of more than six lakh people carried his coffin to the cremation ground in Calcutta. Bhagat Singh trail electrified the nation. A large number of revolutionaries were convicted in the Lahore Conspiracy Case and sentenced to long term of imprisonment; many of them were sent to the Andaman. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were sentenced to be hanged. The sentence was carried on 23 March 1931.

Importantly, Bhagat Singh had organised a Nau Jawan Sabha in March 1926 to instil revolutionary ideas among Punjabi youth and to prepare them for the future struggle. The political aims of the Nau Jawan Sabha were: to establish a completely independent republic of the labourers and peasants in India; to infuse a spirit of patriotism in the hearts of the youth of India to establish a united Indian nation; to express sympathy with and to aid the economic, industrial and social movements which were free from bounds of religion; and to formally organise

labourers and peasants. The Sabha received support from agitators like Kidar Nath Sehgal, Sardul Singh Kavishar and Comrade Ram Chandra. The meetings of the Sabha were addressed by well-known revolutionaries and communists like Bhupendra Nath Dutt, S.A. Dange and Phillips Spratt. The Sabha started a Tract Society to popularize radical ideas. Soon branches of the Sabha were set up at Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Montgomery and Gujranwala. The Sabha participated in the boycott of the Simon Commission. The members of the Sabha decided to avenge the death of Lala Lajpat Rai who had been killed by the soldiers while protesting against the Simon Commission. They celebrated Kakori Day eulogising the sacrifices made by Kakori heroes. The press organ Nau Jawan wrote articles about martyrs like Madan Lal Dhingra, Kartar Singh Sarabha etc.

An important revolutionary organisation of the Punjab was the Babbar Akali movement that was active from 1921 to 1926. The Babbar Akalis stood for using violent means to get freedom. Their aim was to terrorize agents of the British like the Lambardars, police informers and spies. The members of this organisation reached out to soldiers and students for support. Important members were Kishan Singh, Dalip Singh Gosal, Babu Santa Singh etc. They murdered government agents and supporters. The British were afraid and took stern measures to suppress the Babbar Akalis. Large number of them were arrested and many were sentenced to death. The leaders of the movement left a deep imprint on the minds of youth of the Punjab.

Check your Progress (CYP) II

Q1. Who were the Babbar Akalis?

Q2. When and who organised the Nau Jawan Sabha?

Q3. Who were the Chapekar brothers?

Q4. What was Chandra Sekhar Azad's contribution to the revolutionary movement?

Fill in the Blanks

- a. An important revolutionary organisation of the Punjab was the _____ movement that was active from 1921 to 1926.
- b. _____ had organised a Nau Jawan Sabha in March 1926 to instil revolutionary ideas among Punjabi youth.
- c. The _____ Socialist Republican Army was founded by Chandra Shekhar Azad.
- d. Abhinava Bharat was a secret organization founded by Ganesh Savarkar in _____.

10.5 LET US SUM UP

Learners, the revolutionary movement emerged from various parts of India as a result of the exploitative rule of the colonial rule of the British. The revolutionaries felt that the method adopted by the Moderates had failed to improve the condition of the Indians as the British had taken no steps to stop exploitation and ill-treatment of Indians. The revolutionaries had adopted violent means to attain freedom of the country like the use of bombs, dacoity, and assassination. Revolutionaries from the Bengal, Punjab, Maharashtra, United Provinces etc. had in various ways tried to destabilize the British rule in India.

10.6 GLOSSARY

Akhara: local gymnasium for body building

10.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS/ EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Examine the nature of revolutionary activity in Bengal.
- Q2. Throw light on the methods adopted by the revolutionaries in Bengal and Maharashtra.
- Q3. Discuss the programme of the revolutionaries in different parts of India.
- Q4. What do you know about the ideology and activities of the revolutionaries in India?
- Q5. Was the revolutionary movement a success in India? Comment.

10.8 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. Highlight the role of revolutionaries from Bengal in India's struggle for freedom.
- Q2. Analyse the contribution of revolutionaries in the national movement.
- Q3. Critically underscore the ideology and programme of the revolutionary movement in India's struggle for freedom.
- Q4. Evaluate the role of revolutionaries from Bengal and Maharashtra in the national movement.
- Q5. Throw light on the methods adopted by the Indian revolutionaries to attain freedom. Were they successful? Comment.

10.9 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

1. See Section 10.2
2. See Section 10.2
3. See Section 10.2
4. See Section 10.2
1. See Section 10.2

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Bankim Chandra
- b. Maniktala
- a. Chittagong
- b. *Pather Debi*

CYP II

1. See Section 10.4
2. See Section 10.4
1. See Section 10.3
2. See Section 10.4

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Babbar Akali

- b. Bhagat Singh
- c. Hindustan
- d. Maharashtra

10.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Ishita Banerjee Dube, *A History of Modern India*, Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
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- Peter Heehs, *The Bomb in Bengal: The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in India 1900–1910*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004. (first ed. 1993)
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REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS ABROAD

STRUCTURE

- 11.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 11.1 Introduction**
- 11.2 Background of Revolutionary Movements Abroad**
- 11.3 Early revolutionary activities Abroad**
- 11.4 Formation and activities of the Ghadar Movement**
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11.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Learning Objectives

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to:

- Gain knowledge about the causes and the early revolutionary activities abroad.
- learn about the formation of the Ghadar Party.
- understand the important and significance of the Ghadar Movement.
- analyze the impact of the Ghadar Movement on the freedom movement.

Learning Outcomes

After going through this lesson you will have a clear understanding about:

- the causes for the growth of revolutionary activity abroad.
- Role of Shyamji Krishan Varma's in promoting and encouraging revolutionary activities abroad.
- The ideology, organization and programme of the Ghadar movement in Canada and USA.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Learners, the Indian revolutionary movement was active in Europe, North America, and Southeast Asia. These centers provided a safe haven from British censorship, allowing revolutionaries to publish literature, smuggle arms, and gain diplomatic support from enemies of the Britain. Most important was the Ghadar movement that was started by Punjabis in the first quarter of the twentieth century. These immigrants had gone to USA and Canada in search of jobs. The economy of India under the British had resulted in unemployment and poverty in India. Large number of Sikhs and some Hindus and Muslims had migrated to foreign countries from 1880s onwards. These immigrants were humiliated and ill-treated by the governments as well as population abroad. The British government in India did not care for these immigrants. This led to disillusionment among the immigrant community abroad. The Ghadar movement emerged in such a context. The objective of the Ghadarites was the end the rule of the British from India.

11.2. BACKGROUND OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS ABROAD

Learners, the failure of constitutional methods of the Moderates to make any headway in the independence movement along with the aggressiveness of Extremists made the youth adopt revolutionary path. The growth of education increased awareness amongst the Indians in India as well as abroad. The ideas of democracy, liberty, equality, and nationalism had made the Indians aware of the injustice and humiliation that they faced as colonists at the hands of the British rulers. The educated youth became the vocal supporters of revolutionary movement. They became conscious about the need for self-government for the economic and political development of India. Economic exploitation and unemployment also encouraged the educated youth to take up revolutionary methods as peaceful means had failed. The indifferent attitude of the British towards the sufferings of the Indians inspired the revolutionaries abroad as well.

Leaders like Swami Vivekanand, Aurobindo Ghosh and Bal Gangadhar Tilak introduced ideas of revolution in the minds of Indians in India as well as abroad. Significantly, literature played an important role in bringing patriotism to the surface. *Anand Math* written by Bankim Chandra, writings of Rabindra Nath Tagore and articles of Virendra Bose inspired the Indians both local and abroad to end oppressive rule of the British.

Mistreatment of the Indians in the British colonies incited revolutionary movements abroad. Victory of nationalism in Italy and Germany and struggle of Ireland against the British, inspired many revolutionaries abroad. The defeat of Italy by Abyssinian in 1896 and Russia's defeat at the hands of Japanese in 1905 made the Indians realize that the Europeans were not invincible. Many Indian revolutionaries abroad were inspired by Mazzini's role in Italy and Lenin in the Russian revolution. Thus, the revolutionary movements were born due the demeaning treatment of Indians by the British rulers. It was the result of extreme Indian nationalism that took a violent form.

Educated youth in India and abroad were inspired by extremism and turned to violent means to end British rule in India. These impatient young men in different parts of India and abroad took the path of individual heroism and revolutionary. They demanded self-sacrifice from the youth and advocated direct action and the politics of bomb. They copied the methods of the Irish terrorists and the Russian Nihilists. They planned to assassinate unpopular British officials. With such acts they wanted to strike terror into the hearts of the British and arouse the patriotic instincts of the Indians. Such actions they believed would end the fear of authority from the minds of the common man. These revolutionaries formed secret societies, propagated revolutionary ideas through newspapers, pamphlets and books, manufactured bombs and other firearms. They made elaborate plans abroad taking material help from the enemies of Britain. Revolutionaries living abroad dreamed of seeing their country free. Some of them tried to turn their dreams into reality by forming various associations.

11. 3 EARLY REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES ABROAD

Learners, Shyamji Krishna Varma was responsible for uniting Indian revolutionaries in London by establishing India House in 1905. Shyamji Krishna Varma is a well-known figure in the national movement known as the 'father of Indian revolutionary nationalism abroad'. A scholar, lawyer, and journalist, he provided the ideological and logistical foundation for the radical movement in Europe.

Shyamji Krishna Varma was born in 1857 in Gujarat. He was a brilliant scholar of Sanskrit and Philosophy. He was the first Indian to receive an M.A. from Oxford University. He was a barrister and served as the Diwan (Prime Minister) in several princely states, including Ratlam and Junagadh. Witnessing the exploitation and racial discrimination of British officials during his service, he became convinced that self-rule in India could not be achieved through moderate petitions alone. He moved to London in 1897.

Varma's most significant contribution was the establishment of India House at 65 Cromwell Avenue, London. It served as a residence for Indian students, but secretly, it was a hub for political radicalism. He started the Herbert Spencer and Swami Dayanand Saraswati Fellowships to bring bright Indian students to London. His goal was to expose them to Western political thought while fostering a revolutionary spirit. The India House was one of the first organizations to internationalize the Indian cause, connecting with socialists and anti-imperialists across Europe. Under his mentorship, India House produced legends like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Madan Lal Dhingra, Lala Hardayal and V.V.S. Aiyar. In 1905, he founded the Indian Home Rule Society with the support of other radicals like Bhikaji Cama and S.R. Rana.

Varma launched a monthly journal called *The Indian Sociologist*. It became a powerful tool for propaganda. The articles published in the journal argued that British rule in India was illegitimate and that Indians had a moral right to resist. This journal was banned in India, but it was smuggled and read widely by secret societies like the Anushilan Samiti in Calcutta.

After the assassination of Curzon Wyllie by Madan Lal Dhingra, a member of the London Group in 1909, the British authorities cracked down on India House. Madan Lal Dhingra after a trial was hanged on 17 August 1909. Shyamji Krishna Varma escaped from London to Paris to continue his work and V.D. Savarkar became

the leader of the revolutionary group at the India House. From here he supplied weapons to the Abhinav Bharat Society, which was working under the direction of his brother Ganesh Savarkar. Later, during the first World War, Varma moved to Geneva, Switzerland. He died in Geneva in 1930. He famously expressed a wish that his ashes be returned to a free India. For decades, his ashes remained in an urn in Geneva. In 2003, 73 years after his death and 56 years after independence, his ashes were finally brought back to India and taken to his birthplace in Mandvi, Gujarat, where a memorial honouring him called Kranti Teerth was set up.

In western India, V.D. Savarkar (1883-1930) influenced by Balgangadhar Tilak formed a secret society called Mitra Mela in 1899 at Nashik, later this body was called Abhinav Bharat. His association with the India House has been discussed above. Savarkar was arrested in England in 1910, deported to India and sentenced to transportation for life for two consecutive terms, being sent to the Andaman Islands.

Check your Progress (CYP) I

Q1. Who was V.D. Savarkar?

Q2. Who was Shyamji Krishan Varma?

Q3. What was the contribution of Madan Lal Dhingra in the revolutionary movement abroad?

Q4. Name the Indian leaders who introduced the Indian youth to the ideas of revolution.

Q5. Name two Indian revolutionaries abroad.

Fill in the Blanks

- a. V.D. Savarkar formed a secret society called _____ in 1899 at Nashik in Maharashtra.
- b. Curzon Wylie was assassinated by _____, a member of the London Group in 1909.
- c. Shyamji Krishna Varma is a well-known figure in the national movement also known as the ‘_____ of Indian revolutionary nationalism abroad’.

11. 4 FORMATION AND ACTIVITIES OF THE GHADAR MOVEMENT

Learners, the Ghadar movement originated from Canada and USA. It was led by primarily Punjabis comprising of Sikhs, with a smattering of Hindus and Muslims. The policies adopted by the British resulted in political and economic unrest in the region of Punjab due to the massive problem of unemployment and loss of land among the farming community in the first decade of the twentieth century. Increase in production of commercial crops, along with enhancement of taxes in Punjab forced the people to move abroad. The British recruitment of Punjabis in the army also made them mobile. The government sent them to various countries to fight for the British Empire. The Punjabis were also hired as personal workers to look after the properties and home in foreign countries. Trade opportunity and education in America and Canada was another reason for immigration. Hordes of people from Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur and Amritsar migrated to foreign countries to try their luck.

The Punjabis found employment easily in Canada as they accepted jobs even at lower salaries. This angered the white Canadians and they started to oppose the Punjabis. The immigrants faced not just dislike and hatred but also racial discrimination on account of their skin colour. Thus, the Canadian government changed laws of immigration making it difficult for the Punjabis to move to Canada. The Punjabis also moved in large numbers to USA. It was noted that by the second decade of the twentieth century around five thousand Indians were settled in USA. They faced racial discrimination in USA too and this made the Punjabis realise that they had to take action to improve their social, economic and political status. Indians faced discrimination on three fronts, that is, colour, race and religion. The immigrants living in the USA learnt about democracy and equality and soon began to establish parties and associations to become self-sufficient.

Before the formation of the Ghadar party, several educated people were publishing revolutionary literature and organizing like-minded Indians into various organizations and associations. In the first decade of the twentieth century, a pamphlet titled *Circular-i-Azadi* by Tarak Nath and Ram Nath Puri asked the Indian immigrants boycott foreign goods and services and to adopt ideology of use of Swadeshi. Pamphlets like '*maro farangi ko maro*', and '*bhai band*' made Indians abroad aware of the ill-treatment they were facing at the hands of foreign governments and people. In the USA Punjabis like Bhai Jawala Singh, Santokh Singh and Hazara Singh leased a property where all Indians who had no employment were welcomed and were given livelihood. Majority of Punjabis who had moved abroad were Sikhs (ninety percent). Soon they formed different bodies to protect their economic and political rights. An important organisation was the Khalsa Diwan society created in 1907 in Vancouver. Another society was set up by Jawala Singh and his supporters titled Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan society. Many Gurdwaras came up in Stockton where large number of Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus collected and had political interactions and meetings.

Learners, many Punjabi students had accepted the ideology of revolution to gain freedom from the British. They supported revolutionary activities and helped in setting up of the Ghadar Party. Tarak Nath, started a periodical titled *Free Hindustan* from Vancouver and Seattle promoting the use of revolutionary methods to attain freedom. A society named Hindustan Association was given another name, United Indian League and Hussain Rahim was made the President. Two newspapers, *Hindustan* and *Sansar* were printed from England. This League along with Vancouver Khalsa Diwan Society started to participate in political matters and raised many relevant issues pertaining to immigrants. The Punjabis in Canada protested against the unjust immigration laws imposed by the government of Canada. These laws prevented families of immigrants to travel to Canada to join their loved ones. Punjabis stated that they were citizens of Canada, all laws regarding immigration should be same and there should be no discrimination.

Lala Hardayal was employed as a Professor of Indian Philosophy in San Francisco in 1912. But he left post in the University and joined the protesting revolutionary group where he debated and lectured on various relevant issues. Different organizations functioning in the USA got together to form the Pacific Coast Hindi Association and Sohan Singh Bhakna became its President. Sohan Singh Bhakna then sent for Lala Hardayal who agreed to join the party and purposed to publish a weekly paper called *Ghadar* in Urdu and in Punjabi. The party organized meetings and called for the Indians to fight against British imperialism. This party's primary centre was at San Francisco called *Yuganter Asharam*. All branches of Pacific Coast Hindi Association came together to form the Ghadar party in April 1913. Sohan Singh Bhakna was selected as this party's President and it was decided that Lala Hardayal would be the Secretary. Very soon this party came to be called the Hindustan Ghadar Party. The newspaper *Ghadar* continued the work of increasing awareness among the Punjabis abroad.

Soon the Ghadarites opened branches of the party in Panama, Argentina, Afghanistan, Japan, Brazil, Manila, Shanghai, Italy, France, Canada, Germany, South Africa, Ethiopia, Hong Kong and Singapore. The periodical *Ghadar* played a very important role in inspiring many other immigrants to join the revolutionary activity in different countries. The Indian soldiers in the army of the British in India were incited to revolt rule. The people of

Punjab were inspired by the ideology proposed and promoted by the periodical. Although this paper was banned from Punjab but it continued to reach the masses as it was smuggled. Many Punjabis including students and soldiers became members of the Ghadar party and participated in its activities. Financial support too was provided by the locals to fund the plans made by the party leaders abroad.

The Kamagatamaru incident was related to the issue of ban on immigration and was thus important for the Ghadar party. Baba Gurdit Singh hired a ship that was owned by Japanese to go to Canada defying the law. There were three hundred seventy six passengers, mostly Sikh immigrants, travelling to Vancouver. When the ship reached the port of Canada the passengers were not allowed to disembark and for over two months the passengers stayed on the ship facing hardships as there was shortage of food and water. The local Indians of Canada were not allowed to contact or help the passengers of the ship. The ship had to turn back and reach the port of Budge Budge in Bengal in September 1914. Immediately, the British wanted to arrest the people on the ship as they believed that they had broken the law and were criminals with revolutionary background. The British forces fired on the people injuring many and some also died. Two hundred and eleven passengers were sent to jail but Gurdit Singh managed to give the British a slip and was never arrested. This incident angered the Indians and they were now more than ready to join the Ghadarites in their secret plan to launch a revolution to free India from the control of British rule.

The plan to launch a revolution by the Ghadarites was ready. Members of the Ghadar party abroad were to reach Punjab and with the help of the local masses initiate revolutionary action. Some important Ghadarites like Sohan Singh Bhakna, Harnam Singh, Kartar Singh Sarabha, and Barkatulla reached India via different routes. More than six to eight thousand Ghadarites were able to reach India as well as Punjab. The native leaders did not support the Ghadar Leaders and regarded them as foolish. Even the political parties like the Indian National Congress others opposed the Ghadarites and supported the British during the First World War. Many revolutionaries of Bengal like Ras Bihari Bose and Sachin Sanyal came to Punjab to help launch the revolution. The plan was that the revolt would commence on 21 February 1915, to throw the British out of India.

Kirpal Singh, a traitor, leaked the plan of rebellion to the British government. Plans for revolt in the Punjab did not go beyond the conspiracy stage. Government arrested the important leaders of the Ghadar Movement and cases were started against them in a Special Tribunal under Defence of India Act. 46 Ghadarites were executed, 18 were awarded life imprisonment and 58 were exiled. The prominent martyrs were Kartar Singh Sarabha, B.G. Pingle and Harnam Singh. The Ghadar Movement in Punjab failed but it created a strong wave of nationalism among the Punjabis.

The Ghadarites were always accepted as true revolutionaries by subsequent movements. It was a modern revolutionary movement as it was structured on social, economic and psychological ideas instead of abstract ideas. Lala Hardayal in the *Ghadar* newspaper had questioned the barbaric attitude of the British in India. The Indians abroad suffered racial discrimination and had realised that India had to be freed from the control of the British. They had become aware that without freedom Indians abroad too would never be treated as equal and would continue to be exploited economically and politically. They would always be regarded as second-rate

citizens. Only independence would ensure progress of India and Indians abroad.

Check your Progress (CYP) II

Q1. What was the Yugantar Ashram?

Q2. What is the importance of the newspaper titled Ghadar?

Q3. What was the composition of the Ghadarites?

Q4. What is the significance of the Komagatamaru incident ?

Fill in the Blanks

- a. The _____ incident is considered a landmark in revolutionary history as it exposed the racial discrimination practised against Indians by foreign governments.
- b. The party became successful on the account of its paper _____ as it was published from all the foreign branches.

- c. _____ reached San Francisco in 1912 and joined a University as the Professor of Indian Philosophy.

11.5 LET US SUM UP

Learners, numerous causes were responsible for the growth of revolutionary ideology and movement among the Indians living abroad. The initial lead was taken by Shyamji Krishan Varma who set up the India House in London where many educated Indians who favoured revolutionary methods could stay and plan their activities. He also encouraged students to adopt to this ideology. The members of the Ghadar party were educated abroad and were thus intellectually motivated. The movement was secular in nature inspite of the fact that ninety percent of the members of the party were Sikhs. The spokesmen of the Ghadar party referred to the bravery and sacrifices made by the Sikh Gurus for creating an egalitarian society. Poetry was written and used and songs remembering the Sikh martyrs were sung to energise and inspire the masses to participate in this revolution that was part of the national movement to free India from the British.

11.6 GLOSSARY

Ghadar: revolt or a rebellion

Swadeshi: preference for Indian goods and services.

11.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS/ EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Throw light on the causes leading to revolutionary movements abroad.
- Q2. Examine the early revolutionary activity of Indians abroad.
- Q3. What do you know about the ideology and programme of the Ghadar movement?
- Q4. Trace the main events of the Ghadar movement.
- Q5. What was the impact of the Ghadar movement on the freedom struggle in India?
- Q6. Analyse the revolutionary movements organised by Indians abroad.

11.8 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. What were the various factors that started the revolutionary movements abroad?
- Q2. How successful were the revolutionary movements started by Indians abroad? Comment.
- Q3. Throw light on the role of Shyamji Krishan Varma in revolutionary activities abroad.
- Q4. Examine the ideology and organization of the Ghadar movement abroad.
- Q5. Assess the nature and programme of the Ghadar movement.

Q6. What was the importance of the Kamagatamaru incident with special reference to the Ghadar movement?

11.9 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

1. See Section 11.3
2. See Section 11.3
1. See Section 11.3
2. See Section 11.2
3. See Section 11.3

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Mitra Mela
- b. Madan Lal Dhingra
- c. Father

CYP II

1. See Section 11.4
2. See Section 11.4
3. See Section 11.4
4. See Section 11.4
5. See Section 11.4

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Kamagatamaru
- b. *Ghadar*
- c. Lala Hardayal

11.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

- J.S.Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, New Cambridge History of India, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1990.
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GENESIS OF AND REACTION TO THE MORLEY MINTO REFORMS

STRUCTURE

12.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Policies for Tackling Political Unrest (1909-14)

12.3 Policies towards the Princely States.

12.4 Political Weightage

12.5 Provisions of the Act

12.5.1 System of Separate Electorate and its Impact

12.6 The Real Purpose

12.7 Consequences

12.8 Limitations of the Act

12.9 Let us sum up

12.10 Glossary

12.11 Examination Oriented Questions

12.12 Lesson End Exercises

12.13 Answer Key

12.14 Suggested Readings

12.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to-

- understand the context that led to the Morley Minto reforms
- discuss the role of John Morley and Lord Minto in shaping the reforms

- explore the significant changes it brought in the Legislative Councils
- analyse the consequences of introduction of Separate Electorate and the Political Weightage in Indian Political system
- evaluate the reforms and assess the political responses

Learning Outcomes

After going through the lesson, you will be able to understand-

- the main features and provisions of the reforms
- the political significance of the Act
- responses of the Indian political parties
- the limitations of the Act.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, this lesson will examine the imperialist policies and attitudes especially of Lord Curzon which intensified bitterness among the educated Indians against the British government. The Partition of Bengal was widely perceived as a calculated attempt to undermine the emerging solidarity of Indian nationalism. It evoked a profound sense of humiliation and resentment among Indians, who responded with sustained and vigorous agitation aimed at reversing the measure. The intensity of the Swadeshi Movement, coupled with the growing influence of extremist tendencies within the nationalist movement, compelled the British administration to reassess its policies and consider new strategies for governance in India. The British policy during this period was guided by repression, conciliation and divide and rule.

The process started in 1906 after the Surat Split of the Congress and its strict constitutional method excluded extremists from the organization. In December, the accession of the Liberal Party to power in England brought the Indian question into sharper focus, drawing renewed attention from the British government toward the evolving political situation in India.

Now moderate leadership expecting reforms as liberals were in power and the famous liberal political thinker John Morley was the secretary of the State of India.

12.2 POLICIES FOR TACKLING POLITICAL UNREST (1909-14)

Viceroy Minto and John Morley, the liberal scholars were appointed by outgoing Tory administration. These British officials, in collaboration with other members of the colonial administration, played a crucial role in formulating a set of policies aimed at managing political unrest—policies that in their essential features, came to constitute a more or less enduring framework for governance throughout the remaining years of British rule in India.

The policy was outright repression, political concession to rally the moderates the strategy of “divide and rule,”

most notably institutionalized by the introduction of separate electorates, which served to accentuate communal divisions within the political framework. The British repressive measures in 1906 during Swadeshi movement adopted the policy of repression and the target were educated Indians. It was first implemented by the Lieutenant Governor of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Bampfylde Fuller, who deployed Gorkha troops to suppress the Barisal demonstration, banned *bande matram*, seditious meetings, newspaper acts, seizure of press, deportation of leaders of swadeshi movement and tried to get schools disaffiliated for participation of students in politics. This was rather embarrassed the government and the Government readily accepted Fuller's resignation in 1906 over clash of disaffiliation issue.

For balancing the effects of unpopular partition, government wanted to give some political concession to Indians in the form of reform. To rally the Indians, it was proposed to be included in both the legislative and executive councils, marking a gradual step towards associating Indians with higher levels of governance. It was argued that Indians should be given representation in both the legislative and executive councils, thereby associating them more closely with the process of governance. Morley wanted to appease moderates of Gokhale kind. Series of meetings were called to deliberate on the reform scheme but the viceroy also wanted to create loyalist outside the Congress, rich landlords, princes and upper-class Muslims as necessary counterweight to nationalism of the Congress.

12.3 POLICY TOWARDS PRINCELY STATES

Minto and his political secretary Harcourt Butler inaugurated a significant change in British policy towards the princely states. The Viceroy, in his Udaipur speech of 1909, emphasized a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the native princely states. The post-Mutiny policy of alliance with conservative feudal chiefs was further extended and gradually institutionalised in response to rising nationalist resistance. Moreover, Curzon's earlier policy of intervention in the name of administrative efficiency was largely abandoned. The unpopular decision to partition Bengal became a symbol of the colonial government's complete disregard for the wishes of the governed.

Morley and Minto both were from different background but viewed the partition of Bengal as a blunder. The event had hardened anti-British feeling in the country. British officials' correspondences showed that they feared that they are losing their hold on English speaking classes and that would filter down to the lower class. Hence, change of policies or some political concessions were badly needed.

The Congress leaders especially moderates put pressure on the British to make some liberal gesture. They emphasised the demands to reform the size and functions of the legislative councils and the appointment of at least three Indians to the Executive Council of the Secretary of State for India.

The Act of 1909 proposed introduction of changes in the composition and functions of the legislative council. In this was they could rally the moderates as they were making demands for self-government in 1904, 1905 and 1906. In addition to make an attempt to win over this section of the people, the British raised other pillar of support for their regime in India — princes and landlords. It was decided to grant representation to landlords in

the Imperial Legislative Council. Meanwhile, a deputation of certain Muslim leaders met the Viceroy at Simla in October 1906 to represent their case of political representation in legislative council. Aga Khan, Muhsin-ul-Mulk, presented memorial to the Viceroy.

12.4 POLITICAL WEIGHTAGE

They demanded that because Muslims were in numerical minority and would be dominated by majority so the Muslim community representation in the council should be based on not only on their population or on numerical strength but also on their political importance and political weightage.

The British viewed this demand as a promising alternative to the Congress. In the post-Mutiny period, the policy of alliance with feudal chiefs was further extended in response to the growing nationalist movement against British rule. Hence, the policy was developed to patronise this section of Muslims. Thus, the Muslims got political weightage and the scheme of separate electorate. The British encouraged communal separation as means of continuing their rule.

This was the reason why, despite a relatively weak organisational base and through methods of petitioning and representation—which the Congress had been advocating for over two decades—the Muslim League achieved notable success. Lord Minto readily accepted the upper-class Muslims as a necessary counterweight within the emerging political framework.

One important demand of Indian leaders was fulfilled even before the Act was passed: the inclusion of Indians in the Viceroy's Executive Council. Accordingly, Sir Satyendra Prasad Sinha became the first Indian to be appointed in 1909. In addition, two Indians were also nominated to the Council of the Secretary of State for India, reflecting an attempt to create the impression of associating qualified Indians with the colonial administrative structure.

This provision was significant as it implied an implicit recognition of two important principles: first, that Indians were competent to hold high governmental positions; and second, that Indians could better represent and interpret the aspirations of their countrymen than British officials themselves.

Check Your Progress (CYP)-I

Q1. What were the set of policies for tackling political unrest from 1909-1914?

Q2. Highlight the changes made in the policy towards Princely States by Lord Minto

Q3. What was the system of political weightage?

12.5 PROVISIONS OF THE ACT

The act of 1909 introduced changes in the size and composition and functions of the Imperial and provincial legislative council. The Act of 1909 formally introduced for the first time the principles of election, details of seat allocation, electoral qualification and right to vote. The Government of India was also vested with the general power to reject candidates considered politically dangerous.

There was a special provision for the representation of various professional and interest groups, including landlords, princes, Muslims, and commercial interests (both European and Indian). The Act of 1909 expanded the Imperial Legislative Council and increased the number of elected members, while also providing limited representation to these diverse constituencies. However, an official majority was retained in the Council, thereby ensuring continued governmental control. Most of the members were still indirectly elected, which significantly restricted the development of genuine representative institutions.

The strength of the Imperial Legislative Council was increased to 68 members. Of these, 27 were elected members, 36 were official members, and 5 were nominated by the British Government. Despite the enlargement and limited introduction of elective elements, the structure continued to reflect the dominance of the colonial administration.

However, an official majority was retained in the Imperial Legislative Council. The Act of 1909 increased the number of elected members in the Council, but most of these members were still indirectly elected, which limited the extent of genuine representative government. Out of 27 elected members, six were elected by big landlords and by British capitalists.

Thirteen members were directly elected and two members were from British capitalists. Eight to six positions were reserved for Muslims. But official majority in Provincial Legislative council remained as it included nominated members. Only Bengal province was given formally an elected majority and 4 members were to be returned by British commercial interests.

12.5.1 System of Separate Electorate and its Impact

The system of separate electorates was introduced by the Government under the Act of 1909. Under this arrangement, no fewer than eight out of twenty-seven elected seats in the Imperial Legislative Council were reserved for the Muslim separate electorate, under which only Muslim voters could elect Muslim candidates in constituencies specifically designated for them. This provision effectively institutionalised communal representation in the electoral system. It has been argued that such an arrangement indirectly disadvantaged the non-Muslim educated middle class, which had been actively demanding constitutional reforms and greater political participation.

This act excluded Hindus from any share in election of Muslim representatives. Muslim were regarded as of distinct religion and political cultural communities. Seats were reserved for them that was to be filled exclusively by them and they also voted along with others in the general electorates for general representation. All this was done to counter Hindu domination.

The Act of 1909 – allowed some significant powers to the members of the Imperial legislative councils for budget discussions, putting questions and resolutions. The Act also permitted members to introduce resolutions and expanded their right to ask questions. It further allowed voting on separate items of the budget, thereby modestly widening the scope of legislative participation. However, the reformed councils still did not possess any real authority and essentially remained advisory bodies. Although an element of democracy or self-government was introduced, the fundamentally undemocratic and exploitative character of British rule remained unchanged. Indeed, Morley himself openly declared in Parliament that the reforms did not imply the introduction of a parliamentary system in India.

12.6 THE REAL PURPOSE

The underlying motive of the Act of 1909 is often interpreted as an attempt to fragment nationalist cohesion and restrain the growing unity among Indians by promoting communal divisions, particularly through the encouragement of Muslim communalism. To advance this objective, the reform introduced the system of separate electorates. This measure sought to reinforce the perception that the political, economic, and cultural interests of Hindus and Muslims were distinct rather than shared. The institution of separate electorates thus became one of the most contentious provisions of the reforms, later regarded as a “poisonous seed” that produced far-reaching and bitter consequences in subsequent decades.

The novel concept of political importance or weightage to the Muslim community were given. The underlying objective of the Morley–Minto Reforms was widely perceived as an attempt to divide the nationalist ranks and curb the growing unity among Indians by fostering communal divisions, particularly by encouraging the development of Muslim communalism.

12.7 CONSEQUENCES

The novel concept of political importance led to the glaring anomalies in the composition of the new provincial councils. Elective seats For example in UP, where Muslims constituted only 14 percent of the population, they secured the same representation in the imperial council as the 85 percent Hindus; in the provincial council they had seven out of the twenty elective seats. In Bihar where Muslims were 13 percent of population, they were allotted 25 percent of the seats in the provincial legislature. In Bombay where their population was 20 percent, they received 1/3rd of the seats; in Central Province 4 percent Muslims got 10 percent representation ; and in Madras with the population of 7 percent, Muslims got 15 percent of the seats .Further, in Bengal where Muslims had a population of 52.7 percent and only 10.4 percent seats in the provincial legislature under the Morley Minto reforms; they were allotted 33 1/3 percent of the seats and later this was raised subsequently to 40 percent .

No less glaring was the discrimination in franchise. Election rules were also made markedly unjust and discriminating. Right to vote depended on income / property qualifications. The income qualifications for Muslim voters being preferred throughout by the government policy. While Muslim landlords, affluent traders, and professionals were granted the right to vote directly in elections to the provincial and central legislative councils; non-Muslims—however wealthy or qualified—were denied similar privileges unless they were members of municipal committees or district boards. This discriminatory arrangement produced glaring anomalies:- in Calcutta, for instance, a Muslim teacher earning a modest salary of fifty rupees per month was enfranchised, whereas a Hindu professor with an income of five hundred rupees per month was excluded from the electorate. Such distinctions were deeply resented and underscored the inequitable and divisive character of the electoral system. Gokhale was scandalised by this blatant discrimination. However, what is particularly noteworthy in the legislative conduct of the members is that on issues of national significance, there was seldom unanimous support for the British government. Instead, members often acted in concert, especially on matters of broader national and public concern such as fiscal autonomy, state control of railways, the abolition of cotton excise duties, and increased expenditure on technical education.

12.8. LIMITATIONS OF THE ACT

Indian Councils Act of 1909 ensured the smooth passage of official legislation in the Imperial Legislative Council, as the government retained an official majority. From the outset, this arrangement generated friction between the executive and the councils. Non-official members persistently criticized governmental policies, while the councils themselves remained largely ineffective due to their inability to exercise real control over the administration.

Legislative authority continued to be circumscribed by the overriding powers of the Governor and the Governor-General, whose veto ensured that the constitutional position remained largely unaltered. Executive councillors retained full control over administrative departments and were not accountable to, nor removable by, the councils. Consequently, the reforms failed to introduce any meaningful element of responsible governance.

The introduction of the communal principle—most notably through separate electorates—proved particularly contentious. Rather than resolving political tensions, it intensified communal divisions and undermined the fragile

emergence of a unified national consciousness. The provisions granting Muslims separate electorates, along with elements of plural voting and preferential representation for landlords and commercial interests were widely interpreted as deliberate attempts by the colonial state to fragment nationalist unity and weaken political solidarity.

Even moderate leaders expressed dissatisfaction with the reforms. The actual working of the Act revealed the adverse consequences of communal representation and indirect elections, which created a significant disconnect between the electorate and their representatives. Members of the legislatures, elected through a multi-tiered and indirect system, often felt little responsibility toward the broader population. As Surendranath Banerjee observed, the detailed rules and regulations governing the implementation of the reforms effectively undermined their intended benefits, reflecting what he perceived as bureaucratic retaliation against Indian political aspirations.

Moreover, the extensive control exercised by the central government over the provinces rendered provincial legislative proceedings largely nominal, lacking substantive autonomy. The disproportionate representation accorded to zamindars and commercial classes further diluted the influence of politically conscious sections, privileging compliant interests over critical voices.

Statements by British policymakers further clarified the limited intent of these reforms. Minto explicitly emphasized that the councils were not designed to introduce parliamentary government in India. Similarly, John Morley categorically rejected any suggestion that the reforms aimed at establishing a parliamentary system. As Lionel Curtis later remarked, the fundamental defect of the Morley-Minto framework lay in its retention of responsibility in the hands of the executive while gradually conceding limited power to representative bodies. Nevertheless, despite its limitations, the Act marked a definite advance over elements of electoral representation and broadened legislative participation.

Check Your Progress (CYP)-II

Q1 Write about the discriminatory provisions related with election rules.

Q 2 What was the impact on the legislative behaviour by the changes made in the Act?

12.9 LET US SUM UP

The Indian Councils Act 1909 enlarged both the membership and the functional scope of the legislative councils. However, their fundamental character remained largely unaltered. In order to ensure the secure passage of key government legislation in the Imperial Legislative Council, an official majority was deliberately retained. The Act also introduced significant changes in representation, most notably granting Muslims the right to separate electorates, along with provisions that effectively enabled plural voting and direct elections.

Despite its evident limitations, the Act of 1909 marked a clear advancement over the Indian Councils Act 1892. It initiated, albeit in a limited and indirect manner, the process of constitutional development toward parliamentary governance in India. In this sense, it constituted an important step along a trajectory that would eventually foreground the demand for responsible government.

12.10 GLOSSARY

Separate Electorate – An electoral system in which members of a specific community or group vote exclusively for their own representatives.

Political weightage – representation on the basis of political importance

Legislative behaviour – conduct of members in the legislature

Franchise - voting rights

12.11 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Write about the Provisions of the Act of 1909

Q2. What were the limitations of the Act?

12.12 LESSON END EXERCISES

Q I. Write a note on the system of Separate Electorate

Q 2. Discuss the impact of system of political weightage?

12.13 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

1. See Section 12.2
2. See Section 12.3
3. See Section 12.4

CYP-II

- I. See Section 12.7
2. See Section 12.7

12.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

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- Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books India, 1989;
- S.P. Nanda, *History of Modern India*, Dominant Publishers and Distributors, 2011.

ORIGIN, AIMS AND ACTIVITIES OF DEOBAND MOVEMENT

STRUCTURE

- 13.0 Learning objectives and outcome**
- 13.1 Introduction**
- 13.2 Eighteenth century: Crisis and Transition**
 - 13.2.1 Who were the Ulemas?**
 - 13.2.2 The Deoband Ulema**
- 13.3 The Town of Deoband**
- 13.4 The Institutional foundation of the Deoband**
 - 13.4.1 Administrative Structure**
- 13.5 A Unique Centre of Islamic Learning**
- 13.6 The Curricular Framework**
- 13.7 Old Boy's Social Network**
- 13.8 A Unique Financial Arrangement**
- 13.9 Celebration of Various Muslim Festivals.**
- 13.10 The Aim of the Institution**
- 13.11 The Techniques of Instructions**
- 13.12 Vocational Training**
- 13.13 Encountering crisis**
- 13.14 Enduring Legacy**
- 13.15 Glossary**
- 13.16 Let us sum up**

13.17 Examination oriented question

13.18 Lesson End Exercises

13.19 Answer Key

13.20 Suggested Readings

13.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objectives of this lesson is to enable you to-

- explain the historical context leading to the emergence of the Deoband movement
- discuss the ideological foundation and objectives of the movement
- understand the distinctive characteristics as a reformist institution.
- understand features of the educational system.
- explain the impact of the movement on Indian Muslim community

After going through the lesson, you will have the clear understanding about-

- the movement's role in reviving Islamic teachings based on Quran and hadith
- its promotion of rational education among Muslims and preservation of Muslim identity under colonial rule.
- the movement's independence from state patronage and reliance on community support.
- institutionalized Islamic education and impact on the grassroots religious consciousness.
- the debate on modernity and tradition within Islam
- its global influence and trans-national educational networks.
- Its socio- religious response to colonial hegemony

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, this lesson explores the emergence and contributions of the Deoband movement as a significant religious reform aimed at the revitalization of Muslim religious life in the Indian subcontinent. In the aftermath of the decline of the Mughal empire and subsequent consolidation of colonial rule, Muslim society experienced profound political, social, and cultural dislocation. This context generated a pressing need for religious and moral reorientation which the Deoband movement sought to address through the principles of *tajdid* (renewal) and *jihad* (struggle in the path of faith, primarily understood in a moral and spiritual sense). Led by prominent scholars, the movement emphasised a return to orthodox Islamic teaching grounded in *Quran* and *Hadith*. It sought to purify religious practices by eliminating innovations and promoted disciplined religious education and moral reform. It also aimed at preserving Islamic identity and cultural autonomy in the colonial political landscape.

13.2. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: CRISIS AND TRANSITION

The eighteenth century marked a crucial phase of transition in the Indian sub-continent, particularly for Muslim intellectual and religious life. During the Mughal rule, the ulema functioned as key custodian of religious knowledge, serving as teachers, interpreters, jurist of Islamic law within the framework sustained by imperial patronage. However, with the empire's decline, institutional support eroded, compelling religious scholars to adapt to conditions of uncertainty. In response, diverse groups such as landed Sufi pirs in Punjab and the scholars associated with firangi mahal undertook efforts to preserve and disseminate Islamic learning separately of state structures. This period of intellectual resilience and adaptability was assessed by Albert Hourani who emphasised the richness of Islamic responses towards the crisis. These evolving efforts eventually crystalized into organised reform movements in the nineteenth century, most prominently the Deoband movement. A significant section of these reformist ulema aligned themselves with the Indian national congress, reflecting broader engagement with anti- colonial politics while continuing to articulate and safeguard Muslim religious and cultural interests.

13.2.1 Who were the Ulemas?

They constituted a distinct class of religious scholars and interpreters of Islamic law whose emergence can be traced to the period following the decline of centralized authority under the Abbasid caliphate in the tenth century, when religious authority became increasingly diffused across regional and local contexts. Functioning both within state structures and at the community level, they played a vital role in guiding Muslim society through legal, educational and spiritual frameworks. In the Indian contexts particularly under the waning Mughal empire and the subsequent rise of British East India company, the ulema were compelled to confront the new political and intellectual challenges. The Delhi school of thought represented a critical response to these transformations especially in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857, seeking to reinterpret the Islamic doctrine in the context of colonial dominance. These responses were exemplified by the reformist trends such as the Ahl-i-Hadith movement and the Deoband seminary movement.

13.2.2 The Deoband Ulema

Under the rubric of Deoband ulema, a new model of religious leadership emerged that consciously distanced itself from dependence on state patronage, institutionalized through Darul-Uloom Deoband. These scholars focused on serving the everyday spiritual and legal needs of the Muslim community while simultaneously training future generation of ulema through the structured system of education. Notably, this institutional framework, while rooted in traditional Islamic pedagogy also reflected certain organizational influences of contemporary British educational models, thereby enabling the movement to sustain itself autonomously in a colonial milieu.

13.3 THE TOWN OF DEOBAND

The town of Deoband which emerged as the centre of Islamic learning, possessed a longstanding historical and cultural significance rooted in the Mughal period. Dominated by the influential families such as Usmani and Siddiqi sheikhs whose prominence dated back to the era of Mughal empire, the town reflected a deep integration

with imperial structures. Its architectural landscape bore testimony to this legacy marked by enduring elements of Indo-Islamic design palace attributed to Usmani official during the reign of Akbar. A seventeenth century *khanqah* a fort constructed under imperial auspices and several notable mosques that underscored its religious vitality. The most celebrated of these mosques were the *masjid-i-Chattah* where the great Sufi Hazrat Baba Faridu'd-Din Ganj-i-Shakar was said to have meditated, and the *masjid-i-khanaqah* built by Aurangzeb. In addition to its built environment Deoband was characterized by its favourable climate, availability of sweet water, presence of tombs of revered figures, and a thriving market place. All of which contributed to its status as a lively urban centre situated in the close proximity of imperial capital, just 90 miles north east of Delhi on Sher Shah royal road. However, the eventual selection of Deoband as the site for the establishment of a major seminary was not merely based on these strategic considerations; rather was imbued with a sense of divine sanction.

13.4 THE INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION OF THE DEOBAND

Two major figures in the founding of the Deoband school were Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (1833-77) and Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829-1905). Both had their homes in towns of the doab and came from families of ulema class. They were influenced by the intellectual life of Delhi. Muhammed Qasim was sent to stay with relatives in Deoband because of a family feud where he studied at the *maktab*- primary school of Maulana Mahtar Ali and shaikh Nihal Ahmed.

By 1840s he moved to Delhi for future education. Rashid Ahmed studied in his home town of Gangoh, then travelled to Karnal and Rampur, finally ending in Delhi where he met Muhammed Qasim. The two young students became disciple of Imdad Ullah, a Sufi Pir whose home was in doab and who shared a similar cultural background. They took initiation from him and apparently became private students at Delhi college where they came into contact with the teachings of sayyid Ahmed Berelwi and with the Delhi school of thought. During their stay in Delhi, the two young men decided to returned to the Doab and in 1876 settled in Deoband where they opened the educational institution.

Throughout the subcontinent, a fundamental difference quickly became apparent regarding the institution. One of the leading founders Maulana Muhammed Qasim enunciated eight fundamental principles dealing with the institutional characteristics. The school was not in the hands of a single family.

Check Your Progress I (CYP)

Q1. Why the town of Deoband was chosen for the establishment of the educational institution?

Q2. Who were the two main figures who founded the Deoband institution?

Q3. Who were the ulemas?

13.4.1 Administrative Structure

Administratively they developed an Islamicized organization that borrowed heavily from the government colleges. It began with three officers: the sarparast rector - a patron or guide of the institution; the Muhtamim, or chancellor, the chief administrative officer; and the Sadr Mudarris, the chief teacher or principal - the person responsible for instructions.

In 1892, Deoband added an officer whose duties stemmed directly from Islamic culture. This was the mufti who supervised the issuing of fatwa, a major task of traditional ulema. Questions of law, custom and behaviour were submitted to the school and answered in the form of fatwa issued by assembled scholars. The final authority within this institution was vested in a consultative council that decided all questions related to personal curriculum, finances and organizational procedures. This administrative structure marked a sharp break from the older organization of Muslim schools which were personal in nature and under the control of local leaders. The members of the teaching staff were ranked by learning. Those with the Arabic faculty given precedence in pay and prestige over the Persian teachers.

The institution's rules called on all to subordinate personal interests in striving for common goal. Members were to demonstrate openness and tolerance in dealing with each other engaging in mutual consultations not on the basis of position but on that of value of their ideas. It was instructed that the councillors of the Institution should always keep in mind its wellbeing. There should be no rigidity of views and for this reason they must never hesitate to express their opinion. It is essential that the teachers of the madersa be in accordance with the instructions and unlike the worldly ulema not to be selfish and intolerant of others. The last principle was particularly significant, asking the teachers to forgo individual inclination in the interest of a common programme.

The council was the central organization and the school was freed of both instability and personal whims. No one person by virtue of either his administrative position or his seniority within the family was to dominate the school.

13.5 A UNIQUE CENTRE OF ISLAMIC LEARNING

The *madersa* began modestly in the old Chattah Masjid under a spreading pomegranate tree that still stands there. The school from its inception was unlike earlier *madersa*. Its founder attempted to emulate the British bureaucratic style for educational institution, in fact eschewed the informal pattern of education.

For this purpose, school was not relegated to a wing of a mosque or home and dependent on a parent institution. It acquired classroom and library and was run by professional staff. Its student were admitted for a fixed course of study and required to take examinations for which prizes were awarded in a yearly convocation. Gradually an informal system of affiliated colleges emerged. Many of the colleges were ultimately staffed by the school's own graduates and their students were examined by visiting Deoband Scholars.

The institution was separate from the local mosque and not merely an appendage to it. The casual and personal teaching style used for centuries was replaced by the permanent teaching staff. Students enrolled in the school studied a defined curriculum with annual examinations. Much of the organizational form was adopted from British institutions and then modified to fit the needs of Deoband.

13.6. THE CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK

The frame work of the curriculum was not English instead they used the syllabus of the Firangi Mahal – a Muslim college associated with the court in Lucknow – as their guide in establishing the educational content of the school. The institution placed at the centre of the education *the hadith*, the source of proper religious practice.

The Deoband Curriculum of study was originally set to cover ten years but later reduced to six. Officially the school did not object to western learning but neither was introduced instead the syllabus focused on Islamic texts, covering Arabic and Persian grammar, prosody and literature, history of Islam, logic, Greco Arab philosophy, *kalam*, dialects, disputation, medieval geometry and astronomy, jurisprudence, the *hadith and tafsir*.

In course of time Persian was de-emphasised instead the seminary utilized Arabic as the language of the scriptures and Urdu as the language of North Indian Muslims. The curriculum was designed to prepare students for their role as members of ulemas and in doing so to strengthen that group as the link between Islamic religion and culture and the Muslim population.

As the reputation of Deoband grew, students arrived from throughout the British Indian empire, but most of them came from Punjab, the North Western Province and Bengal.

once the student had enrolled, he fell under the care and discipline of the institution. They lived nearby the institution until a hostel was constructed at the end of the century. Students were given supplies by the school, and treated if they fell ill. The students lived respectably, attended class regularly and, if they failed to work were promptly dismissed. Their holidays were limited to every Friday and one month off each year.

13.7 OLD BOY'S SOCIAL NETWORK

After six years at Deoband many of the students formed close ties with their fellows' that stayed with them for the rest of their lives. Such bonds strengthened that section of the ulema who were sympathetic to Deoband ideas, adding the dimension of an old boy's social network to this community.

13.8 A UNIQUE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENT

A distinctive feature of the Deoband seminary lay in its unique financial and institutional arrangement which marked a significant departure from earlier patterns of Islamic education in south Asia. Unlike the scholars associated with *Firangi Mahal*, where instruction was often conducted informally within domestic spaces and lacked structural facilities such as libraries and classrooms; the Deoband initiatives established a more organized educational framework. Traditionally ulema in such settings were dependent on the patronage of princes and landed elites, however, the founders of Deoband consciously rejected reliance on state support or aristocratic benevolence. Instead, the institution was sustained through voluntary public contributions, symbolizing a broad community-based commitment to religious education. The seminary also declined government grants-in-aid thereby, preserving its autonomy. Contributions came from wide social spectrum including landholders as well as ordinary believers who donated funds and books, with modest expenditure incurred per student to ensure accessibility. This financial model not only democratized the support base of the institution but also reinforced its ideological orientation. The seminary developed a systematic and innovative approach to fund raising, utilizing modern instruments such as printing press and postal services to mobilize financial support. Contributors were solicited through pledges gifts and money orders accompanied by the circulation of annual reports and the publication of donors' names thereby ensuring transparency and accountability. This process facilitated the creation of extensive well organised network of donors, in which meticulous records were maintained and benefactors were accorded recognition for their generosity notably even the humblest contributors were acknowledged, reflecting their inclusive ethos. The impact of this model was further amplified by the graduates of the seminary, who established numerous affiliated institutions across region such as in upper Doab and Rohilkhand, leading to a significant expansion of the education system.

Consequently, the fame of the institution of the Deoband movement extended across the subcontinent, reaching areas as distant as Peshawar, Chittagong and Madras.

Doctrinally, the Deoband ulema emphasized a balanced adherence to sharia Islamic law and tariqa the spiritual path., grounding their teachings in the interpretive traditions of the four school of Islamic jurisprudence. In doing so, they provided a structured foundation of religious knowledge that combined a legal rigor with spiritual discipline. While accepting certain dimensions of Sufism, they rejected practices and ritual ceremonies that were not based on authoritative learning or scriptural sanction. In particular, customs such as urs celebration and pilgrimage to saints' tombs were deemed to fall outside the boundaries of acceptable Islamic practices reflecting their broader commitment to doctrinal purification and reform.

13.9 CELEBRATION OF VARIOUS MUSLIM FESTIVALS.

The celebration of Muslim festivals within the Deoband milieu further reflected its distinctive social base and ideological orientation. Unlike the earlier institutions which were sustained by elite patronage, the support for the seminary and its associated religious activities, including festivals was drawn from a broad spectrum of Muslim community, thereby reinforcing a sense of collective participation and shared religious identity. This wide network of donors underscored the popular character of the movement distinguishing it from aristocratic funded traditions.

13.10 AIM OF THE INSTITUTION

The goal of the school was to train the students to be a well-educated ulema who would be dedicated to reformed Islam. Such ulema would become prayer leaders, writers, preachers and teachers and thus disseminate their learning in the community. For this purpose, the school set formal requirements for admission. Local students were admitted to study Persian or Quran. The students were expected to study a fixed comprehensive body of learning for the period of six years. The school taught basically *dars-i-Nizami*, the curriculum evolved at Firangi Mahal in the 18th century. The Deobandis reversed the emphasis on rational studies. They deemed *Hadis*, the subject that provided material for popular teaching and influence. It was the basis of correct practice and beliefs and regarded as the crowning subject. However, there were no spokesmen for inclusion of English or western subjects.

13.11 TECHNIQUE OF INSTRUCTION

In terms of technique of instruction, the Deoband seminary introduced a significant pedagogical shift by adopting Urdu, rather than Persian as the principal medium of instructions. The transition to vernacular language facilitated greater accessibility and enabled the dissemination of religious knowledge among wider audience. The conscious promotion of Urdu contributed to its consolidation as a major language of communication among north Indian Muslims, thereby aligning linguistic practice with broader reformist objectives of the movement.

13.12 VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The school also included training in crafts and trade. Teaching of surveying and cartography was also planned in order to provide skills for jobs in the Government Departments. But this plan did not materialize. During that time the preference for intellectual work was too strong. Only two kind of vocational training – *Tibb* and Calligraphy had their place in school.

To train students in calligraphy was important vocational course for attaining jobs in Lithographic press. Moreover, it had its practical value as calligraphy in Islam was regarded as manifestation in spirituality. As for *Tibb* – was a system of medicine derived from the theories of classical Greek. These two subjects were very popular as they extended the scope of influence of ulemas.

A great resource in this teaching was school library. It had a superb collection of Persian and Arabic manuscripts. A British government official toured the school in 1875 and reported that the teachers treated their students with severity but he was impressed by explanation that the staff deemed it beneficial to train students while young to

have a sense of work culture.

Besides Friday, the students were provided with one months' vacation in a year. The school provided books, clothes, shoes, cotton quilt, money for laundry, oil and match for light and medicine and care when sick. At the end of the century the school established a boarding house presumably modelled on Aligarh. Students' daily life was under close supervision of the staff. The faculty was of course had prime influence on the students. The institution attained such a high degree of prestige that all most all the leading scholars, despite the offer of small remuneration, preferred to serve within it rather than accept more lucrative appointments in princely states or government services. This reflected both its intellectual authority and moral appeal.

13.13 ENCOUNTERING CRISIS

The institution confronted two significant crises in 1876 and 1895. Both closely linked to its relationships with local Muslim elite. The first controversy arose over the decision to construct a separate building for the seminary distinct from the mosque, a move that symbolized institutional autonomy and independence from traditional pattern of control. The second crisis centred on issues of staffing and administrative authority wherein local lenders sought to assert influence over appointments and governance. It challenged the seminary's commitment in maintaining scholarly control. Despite these internal challenges, the ulema engaged themselves actively in the broader religious sphere beyond the confines of the school. They participated vigorously in intellectual debates and issued fatwas to address contemporary concerns particularly towards the critiqued posed by Christian missionaries and reformist hindu group such as *Arya samaj*. The institution in this manner not only navigated internal crisis but also positioned itself as chief defender of Islamic doctrine in the contested religious colonial milieu.

13.14 ENDURING LEGACY

The Deoband movement introduced a structured and systematic model of Islamic education that marked a departure from earlier informal modes of instruction. It institutionalized key features such as appointment of regular teaching staff, fixed and standardized curriculum and conduct of periodic examinations which bore certain organizational affinities with educational model of the British. Its graduates emerged as influential scholars of considerable repute actively engaging themselves in intellectual debates to counter critique of Islam and issued fatwa to guide the community on matters of religious practices. Furthermore, Deoband model inspired the establishment of numerous affiliated institutions across the subcontinent, ensuring diffusion of educational ideological framework for cementing lasting impact on Islamic thought and society.

Check Your Progress II (CYP)

Q1. Write about the financial resources of the institution.

Q2. Throw light on the aim of the institution.

Q 3. Write a note on the technique of instruction followed by the Deoband institution

13.15. GLOSSARY

Tibb - Traditional system of medicine

Calligraphy - Art of decorative handwriting

Manuscripts - Hand written documents

Hadith - Sayings of Prophet

Firangi mahal - A renowned centre of Islamic learning in Lucknow associated with the development of the Dars-i-Nizami curriculum

Shariat - A body of Islamic law derived from Quran and Hadith

Maktab - A primary level Islamic school

Vernacular - Native language spoken by ordinary people.

13.16 LET US SUM UP

The Deoband movement was a significant reformist initiative, which represented distinct institutional model that differed from earlier madarsa in its organization, administration, community-based support and ideological orientation. Its curricular framework was progressive and rational within the traditional paradigm which incorporated elements of vocational training with emphasis on religious scholarship. It played a crucial role in preserving cultural identity, collective consciousness and pro-nationalist sentiments.

13.17 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Give reasons for Deoband's recognition as an educational institution in south East Asia?
- Q2. Write about the crisis faced by the institution

13.18 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q I. Write about the administrative structure of the institution
- Q2. Throw light on the vocational training provided by the institution

13.19. ANSWER KEY

CYPI

1. See Section 13.3
2. See Section 13.4
3. See Sub- section 13.2.1

CYPII

- I. See -Section 13.8
2. See - Section -13.10
3. See -Section 13.11

13.20 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*, Cambridge University Press, 1990;
- Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900*, Princeton University Press, 1982.

ALIGARH MOVEMENT

STRUCTURE

14.0. Learning Objectives and Outcomes

14.1. Introduction

14.2. Aligarh Movement

14.3. Let us sum up

14.4. Glossary

14.5. Examination Oriented Questions

14.6. Lesson End Exercises

14.7. Answer Key

14.8. Suggested Readings

14.0. LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Learning Objectives

Dear learners, the objective of this lesson is to enable you to:

- examine the role of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in promoting modern education among Indian Muslims
- explain the aims, principles, and major features of the movement.
- the significance of the movement in the growth of modern Muslim consciousness in India.
- illustrate the contribution of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in spreading modern education.

Learning Outcomes

Dear learners, after going through this lesson, you will have a clear understanding about:

- the circumstances that led to the rise of the Aligarh Movement.
- the life, ideas, and reformist activities of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.

- the importance of modern and scientific education in the upliftment of society.
- the objectives and major contributions of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College.
- the social and political impact of the movement on Indian Muslims.
- the role of the movement in shaping modern Muslim thought and awakening in India.
- the achievements and limitations of the movement in colonial India.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, the **Aligarh Movement** was a socio-educational reform movement initiated in the 19th century by Syed Ahmad Khan. It aimed at the upliftment of Indian Muslims through modern education, scientific thinking, and social reform under British rule. The movement emphasized learning English and western sciences so that Muslims could improve their economic and political position in colonial India. Centered around the establishment of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875, it later became the foundation of modern Muslim education and contributed significantly to the emergence of Muslim political and educational consciousness in India. Let us discuss in detail.

14.2 ALIGARH MOVEMENT

Dear learners, with the decline of the Mughal Empire and the rise of British power in India, Muslims suffered a major loss of political authority, social prestige, and economic opportunities. The situation worsened after the Revolt of 1857, when the British held Muslims largely responsible for the uprising, interpreting it as an attempt to restore Mughal authority under the leadership of the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar. In reality, the revolt was a widespread anti-colonial movement in which both Hindus and Muslims participated actively. Leaders such as Rani Lakshmibai, Nana Sahib, and Kunwar Singh fought prominently alongside Muslim leaders like Bahadur Shah Zafar. Having been thoroughly shaken by the unprecedented unity between Hindu and Muslim soldiers and rulers during the revolt, the British systematically implemented a policy of "Divide and Rule". As a result, the British viewed Muslims as inherently disloyal and politically dangerous, while viewing Hindus—who had been quicker to adopt English education in the decades prior—as more pliant and reliable partners in governance. In the nerve centers of the revolt (like Delhi, Lucknow, and Rohilkhand), Muslim property, lands, and estates were confiscated on a massive scale. Much of this land was redistributed to groups who had aided the British during the mutiny, such as the Sikhs and Gurkhas. Muslims were systematically barred from government jobs, judicial posts, and the military. In some regions, government gazettes explicitly stated that certain administrative vacancies were reserved strictly for Hindus. For the Hindus it meant only a change of masters, but for the Muslims, it meant the loss of power, position, wealth and dignity. Consequently, the nineteenth century, witnessed a significant wave of socio-religious reform movements that spread among the Hindus first. Probably the best example illustrating this is the emergence, as early as 1828, of Brahmo Samaj under the leadership of Raja Rajarammohan Roy. A.R. Desai states that "The pioneers of nationalism in all countries were always the modern intelligentsia ..." and in the case of India "it was predominantly from the Hindu community that the first sections of the Indian intelligentsia ...

sprang,” hence the latter became the “pioneers of Indian nationalism”.

On the other hand, Muslims faced severe repression, discrimination, and exclusion from government employment. This created not only deep resentment and distrust towards the British, but also widened communal divisions in Indian society. Many Muslims distanced themselves from western education and colonial institutions, which contributed to their social and political backwardness in the early colonial period. This educational backwardness amongst the Muslims contributed to their economic decline, as many Muslims lost access to government employment and faced growing poverty and social insecurity. Sections of Muslim society remained influenced by orthodox attitudes that resisted modern ideas and rational thinking, which limited social progress and adaptation to changing times. Meanwhile, other communities especially Hindus began to advance rapidly in education and employment, increasing competition and widening the gap further. In this context, reform became necessary for the upliftment and survival of Muslims in colonial India. In shaping the vision and thinking of Muslims in modern India, the contribution of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) remains foundational.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was born in 1817 to one of the few Ashraf families of Delhi where education was held in high esteem. His childhood was quite affluent and joyful. During his childhood, under the influence of his mother, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was introduced to the traditional system of education focusing on learning Urdu, Arabic, Persian, and Islamic studies. However, his inquisitive and probing mind led him to look beyond the limitations and stereotypes of traditional education, encouraging him to embrace modern knowledge and scientific thinking. Despite his family’s long association with the Mughal court, he rejected an offer of employment there, recognising the declining power of the Mughal Empire. Instead, in **1838**, Syed Ahmad Khan joined the service of the British East India Company as a **judicial clerk** and later worked in various judicial positions, eventually becoming a **judicial officer**, where he served until his retirement in 1877.

During the Revolt of 1857, Sir Syed remained loyal to the British. The brutal repression of Muslims by the British after the Revolt of 1857 and the failure of armed resistance convinced Syed that British rule in India was likely to remain for a long time. He believed that Muslims needed to accept this reality and reconcile with the British by adopting modern education and engaging with the new political and social order. In order to reduce British suspicion towards Muslims and build better relations with the colonial government, he organised a celebration in honour of the continuation of British rule. In 1859, he published his famous Urdu treatise *Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind* (*The Causes of the Indian Revolt*). The main objective of this work was to explain the real causes behind the Revolt of 1857 and convince the British that the uprising was not merely the result of disloyalty, but was caused by administrative mistakes, misunderstandings, and the exclusion of Indians from governance. He also sought to remove British hostility towards Muslims and promote reconciliation between the rulers and the ruled.

He also wrote two English pamphlets titled *The Loyal Mohammedans of India* and *Review on Dr. Hunter’s Indian Musalmans*. Through these writings, he highlighted Muslims who had remained loyal to the British, and improve relations between the British and the Muslim community.

For Syed, the future progress of Islam depended on the social and educational upliftment of Muslims. Therefore, he encouraged Muslims to adopt western education, embrace modern scientific knowledge, and seek employment

in government services to improve their social and economic position under British rule. He began to translate western works on science, history, and modern knowledge into Urdu so that Muslims could access contemporary education and broaden their intellectual outlook. In 1863, he travelled to Calcutta and spoke before the Muslim Literary Society, founded by Nawab Abdul Latif. The society promoted modern education, social reform, and cooperation between Muslims and the British government. During his address, he urged Muslims to study European science and technology, arguing that nothing in Islam prohibited the pursuit of modern knowledge and learning.

In 1864, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan founded the **Scientific Society** at Ghazipur. After his transfer to Aligarh, the main office of the Scientific Society was also transferred to Aligarh. Its main aim was to translate English books on science, history, and other modern subjects into Urdu and to spread modern education among Muslims. He believed that mutual understanding between the British and Indians could be strengthened through the exchange of knowledge and ideas. To achieve this, he launched an English-Urdu journal called *The Scientific Society Paper*, which aimed to make western scientific and intellectual developments accessible to Indian readers. The journal also served as a bridge between English-educated circles and Urdu-speaking society, helping spread rational and modern thinking. In addition, he established the **British-Indian Association of the North-Western Provinces**, through which he encouraged dialogue and cooperation between Indians and the colonial administration. These efforts reflected his broader vision of social reform, educational advancement, and reconciliation with the British, which he believed was essential for the progress of Indian Muslims.

In 1869–70, Sir Syed travelled to England with his son, where during his seventeen months stay, he closely observed English society and its educational institutions, especially universities like Oxford and Cambridge. He was deeply impressed by their system of modern education, scientific thinking, discipline, and social progress. This experience further strengthened his belief that Muslims in India needed to adopt western education and modern ideas in order to improve their social, economic, and political condition.

On his return, he dedicated his life to reconciling modern western ideas with Islam. He argued that Islam was not in conflict with reason or science and that Muslims should reinterpret religious teachings in the light of changing times. He argued that the Quran contains eternal and ultimate truth and that it exists in harmony with all knowledge, including science. Secondly, he believed that science and natural laws are also true, as they are part of God's creation. Therefore, there can be no real contradiction between the Quran and natural law. If any apparent conflict arises, it is either due to a misunderstanding of the Quranic message or an incorrect interpretation of scientific laws. He said that if something can be explained through reason and science without going against the Quran, it should be accepted. In this way, Sir Syed tried to bring Islam in line with modern science and rational thinking. However, many orthodox Muslims opposed his ideas and mockingly called him and his followers "Necharis" (naturists).

Throughout his life, Sir Syed opposed blind faith in tradition, ignorance, and irrational thinking. He encouraged people to think critically and develop freedom of thought. He believed that without intellectual freedom, civilized life was not possible. He also warned against religious fanaticism, narrow-mindedness, and exclusiveness, and advised students and society to be broad-minded, rational, and tolerant towards others. He also allowed Muslims

to wear shoes in mosques, take part in Hindu and Christian festivals, and eat at European-style tables. Sir Syed defended these practices through the idea of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), saying that Islam should be understood in the light of changing times and circumstances. However, many religious scholars (*ulama*) rejected his views because they believed he was not properly trained in religious studies and therefore had no authority to interpret Islamic teachings.

For Syed, the solution to the problems faced by Muslims lay in providing modern education that combined western knowledge with Islamic values. In 1872, he formed a Select Committee to plan an education system for Muslims. The committee studied the needs of different sections of Muslim society, including peasants, shopkeepers, artisans, labourers, and those aiming for government jobs or religious careers. This work led to the idea of a modern school that would educate all Muslims and reduce sectarian divisions. Some Hindus also supported this initiative and contributed financially. However, over time, the focus shifted mainly to the education of respectable upper-class Muslims.

In June 1875, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was established at Aligarh. It followed the government curriculum under an English headmaster but maintained an Islamic cultural environment. Degree classes began in 1878, though the college initially struggled with low enrolment. Gradually, it became an important centre of Muslim education. Between 1882 and 1902, Aligarh produced a significant number of Muslim graduates and played a key role in creating a modern educated Muslim elite in India. He envisioned the college as a training ground for Muslims who could serve their community (*qaum*). He wanted educated, honest, and responsible leaders who could work with the British government and protect Muslim interests. He hoped that, over time, this educated elite would help Muslims gain a strong position in society through cooperation with the British.

The English headmaster, Theodore Beck, supported this vision but shaped it according to the model of English public schools. He aimed to develop students with strong character and Islamic values, similar to the educated elite of England. However, the college did not focus strongly on academic excellence, as shown by its modest results in university examinations.

Student life at Aligarh was more active in debates, public speaking, and social activities than in classroom learning. The student Union became the centre of campus life, where students actively participated in elections and competitions. While deep study of Islamic theology was limited, a strong sense of belonging to the Muslim community remained an important feature of the institution. In 1920, Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College became the Aligarh Muslim University through an Act of the Indian Legislative Council.

It is interesting to note that Sayyid's educational reforms were meant only for the Muslim boys and not for the Muslim girls. Indeed, he considered modern education dangerous for women. He strongly advised Muslim women to adhere to the traditional system of education that alone would help them in their moral and material well-being. Once educated, Muslim men, he felt, would in turn educate their female relatives. Suitable curriculum for girls would be "domestic crafts, respect for their elders, affection for the husband, care of the children and understanding of religious tenets". He approved only these aspects of education for Muslim women. In particular he wrote in favour of raising the women's status in society by advocating removal of *purdah*, condemning the customs of polygamy and easy divorce.

For the rest of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's life, Aligarh College remained his main focus. He devoted most of his time to its administration and acted almost like a one-man managing committee, handling finances, publications, correspondence, teaching matters, and student discipline. Alongside the college, he continued working for the upliftment of the Muslim community. In 1886, he founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Educational Conference to promote a combination of modern English education with Islamic learning.

It is interesting to note that initially, Syed Ahmad Khan supported Hindu–Muslim unity and believed both communities were integral parts of Indian society. He famously described Hindus and Muslims as the “two eyes of a beautiful bride”, emphasizing cooperation and shared interests. During his early reform efforts, he encouraged modern education and social progress for all Indians. However, his views gradually changed in the late nineteenth century due to political and social developments. The **Hindi–Urdu controversy (1867)** emerged in the north-western provinces, when some Hindu groups demanded that **Hindi written in Devanagari script** should replace **Urdu written in Persian script** in courts and official administration. Until then, Urdu had been widely used for government work in the region. Syed Ahmad Khan strongly opposed this demand because he considered Urdu represented the composite culture (*Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb*) and Hindu–Muslim coexistence. The controversy convinced him that Hindus and Muslims might have different political and cultural interests. Another important source of tension was that he increasingly feared that Muslims were lagging behind in English education and government employment compared to Hindus. Sir Syed also believed that in a democratic system based on majority rule, Muslims—being a minority—might be politically dominated by Hindus. Therefore, he opposed the formation of the Indian National Congress, arguing that it mainly represented Hindu interests and could harm Muslims. As a result, he gradually moved away from his earlier emphasis on Hindu–Muslim unity and began advocating separate political safeguards and educational advancement for Muslims through cooperation with the British. In 1889, along with Theodore Beck, he established the United Indian Patriotic Association to counter the Congress, and focused on improving the condition of Muslims through education and promoting loyalty to the British government. He advised all educationally backward Muslims to remain aloof from politics for some time to come. The time for politics he said had not yet come. The British later honoured him with the title of “**Sir**” (Knighthood) in **1888** for his services to education and public life.

He believed that the new generation from Aligarh would unite Muslims into a single community, overcoming divisions of sect, class, and language. He also noted that the dress style of Aligarh students, such as the *fez* and Turkish coat, helped create a sense of identity among them. This approach contributed to the development of Muslim political consciousness. He would not do anything to offend the government and, on the other hand, encouraged communalism and separatism. In the coming years he was regarded as the father of the ‘Two-Nation Theory’ which says that Hindus and Muslims cannot be one nation, leading to the partition of country in 1947.

Check Your Progress (CYP) I

On the basis of your understanding of the previous section, answer the following questions in your own words:

Q1. Who was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan?

Q2. What was the main objective of the Aligarh Movement?

Q3. Explain **Hindi–Urdu controversy (1867)**.

Q4. What was the role of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in the Aligarh Movement?

Q5. How did Sir Syed's opinion on Hindu–Muslim unity change over time?

Fill in the Blanks

- The Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College later became _____.
- Sir Syed believed Muslims should cooperate with the _____ **government**.
- In 1859, Sir Syed published his famous Urdu treatise _____ (*The Causes of the Indian Revolt*).
- In 1864, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan founded the _____ at Ghazipur.
- In 1889, along with Theodore Beck, he established the _____ to counter the Congress.
- In **1920**, Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College became the _____ through an Act of the Indian Legislative Council.

14.3 LET US SUM UP

Dear learners, Syed Ahmad Khan played a crucial role in the social and educational upliftment of Indian Muslims through the Aligarh Movement. His emphasis on modern education, scientific thinking, and cooperation with the British helped Muslims adapt to changing political conditions under colonial rule. Although his views on Hindu–Muslim unity changed over time due to political developments like the Hindi–Urdu controversy, his overall contribution laid the foundation for modern Muslim education and political consciousness in India.

14.4 GLOSSARY

Ashraf: educated and upper-class Muslims

Ijtihad: independent reasoning

Ulama: Muslim religious scholars

Qaum: is an Urdu word that means **”nation” or “community”**. It is commonly used to refer to a group of people who share a **common identity**, such as religion, culture, language, or ethnicity.

Fez: cap

Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb: refers to the **composite culture of north India**, formed through the long interaction and coexistence of Hindus and Muslims. The term symbolically represents the unity of the **Ganga (Hindu culture)** and **Yamuna (Muslim culture)**, showing how both communities influenced each other in language, traditions, art, music, festivals, and daily life.

14.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the contribution of the Aligarh Movement towards cultural and educational reforms amongst the Muslims.
- Q2. Discuss the life and early career of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and explain how his experience in the British East India Company shaped his reformist ideas.
- Q3. Examine the causes that led Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to initiate the Aligarh Movement.
- Q4. Explain the main objectives and features of the Aligarh Movement. How did it aim to modernize Muslim society?

14.6 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. Analyze the role of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in the educational upliftment of Indian Muslims.
- Q2. Discuss the significance of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in the development of Muslim education in India.
- Q3. Critically evaluate Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's views on Hindu–Muslim unity. Why did his perspective change over time?
- Q4. Discuss the contribution of the Aligarh Movement towards the emergence of Muslim political consciousness in India.
- Q5. Why did Sir Syed Ahmad Khan oppose the Indian National Congress? Explain his political ideology.

14.7 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

- Q1. See Section: 14.2
- Q2. See Section: 14.2
- Q3. See Section: 14.2
- Q4. See Section: 14.2
- Q5. See Section: 14.2

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Aligarh Muslim University
- b. British
- c. *Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind*

- d. **Scientific Society**
- e. United Indian Patriotic Association
- f. Aligarh Muslim University

14.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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SYED AHMED KHAN AND HIS RELATIONS WITH THE CONGRESS**STRUCTURE****15.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes****15.1 Introduction****15.2 Political Philosophy of Syed Ahmed Khan****15.3 Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: A leading Public Figure in Northern India.****15.4 The Aligarh Institution: Formation of Political Consciousness****15.5 Countering Congress****15.6 Aligarh and the Indian National Politics****15.6.1 Internal Challenges****15.7 Conspicuous Aloofness****15.8 Muhammadan Educational Conference.****15.9 Anti-Congress Campaign****15.10 Aligarh and the Indian National Congress****15.11 Let us sum up****15.12 Glossary****15.13 Examination Oriented Questions****15.14 Lesson End Exercises****15.15 Answer key****15.16 Suggested Readings**

15.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to-

- examine the political ideas of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan
- analyse his attitude towards the formation and activities of the Indian National Congress.
- understand the reasons behind his opposition to Congress politics, particularly his views on representation and majority rule.
- explore the broader impact of his ideas on Muslim political thought and the Aligarh movement

Learning Outcomes

After going through this lesson, you will be able to understand-

- the political philosophy of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in the context of late 19th-century India.
- his relationship with the Indian National Congress and the causes of his opposition.
- how his views contributed to the development of separate political identities.
- development of early communal and political dynamics in colonial India.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, this lesson examines the ideas of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his associates at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (MAO College) in Aligarh, identified as only vocal group which raised the spectre of Hindu domination.

They were the first to introduce the language of minoritism, backed by Muslim elites of upper India. They further, developed separatist politics to safeguard their interests which was under threat from British education policies, constitutional reforms and powerful Hindu revivalist campaign.

15.2 POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SYED AHMED KHAN

Syed Ahmed started a modernization movement among the Muslims and founded for this purpose the Muhammadan Anglo oriental college in Aligarh in 1875. Devid Lelyveld has shown in his work *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim solidarity in British India* - that his political philosophy revolved round the idea that Indian society was an aggregate of contending groups brought together by superior power, previously the Mughal emperor and now replaced by the British.

The Muslims as an ex -ruling class were entitled to distinct position of authority and power in this British Empire. For this they must educate themselves and acquire new skills which would empower them to assert themselves within the new institutional set up of colonial India.

He visualized nation as federation of *Quam* or ethnic communities based on common descent. These groups would enjoy cultural autonomy and share power according to their inherited subculture. The Muslims as ex-ruling class would therefore have a greater representation in the sharing of power and special relationship with the political order. It was here that his philosophy differed from that of the Indian national congress, which imagined India as nation state. It was because of this divergence of perceptions; the Muslim politics began to drift away from congress and mainstream nationalism.

15.3 SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN: A LEADING PUBLIC FIGURE IN NORTHERN INDIA.

Syed Ahmed Khan had served as a nominated member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council, where he supported measures such as local self-government and upheld the right of Indian judges to try Europeans. As early as 1858, he had advocated for Indian representation in government councils.

During the 1860s, he utilized platforms like the British Indian Association and the Aligarh Institute Gazette to voice sharp criticism of government policies, even at the risk of incurring considerable hostility from sections of the British official establishment.

Although the cause of enabling Indians to enter the coveted civil services remained close to his heart, Syed Ahmed Khan consistently supported such efforts. He wrote in defence of Surendranath Banerjee's claims in 1870 and again in 1877, and also joined the campaign to raise the age limit for the civil services examination from 19 to 21 years.

In 1884, Banerjee initiated a new organization, the National Fund, with Syed Ahmed serving as its president, reflecting a moment of cooperation between early nationalist leaders and reformist Muslim leadership.

In coordination with the National Fund, the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College established a Civil Service Fund and initiated preparatory classes for the civil services examination, reflecting a concerted effort to promote Muslim participation in government service.

15.4 THE ALIGARH INSTITUTION: FORMATION OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The Aligarh college as Devid Lelyveld argues was a profoundly political enterprise to construct and consolidate among its Muslim students the mentality of belonging to a *Quam* and to reach through them to greater social area of north Indian Muslim population.

Its curriculum blended Muslim theology with 19th century European empiricism that would prepare the new generation of Muslim for the advantages and opportunities of British rule. The Aligarh students had developed the spirit of solidarity. The other significant organization to spread Sir Syed Ahmed's message was the Mohamdan Educational Conference which met every year since 1886; the year after the Congress was established.

Sir Syed thought to organise and consolidate Muslim minority otherwise the Hindu majority electorate would dominate over the Muslim minority in the new representative bodies and the civil services. The fear of majority

increased due to cow killing riots of 1893 and the Hindu demand of legal ban on cow slaughter. Syed Ahmed's radical anti-Congress stand became the trend in Muslim politics and that was patronised by British bureaucracy. In this significant role was played by the European principal of the college named Theodore Buck.

15.5 COUNTERING CONGRESS

The apprehension of Muslims toward elective representative institutions and majority rule was forcefully articulated by Syed Ahmed Khan in his 1883 speech on the Local Self-Government Bill for the Central Province. He argued that in a system based on numerical representation, Muslims—being a numerical minority—would be politically marginalized, as power would inevitably gravitate toward the Hindu majority. This critique reflected not merely a resistance to institutional reform but a deeper concern about the implications of majoritarian democracy in a socially and religiously diverse society.

At the same time, these anxieties were intensified by the rise of Hindu revivalist movements in the late nineteenth century, whose rhetoric was often perceived by Muslim elites as exclusionary and antagonistic. The convergence of political insecurity and cultural apprehension contributed to the gradual emergence of separatist tendencies within sections of Muslim leadership. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, this evolving outlook began to crystallize into a more defined communitarian consciousness, wherein political identity increasingly aligned with religious affiliation, laying the groundwork for future demands centered on distinct political representation.

In 1888, Sir Syed Ahmed formed the United Patriotic Association to oppose the Congress and to plead for government patronage for the Muslim. In 1893 the Mohamdan Anglo- Oriental Defence Association was formed once again with Buck's encouragement to check the growing popularity of the congress and to organise Muslim public opinion against it. Thus, Aligarh movement under Syed Ahmed and his Aligarh college developed in opposition to congress led nationalism. He advocated the idea of necessity of loyalty to the British which was conceived as a legitimate successor to the Mughal empire.

When Syed Ahmed Khan exhorted Muslims to keep away from the Indian national congress, some of his critics accused him of being anti- national.

15.6 ALIGARH AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL POLITICS

The Muhamadan educational conference represented a kind of short course in the Aligarh ethos. In a political sense it was an effort to stake out Aligarh's claim to leadership of an all-India muslim constituency. From a more practical point of view, the conference was one more in the series of efforts to widen the financial and recruitment base of the college.

It was Syed Ahmed's contention that the best political strategy for Muslims all over India was to pour every last bit of public energy and economic capital in to the college at Aligarh to build up one great centre for a unified network of Muslim institutions.

15.6.1 Internal Challenges

Not everyone within the community shared his ideas. Many who shared Syed Ahmed's general belief in the need for fundamental intellectual and moral reformation, did not feel the necessity of working under his shadow. In Punjab for example the *Anjuman Himayati- Islam*, which was basically sympathetic to the aims of Aligarh movement, nevertheless wanted to establish its own school and college rather than depend on Aligarh for the education of Punjabi Muslims. Moreover, a significant number of supporters of the Aligarh Movement viewed Aligarh as the central headquarters of Indian Muslims while simultaneously adhering to a strong commitment to religious orthodoxy and traditional practices. As a result, the reformist religious ideas of Sayyid Ahmed Khan found only limited acceptance within the Muhammadan Educational Conference, not much as they had within the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College.

Both institutions, in order to sustain their legitimacy as representative Muslim bodies, were compelled to accommodate and show deference to prevailing religious sentiments and inherited pieties, thereby constraining the full expression of Sayyid Ahmed's modernist agenda.

In order to attract an all India interest, the conference were itinerant, held each year in a different city with success or failure in the hands of local reception committee. However, it suffered from an inability to attract much interest in the more distant centre of Muslim population such as Bengal and Bombay presidencies.

The newly established organization of *Sunni Ulama*, the *Nadvat-ul-Ulema*, held its first annual conference at Kanpur, with active participation from Shibli Nomani, a prominent figure associated with Aligarh. The association sought to reassert the leadership of the *Ulama* at a time when new organizational and intellectual currents were reshaping Muslim society. In this sense, it represented a direct challenge to the modernist vision of Syed Ahmed Khan.

At the same time, the Aligarh gathering faced significant competition for public attention from the ninth Indian National Congress session, held that year in Lahore, a location geographically close to Aligarh's own sphere of influence. This overlap further underscored the contested political and intellectual space in which Muslim reformist and nationalist agendas were being articulated during the period.

Dadabhai Naoroji, who had recently secured victory as a Liberal Party Member of the Parliament in England, presided over the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress in 1893. For Indian National Congress, these developments constituted a significant advance for the political movement it had helped to initiate. The Congress consistently advocated the establishment of representative institutions in India and sought to widen Indian access to the higher echelons of the bureaucracy, particularly by demanding that the civil services examination be conducted within India itself. Alongside these administrative reforms, it also articulated a series of economic demands aimed at fostering indigenous enterprise and strengthening Indian commercial interests.

Above all, Congress nationalists aspired to create an all-India political identity that could transcend regional and social divisions. However, despite its efforts to broaden indigenous participation, the early goals of nationalism remained largely framed within the context of the British Empire. The demand for self-government was modelled

on colonies such as Australia and Canada, reflecting a renewed optimism that constitutional reform within the Imperial framework could eventually secure greater autonomy for India.

15.7 CONSPICUOUS ALOOFNESS

When the Indian National Congress was established in 1885, Syed Ahmed Khan remained conspicuously aloof. Surendranath Banerjee wrote to him, emphasizing that no assembly of national delegates would be complete without his presence. Despite such warm solicitations from the founders, Sayyid Ahmed neither issued any public statement nor allowed the Aligarh Institute Gazette to provide coverage of the Congress.

His deliberate refusal to engage with the organization caused considerable disappointment among Congress leaders, particularly because Sayyid Ahmed was regarded as the most prominent public figure in northern India at the time, whose support could have significantly enhanced the legitimacy and reach of the nascent nationalist movement.

Check your Progress (CYP)- I

- Q1.** Evaluate the significance of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's political ideas in the development of Muslim political consciousness in India.

- Q2** Examine the strategies adopted by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to counter the influence of the Indian National Congress.

15.8 MUHAMMADAN EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE.

In 1886, Syed Ahmed Khan founded the Muhammadan Educational Conference. Its sessions were deliberately scheduled at the same time as those of the Indian National Congress. Although no explicit opposition was expressed, this timing was widely interpreted as a symbolic gesture of distance, if not indirect opposition, to the Congress.

In the following year, Allan Octavian Hume wrote to Syed Ahmed, urging him to extend his support to the Congress, reflecting continued efforts by its leadership to secure his endorsement.

By this time, the new political movement had already generated considerable controversy among Muslim elites. In Calcutta, two prominent leaders—Abdul Latif and Amir Ali—refused to associate themselves with the Indian National Congress, arguing that the establishment of representative institutions would not serve the interests of the Muslim population. Subsequently, Ameer Ali sought to gauge and mobilize Muslim opinion in opposition to the Congress.

In contrast, in Bombay, the Congress found a distinguished Muslim supporter in Badruddin Tyabji. When Tyabji was elected president of the third session of the Congress, it became evident that continued silence on the issue would risk undermining his claim to leadership among Indian Muslims, compelling him to take a more explicit public stance.

Sayed Ahmed Khan chose the occasion of Badruddin Tyabji's presidency to articulate his opposition to the Indian National Congress in a more explicit and public manner. In December 1887, the two organizations met simultaneously—the Congress at Madras and the Muhammadan Educational Conference at Lucknow. In order to preserve the formally non-political character of his own organization, Syed Ahmed delivered his views at a separate public meeting.

15.9 ANTI-CONGRESS CAMPAIGN

In this address, he openly criticized the Congress, portraying it as an attempt by a limited regional leadership to dominate Indian politics. He argued that democratic institutions and recruitment to the bureaucracy purely on the basis of merit were impracticable in a society that lacked a homogeneous political community. Such a system, he contended, could result in the temporary ascendancy of socially and politically unrepresentative groups. Instead, he maintained that the proper representatives of Indian opinion in the councils of government should be drawn from established social elites, whose authority derived from lineage and inherited status rather than solely from competitive merit.

Syed Ahmed Khan argued that if appointments were made solely through competitive examinations, not only Muslims but also traditional elites such as rajas and the martial Rajputs would be overshadowed by more educationally advanced groups, particularly the Bengalis. In his view, such an outcome would result in a disproportionate concentration of power, leading to widespread discontent and a sense of subjugation among other communities.

He further contended that the proposals advanced by the Indian National Congress could ultimately produce conditions of instability, anarchy, and even violence in a socially divided polity. Under such circumstances, he maintained that the continuance of British rule in India was necessary to preserve order and ensure peace among the diverse and potentially conflicting segments of the population.

In 1882, during the proceedings of the Hunter Education Commission, Syed Ahmed Khan witnessed the revival of a campaign advocating the replacement of Urdu with Hindi as the official language of the North Indian provinces. In the same year, Dayananda Saraswati initiated a movement, through the Arya Samaj, calling for the prohibition of cow slaughter. These developments deepened Muslim anxieties regarding cultural and political marginalization.

Syed Ahmed's speech at Lucknow was subsequently followed by a vigorous political campaign under the direction of Theodore Beck. This led to the formation of an anti-Congress organization, the United Indian Patriotic Association, which claimed to represent the loyal and politically significant sections of Indian society. Initially, the association included several prominent North Indian Hindus, such as Oudh talukdars, the Raja of Banaras, and even Syed Ahmed's former associate Shiv Prasad.

Across India, meetings were organized to express Muslim support for Syed Ahmed's position. While in some Muslim circles his opposition may have inadvertently lent impetus to the Indian National Congress, overall, the anti-Congress campaign tapped into a new reservoir of public sympathy for the Aligarh movement. Syed Ahmed's arguments resonated more closely with prevailing indigenous political assumptions than the Congress's more ambitious advocacy of nationalism and representative government.

Even supporters of the Indian National Congress such as Badruddin Tyabji were compelled to articulate their arguments in the idiom of *qaums* (communities), reflecting the growing salience of communitarian political language. The principal aim of Syed Ahmed Khan's opposition was to bring Aligarh to the centre of the political stage, and in this respect, his efforts proved successful.

In 1889, students of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College gathered nearly thirty thousand Muslim signatures on an anti-Congress petition addressed to the British Parliament. The college had never before attracted such widespread attention. In this context, Theodore Beck was accused of opposing the Congress in order to project Aligarh into the forefront of British efforts to counter and contain the Nationalist movement.

Within a week of the Lucknow speech Syed Ahmed had become 'Sir Syed'. He received a fan mail from fit James Stephen and responded by showing that he was well acquainted by the latter's argument against democracy in general and the possibility of national consolidation for India in particular. Auckland Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Province and Oudh and the leading official critic of the Congress were a long-standing associate of Syed Ahmed.

15.10 ALIGARH AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The opposition of Syed Ahmed Khan to the Indian National Congress constituted a crucial turning point in the early history of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College. This opposition may also be understood as an effort to enhance the prestige and public visibility of the college during a period marked by internal challenges.

The initial bursts of political activity at Aligarh coincided with institutional difficulties, including student strikes, poor examination results, and controversies surrounding the trustee bill. Faced with declining enrolments and the withdrawal of support from several major patrons, the college increasingly relied on the backing of the British government, projecting itself as a loyal outpost of the Raj. However, subsequent factional entanglements generated considerable public embarrassment.

Administrative and financial mismanagement further complicated matters, enabling Theodore Beck to assume extensive control over the institution. After the death of Syed Ahmed Khan, Beck, with the assistance of younger

alumni, managed to stabilize Aligarh for a time. His premature death at the age of forty was later commemorated through the establishment of a memorial fund in his name.

Within the college, ideological discipline was also enforced: pro-Congress newspapers were barred from the reading room, and anti-Congress exhortations became an integral part of the institution's moral and intellectual environment. His opposition to the Congress stands out as a defining moment in the early history of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, not least because it also served to enhance the institution's public profile during a phase of internal crisis.

Check Your Progress (CYP)-II

Q1. Discuss the factors that led to tensions between Aligarh leaders and the Indian National Congress.

Q2. How did the Aligarh Institution contribute to the formation of political consciousness among Indian Muslims?

15.11 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, the political outlook of Syed Ahmed Khan had been clearly articulated well before the emergence of either Theodore Beck or the Indian National Congress. Drawing upon his Mughal intellectual inheritance, he conceived of India not as a unified nation but as a composite of unequal and often antagonistic ancestral groups, held in balance only by the authority of an overarching power. Thus, even while supporting measures such as local self-government, he opposed the introduction of elective institutions, arguing that in a system based on numbers, the larger community would inevitably dominate the smaller. Instead, he favoured representation through nomination rather than election.

For Syed Ahmed, Muslim identity was rooted in the notion of *qaum*—a community defined by common descent—rather than the broader religious idea of the *umma*. Consequently, if electoral principles were to be introduced in India, he and his supporters insisted upon safeguards such as separate constituencies and representation proportionate to the Muslim population. His campaign against Congress politics was in effect, as much a mobilizational effort as the Congress agitation itself.

At the same time, his political interventions must be viewed in the context of institutional concerns at Aligarh. The United Indian Patriotic Association proved short-lived, lasting barely two years, and was followed by a period of relative political quiet before the establishment of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association.

His opposition to the Congress stands out as a defining moment in the early history of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, not least because it also served to enhance the institution's public profile during a phase of internal crisis.

Indeed, the bursts of political activity at Aligarh coincided with challenges such as student unrest, poor examination results, and controversies surrounding governance, including the trustee bill. In the face of declining enrolment and the withdrawal of support from key patrons created harm for the college.

The career of Syed Ahmed Khan illustrates the complex transition of Indian Muslim politics in the late nineteenth century, shaped by concerns over representation, identity, and power.

The Aligarh Movement sought educational uplift and political caution, while maintaining loyalty to the colonial state. Its opposition to the Indian National Congress reflected fears of majoritarian domination and helped foster a distinct communitarian consciousness.

Overall, these developments contributed to the emergence of organized Muslim political identity and set the stage for future debates on representation and nationalism in colonial India.

15.12 GLOSSARY

Quam (Ethnic Community): A group of people bound together by shared identity such as religion, culture, language, or ancestry, often used in the Indian context to denote a community with common social and cultural ties.

Theology: The study of religious beliefs, doctrines, and the nature of God or the divine within a particular religion.

Empiricism: A philosophical approach that emphasizes knowledge gained through observation, experience, and evidence rather than theory or pure reasoning.

Ulema: Islamic scholars who are learned in religious sciences and interpret Islamic law and teachings for the community.

15.13 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. How did the anti-Congress campaign influence Muslim political opinion in late 19th- century India?
- Q2. Evaluate the impact of the Muhammadan Educational Conference on the development of Muslim political consciousness in colonial India.

15.14 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1 Examine the role of the Aligarh group in shaping attitudes towards the Indian National Congress.
- Q2. Why did Sir Syed Ahmad Khan maintain aloofness from the Indian National Congress?

15.15 ANSWER KEY

CYP-I

- Q1 See Section 15.4
- Q2 See Section 15.5

CYP -II

- Q1. See Section 15.10
- Q2. See Section 15.5

15.16 SUGGESTED READINGS

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EMERGENCE OF MUSLIM LEAGUE

STRUCTURE

- 16.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
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- 16.3 Philosophical Ideological differences with the Indian National Congress**
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16.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to –

- understand the historical context leading to the formation of All India Muslim League
- analyse the political, social and economic factors that contributed to the Muslim political consciousness in colonial India.
- assess its objectives and early aims.
- develop the understanding of how communal representation shaped Indian politics
- evaluate the role of prominent Muslim leaders.

Learning Outcomes

After going through this lesson, you will have a clear understanding about-

- the circumstances that led to the formation of the Muslim league
- ideological political differences of Muslim league with the congress.
- the role of prominent leaders in initiating the movement
- aims and early objectives of Muslim league.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learner, in this lesson we will learn about the formation of Muslim league which marked a significant development in the history of colonial India. It emerged in the backdrop of socio-political changes like partition of Bengal and increasing political mobilization under the Indian national congress. Section of Muslim elite felt the need for separate political platform to safeguard their rights. The Simla deputation highlighted these concerns and requested for constitutional assurance from the British government. Consequently, Muslim league was established at Dhaka to advance and safeguard community's interests. It also professed loyalty towards the British government.

16.2 COLONIAL SOCIAL POLITICAL MILIEU

Syed Ahmed Khan and his comrades at the MAO Collage in Aligarh identified as only vocal group which raised the spectre of Hindu domination. He was the first to introduce the language of minoritism, backed by Muslim elites of upper India who formed to separatist politics to safeguard their interests which was under threat from British education policies, constitutional reforms and powerful hindu revivalist campaign.

Syed Ahmad Khan initiated a movement for the modernization of Indian Muslims and in pursuit of this objective, established the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875. David Lelyveld, in his work *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*, argues that his political philosophy was grounded in the belief that Indian society constituted an aggregate of competing groups, historically unified under a dominant

authority—first the Mughal emperor and subsequently the British.

As a former ruling elite, Muslims were seen as entitled to a distinct status of authority and influence within the British Empire. To sustain and reclaim this position, it was essential for them to pursue modern education and acquire new skills, enabling effective participation and assertion within the emerging institutional framework of colonial India.

16.3 PHILOSOPHICAL IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES WITH THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

He conceived that the nation is not a homogeneous entity but a federation of *qaums* or ethnic communities, bound by common descent. Within this framework, each group would retain cultural autonomy and participate in governance in proportion to its inherited socio-cultural status rather than individual achievement. Consequently, Muslims, as a former ruling class, were envisaged as entitled to a larger share in political power and a distinctive relationship with the colonial state.

16.4 THE ALIGARH INSTITUTION: FORMATION OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

As David Lelyveld argues, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was not merely an educational institution but a deeply political enterprise, aimed at fostering among its Muslim students a consciousness of belonging to a *qum*, and, through them, extending this sense of identity to the wider Muslim society of North India.

Its curriculum represented a synthesis of Islamic theological traditions and nineteenth-century European empiricism, designed to equip a new generation of Muslims to effectively engage with and benefit from the opportunities offered under British rule. The students of Aligarh thus developed a strong sense of communal solidarity.

Another important instrument for disseminating Syed Ahmad Khan's ideas was the Muhammadan Educational Conference, which convened annually from 1886, the year following the establishment of the Indian National Congress.

Syed Ahmad Khan emphasized the need to organize and consolidate the Muslim minority, apprehending that, under an emerging representative system, a Hindu-majority electorate would overshadow Muslim interests in legislative bodies. These anxieties were further intensified by the Riots of 1893 and the growing demand among sections of Hindus for a legal prohibition on cow slaughter.

In this context, his increasingly pronounced anti-Congress stance came to shape the trajectory of Muslim political thought, a position that also received encouragement from sections of the British bureaucracy. A notable role in reinforcing this orientation was played by Theodore Beck, the European principal of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College.

16.5 COUNTERING CONGRESS

Muslim fear of elective representative form of government and of majority rule was vividly described by Syed Ahmed Khan in his 1883 speech of local self-government bill for central province. However, greater apprehension was caused by Hindu revivalism and its stridently anti-Muslim posture. These factors and separatism developed by religious political leadership in the last decade of 19th century heightened the communitarian consciousness.

In 1888, Syed Ahmad Khan established the United Patriotic Association with the objective of opposing the Indian National Congress and securing governmental patronage for Muslims. Subsequently, in 1893, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association was formed on the advice of Theodore Beck to counter the growing influence of the Congress and to mobilize Muslim public opinion against it.

Thus, the Aligarh Movement, under the leadership of Syed Ahmad Khan and centred around the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College evolved largely in opposition to Congress-led nationalism.

However, the leadership of Syed Ahmad Khan did not command universal acceptance among the Muslims of North India. The *ulema* were particularly critical of his emphasis on Westernization, which they perceived as a threat to their traditional authority and pre-eminence within Muslim society. By the late 1880s, a section of North Indian Muslims had begun to incline towards the Indian National Congress. This trend was reflected in 1887 when Badruddin Tyabji of Bombay became the first Muslim to preside over a session of the Congress.

16.6 THE SIMLA DEPUTATION: CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE

By the late 1890s, several Urdu newspapers in Punjab had begun to assert that the Aligarh school did not adequately represent the interests of Indian Muslims. Following the death of Syed Ahmad Khan in 1898, a sense of discontent emerged even among the younger generation at Aligarh, who felt that their community was insufficiently organized and therefore unable to articulate its demands effectively. Consequently, they gradually began to move away from the established Aligarh line of thought.

Younger leaders such as Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Shaukat Ali were deeply influenced by *ulema* like Abdul Bari, and through this engagement, they rediscovered Islam as a potent mobilizing force. This shift contributed to what may be described as a gradual Islamization of Muslim politics.

At the same time, these leaders began to depart from the loyalist stance of Syed Ahmad Khan. This shift was further reinforced by the unsympathetic attitude of the colonial administration, particularly under the Governor of the United Provinces, whose policies appeared to favour Hindus. This bias was evident in the Nagri Resolution of 1900 (18 April 1900), which granted official recognition to the Nagri script alongside Persian in the courts.

This development gave rise to a sharp Hindu–Muslim controversy, as language came to symbolize community honour and emerged as a key instrument of political mobilization. In this context, a proposal to establish an All-India Muslim university as a cultural centre of pan-Indian Islam failed to materialize, as leaders of the older generation withdrew their support when Anthony MacDonnell threatened to withhold financial grants to the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College.

16.7 INADEQUACY OF SYED AHMED LOYALIST POLITICS

The younger generation found themselves increasingly isolated and became conscious of the limitations of Syed Ahmad Khan's loyalist politics. Some even contemplated aligning with the Indian National Congress. In response, both the older leadership and sections of the colonial bureaucracy recognized the urgent need for a distinct political organization to mobilize Muslims, counter the influence of the Congress, and provide an independent political platform—especially as many Muslims in Bengal, Punjab, and Bombay were unwilling to accept the dominance of Aligarh leadership.

Moreover, the budget speech of 1906 by John Morley signalled the impending introduction of representative institutions in India. This development generated widespread concern among Muslim leaders, who feared that, in such a system, they would be politically marginalized by a numerically dominant and increasingly organized Hindu community under the aegis of the Congress.

16.8 SIMLA DEPUTATION OF 1ST OCTOBER 1906

This development provided the backdrop for the Simla Deputation of 1 October 1906, when Muslim leaders approached the colonial authorities to press for the recognition and protection of their distinct political interests.

The deputation presented a memorial to the Viceroy signed by 35 signatories and headed by Aga Khan who belonged to the landed gentry. But some of them like Hakim Azmel Khan, Syed Ali Imam were from the urban middle class. Syed Hassan Belgrami was ex-bureaucrat. The initiative had come from Aligarh leaders such as Mohsin-ul-Mulk, who served as secretary of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, sought to reconcile and address the concerns of the younger generation of Muslims. The petition, drafted by Aligarh leaders, presented Muslims as a distinct community with political interests divergent from those of the Hindus. The memorial was to present their case of representation in the legislative council as Muslims were in numerical minority. Therefore, their legitimate claim to minority rights of proportional representation in the representative bodies and for public employment would be made.

The fear of Muslims was not without foundation. As far as 45 percent of the non-official seats in the imperial legislative council from 1893 belonged to Hindus. Muslims had 12 percent as against 23 percent of the population in the country. In Madras and UP no Muslims succeeded in obtaining a seat by election between 1893-1901. Muslim position was no better as far as employment was concerned. The memorial mentioned that there were hundred Hindu judges in various high courts but none from the Muslims community.

Further, the election system of 1893 had failed to secure their representation even according to their numerical strength. For these fears Muslim deputation met the viceroy and urged that the Muslims community representation should be based not only on their population or numerical strength but also on their political importance.

The deputation was accorded a patient hearing by the Viceroy who assured the representatives that the interests of the Muslims of Eastern Bengal would be duly safeguarded.

Check your Progress (CYP)-I

Q1. Examine the colonial social political milieu which led to the rise of community consciousness among Muslims.

Q 2.-Write about the context of Simla deputation and its significance.

Q3. Who were the prominent leaders who played a significant role in the formation of Muslim league.?

16.8.1 Viceroy's Cordial Response

The success of the Simla Deputation proved to be a significant morale booster for Muslim politics, reinforcing the long-felt need for a separate political organization. At the same time, the movement began to acquire a more pronounced religious orientation, marked by a shift in emphasis from *qaum*—a community based on common descent—to the concept of *ummah*, defined by shared faith.

The thirty-five delegates at Simla resolved to organize the Muslim community for independent political action in order to secure formal recognition of their interests. The deputation was led by Aga Khan.

The next session of the Muhammadan Educational Conference was scheduled to be held in December 1906 at Dacca, the capital of the newly created province of East Bengal and Assam. It was decided to utilize this occasion to initiate the formation of a new Muslim political organization.

A proposal in this regard had already been advanced by Nawab Salimullah Khan, a prominent leader of the Muslims of Eastern Bengal. The title of Nawab of Dacca had been conferred upon him by Queen Victoria in recognition of his loyalty and contributions to social welfare. As one of the largest Muslim zamindars in British

Bengal and Assam, he strongly advocated the creation of a political organization for Muslims and viewed the forthcoming conference as an ideal platform to advance this initiative.

Thus, it was at the session of the Muhammadan Educational Conference held at Dacca on 30 December 1906 that a new political organization was formally established, known as the All-India Muslim League.

The fear of Muslims was not without foundation or base. Forty five percent of the non-official seats in the Imperial legislative council from 1893 belonged to Hindus. Landlords had 27 percent and Muslims had 12 percent as against 23 percent of the population in the country.

In Madras and United Province, no Muslims succeeded in obtaining a seat by election between 1893-1901. Muslim position was no better as far as employment was concerned. The memorial mentioned there were hundred judges in various high courts but no Muslims. The election system of 1893 had failed to secure their representation even according to their numerical strength. The elective system principle meant worse for Muslim community

For these fears Muslim deputation met the viceroy and urged that the Muslims community's representation should be based not only on their population /numerical strength but also on their political importance.

16.9 ANGLO – MUSLIM ALLIANCE

Bampfylde Fuller had been deliberately playing off the two communities against each other in the newly created province—a fact acknowledged by Lord Minto in his correspondence with John Morley on 15 August 1906. Moreover, his successor continued this policy by favouring Muslims in new administrative appointments. He also urged Minto to sanction a loan of fourteen lakh rupees to Nawab Salimullah Khan, a decision that carried significant political implications.

There is substantial evidence to suggest that, through figures such as Theodore Morison Archbold, Mohsin-ul-Mulk, and other Muslim leaders, close contacts were maintained with the Viceroy's private secretary Dunlop Smith, as well as with officials like Harcourt Butler, the Commissioner of Lucknow. Historians have discovered in Butler's private papers an early draft of the Simla memorial, indicating the extent of official involvement during the formative phase of the All-India Muslim League.

Further, Aga Khan assured Dunlop Smith on 29 October 1906 that he had instructed Mohsin-ul-Mulk not to take any step without first ascertaining the private approval of the government. More significant than such direct interactions, however, was the underlying convergence of interests between sections of Muslim leadership and the colonial state, a pattern that would recur in subsequent decades.

It may also be noted that at a meeting of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal in December 1906, Maharaja Rameshwar Singh declared that, for Hindus, loyalty (*raj bhakti*) constituted an integral element of religion.

16.10 ALL INDIA MUSLIM LEAGUE

The objectives of the All-India Muslim League were to safeguard the political rights and interests of Muslims, to promote loyalty to the British government, and to foster inter-communal harmony. Until around 1910, the League

functioned largely as an adjunct of the Muhammadan Educational Conference, after which the two organizations formally separated.

It has often been argued that the Muslim League was not merely an outgrowth of the Aligarh Movement but also the result of political developments among Bengali Muslims, who were generally more politically active than their North Indian counterparts. However, David Lelyveld notes that even Nawab Salimullah Khan believed the new organization represented a natural progression of the political awakening that had first taken shape at Aligarh, and that it would create wider opportunities for the emerging class of educated Muslim youth.

During the first decade of its existence, the All-India Muslim League remained largely dominated by Muslims from the United Provinces, thereby placing the Aligarh perspective at the centre of all-India Muslim politics. Leaders such as Viqar-ul-Mulk and Mohsin-ul-Mulk served as joint secretaries of the provisional committee that drafted its constitution, which was subsequently approved at the Karachi session in December 1907.

In this manner, the Aligarh leaders, with the support of certain Punjabi leaders, succeeded in shaping the League into an organization reflecting their own ideological orientation and political priorities.

16.10.1 Provincial Branches

Between 1907 and 1909, provincial branches of the All-India Muslim League were established in major provinces, and they were granted considerable autonomy to frame their own constitutions. These provincial leagues were neither formally subordinate to the central organization nor empowered to interfere in its affairs. Consequently, they exhibited diverse political orientations, often differing from the policies of the central body.

A London branch of the League was inaugurated in 1908 by Syed Ameer Ali, which played a significant role in influencing the Morley-Minto Reforms. The reforms introduced provisions for reserved seats for Muslims in both imperial and provincial legislatures in numbers exceeding their numerical proportion and reflecting their perceived political importance. The introduction of separate electorates for Muslims thus conferred official recognition on their minority status and reinforced the notion of a distinct political identity.

Francis Robinson, in his work *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces*, observes that the emerging leadership of the new party largely belonged to a class that derived only modest income from land and increasingly depended on employment in services and the professions. In this respect, its social composition bore notable similarities to that of contemporary Hindu nationalist groups.

At the same time, journals such as *The Comrade* edited by Muhammad Ali Jauhar, *Al-Hilal* edited by Abul Kalam Azad, and *Zamindar* edited by Zafar Ali Khan increasingly drew the attention of the colonial authorities due to their pan-Islamist and anti-British orientation.

Check your progress (CYP)-II

Q1. Write about the role played by Mohamdan educational conference in the emergence of Muslim league

Q2. Examine the role of United Patriotic Association in countering the congress

16.11 LET US SUM UP

Syed Ahmed Khan and his comrades at the MAO Collage in Aligarh were identified as only vocal group which raised the spectre of hindu domination and were the first to introduce the langue of minoritism. Thes political thought led to the development community consciousness and desire for political party which would safeguard their political aspirations and cultural identity.

16.12 GLOSSARY

Quam - a socio-political cultural group bound by shared religious identity

Ummah- community of shared faith and religious identity

Theology - the systematic study of religious beliefs

Ethnic communities- social groups sharing common ancestry, language, traditions and historical experiences.

16.13 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the significance of Simla Deputation.

Q 2. Examine the role of British Government in the emergence of separate political organization of Muslims.

16.14 LESSON END EXERCISES

Fill in the Blanks

1. The Simla deputation was headed by _____

2. Nawab Mohsin-Ul- Mulk was _____
3. Al- Hilal a prominent weekly Urdu language newspaper was established by—

16.15 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

1. See Section 16.2
2. See Section 16.8
3. See Section 16.10

CYPII

- I. See Section 16.10
2. See Section 16.10

16.16 Suggested Readings

- David Lelyveld; *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*; Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978.
- M. Rafiq Afzal; *A History of the All-India Muslim League: 1906–1947*; Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1970.
- S.R. Bakshi; *Politics of the All-India Muslim League, 1924–1940*; Atlantic Publishers, New Delhi, 1984.

MUSLIM LEAGUE AND ITS ACTIVITIES TILL 1919

STRUCTURE

- 17.0 Learning objectives and outcomes**
- 17.1 Introduction**
- 17.2 Anglo Muslim Alliance under Strain**
- 17.3 Lucknow Pact**
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17.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to –

- understand the political activities of Muslim league
- explore its role in articulation of Muslim interests
- examine the relation with the congress
- analyse the role of its leaders in shaping the political consciousness

Learning Outcomes

After going through this lesson, you will have a clear understanding about-

- the major activities and strategies of the Muslim league
- their political role in colonial India
- its trajectory during the freedom struggle.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, in this lesson you will learn about the activities of Muslim League in the early 20th century. The activities of the All-India Muslim League reflected the emergence of a new Muslim leadership that departed from the loyalist politics of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the elitist orientation of the earlier Aligarh generation, instead seeking to mobilize broader support from across the Muslim community. During the time of the emergence of Muslim league, its leadership remained in the hands of the landed aristocracy of United Province where traditional landlords were most powerful.

The younger Muslim leaders were dissatisfied with the loyalist and anti-congress mentality of the upper-class leadership of the League. For the younger leadership, there existed no fundamental contradiction between Muslim self-assertion and Indian nationalism.

During this period, new issues also arose that undermined confidence in British patronage. The renewed campaign for a Muslim university in 1910 encountered a significant setback when the colonial government adopted a rigid stance, insisting on stringent official control and rejecting the proposal to grant it the status of an affiliating institution, as envisaged by its proponents.

The creation of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam had initially conferred significant political and administrative advantages upon sections of the Muslim elite however, its abrupt annulment in December 1911 marked a decisive reversal. The revocation of the Partition of Bengal formally proclaimed by George V at the Delhi Durbar, delivered a profound shock to the Muslim political leadership.

The proposal was reportedly advanced by George V himself as an appropriate imperial concession. Despite initial reservations, Lord Hardinge and Robert Crewe-Milnes came to view the scheme favourably, particularly because it entailed minimal financial burden in comparison to alternative concessions. The measure also received strong support from Henry Wheeler Jenkins, who was deeply concerned by the persistence of revolutionary movement in Bengal, regarded the annulment of the partition as essential for restoring political stability.

The Government of India's despatch of 1911 explicitly linked the reunification of Bengal under the Governor-General-in-Council with the transfer of the imperial capital to Delhi, presenting both measures as calculated attempts to conciliate Muslim opinion. Nevertheless, the annulment of the Partition of Bengal was formally deplored by the All-India Muslim League at its Calcutta session in 1912.

Simultaneously, the Balkan Wars were widely perceived in Indian Muslim political discourse as a concerted

European effort to weaken the Ottoman Empire, then regarded as the last major Islamic Imperial power in the world.

A Turkish Relief Fund was mobilized, and a Red Crescent medical mission was dispatched to Turkey in March 1912, reflecting the growing transnational solidarities among Indian Muslims. Concurrently, a number of Muslim newspapers and periodicals—such as *Comrade* and *Hamdard* associated with Muhammad Ali Jauhar, *Zamindar* linked to Zafar Ali Khan, and *Al-Hilal* edited by Abul Kalam Azad—emerged in both English and Urdu, articulating the political and religious concerns of the educated Muslim intelligentsia.

Alongside the rise of a new educated middle-class leadership, the *ulema* (Muslim clergy) increasingly asserted themselves as a significant political force, serving as a crucial link across diverse Muslim social groups in India. Two key institutions—the Darul Uloom Deoband and the Firangi Mahal—played a central role in facilitating this transformation.

The Deobandi *ulema* further consolidated their organizational base through the establishment of the Jamiat-ul-Ansar in 1910, followed by the founding of a Quranic school in Delhi in 1913. These initiatives were aimed at extending their influence to a broader Muslim populace, particularly in the context of the heightened political and emotional mobilization generated by the Balkan Wars.

17.2 ANGLO MUSLIM ALLIANCE UNDER STRAIN

As we have seen that Muslim alienation from the colonial state was further intensified by the revocation of the Partition of Bengal, formally announced in 1911, which was widely perceived as a betrayal of earlier assurances extended to Muslim political interests. Gokhale, one of the most prominent nationalist leaders welcomed the announcement but this decision struck the Muslim politicians.

For Muslim intelligentsia it was a shattering blow. The decision was represented as victory of Hindus over Muslims of political agitation over unquestioning loyalty to the government. The comrade edited by Mohammed Ali, wrote that through this decision the government had acknowledged that agitation was the only effective method of converting them and further he described the reunification of Bengal as a great blunder. He wanted Hindus not to be carried away by a feeling of triumph. These divergent reactions among the leaders of the two communities exposed the deep and widening chasm that separated them. Such apprehensions were further intensified as Muslim discontent which exacerbated during this period by a series of controversies, including the protracted debates over the establishment of a Muslim university and the Kanpur Mosque Incident, which arose from a conflict over the demolition of a structure adjoining a mosque.

The ascendancy of the so-called “young party” within the All-India Muslim League marked a significant ideological shift towards a more radical political orientation, characterized by a willingness to explore accommodation with nationalist Hindu leadership alongside an increasing commitment to pan-Islamism. Its leadership included figures such as Wazir Hasan, T.A.K. Sherwani, the more militant Ali brothers, and Hasrat Mohani in the United Provinces; Zafar Ali Khan in Punjab and A.K. Fazlul Huq in Bengal. This emerging leadership stood in marked contrast to

the earlier more conservative and loyalist elite represented by Nawab Salimullah Khan, Nawab Ali Chowdhury, and Mohsin-ul-Mulk.

As Francis Robinson has demonstrated, the “young party” was largely drawn from a social stratum that while occasionally linked to the landed gentry, was more typically dependent on employment in the professions and public service. In this respect, its social composition closely paralleled that of contemporary radical Hindu nationalist groups. Moreover, journals such as *Comrade* associated with Muhammad Ali Jauhar, *Al-Hilal* edited by Abul Kalam Azad, and *Zamindar* under Zafar Ali Khan increasingly attracted official surveillance owing to their pronounced pan-Islamist orientation and sharply critical stance towards the British rule.

Ali brothers, supported by Abdul Bari, the Firangi Mahal network of *ulema*, organized the Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba in 1913 with the objective of mobilizing resources for the protection of Islamic holy sites. Around the same time (1912–13), Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari and Zafar Ali Khan led a medical mission to assist Turkey during the Balkan Wars.

Within the All-India Muslim League, the appointment of Wazir Hasan as secretary marked an important ideological shift. In March 1913, he successfully advanced a resolution committing the League to the attainment of self-government through constitutional means, thereby bringing its objectives into closer alignment with those of the Indian National Congress. These developments collectively signalled the gradual emergence of conditions conducive to broader Hindu–Muslim political cooperation.

Check your progress I (CYP)

Q1 Write about the young leaders who were prominent in the organization of the League?

Q2. Anglo – Muslim alliance was strained after the annulment of partition of Bengal (1911) Comment.

Q3. Give reasons behind the establishment of the *Anjuman -I khuddam- I Kabba*

17.3 LUCKNOW PACT

The British administrators began to apply their minds to post-war problems and what would be the Imperial policy for tackling them. Early in 1915 Lord Willingdon, the governor of Bombay invited Gokhale to suggest constitutional reforms which in his opinion were essential as well as immediately practicable.

With rising hopes of constitutional reforms, Indian nationalists found an incentive to close their ranks. In December 1915, the Bombay congress amended its 1908 constitution to end the feud between the Moderates and the Extremists, thus enabling Tilak and his party to rejoin the congress. The Bombay congress also authorized negotiations with the representatives of the Muslim league, which was holding its session at Bombay during the same week.

Surendranath Banerjee informed the delegates of the Indian National Congress that the attainment of self-government within the framework of the British Empire constituted the central objective of the Congress. He further asserted that a joint constitutional demand advanced by both the Congress and the All-India Muslim League, articulated as the collective voice of a united India, would possess an irresistible political force.

It had not been easy to convene the annual session of the league in Bombay so as to synchronize with the Bombay congress, the proposal was discussed by the raja of Mahmudabad and Wazir Hasan with Aga Khan in 1914. They contrived a formal invitation through Jinnah to hold the session at Bombay, but the proposal met with fierce opposition both inside and outside the league council.

Mahmudabad, Wazir Hasan and their friends were roundly denounced in the Muslim Press. They joined the congressmen in demanding political rights.

Mahmudabad, Wazir Hasan faction was undaunted; it mustered the support of UP, Bihar members and bulldozed the council of the League into accepting the session at Bombay. A sharp controversy subsequently erupted at Bombay between rival factions within the All-India Muslim League. Among the most vehement opponents of the proposal was Rafi-u'd-din Ahmed, a staunch loyalist and president of the League's Bombay branch. In response to the escalating dispute, Lord Willingdon was approached to mediate; he subsequently convened a meeting of prominent Muslim leaders in Bombay, where a compromise formula was negotiated.

The annual session of the All-India Muslim League was scheduled to be held in Bombay, where it was expected to adopt a resolution declaring loyalty to the government. The League session commenced under the presidency of Mazhar-ul-Haq. The nationalist tone of its proceedings was not accepted by the hardliners.

The “young party,” led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Mazharul Haq, Raja of Mahmudabad, and Wazir Hasan, sought a more secure venue and accordingly shifted the remaining proceedings to the Taj Mahal Hotel. In the course of these deliberations, they replaced Aga Khan with Mahmudabad and authorized the formulation of a joint scheme of constitutional reforms.

The committee examined the scheme with considerable diligence and political acumen. Raja of Mahmudabad and Wazir Hasan subsequently joined the reception committee of the Indian National Congress sessionscheduled to be held at Lucknow in December 1916. They further manoeuvred the Council of the All-India Muslim League to convene its next annual session at the same venue and time, and secured the election of MuhammadAli Jinnah as its president.

Although Muhammad Ali Jinnah had joined the All-India Muslim League only three years earlier, he was widely regarded as a disciple of Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and enjoyed considerable prestige within the circles of the Indian National Congress. His election to the presidency of the League significantly facilitated negotiations with the Congress, whose leadership now prepared to extend substantial concessions to Muslim political demands. In this context, the prospects of a Hindu–Muslim political accord appeared increasingly imminent.

17.4. MAIN FEATURES OF THE SCHEME

The principal features of the scheme included the provision of elected majorities in both central and provincial legislatures, as well as the election of a substantial proportion of the central and provincial executives by the members of the respective legislatures. The legislatures were to exercise jurisdiction over most areas of legislation, with the exception of foreign, military, and political affairs, which remained subject to the overriding veto of the Viceroy and the provincial governors.

In July 1916, Wazir Hasan, as secretary of the All-India Muslim League, circulated a constitutional scheme within the League that closely resembled the proposals of the Indian National Congress, but with the crucial addition of provisions for separate electorates for Muslims.

In 1916, there emerged a striking demonstration of political unity, as the Indian National Congress made significant concessions in the interest of inter-communal agreement. Departing from its earlier position, the Congress accepted the principle of separate electorates and agreed to minority representation in legislative bodies in excess of their demographic proportion. Thus, in the United Provinces, where Muslims constituted approximately 14 percent of the population, they were accorded representation in the Imperial Legislative Council at par with the Hindu majority, which comprised around 85 percent. Similarly, in the provincial council, Muslims were allocated seven out of the twenty elective seats.

In Bihar, where Muslims constituted approximately 13 percent of the population, they were allotted 25 percent of the seats in the provincial legislature. Similarly, in Bombay Presidency, with a Muslim population of about 20 percent, they secured one-third of the seats; in the Central Provinces, 4 percent Muslims were granted 10 percent representation and in Madras Presidency, where Muslims comprised roughly 7 percent of the population,

they received 15 percent of the seats.

Further, in Bengal, where Muslims formed 52.7 percent of the population but held only 10.4 percent of the seats under the Morley-Minto Reforms, their representation was enhanced to 33 percent, and subsequently increased to 40 percent.

An additional safeguard—constituting a notable departure from the orthodox principle of majority rule—was introduced at the instance of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Any legislation affecting a particular community was to be withdrawn if it was opposed by three-fourths of that community's representatives in the legislature.

The Lucknow Pact was widely acclaimed at the time as a landmark achievement, having provided a seemingly satisfactory resolution to the most formidable obstacle impeding India's progress towards political cooperation and national unity.

India's politicians had at last found an answer to the Anglo-Indian taunt that Indian disunity and not British reluctance, barred India's progress. The Lucknow meetings provided a remarkable demonstration of unity between extremist and moderate factions of the congress and between Hindus and Muslims. The Congress-League scheme was presented as the collective and unified demand of India, thereby exerting considerable political pressure on the British government, which could scarcely afford to disregard it.

17.4.1 Consequences

The Lucknow Pact constituted a clear acknowledgment that the Indian National Congress required the support of a representative Muslim political organization, notably the All-India Muslim League, before it could legitimately claim to speak on behalf of the entire nation.

Seven years later after the passing of 1909 Act, the congress leader agreed to perpetuate separate electorate and political weightage. Curiously enough Tilak who in 1890s had berated Ranade and Gokhale for not standing up to Muslim communalism, lent powerful support to separate electorates in 1916.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak expressed satisfaction that, through a singularly generous gesture, the Indian National Congress had effectively allayed Muslim apprehensions and dispelled long-standing suspicions.

According to C. S. Ranga Iyer, who was in close touch with him, the Maharashtrian leader was not enamoured of the Lucknow pact, but felt that if the congress could win over the Muslims and replace their extra-territorial patriotism with the Indian nationalism, the price was well worth paying.

Tilak recognised that Muslim community had by and large remained aloof from the congress and hence congress needed Muslim League to present a national demand to the British. In January 1919, while he was in London, he suggested that of the two representatives at the peace conference, one nominee was to be proposed by the Indian National Congress and the other by the All-India Muslim League. At Lucknow, Muhammad Ali Jinnah acknowledged the wide hearted spirit in which the Hindu leadership had made these concessions.

However, in Bengal and Punjab the critics of the Lucknow pact included Nawab Ali Choudhary president of

provincial Muslim League and in Bengal, Muhammed Safi a former president of provincial Muslim league in Punjab respectively.

However, it was not only from dissidents of the league that the Lucknow pact faced an assault. in the next session of the league in Calcutta in 1917, communal demand was further stepped up and the issue which was settled was reopened.

Resolutions were passed demanding extensions of the principle of separate representation for Muslims to local bodies, to public services and even to the universities in the same proportion of the representation accorded in the legislature.

It is important to note that the Calcutta Session of the Muslim League was dominated by the very leaders who had played a central role in shaping the Lucknow Pact—notably Raja of Mahmudabad, Mazharul Haq, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. In this context, there appeared to be little substantive distinction between nationalist Muslim leaders and the more traditional pro-British elite, particularly with regard to their political demands vis-à-vis the Hindu community.

By 1916 Jinnah, who had started his political career by opposing separate electorate and the formation of separate political party for Muslim community, became the vigorous champion of separate electorate and president of Muslim league. In the next constitutional reform of 1919, embodied a diluted version of the political part of the Lucknow pact and adopted its communal provisions in entirety.

In 1917, the All-India Muslim League extended its support to the Home Rule agitation initiated by Annie Besant. However, the outbreak of communal disturbances in Bihar, United Provinces, and Bengal shortly thereafter exposed the persistent disjunction between elite political cooperation and popular sentiment. This fragile rapprochement suffered a further setback with the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, which largely disregarded both the provisions of the Lucknow Pact and the demands embodied in the Muslim University Bill.

The defeat of Turkey generated a widespread perception of Islam being under threat, thereby creating a potent ideological basis for mass political mobilization. The cumulative effect of these developments was a discernible shift in the leadership of the All-India Muslim League, away from moderate constitutionalists towards figures advocating Islamic self-assertion and the organization of broad-based mass movements.

At its Delhi Session of the Muslim League in December 1918, the League extended an invitation to the *ulema* and accorded them significant public prominence, thereby marking their first direct and visible entry into the central arena of political activity.

17.5 KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

The prevailing circumstances thus created the necessary conditions for the emergence of the Khilafat Movement the first significant mass agitation aimed at forging political unity among the otherwise divided Indian Muslim community. Although essentially pan-Islamic in character—with its immediate concerns lying outside India—the movement functioned less as a programme for altering political realities in the Middle East and more as a powerful symbolic instrument.

In this sense, the Khilafat issue was effectively deployed as a unifying device for mass political mobilization among Indian Muslims, particularly due to its pronounced anti-colonial and anti-British appeal, which inspired broader efforts to integrate Muslim political sentiment into the mainstream nationalist movement. Thus, the Khilafat Movement was the first major mass agitation directed towards forging political unity among the otherwise fragmented Indian Muslim community. Although fundamentally pan-Islamic in orientation, with its primary concerns located outside India, the movement functioned less as a programme aimed at transforming political conditions in the Middle East and more as a potent symbolic vehicle.

In practice, the Khilafat issue served as an effective instrument for mass political mobilization, owing to its strong anti-colonial and anti-British appeal. Recognizing its integrative potential, Mahatma Gandhi extended his support to the movement viewing it as a strategic means of incorporating Muslim political sentiment into the broader stream of Indian nationalism.

However, instead of understanding and opposing the economic political consequences of modern imperialism they fought the British government on the issue of Turkey and Muslim holy places and appealed to the religious sentiments. But it encouraged nationalist trend among urban Muslims. In a long run it was harmful as it encouraged the habit of looking at political question from the religious point of view. Even though the khilafat was a religious issue, it resulted in rising the nationalist sentiments among the Muslim masses. The League identified with the gandhian policy of non-cooperation. Mahatma Gandhi perceived in the Khilafat Movement a significant opportunity to forge Hindu–Muslim unity through a shared anti-colonial struggle against British rule.

Check Your Progress II (CYP)

Q1. What do you understand by Lucknow Pact?

Q2. Discuss the features of the Pact.

Q3. Write a short note on khilafat movement

17.6 LET US SUM UP

The activities of Muslim league evolved from moderate political organization to a assertive political force playing decisive role in shaping communal consciousness and the politics of identity in colonial India. Through constitutional negotiations, electoral participation and mass mobilization the league strengthened its claim for safeguarding Muslim interests. Ultimately its activities culminated in the demand of Pakistan.

17.7 GLOSSARY

Dar al Ulam - Islamic institution of higher learning

Hardliners - Individuals or groups who hold strict uncompromising views

Self-assertion - The act of confidently expressing and defending one's rights

17.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTION

Q1. Examine the political activities of Muslim league between 1906-1913

Q.2 Analyse the shift in the objectives of League after 1913

17.9 LESSON END EXERCISES

Fill in the Blanks

- I. The agreement between congress and league in 1916 was known as _____
2. _____ played the prominent role in bringing congress and League together for the 1916 agreement.

17.10 ANSWER KEY

CYP-I

- I. See Section 17.2
2. See Section 17.2
3. See Section 17.2

CYP II

- I. See Section 17.3
2. See Section 17.3
3. See Section 17.5

17.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Dvid Lelyveld; Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim solidarity in British India
- M. Rafiq Afzel; A History of All India Muslim League -1906-1947
- S.R. Bakshi; Politics of the All-India Muslim League 1924-1940

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MONTAGUE'S DECLARATION

STRUCTURE

- 18.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 18.1 Introduction**
- 18.2 Political Situation Before 1917**
- 18.3 Impact of World War I**
- 18.4 Rising Expectations for Political Concessions**
- 18.5 The Home Rule Movement (1916–1918)**
- 18.6 The Montagu Declaration**
- 18.7 From Declaration to Reform: Policy Transition**
- 18.8 Indian Responses and Political Debate**
- 18.9 Significance in Constitutional and Nationalist History**
- 18.10 Critical Evaluation**
- 18.11 Let us sum up**
- 18.12 Glossary**
- 18.13 Examination Oriented Questions**
- 18.14 Lesson End Exercises**
- 18.15 Answer Key**
- 18.16 Suggested Readings**

18.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to-

- understand the historical context leading to the Montagu Declaration of 1917

- examine the limitations of earlier reforms such as the Indian Councils Act of 1909
- analyse the impact of the World War I on British policy towards India
- explain the meaning and significance of the Montagu Declaration as a policy statement
- assess the role of the Home Rule Movement in shaping political pressure
- evaluate the transition from declaration to constitutional reform of the Act of 1919
- examine different political responses and historiographical interpretations

Learning Outcomes

After going through the lesson, you will be able to understand-

- the key features of the Montagu Declaration of 1917
- the concept of “progressive realization of responsible government” in the colonial context
- the relationship between wartime developments and constitutional changes in India
- role of nationalist leaders and movements in influencing British policy
- difference between policy declaration and actual constitutional reform
- the strengths and limitations of the Montagu Declaration
- its significance in shaping later constitutional developments and nationalist politics

18.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, the limitations of the Indian Councils Act of 1909 had already exposed the inadequacy of earlier constitutional reforms in meeting Indian political aspirations as they offered only limited representation while firmly retaining British control. By the time of the First World War, a significant shift had begun in British policy towards India, driven both by wartime exigencies and the growing pressure of Indian nationalism. India’s substantial contribution to the war effort—in terms of men, resources, and finances—intensified expectations of political concessions and greater participation in governance.

It was in this context that the Montagu Declaration of 20th August, 1917, announced by Edwin Samuel Montagu, emerged not as a concrete reform measure but as a policy statement reflecting a new direction in imperial governance. Unlike previous enactments, it did not introduce immediate institutional changes rather, it articulated a long-term objective—the “progressive realization of responsible government” in India. As such, the Declaration marked a significant discursive turning point, redefining the language and intent of British policy by formally acknowledging, for the first time, the eventual goal of responsible government even though its practical realization remained uncertain and conditional.

18.2 POLITICAL SITUATION BEFORE 1917

The political situation in India before 1917 was shaped by the limited and cautious nature of British constitutional reforms, most notably the Indian Councils Act of 1909. While this Act introduced certain changes, such as the expansion of legislative councils and the inclusion of a small number of Indians in governance, these reforms were largely superficial. Real power remained firmly in the hands of British officials, and the principle of responsible government was absent. Moreover, the introduction of separate electorates for Muslims, though presented as a measure of representation, contributed to communal divisions rather than genuine political empowerment. As a result, the reforms failed to satisfy the growing aspirations of Indians for meaningful participation in administration.

At the same time, Indian nationalism was undergoing a significant transformation, marked by the emergence and consolidation of both moderate and extremist strands within the national movement. The moderates continued to advocate constitutional methods such as petitions, resolutions, and dialogue with the British government. However, their gradualist approach increasingly came under criticism for its limited success. In contrast, the extremists, led by figures like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, emphasized assertive methods. This ideological divide within the nationalist movement reflected a broader shift in political consciousness, as dissatisfaction with British policies deepened and demands for self-government became more urgent and widespread.

18.3 IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I

The outbreak of the World War I marked a crucial turning point in the relationship between the British government and India, significantly shaping the context in which the Montagu Declaration was announced. The war not only intensified the economic and political pressures on colonial governance but also transformed Indian expectations regarding their role within the empire.

India played a vital role in supporting the British war effort on an unprecedented scale. Over a million Indian soldiers were recruited and deployed in various theatres of war, including Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, demonstrating both loyalty and sacrifice. In addition to manpower, India provided substantial financial assistance through war loans and heavy taxation, which placed a significant burden on the Indian economy. Raw materials, agricultural produce, and industrial goods were also supplied extensively to sustain the war machinery. This massive contribution highlighted India's importance within the empire and strengthened the belief among Indians that such sacrifices deserved political recognition.

18.4 RISING EXPECTATIONS FOR POLITICAL CONCESSIONS

The scale of India's involvement in the war led to a corresponding rise in political expectations among Indians. Leaders across the political spectrum believed that their loyalty and support would be rewarded with meaningful constitutional reforms and greater self-governance. The wartime rhetoric of defending democracy and freedom further intensified these demands, as Indians began to question the contradiction between Britain's proclaimed ideals and its colonial practices. Consequently, the war created a climate in which the demand for responsible government became more assertive and widespread, putting considerable pressure on the British government to reconsider its policies towards India.

18.5 THE HOME RULE MOVEMENT (1916–1918)

The period leading up to the Montagu Declaration saw the emergence of the Home Rule Movement as a significant phase in the evolution of Indian nationalism, bringing the demand for self-government into sharper and more organized focus. The movement began in 1916, when Bal Gangadhar Tilak, after his return to active politics, launched the Home Rule League in western India, particularly in Maharashtra and the Central Provinces. Around the same time, Annie Besant established her own Home Rule League, operating mainly in Madras and other parts of the country. Inspired by the Irish Home Rule model, both leaders sought to achieve self-government for India within the British Empire through constitutional and peaceful methods.

As the movement progressed, it rapidly expanded its reach by organizing public meetings, lectures, and campaigns, and by using newspapers and pamphlets to spread political awareness. It attracted a wide range of participants, including students, professionals, and sections of the urban middle class, thereby marking a shift from elite politics to broader political mobilization.

By 1917, the movement had gained considerable momentum, uniting different strands of nationalism and creating sustained pressure on the British government. The arrest of Annie Besant in 1917 further intensified public support and agitation, turning the movement into a symbol of resistance against colonial restrictions. This growing wave of organized political activity and popular demand for self-rule played a crucial role in compelling the British government to respond, ultimately contributing to the announcement of the Montagu Declaration later that year.

18.6 THE MONTAGU DECLARATION

The Montagu Declaration, announced on 20 August 1917 by Edwin Samuel Montagu, marked a significant moment in the evolution of British policy towards India. For the first time, the British government formally articulated its intention to introduce self-governing institutions in India, stating that its objective was the “progressive realization of responsible government” within the framework of the British Empire. This statement did not constitute an immediate constitutional reform; rather, it served as a policy declaration outlining a long-term goal. The phrase itself was carefully chosen—“progressive realization” implied a gradual and controlled process, while “responsible government” suggested a system in which the executive would be accountable to a representative legislature, a principle central to parliamentary democracy.

However, the meaning of responsible government in the Indian context remained deliberately undefined and open to interpretation. In theory, it referred to a form of governance where Indian representatives would increasingly participate in administration and hold authority over decision-making processes. In practice, the British government retained the power to determine the pace and extent of this transition.

This distinction between promise and implementation is crucial. While the declaration acknowledged Indian aspirations, it did not provide a clear timeline, specific mechanisms, or guarantees for achieving responsible government. The ambiguity of the language allowed the British to present the declaration as a progressive step while simultaneously maintaining imperial control. Thus, the Montagu Declaration functioned both as a response to mounting political pressure and as a strategic tool, using carefully framed rhetoric to manage nationalist

expectations without committing to immediate or substantial transfer of power.

Check Your Progress (CYP)-I

Q1. Explain the historical circumstances that led to the announcement of the Montagu Declaration 1917.

Q2. Assess the impact of the World War I on British policy towards India.

18.7 FROM DECLARATION TO REFORM: POLICY TRANSITION

The Montagu Declaration of 1917 did not remain a mere statement of intent; it initiated a process through which British policy was translated into a framework for constitutional change. Following the announcement, Edwin Samuel Montagu undertook a visit to India between 1917 and 1918 with the objective of assessing political conditions and consulting a wide spectrum of Indian opinion. During this tour, he engaged with leaders from different political backgrounds, including moderates, nationalists, and representatives of various communities, in order to gauge expectations regarding self-government. These consultations were significant not because they immediately resolved political demands, but because they created a formal channel through which Indian aspirations entered the process of policy formulation.

This phase was further shaped by Montagu's collaboration with Lord Chelmsford, which led to the preparation of a set of reform proposals intended to operationalize the broad principles outlined in the Declaration. The emphasis during this stage remained on reconciling two competing objectives: responding to Indian demands for greater participation while preserving British authority over key aspects of governance. As a result, the proposals reflected a cautious and incremental approach, translating the idea of "progressive realization" into a structured but controlled plan for political development.

In this way, the Montagu Declaration provided the ideological and policy framework that guided subsequent constitutional change, most notably culminating in the Government of India Act 1919. Rather than viewing the Act as a separate or isolated reform, it is more accurate to understand it as an extension of the Declaration's underlying logic. The continuity between the two lies in the gradualist approach, the emphasis on limited devolution of power, and the retention of ultimate British control. Thus, the transition from declaration to reform represents not

a sudden transformation, but a carefully managed progression in imperial policy, where rhetoric, consultation, and institutional change were closely interconnected.

18.8 Indian Responses and Political Debate

The Montagu Declaration of 1917 generated a wide range of responses within Indian political circles, reflecting differing expectations, strategies, and ideological positions within the nationalist movement. Among the moderates, particularly those associated with the early leadership of the Indian National Congress, the declaration was received with cautious optimism. They welcomed it as the first formal acknowledgment by the British government of the goal of responsible government in India and viewed it as a potential opening for further constitutional progress. However, this support was measured rather than enthusiastic, as moderates remained aware of the absence of clear timelines and concrete guarantees.

In contrast, more assertive nationalists and critics regarded the declaration as vague and inadequate. Leaders influenced by the ideas of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the broader Home Rule agitation argued that the language of “progressive realization” allowed the British to delay meaningful reforms indefinitely. For them, the declaration fell short of the immediate self-government that Indian political conditions, especially after World War I, seemed to justify. This critique emphasized the gap between rhetorical commitment and actual transfer of power.

At an even more critical level, radical and revolutionary groups rejected the declaration outright as insufficient and strategically misleading. They viewed it not as a genuine step toward self-rule but as a calculated move to placate Indian opinion and weaken the momentum of nationalist agitation. From this perspective, the declaration was seen as an instrument of imperial control rather than a concession to Indian aspirations.

These differing responses contributed to an emerging political divide within the nationalist movement, sharpening the distinction between moderates and more assertive or extremist elements. While moderates were inclined to work within the framework offered by the British, others increasingly questioned the effectiveness of constitutional methods and began to advocate stronger forms of political action. Thus, the declaration not only influenced British policy but also reshaped the internal dynamics of Indian nationalism, highlighting tensions over strategy, pace, and the ultimate goal of self-government.

18.9 SIGNIFICANCE IN CONSTITUTIONAL AND NATIONALIST HISTORY

The Montagu Declaration of 1917 marked a decisive moment in the evolution of British policy in India, as it represented the first official commitment by the British government to the goal of responsible government. Announced by Edwin Samuel Montagu, the declaration signaled a departure from earlier policies that had largely treated Indian participation in governance as a limited concession rather than a long-term objective. By explicitly acknowledging the “progressive realization of responsible government,” it introduced, for the first time, a formal recognition of India’s political aspirations within the framework of imperial rule.

This shift also reflected a broader transition from imperial paternalism—where the British justified their rule as a civilizing mission exercised in the interests of their colonial subjects—to a model of conditional self-governance.

While the British continued to retain ultimate authority, they now framed their rule in terms of gradual political development, suggesting that Indians would increasingly share responsibility in governance as they became “fit” for it. This redefinition of imperial policy was significant not because it immediately altered the structure of power, but because it transformed the language and logic through which that power was justified.

At the same time, the declaration played a crucial role in strengthening political expectations within India. By committing, even in ambiguous terms, to responsible government, it raised hopes among Indian leaders and the broader public that meaningful constitutional progress was imminent. This, in turn, intensified political engagement and sharpened demands for clearer and more immediate reforms. The gap between promise and implementation became a central issue in nationalist discourse, contributing to both cooperation and criticism.

Finally, the Montagu Declaration prepared the ground for subsequent constitutional developments, particularly the Government of India Act 1919, by providing the ideological foundation for reform. It also influenced later debates on constitutional change, shaping discussions around representation, responsibility, and the pace of political transition. In this sense, its significance lies less in immediate outcomes and more in its long-term impact on the trajectory of both constitutional reform and nationalist politics in India.

18.10 CRITICAL EVALUATION

The Montagu Declaration of 1917 occupies a complex position in the constitutional history of colonial India, as it combined elements of progressive intent with significant structural limitations. On the one hand, it represented a notable strength in that it formally recognized Indian aspirations for self-government. For the first time, the British government, under Edwin Samuel Montagu, explicitly acknowledged the goal of responsible government, thereby marking an important shift in imperial policy. This recognition was not merely symbolic; it altered the language of governance and provided Indian political leaders with a basis to demand further reforms. In this sense, the declaration signaled a transition in imperial ideology, moving away from rigid control toward a more flexible, though still cautious, approach to political development.

However, these strengths were accompanied by significant limitations. The declaration was notably vague and non-binding, offering no concrete framework or enforceable commitment to achieve responsible government. The phrase “progressive realization” allowed the British government to retain full discretion over the pace and nature of reforms, effectively postponing substantive change. Furthermore, the absence of a clear timeline created uncertainty and frustration among Indian leaders, who were left without any assurance regarding when or how these promises would be fulfilled. Most importantly, the declaration did not challenge the fundamental structure of colonial rule; British supremacy remained intact, with ultimate authority continuing to reside in imperial hands.

From a historiographical perspective, interpretations of the Montagu Declaration have varied considerably. Nationalist historians have generally viewed it as an inadequate and strategic concession, designed to placate Indian opinion without transferring real power. In contrast, some imperial or liberal interpretations have emphasized its importance as a genuine step towards constitutional progress, highlighting the constraints faced by British policymakers in balancing reform with imperial stability. Thus, the declaration can be understood as both a

milestone in acknowledging Indian political aspirations and a reflection of the inherent contradictions of colonial governance, where promises of self-rule were carefully managed within the limits of imperial control.

Check Your Progress (CYP)-II

Q1. What did the phrase “progressive realization of responsible government” mean in the context of colonial India? Discuss.

Q2. Evaluate the significance and limitations of the Montagu Declaration.

18.11. LET US SUM UP

The Montagu Declaration of 1917 stands as a significant turning point in the history of British policy in India, not because it introduced immediate constitutional change but because it transformed the language and direction of imperial governance. Announced by Edwin Samuel Montagu, it marked a decisive shift in rhetoric by formally committing the British government to the goal of the “progressive realization of responsible government.” This articulation, though cautious and qualified, represented a departure from earlier policies that had avoided any clear acknowledgment of Indian aspirations for self-rule.

Its importance, therefore, lies less in its immediate outcomes and more in its long-term impact on political expectations and policy formulation. By introducing responsible government as an official objective, the declaration raised hopes among Indian leaders and the wider public, intensifying demands for concrete reforms and greater participation in governance. At the same time, it provided the ideological foundation for subsequent constitutional developments, particularly the Government of India Act 1919, thereby shaping the trajectory of reform in the years that followed.

In this sense, the Montagu Declaration can be understood as a pivotal moment of transition—one that redefined the terms of political debate in colonial India. While it did not alter the structure of power immediately, it set in motion a process through which the idea of self-government became central to both British policy and Indian nationalism, ultimately influencing the course of India’s constitutional and political evolution.

18.12 GLOSSARY

Responsible Government – A system in which the executive is accountable to an elected legislature and must retain its confidence to remain in power.

Progressive Realization – Gradual move toward self-government without a fixed timeline

Constitutional Reform – Legal changes in governance structure

18.13 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1** Examine the role of Edwin Samuel Montagu and Lord Chelmsford in shaping the policy transition from declaration to reform.
- Q2.** How did the Montagu Declaration of 1917 reflect a shift from imperial policy?
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18.14 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1** Explain the concept of “responsible government” as introduced in the Montagu Declaration. How was it different from earlier ideas of governance under British rule?
- Q2** How did the political and wartime context influence the announcement of the Montagu Declaration 1917?
-

18.15 ANSWER KEY

CYP-I

- Q1.** See Sections- 18.3, 18.4, 18.5
- Q2.** See Sections- 18.3, 18.4

CYP-II

- Q1.** See Sections -18.6, 18.10
- Q2.** See Section 18.9
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18.16 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Bipan Chandra, India’s Struggle for Independence. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1988.
- Sumit Sarkar. Modern India 1885–1947. New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983.
- Sekhar Bandyopadhyay. From Plassey to Partition and After. New Delhi: Orient Black swan, 2015.

GENESIS AND REACTION TO THE ACT OF 1919

STRUCTURE

- 19.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 19.1 Introduction**
- 19.2 Continuity of Administrative Trends**
- 19.3 War Context and Policy Shift**
- 19.4 Preamble to the Act**
- 19.5 Provisions**
 - 19.5.1 Provincial System of Dyarchy**
- 19.6 Montagu's Image as a Reformer**
- 19.7 Why Dyarchy Failed?**
- 19.8 Disillusionment and Rise of Nationalism**
- 19.9 Let us sum up**
- 19.10 Glossary**
- 19.11 Examination Oriented Questions**
- 19.12 Lesson End Exercises**
- 19.13 Answer key**
- 19.14 Suggested Readings**

19.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to-

- understand the background and aims of the Act, particularly the British intention of introducing limited constitutional reforms while retaining Imperial control.

- explain the concept of dyarchy in the provinces, including the division between reserved and transferred subjects and its practical implications.
- analyse the structure of the central government, especially the introduction of bicameralism and the limited powers of the legislature.
- evaluate the extent of Indian participation in administration, including the role of Indian ministers and the limitations placed on their authority.
- critically assess the impact and the limitations of the Act, including its role in generating nationalist discontent and strengthening the freedom movement.

Learning Outcomes

After going through the lesson, you will be able to understand-

- the nature of constitutional reforms introduced by the Act.
- the working and failure of dyarchy by identifying its structural weaknesses and practical limitations in provincial governance.
- the responses of different groups towards the provisions of the Act.
- the broader historical impact of the reforms in intensifying nationalist sentiment and contributing to the growth of the Indian freedom movement.

19.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, this lesson examines the key features, objectives, and impact of the Government of India Act of 1919, along with its functioning, limitations, and role in shaping the Indian national movement.

The post-war years witnessed significant changes in Indian political life, particularly through a series of constitutional reforms. A key turning point was the declaration made by Edwin Montagu on 20 August 1917, which was followed by the Montagu–Chelmsford Report (1918) and eventually the Government of India Act 1919. Liberal-imperialist scholars often viewed these reforms as evidence of British goodwill, especially Montagu’s promise of the gradual development of self-governing institutions with the aim of achieving responsible government in India within the British Empire. This marked a shift from earlier policies that allowed limited representation but denied Indians any real control over the executive.

19.2 CONTINUITY OF ADMINISTRATIVE TRENDS

A closer examination of the reform process reveals that it was far from being a novel idea in British policy, rather, it represented a continuation of earlier administrative trends, particularly in the direction of decentralization. Measures such as the devolution of financial responsibilities—whereby local expenditures were increasingly met through locally raised and managed revenues—can be traced back to the initiatives of Lord Mayo and Lord

Ripon.

This trajectory was further reinforced in 1907 with the appointment of the Decentralization Commission, which was tasked with examining the broader question of administrative distribution of powers.

Subsequently, the despatch of Viceroy Hardinge dated 25 August 1911, implicitly advanced the idea that the next phase of political concessions should involve a degree of provincial autonomy and self-government. However, this proposal was carefully framed to ensure that effective control at the central level retained firmly in British hands. Despite such considerations, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe, dismissed the notion of Indian self-government at that time, regarding it as a distant and impractical objective.

19.3 WAR CONTEXT AND POLICY SHIFT

The pressures of the First World War compelled the British administration in India to undertake a significant reassessment of its approach. Under the viceroyalty of Lord Chelmsford, a series of concessions were made in response to growing Indian public opinion—measures which Edwin Montagu later characterized as mere “lubricants” designed to ease political tensions without altering the fundamental structure of colonial control.

Wartime financial exigencies necessitated an increase in cotton import duties, which were raised from 3.5 percent to 7.5 percent in March 1917, notably without a corresponding increase in the countervailing excise duties on Indian textiles. This decision marked a partial concession to long-standing Indian economic grievances. Similarly, Indian opinion had long opposed the export of indentured labour (coolies), and when the army also supported a ban on emigration to facilitate military recruitment, the administration of Lord Chelmsford readily accepted this demand in 1917.

At the same time, the Viceroy of India urged the Secretary of State, Austen Chamberlain, to issue a clear statement outlining British policy objectives in India. In making this request, he pointed to the growing intensity of the Home Rule Movement as well as the wider international context, particularly the impact of the Russian Revolution and the collapse of Tsarist autocracy in March 1917. These developments made it increasingly urgent for the British government to respond to Indian political aspirations, while still maintaining imperial control.

The replacement of Austen Chamberlain by Montagu in July 1917 merely accelerated a process that was already well underway though the British strategy remained cautious.

Chamberlain himself had displayed a degree of foresight and liberal inclination in advocating the issuance of a formal statement of British policy objectives in India. From the imperial standpoint, such a declaration was advantageous precisely because it offered a broad and ambiguous promise of future progress without committing to any immediate or concrete measures.

At the level of specific constitutional reforms, the Government of India’s despatch of 24th November 1916 proposed introducing elected majorities in the provincial legislatures, but without giving them any real executive power. However, it soon became clear that simply extending the Morley–Minto Reforms would only create a

strong and permanent opposition within the councils, without increasing Indian cooperation with the colonial government.

In this context, an influential intellectual and political circle associated with the London journal *Round Table* played a significant role. This group argued that it would be imprudent to expand the powers of elected non-official members without simultaneously assigning them a measure of executive responsibility. Consequently, they advanced the idea of dyarchy in the provinces—a system that sought to reconcile limited Indian participation in governance with the continued supremacy of British authority.

19.4 PREAMBLE TO THE ACT

The Government of India Act 1919 did not contain a formal preamble in the conventional sense. However, its guiding principles were clearly expressed in the historic declaration made by Edwin Montagu on 20 August 1917.

This declaration stated that the policy of the British Government was the gradual development of self-governing institutions in India with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government, while remaining an integral part of the British Empire. At the same time, it emphasized that this progress would be gradual and subject to British control, ensuring that ultimate authority continued to rest with the colonial administration.

In line with the policy of increasing Indian participation in administration, it was provided that three out of the six members of the Executive Council of the Governor-General of India would be Indians. However, these Indian members were usually assigned portfolios of lesser importance, such as law, education, and health. Furthermore, they were accountable not to the legislature but to the Governor-General and through him to the Secretary of State for India, which significantly limited the development of responsible government.

The chief executive authority remained firmly vested in the Governor-General of India, who was responsible not to the Indian legislature but to the British Parliament through the Secretary of State for India.

While the constitution of the Governor-General's Executive Council was only slightly modified, more substantial changes were introduced in the composition of the Indian legislature. It was explicitly stated that the objective was not to enhance its powers, but rather to make it more representative and to expand opportunities for influencing government policy.

19.5 PROVISIONS – CENTRAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

At the centre, the Act introduced a bicameral legislature consisting of the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. Although these bodies had elected majorities, they had very limited powers. The Governor-General retained overriding authority, including veto powers and the ability to certify and pass rejected bills. The executive remained responsible not to the legislature but to the British Parliament through the Secretary of State.

The reforms expanded the electorate, but voting rights were still restricted to a small section of the population. The electorate expanded, with approximately 5.5 million voters in the provinces and around 1.5 million for the central legislature.

Despite these changes, the Central legislature had no effective control over the Governor-General and his Executive Council, while the central government continued to exercise extensive and unrestricted authority over the provinces.

Limited Representation and Communal Politics

Separate electorates were not only retained but extended, reinforcing communal divisions. Reservations for specific groups, such as non-Brahmins in Madras, were also introduced, reflecting British attempts to balance competing social interests while maintaining control.

Check your progress (CYP)- I

Q1. How did limited representation and communal politics under the Act 1919 affect Indian political development?

Q2. What were the main provisions of the Preamble to the Act of 1919?

19.5.1 Provincial System of Dyarchy,

At the provincial level the system of dyarchy was introduced which divided subjects into “reserved” and “transferred” categories. Crucial subjects such as finance and law and order were classified as reserved subjects and remained under the direct control of the Governor and his executive officials. In contrast, lesser significant areas—including education, public health, agriculture, and local self-government—were designated as transferred subjects and were administered by Indian ministers responsible to the provincial legislatures.

However, this apparent devolution of authority was severely limited in practice. The Governor retained complete control over provincial finances, which in turn constrained the functioning of the transferred departments. There was often discrimination in the allocation of funds, with relatively meagre resources being assigned to departments under Indian ministers, while reserved subjects continued to receive priority.

The transferred departments were assigned relatively low political importance and were given very limited financial resources, as they were placed under ministers responsible to the provincial legislatures. This arrangement effectively drew Indian politicians into a competitive struggle for patronage, while setting them up for failure. Since meaningful

improvements in areas such as education, health, agriculture, and local self-government required far greater financial support than the British administration was willing to provide. Hence, these ministers were unable to deliver tangible results, thereby discrediting them in the eyes of the public. Above all Provincial governors too had veto and certificate powers

Revenue resources were divided between the centre and the provinces, with sources such as land revenue assigned to the provinces, while more lucrative sources like income tax remained under the control of the Government of India, thereby limiting the financial autonomy of the provinces.

Moreover, the Governor enjoyed overriding powers to intervene and overrule ministers on any grounds he considered “special,” which seriously weakened the principle of responsible government. As a result, the system of dyarchy was marked by inherent structural flaws that restricted meaningful Indian participation in governance.

19.6 MONTAGU’S IMAGE AS A REFORMER

Despite the limitations of the reforms, Edwin Montagu generally received a more favourable assessment in both contemporary and later writings. He portrayed himself as a crusading reformer and a champion of gradual constitutional progress in India. This image was further reinforced in his work *An Indian Diary*, where he presented the reforms as a meaningful step towards responsible government, even though in practice their impact remained limited.

19.7 WHY DYARCHY FAILED?

The system of dyarchy introduced under the Government of India Act 1919 proved unsuccessful due to a combination of structural flaws and practical limitations. One of the fundamental weaknesses lay in the nature of the “transferred” departments. These subjects—such as education, health, agriculture, and local self-government—were assigned comparatively less political importance and were allocated inadequate financial resources. As a result, Indian ministers, who were placed in charge of these departments, were unable to implement meaningful reforms or deliver tangible improvements in public welfare. This often led to their discredit in the eyes of the general public.

In practice, this rigid separation proved unworkable and illogical, as governance required coordination across departments. Since finance was central to the functioning of all departments, the transferred branches remained dependent and constrained, further weakening the authority of Indian ministers.

There was also an inherent conflict of interests within the system. While Indian ministers sought to promote the welfare of their countrymen, the Governor and his civil servants prioritized British imperial interests. Moreover, ministers had no effective control over the civil servants who administered the transferred departments, limiting their ability to implement policies. Although ministers were nominally responsible to the legislature, they remained subordinate to the Governor, who possessed the authority to appoint, dismiss, and overrule them.

The absence of well-organized political parties further undermined the system. Without cohesive party structures, the principle of collective or joint responsibility among ministers could not develop. Consequently, dyarchy failed

to provide any real training in parliamentary governance, and there remained a weak connection between elected representatives and the electorate.

While some historians argue that the reforms encouraged democratic practices by expanding the electorate, their overall impact was limited. They failed to address the growing political consciousness and mass awakening in India. Instead, the inadequacies of the system led to widespread dissatisfaction among Indian nationalists, including the Indian National Congress.

19.8 DISILLUSIONMENT AND RISE OF NATIONALISM

Ultimately, the Government of India Act 1919 fell short of Indian expectations. By offering limited reforms while retaining real power in British hands, it deepened political disillusionment. This dissatisfaction contributed directly to the growth of mass nationalist movements in the 1920s, marking a new phase in India's struggle for independence.

Check Your Progress CYP)-II

Q1. Write briefly the causes of the failure of dyarchy.

Q2. Discuss the Provision of the Act of 1919.

19.9 LET US SUM UP

The Government of India Act 1919 ultimately failed to satisfy the political aspirations of Indians and instead generated widespread disillusionment.

The general response to the Act was largely critical. The Indian National Congress strongly expressed its dissatisfactions. It also criticized the evident distrust of the educated Indian middle class and the unsatisfactory composition of the so-called non-official majority in the provincial councils, which rendered these bodies ineffective and largely nominal.

At the same time, sections of the Muslim community also began to show signs of discontent. While they had initially benefited from and supported separate electorates, over the time they increasingly recognized both the

advantages and the limitations of their political position within the colonial framework. This growing awareness contributed to a more complex and evolving political response.

The reforms failed to create a genuine system of responsible government. Instead, they highlighted the reluctance of the British to transfer real power, thereby deepening nationalist critique and accelerating the demand for self-government and independence.

19.10 GLOSSARY

Preamble: The introductory statement of a constitution that outlines its fundamental principles

Responsible Government: A system of governance in which the executive (ministers) is accountable to the legislature

Dyarchy: A system introduced under the Government of India Act, 1919, where subjects were divided into “transferred” (controlled by Indian ministers) and “reserved” (controlled by British officials).

Veto Power: The authority of a person or body (such as the Governor-General) to reject or stop a bill passed by the legislature.

Certification Power: The authority of the Governor-General to certify a bill as essential, allowing it to become law even if it is not approved by the legislature.

19.11 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1 Discuss the impact of the Act 1919 on Indian politics and National movement?

Q2. How did the First World War Influence British policy changes in India?

19.12 LESSON END EXERCISES

Q1. In what ways did the war context contribute to a shift in British constitutional policy towards India?

Q2. How did the Act 1919 lead to disillusionment among Indians and contribute to the rise of nationalism?

19.13 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

Q1 See Section 19.5

Q2 See Section 19.4

CYPII

Q1 See Section 19.7

Q2 See Section 19.5

19.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Sumit Sarkar, Sumit. *Modern India: 1885–1947*. Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd., 1983.
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ROWLATT ACT

STRUCTURE

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- 20.10 Regional Variations and the Case of Punjab**
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20.10.2 Social Composition and Urban Character

20.11 Spread of Nationalist and Reformist Ideas

20.12 Communal Unity and Mass Mobilisation

20.13 Let us sum up

20.14 Glossary

20.15 Examination Oriented Questions

20.16 Lesson End Exercises

20.17 Answer key

20.18 Suggested Readings

20.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to -

- understand the nature and impact of colonial administrative policies between 1912 and 1919.
- examine the causes of growing unpopularity of British rule including wartime policies and repression of nationalist movement.
- analyse the role of economic distress, particularly price rise and wage stagnation in shaping public discontent.
- explore the contribution of social, religious, and intellectual movements such as the Arya Samaj in spreading nationalist ideas.
- understand the implications of the imposition of the Rowlatt Act.
- examine the nature of mass mobilisation during protests against the Rowlatt Act.

Learning Outcomes

After going through this lesson, you will have a clear understanding about -

- the economic and political causes of popular unrest in colonial India during 1912-1919.
- the relationship between wartime policies and post-war resistance movements.
- the character and spread of mass protests against the Rowlatt Act.
- the grievances which contributed to wider nationalist mobilisation.

20.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, this lesson examines the impact of British policies in India after the First World War and imperial

strategies—particularly measures like the Government of India Act 1919 and the Rowlatt Act—which failed to address the widespread popular discontent prevailing in the country. The lesson will further examine how the post-war global environment nurtured a renewed spirit of resistance inspiring Indians to confront colonial authority with greater determination and confidence.

20.2 STRATEGY OF POLITICAL INCORPORATION

The British government introduced a limited devolution of power through the Government of India Act 1919. This reform aimed to partially accommodate Indian political aspirations by involving select Indian leaders in governance.

The primary objective behind these reforms was to co-opt Indian nationalists into the colonial administrative framework. By offering limited participation, the British sought to weaken the growing political challenges posed by movements such as the Home Rule Leagues led by Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

However, this Imperial strategy failed to account for the widespread popular discontent prevailing in India. The war had caused severe economic hardships, including inflation, unemployment, and scarcity of essential goods, which intensified public dissatisfaction with colonial rule.

20.3 INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE AND RISE OF RESISTANCE

Moreover, the post-war international context contributed to a new spirit of resistance. The rise of democratic ideals and anti-imperial sentiments in Europe inspired colonized societies including India, to challenge imperial oppression more assertively. Revolutionary activities in the early twentieth century significantly undermined the perceived invincibility of the British Empire among Indians. These acts of resistance fostered a growing sense of confidence and defiance against colonial authority.

Moreover, the *Kheda Satyagraha* led by Mahatma Gandhi further strengthened this spirit of resistance. It demonstrated the effectiveness of organized non-violent protest in challenging colonial policies and mobilizing the masses.

Additionally, the return of large numbers of demobilised soldiers after the First World War contributed to the spread of new political awareness. These soldiers, having been exposed to global political currents and ideas, brought back with them a heightened sense of consciousness and disillusionment with the colonial rule.

20.4 REPRESSIVE MEASURES AND POLITICAL AWAKENING

This phenomenon was particularly evident in Punjab, which had served as a major recruiting ground for the Indian army. The returning soldiers played a crucial role in disseminating new ideas of resistance and contributed to the region's emerging political awakening.

Parallel to the introduction of the Government of India Act 1919, the British government enacted a series of repressive measures aimed at curbing radical nationalist activities. These measures included legislation permitting detention without trial for up to two years, as well as the establishment of secret tribunals to prosecute individuals

accused of revolutionary crimes.

20.5 THE ROWLATT COMMITTEE AND ITS RECOMMENDATIONS

During the First World War, extraordinary measures involving the suspension of normal legal processes were introduced by the British government. Instead of being withdrawn after the war, there were demands to make such emergency provisions permanent. This led to the enactment of the repressive Rowlatt Act, which institutionalised these draconian powers.

These provisions were based on the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee, headed by Sidney Rowlatt, appointed to investigate revolutionary movements in India. The committee submitted its report in 1918, outlining what it described as organized extremist activities, particularly emphasizing revolutionary crimes in Bengal.

The report created an impression that the Indian independence movement was largely driven by violent seditionists who posed a serious threat to the stability of colonial rule. This portrayal, however exaggerated the scale of revolutionary activity, which in reality remained limited in scope.

The recommendations of the 1918 Sedition Committee headed by Sidney Rowlatt were swiftly enacted into law through the Rowlatt Act. The legislation was pushed through the Imperial Legislative Council between 6 February and 18 March 1919 despite unanimous opposition from all non-official Indian members. It represented a determined attempt to make wartime restrictions on civil liberties permanent by establishing special courts and permitting detention without trial for up to two years, even for minor offences such as possession of materials deemed seditious.

20.6 IMPERIAL MOTIVES AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Rowlatt Act was introduced partly to satisfy British officials and Europeans in India who were unhappy with the liberal reforms proposed by Edwin Montagu especially the system of dyarchy under the Government of India Act 1919. To reassure them, the government also promised that the civil services and British business interests would not be affected by these new reforms.

20.6.1 Indian Response and Wider Concerns

From the Indian perspective, although the immediate targets of the Act appeared to be politically active nationalists, its broader implications were deeply troubling. The extension of police powers generated widespread anxiety, given the prevailing perception of the police as instruments of petty oppression. Consequently, the Act provoked strong resentment across all sections of Indian political opinion.

20.7 GANDHI AND THE ROWLATT SATYAGRAHA

By this time, Mahatma Gandhi had already established himself as a significant political figure through his leadership in movements such as the Champaran Satyagraha and the Kheda Satyagraha. Recognising his growing influence, radical members of the Home Rule League in Bombay approached him to lead a campaign against the new legislation.

Gandhi carefully examined the provisions of the Act and concluded that it violated fundamental principles of British Jurisprudence. In particular, it overturned the basic legal principle that the prosecution must prove the accused's guilt, instead shifting the burden of proof onto the individual.

He also argued that the sweeping and arbitrary powers granted under the Act could be used to suppress civil liberties, including freedom of speech across India.

20.7.1 Initiation of Satyagraha

On 11 February 1919, Gandhi convened a meeting at his ashram where a Satyagraha pledge was drafted. The signatories resolved to refuse compliance with the unjust laws. Earlier, on 4 February, Gandhi had communicated his intentions to the Viceroy through a telegram, declaring his decision to initiate Satyagraha and engage in civil disobedience against such legislation through a self-organised committee.

Gandhi also sought to secure the support of other Indian nationalists, presenting his method of non-violent resistance as a disciplined and constructive outlet for the growing discontent among radicalised Indians. His approach aimed to channel popular anger into an organised and ethical form of protest against colonial repression.

20.7.2 All-India Campaign

On 26 February 1919, Gandhi issued a detailed public statement outlining the objectives and methods of the proposed movement, thereby formally initiating a nationwide campaign against the Rowlatt legislation. Mahatma Gandhi proposed a novel and practical form of all-India mass protest. Moving beyond the conventional methods of petitions and appeals, he advocated Satyagraha as a means of resistance. Importantly, this form of protest was intended to remain disciplined and non-violent, offering a controlled yet powerful channel for expressing popular opposition to colonial authority.

The initial plan of the movement was relatively modest, involving selected volunteers who would deliberately court arrest by publicly selling prohibited literature. This symbolic act was intended to challenge the legitimacy of the repressive Rowlatt Act in a controlled and non-violent manner.

20.7.3 Expansion to an All-India Hartal

On 23 March 1919, Mahatma Gandhi broadened the scope of the movement by proposing a more radical step—an all-India hartal. Initially scheduled for 30 March, it was later postponed to 6th April. However, signs of organisational strain and uneven coordination were evident from the outset.

The *hartal* was deliberately fixed on Sunday to minimise disruption. Gandhi emphasised discipline, instructing that workers required to be on duty even on Sundays and should suspend work only after obtaining prior permission from their employers. This reflected his insistence on maintaining order and moral legitimacy within the movement.

20.7.4 Rejection of Radical Escalation

Gandhi firmly rejected more extreme proposals. For instance, he declined Swami Shraddhanand's suggestion of a no-revenue campaign. At the same time, he persuaded moderate leaders such as Denshaw Wacha to support his programme, arguing that the younger generation would no longer be satisfied with constitutional methods like petitions. In this context, Satyagraha was presented as the only viable means to resist the implementation of the draconian law.

20.7.5 Organisational Networks of Satyagraha

To organise the movement, Gandhi relied on three principal political networks :- the Home Rule Leagues, certain pan-Islamist groups, and the Satyagraha Sabha, which he established in Bombay on 24 February 1919. The Sabha became the central body for coordinating the campaign.

Younger and more radical members of the Home Rule Leagues, disillusioned with the moderate stance of Annie Besant after her support for the Montagu–Chelmsford reforms, rallied behind Gandhi. Leaders in Bombay such as Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Shankarlal Banker, Umar Sobani, and Benjamin Horniman provided crucial financial and organisational support. Some followers of Tilak from Maharashtra also joined, though key associates like N. C. Kelkar and G. S. Khaparde remained distant.

20.8 SUPPORT FROM MUSLIM LEADERSHIP

Gandhi had already cultivated strong ties with Muslim leaders, particularly Abdul Bari of the *Firangi Mahal* group in Lucknow. He was also connected to the circle of the Ali brothers, who were then under internment. In the broader political context, worries about the future of the Ottoman Caliph after the defeat of Turkey and the rumours of harsh peace terms to be imposed by the Allied powers created strong emotional unrest among Indian Muslims, which in turn increased their support for the movement.

20.9 RESTRICTED ROLE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

At this stage, the Indian National Congress was not at the forefront of the agitation. It lacked an effective organisational machinery for mass political mobilisation across much of the country. In fact, resistance to Gandhi's methods was particularly strong in regions like Bengal and Maharashtra, where older extremist networks remained skeptical of his approach and strategy.

The Satyagraha Sabha played a crucial role in mobilising public opinion. It focused on disseminating propaganda literature and collecting signatures for the Satyagraha pledge. Gandhi himself undertook extensive tours, visiting cities such as Allahabad, Lucknow and several centres in South India to broaden the movement's reach.

Check Your Progress (CYP)- I

Q1. What were the key features of the Rowlatt Committee report?

Q2. Discuss the strengths and limitations of the organisational networks of Satyagraha.

20.9.1 Organisational Limitations of the Movement

The organisational preparation for the Satyagraha was weak and uneven, especially compared to the large-scale unrest it created. The Indian National Congress did not yet have a strong structure to organise mass movements across the country. This weakness is clear from the fact that only 982 people signed the Satyagraha pledge, even though the movement became one of the biggest anti-British uprisings since the Revolt of 1857.

20.10 Regional Variations and the Case of Punjab

There were significant regional variations in the intensity and character of the movement. The most affected province was Punjab, where, paradoxically, the organisational base of the Home Rule Leagues had been weakest due to wartime restrictions. Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi himself had not visited the region prior to the outbreak of disturbances.

20.10.1 Role of Michael O'Dwyer in Punjab

Among the most prominent hardliners was Michael O'Dwyer, who served as Lieutenant Governor of Punjab from 1912 to 1919. He held deeply alarmist views regarding Indian nationalist activities and believed that constitutional reforms would dangerously empower Indians. Consequently, he pursued a policy of strict authoritarian control, attempting to govern the province with an iron hand.

The administration of Punjab had already become deeply unpopular well before the outbreak of the 1919 disturbances. This discontent stemmed from coercive wartime policies, including forced recruitment into the army, heavy economic exactions, and severe repression following the Ghadar conspiracy. Additionally, tactless official rhetoric, often critical of the educated Indian classes further alienated sections of society.

Further, discontent arose from administrative actions such as the alleged involvement of Michael O'Dwyer in the 1913 collapse of the People's Bank of Punjab, associated with the prominent swadeshi entrepreneur Harkrishan Lal. This event dealt a significant blow to the economic aspirations of the largely Hindu trading community in Lahore, deepening mistrust towards the colonial administration. A detailed micro-study of Lahore by Ravinder Kumar highlights the acute economic grievances that intensified popular resentment. Between 1917 and 1919, Food grain prices rose by nearly 100 percent, while artisan wages increased by only 20–25 percent, leading to a sharp decline in real incomes and worsening living conditions.

Evidence from the Hunter Commission, the Punjab Inquiry Committee (1920), and later scholarly works such as *Essays on Gandhian Politics*; suggests that the movement in Punjab took the form of an elemental upheaval. It was driven by a combination of post-war economic hardships, and severe colonial repression, which provoked widespread anger.

20.10.2 Social Composition and Urban Character

The movement was largely urban in character. It was primarily supported by lower middle-class groups and artisans. Although *hartal* was observed in most Indian towns, the most intense disturbances occurred in cities such as Amritsar, Lahore, and Gujranwala, along with several smaller towns in Punjab. Beyond Punjab, significant activity was witnessed in parts of Gujarat, particularly in Ahmedabad, Viramgam, and Nadiad. Other important centres included Delhi and Bombay, while Calcutta experienced relatively milder disturbances.

20.11 SPREAD OF NATIONALIST AND REFORMIST IDEAS

The spread of anti-colonial sentiment was further facilitated by various social and intellectual currents. Arya Samaj activists and politically engaged professionals, such as Mukund Lal Puri and Gokul Chand Narang, played a role in disseminating nationalist ideas. Simultaneously, Muslim political awakening was influenced by figures like Zafar Ali Khan, while the poetry of Muhammad Iqbal contributed to a broader climate of intellectual and emotional mobilisation.

20.12 COMMUNAL UNITY AND MASS MOBILISATION

A notable feature of early 1919 in Punjab was the emergence of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity, which caused considerable concern among British authorities. This unity was evident during the mass protests against the Rowlatt Act. The hartals observed on 30 March and 6 April in Amritsar were both peaceful and widely attended. Significantly, the *Ram Navami* procession witnessed active participation from Muslims, symbolising a rare moment of inter-communal solidarity in the anti-colonial struggle.

Check your progress (CYP) -II

Q1. Examine the role of organisational deficiencies in shaping the outcome of the movement.

Q2. Discuss the impact of the spread of nationalist and reformist ideas on the Rowlatt Satyagraha.

20.13 LET US SUM UP

The passage of the Rowlatt Act generated widespread resentment across India as it symbolised the continuation of wartime repression in peacetime. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, a nationwide Satyagraha and hartal mobilised diverse social groups in protest against colonial authority. In Punjab, existing economic distress, political repression, and administrative rigidity intensified the popular response.

The arrest of local leaders such as Saifuddin Kichlew and Satyapal in Amritsar further inflamed public anger. Large crowds gathered to protest these arrests and the repressive policies, leading to heightened tensions between civilians and colonial authorities. The administration, under officials like Michael O'Dwyer, adopted an increasingly harsh and repressive stance to restore the order. This culminated on 13 April 1919, when Reginald Dyer ordered troops to fire on an unarmed gathering at Jallianwala Bagh. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians and shocked the entire nation. The massacre marked a turning point, transforming Indian nationalism into a more radical and mass-based movement against British rule.

20.14 GLOSSARY

Inflation – A general rise in prices leading to a decline in purchasing power.

Demobilised soldiers – Troops released from military service and returned to civilian life after war.

Recruiting ground – A region from which people are enlisted for military service.

Internment – The detention of individuals, often without trial, during wartime

Jurisprudence – The study or philosophy of law and legal principles.

20.15 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the significance of communal unity in shaping the course of the movement.

Q2. Discuss the role of Michael O'Dwyer in the escalation of tensions during the movement.

20.16 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. Discuss the role of regional dynamics in intensifying the movement in Punjab.
- Q2. Discuss the methods and strategies adopted by Mahatma Gandhi during the Rowlatt Satyagraha.

20.17 ANSWER KEY

CYP-I

- Q1 See Section -20.5
- Q2 See sub section 20.7.5

CYP-II

- Q1 See sub section 20.9.1
- Q2 See Section 20.11

20.18 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885–1947*. London: Macmillan, 1989.
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JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE

STRUCTURE

- 21.0 Learning Objectives and Outcomes**
- 21.1 Introduction**
- 21.2 Background**
- 21.3 Jallianwala Bagh Massacre**
- 21.4 Aftermath**
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- 21.7 Self -Assessment Questions/ Examination Oriented Questions**
- 21.8 Lesson End Exercises**
- 21.9 Answer Key**
- 21.10 Suggested Readings**

21.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Learning Objectives

The objectives of this lesson is to enable you to:

- Learn about the causes that led to the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.
- Examine the nature of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
- Learn about the impact of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Learning Outcomes

After going through this lesson you will have a clear understanding about:

- The political situation of Punjab and India after the end of the first world war.

- The action of the British government leading to the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh.
- Part played by General Dyer and the British with the aim of spreading terror in India.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

Learners, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, which took place on April 13, 1919, stands as one of the darkest chapters in the history of the British rule. It was a pivotal turning point for the national movement. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre was not just a spontaneous act of violence; it was the result of a deliberate colonial policy to strike terror in the minds of the Indian population. This massacre was not an isolated incident but the climax of rising tensions between the Indian public and the British colonial administration. The causes can be categorized into legislative, political, economic and immediate.

21.2 BACKGROUND

Learners, let's examine the background leading to the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 1919. Even though the Ghadar movement had failed it left its mark on the memories of people of Punjab and enhanced political consciousness among them. The end of First world war had brought fresh disappointments for Indians as they got nothing for their support to the British regime in the war. There was also resentment in Punjab over the forced recruitment of soldiers for the British war effort. The political, social and economic atmosphere in Punjab was rapidly changing.

The urban population of Punjab that was mostly middle classes were discontented. The traders, teachers, lawyers, merchants, government servants and even small shop keepers were feeling exploited by the colonial rule. Social classes like the *khatri*s who were large in numbers in Punjab and had dominated trade did not get administrative posts in the government. The Hindus and Sikhs had higher literacy percentage than the Muslim yet they were given smaller representation in government services. The communal representation in services had created discontentment. The Punjab civil services were dominated by the Europeans who held 54% of the total posts in Punjab. The remaining posts were divided between Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs. The urban western educated Punjabi population was angry and frustrated as they felt cheated out of jobs.

The end of World War I (1918) brought severe economic strain to India being the colony of Britain. Prices of essential commodities increased dramatically causing widespread distress. According to official reports the price of vegetables, food grain, meat and salt had increased so much that it was unavailable for the people. The classes with fixed income were worst hit by the rise. The plight coupled with the famine of 1918 AD, which swept off essential goods from market, made daily life tough. The British had failed to provide any relief. The people were getting restless and agitated with the inability and indifference of the government to control the situation. The British government in 1917 introduced several taxes and enhanced the rates of income tax as well. From April 1918 AD, the tax rise reached up to 55% and cut a major part of income from the upper middle class's income. Government also introduced acts like the excess profit act 'draining the income of the trading community. The banks had also not supported the trading communities and refused to give loans. The banking crash in 1913-14 had already weakened the trading classes in Punjab. The peasantry with small land holding was also angry and

discontented with the government as restriction had been imposed on exports. The big farmers also could not charge high rates for agricultural produce. The crops like cotton and wheat were not making profits for the small farmers.

The people of India and Punjab had expected the British government to them grant constitutional rights after the end of the First world war. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms did not match their expectations. It added to the communal representation granted earlier and did not give any political rights to the people of India. The act was termed unworthy. The ill treatment of Turkey by the allied powers after the war had already agitated the Muslims and they too wanted to protest against the unsympathetic government.

The masses of Punjab were unhappy with the unsympathetic attitude of the British government. In such a situation the enactment of Rowlett Act of 1919 added fuel to the fire. The British government had information that during the First world war Indian revolutionary or seditious parties were in contact with German agents to overthrow the colonial rule. The government believed that it was necessary to curb such activities before they could cause any harm. On 10 February 1917, a seditious committee was appointed to investigate the revolutionary activities in India. Sir Sydney Rowlett was its president and the committee had some Indian members also. The committee studied the revolutionary activities and made their recommendations based on it. Two Rowlett bills were being prepared and the one which was passed was known as Rowlett act (Anarchical and Revolutionary Crime Act 1919). The act was directed against anarchical activities and gave total powers to the government.

The act had the following clauses: People could be imprisoned without any appeal. Any individual who was doubted for being involved in anarchical or revolutionary activities could be restrained or his liberty could be restricted. The act authorized executive authority to search any property without warrant. The Act also allowed automatic continuation of the confinement. The act was criticized throughout the nation. It was considered lawless and would lead to the exploitation of Indian people. The passage of this Act dismayed the people who still hoped to convince the British government. The Indian National Congress and all other political parties criticized this Act. They requested the Viceroy not to give his nod to the act but it was passed. Mahatma Gandhi tried to persuade the government against the bill but when it was passed he stated that the government action has left no other choice except to resort to *satyagraha*. He formed a *Satyagarha Sabha* at Bombay. The masses joined Gandhi's call for *satyagarh* as the bill had shaken their faith in the British justice. The Indian press too opposed the Act. Cartoons were published mocking the Act. *Amrit Bazaar Patrika*, *Independent*, *Bombay Chronicle*, *New Herald*, *The Tribune*, *Inquilab* and *Waqt* published articles against the bill. On 30 March and 6 April, *hartals* were observed in Punjab.

In Punjab two cities, Lahore and Amritsar emerged as main centers of the opposition. Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal the two main leaders of the agitation organized peaceful protest meetings throughout the Punjab. The British prohibited Dr Kitchlew and Dr Satyapal to address any meeting on 6 April in Amritsar. But the *hartal* held on 6 April was a success. The administration took action against the leaders in Amritsar. On 8 April, the military force in Amritsar was increased as tension enhanced. The people displayed Hindu-Muslim unity as jointly they celebrated Ram Navmi on 9 April. The British had already banned the entry of Gandhi in Punjab believing that it would make the situation worse. The Deputy Commissioner Miles Irving ordered the arrest and deportation

of local leaders like Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal. This resulted in violence. People demanded the release of their leaders. The government used force against them and opened fire which resulted in casualties. The masses retaliated and attacked the national bank murdering its manager. The manager of Alliance Bank was also killed. The telephone exchange, Town Hall and Indian Christian church were attacked and set on fire.

The British came to view Amritsar in a state of open rebellion. In response to the violence the administration handed over the city to Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer. He banned all public gatherings and processions. However, the notice was not widely circulated or explained, especially to the thousands of villagers who were arriving in the city for the festival.

On April 13, 1919 the day of Baisakhi, a (harvest festival) a large crowd gathered at the Jallianwala Bagh for two reasons: some were there to peacefully protest the arrest of Kitchlew and Satyapal, while many others had come from rural areas to attend a peaceful public meeting. General Dyer regarded this gathering as a direct defiance of his authority. He did not see it as a crowd to be dispersed, but as a rebellion that needed to be stopped. The British authorities were afraid that a repeat of the 1857 Mutiny would take place. They feared that revolutionary groups (like the Ghadar Party) and the increasing Hindu-Muslim unity (seen during the Rowlatt protests) were precursors to a massive, organized armed uprising. This fear drove the administration to take the most extreme and brutal measures possible to maintain order.

Check your Progress (CYP) I

Q1. Name two leaders who led the protest against the Rowlatt Act.

Q2. Who was General Dyer?

Q3. How did the Indians respond to the passing of the Rowlatt Act of 1919?

Q4. Why was the Rowlatt Act introduced by the British government?

Q5. Highlight the main clauses of the Rowlatt Act.

Fill in the Blanks

- a. The _____ reforms did not give any political rights to the people of India.
- b. In Punjab two cities, Lahore and _____ emerged as main centers of the opposition.
- c. The Deputy Commissioner ordered the arrest of protesting local leaders like _____ and Dr. Satyapal.
- d. Mahatma Gandhi formed a _____ at Bombay.

21.3 JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE

Learners, the city of Amritsar was in a state of high tension following the arrest of local leaders Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal. In response to the unrest, the colonial government banned all public gatherings and placed the city under the command of Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer. On the day of Baisakhi on 13 April, people had gathered in the enclosed space of Jallianwala Bagh. The Bagh was not a park in the modern sense, but a large, irregular open space of roughly 6 to 7 acres, surrounded by the back walls of houses. The main entrance was so narrow that General Dyer had to leave his two armoured cars (equipped with machine guns) in the street outside. He entered on foot with 50 soldiers. Dyer positioned his troops on a raised platform near the entrance. This gave the soldiers a clear, unobstructed line of fire upon the people sitting on the ground. Under standard military protocol, a crowd should be warned to disperse. Dyer later admitted to the Hunter Commission that he gave no warning because he didn't want the crowd to leave; he wanted to punish them. As the firing began, the panic-stricken crowd rushed towards the walls. Seeing this, Dyer ordered his men to direct their fire specifically where the crowd was thickest near the exit. A total of 1,650 rounds were fired. The firing lasted for about 10 minutes, stopping only when the soldiers ran out of ammunition. In the midst of the chaos,

many people (including children and the elderly) saw the large well inside the garden as their only hope for cover. Dozens of people jumped in to escape the bullets, but as more followed, many died of suffocation or drowning. After the massacre, 120 bodies were reportedly recovered from the well alone. After firing Dyer immediately withdrew his troops. He issued no orders to help the wounded, stating it was not his job. As a curfew was in effect, many of the injured lay in the Bagh all night, died of loss of blood as their families could not rescue them. Presently, the bullet holes are outlined in white or red paint. They serve as physical evidence of the Direct Fire proving that the soldiers were not firing into the air to scare the crowd, but were aiming directly at human targets. The massacre was followed by a period of extreme Martial Law in Punjab, designed to humiliate the local population: Indians were made to crawl on their bellies. Many residents were rounded up and whipped in public for minor disrespect shown towards British officers. For several days, water and electricity were cut off in parts of Amritsar to further discipline the city and to teach the people a lesson.

21.4 AFTERMATH

The British administration, led by Sir Michael O'Dwyer, spent the weeks after April 13th trying to frame the event as the suppression of a revolutionary conspiracy. A strict press gag was placed on the newspapers of the Punjab. News of the massacre did not reach the rest of India or the British Parliament for several months. The white paper, the initial official report minimized the casualty count to less than 300 to avoid international outcry. Importantly, after the massacre, the British used the Royal Air Force to drop bombs and fire machine guns from planes on protestors in the town of Gujranwala to ensure the lesson of Amritsar was felt across the Punjab. This brutality changed the hearts of all those Indians who were Moderates or even pro-British. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru regarded the British government as satanic and realized that cooperation was no longer a moral option. After the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, the goal of leaders of the national movement became complete independence. The goal shifted from 'Home Rule' to Purna Swaraj. Rabindranath Tagore renounced his Knighthood in protest, stating that such honors 'make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of helplessness'. It provided the immediate catalyst for Mahatma Gandhi to launch his first large-scale movement (non-cooperation) against British rule in 1920. The event deeply affected young revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh. The massacre had a long-reaching impact. A young man named Udham Singh, who was reportedly present in the Bagh that day and survived, spent over 20 years planning his revenge. In 1940, he travelled to London and assassinated Michael O'Dwyer (the man who had authorized Dyer's actions) at Caxton Hall, stating that he had finally fulfilled his vow to the martyrs of 1919.

The Hunter Commission, officially known as the Disorders Inquiry Committee, was established by the Government of India on October 14, 1919. Its primary mandate was to investigate the series of disturbances in Punjab, Delhi, and Bombay, with a specific focus on the tragedy at Jallianwala Bagh. The commission was headed by Lord William Hunter, a former Solicitor-General for Scotland. To give the committee an appearance of fairness, it included both British and Indian members: The British members were: Lord Hunter the Chairman, Justice Rankin, W.F. Rice, Major General George Barrow and Sir Thomas Smith. The Indian members were: Sir Chimanlal Setalvad (Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University), Pandit Jagat Narayan (Member of the Legislative Council of UP) and Sardar Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Khan.

The key objectives of the Hunter Committee were to investigate the causes of the disturbances that broke out in April 1919; to evaluate the necessity and application of Martial Law in Punjab; to determine if the level of force used by the military (specifically by General Dyer) was justified. The most critical part of the report was based on the testimony of Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer on November 19, 1919. His statements were shockingly candid and formed the basis for the commission's eventual censure. Dyer admitted he did not fire just to disperse the crowd, but to produce a moral effect and to ensure that people were taught a lesson. He confessed he gave no warning to the crowd to disperse, claiming that they would have all run away before he could teach them a lesson. He added that he would have used machine guns and armoured vehicles if the entrance to the Jallianwala Bagh had been wide enough to let them through.

The Hunter commission was split along racial lines, leading to two separate sets of conclusions within the final report submitted in March 1920. The report reflecting the British perspective described Dyer's action as a grave error of judgment and stated that the firing was unfortunate. It defended the imposition of Martial Law in Punjab, arguing that the situation was on the verge of an organized rebellion. The Report concluded that Dyer had exceeded the reasonable amount of force but stopped short of calling it a criminal act or cold-blooded murder.

The minority report reflected the Indian position. The three Indian members refused to sign the majority findings and issued a dissenting report that argued that the gathering at the Jallianwala Bagh was not a conspiracy for rebellion but was a peaceful gathering opposing the Rowlatt Act. The Indian members of the committee condemned the crawling order and other martial law punishments as un-British and designed to humiliate the Indian people. They insisted that Dyer's actions were a monstrous violation of human rights and that the British officers involved should face legal consequences.

The report of the Hunter Committee had several immediate and long-term effects. Based on the report, the Commander-in-Chief of India asked Dyer to resign. He was barred from further employment in India and sent back to England. To the fury of the Indian public, Dyer was not tried in a court of law. He was actually treated as a hero by many in the British House of Lords. Even before the report was finished, the British government passed the Indemnity Act to protect its officers from legal liability for actions taken during the period of martial law.

The Indian National Congress formed its own Non-Official Inquiry Committee (including Motilal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi), which provided a much more scathing indictment of British atrocities.

The Hunter Commission report is often seen as a whitewash by historians because, while it criticized Dyer's tactics, it protected the underlying colonial system that allowed the massacre to happen. It was only due to international and domestic outrage, that the British government formed the Disorders Inquiry Committee, headed by Lord Hunter. During his testimony, Dyer showed no remorse. He stated, *"I think it quite possible I could have dispersed the crowd without firing but they would have come back and laughed at me, and I should have made what I consider to be a fool of myself."*

The reaction in Britain was polarized. Winston Churchill and former Prime Minister H.H. Asquith condemned the act. Churchill called it monstrous and an 'extraordinary event, a monstrous event, an event which stands in

singular and sinister isolation'. Many in the British House of Lords and the *Morning Post* newspaper hailed Dyer as the 'Saviour of the Punjab'. They even raised a significant fund (about £26,000) for him as a retirement gift, which many Indians saw as a final insult to the victims.

Check your Progress (CYP) II

Q1. What happened on 13 April 1919 at the Jallianwala Bagh?

Q2. What was the Hunter Commission?

Q3. What happened when the martial law was imposed?

Q4. Who was Udham Singh?

Fill in the Blanks

a. _____ called the Jallianwala Bagh massacre as monstrous and an 'extraordinary event, a monstrous event, an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation'.

- b. The _____ officially known as the Disorders Inquiry Committee, was established by the Government of India on October 14, 1919.
- c. _____ renounced his Knighthood in protest, stating that such honors 'make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of helplessness'.

21.5 LET US SUM UP

Learners, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre changed the course of the national movement for the freedom of India. Many events led up to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. After the First world war the Indians had hoped that the British government would grant them some political rights. However, their hopes were dashed when the Reforms of 1919 did not give representation to the Indians in the government. The economic situation too had deteriorated. There was price rise and no jobs and both the trading classes in the urban areas as well as peasantry were suffering. The government had not given any relaxation in high taxes. The flu epidemic of 1918 added to the misery of the people. Once again no steps were taken by the government to provide any relief to the people. Rather the arbitrary Rowlatt Act of 1919 was passed taking away the rights of the masses. This angered the people and the Indian National Congress as well as other political groups started protests all over the country. Ignoring the Indians, the British staged the Jallianwala Bagh where they indiscriminately fired at innocent people and attempted to suppress the spirit of the Punjabis with humiliating martial laws.

21.6 GLOSSARY

Hartal: strike

Purna Swaraj: Complete independence

Satyagraha: philosophy of non-violent resistance

21.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS/ EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Throw light on the economic condition of the people of India after the first world war.
- Q2. Why was the Rowlatt Act passed?
- Q3. Throw light on the events preceding the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
- Q4. What was the impact of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre on politics and freedom movement?

21.8 LESSON END EXERCISES

- Q1. What were the economic, social and political causes leading up to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre?
- Q2. Analyse the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in the light of the freedom movement.
- Q3. Throw light on the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

21.9 ANSWER KEY

CYPI

1. See Section 21.2
2. See Section 21.2
3. See Section 21.2
4. See Section 21.2

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Montague-Chelmsford
- b. Amritsar
- c. Dr. Kitchlew
- b. Satyagraha Sabha

CYP II

1. See Section 21.3
2. See Section 21.4
3. See Section 21.4
1. See Section 21.4

Fill in the Blanks

- a. Churchill
- b. Hunter Commission
- c. Rabindranath Tagore

21.10 Suggested Readings

- J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, New Cambridge History of India, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1990.
- Raja Ram, *The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, Panjab University Publication Bureau, Chandigarh: 1978.
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- Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, New Delhi, Macmillan, 1983
- Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition – A History of Modern India*, New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2010.