

# APPOLO STUDY CENTRE

## 12 th History

### MILITANT NATIONALISM

#### Unit - 2. Rise of Extremism and Swadeshi Movement

##### Introduction

- By the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was conspicuous resentment against moderate politics within the Indian National Congress. This feeling of resentment eventually evolved into a new trend, referred to as the 'Extremist' trend. The extremist or what we may call radical or militant group was critical of the moderates for their cautious approach and the "mendicant policy" of appealing to the British by way of prayers and petitions. This form of militancy developed under the leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra, Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal and Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab. The primary reasons for the rise of this trend were: factionalism in the Congress, frustration with the moderate politics, anger against Lord Curzon for dividing Bengal.
- The partition of Bengal in 1905 - a prime example of the British divide and rule policy - acted as the catalyst for the growth of anti-colonial swadeshi nationalism. The partition plan was first opposed by moderates but as the movement progressed, different techniques were improvised for the Swadeshi campaign. Swadeshi constructive programme included boycott of foreign goods and government-administered educational institutions. The Swadeshi movement (1905-1911) is the most important phase of the Indian National Movement in the pre-Gandhian era, as, during the course of the

movement, the character of the Indian national movement changed significantly in terms of the stated objectives, methods and in its social base.

- The mass base of the movement was expanded by exposing the problems of various social groups under the British governance and the underlying commonality in their lives - that is colonial exploitation. For the first time, in the history of Indian national movement, women, workers, peasants, and marginalised groups were exposed to modern nationalist ideas and politics. It was a period when the elite made a conscious effort to address the common people, calling upon them to join politics. The other prominent development during the Swadeshi period was the growth of the vernacular press (newspapers published in Indian languages) in various parts of India. The nationalistic tone of the vernacular press became more pronounced during this time. The role played by Swadesamitran in Tamil Nadu, Kesari in Maharashtra, Yugantar in Bengal are a few examples.
- As the movement gained support among the people, the government passed a series of repressive Acts such as the Public Meetings Act (1907), the Explosive Substance Act (1908), the Newspaper (Incitement and Offence Act 1908) and the Indian Press Act (1910) to crush the nationalistic activities of any nature. One such measure was recording and monitoring of public meetings which were considered a matter of judicial scrutiny. (Shorthand was used by the police for the first time to record political speeches.) In this lesson, while discussing the Bengal as well as national scenarios, the Swadeshi Campaigns conducted in Tamil nadu with particular focus on the role played by V.O. Chidambaram, V.V. Subramaniam, Subramania Siva and Subramania Bharati.

## Partition of Bengal

- On January 6, 1899, Lord Curzon was appointed the new Governor General and Viceroy of India. This was a time when British unpopularity was increasing due to the impact of recurring famine and the plague. Curzon did little to change the opinion of the educated Indian class. Instead of engaging with the nationalist intelligentsia, he implemented a series of repressive measures. For instance, he reduced the number of elected Indian representatives in the Calcutta Corporation (1899). The University Act of 1904 brought the Calcutta University under the direct control of the government. The Official Secrets Act (1904) was amended to curb the nationalist tone of Indian newspapers. Finally, he ordered partition of

Bengal in 1905. The partition led to widespread protest all across India, starting a new phase of the Indian national movement.

- Bengal Presidency as an administrative unit was indeed of unmanageable in size; the necessity of partition was being discussed since the 1860s. The scheme of partition was revived in March 1890. In Assam, when Curzon went on a tour, he was requested by the European planters to make a maritime outlet closer to Calcutta to reduce their dependence on the Assam– Bengal railways. Following this, in December 1903, Curzon drew up a scheme in his Minutes on Territorial Redistribution of India, which was later modified and published as the Risely Papers. The report gave two reasons in support of partition: Relief of Bengal and the improvement of Assam. The report, however, concealed information on how the plan was originally devised for the convenience of British officials and the European businessmen.
- From December 1903 and 1905 this initial idea of transferring or reshuffling some areas from Bengal was changed to a full-fledged plan of partition. The Bengal was to be divided into two provinces. The new Eastern Bengal and Assam were to include the divisions of Chittagong, Dhaka, parts of Rajshahi hills of Tippera, Assam province and Malda.

### **Aimed at Hindu Muslim Divide**

- The intention of Curzon was to suppress the political activities against the British rule in Bengal and to create a Hindu–Muslim divide. The government intentionally ignored alternative proposals presented by the civil servants, particularly the idea of dividing Bengal on linguistic basis. Curzon rejected this proposal as this would further consolidate the position of the Bengali politicians. Curzon was adamant as he wanted to create a clearly segregated Hindu and Muslim population in the divided Bengal. Curzon, like many before him, knew very well that there was a clear geographical divide along the river Bhagirathi: eastern Bengal dominated by the Muslims, and western Bengal dominated by the Hindus and in the central Bengal and the two communities balancing out each other. There was a conscious attempt on the part of British administration to woo the Muslim population in Bengal. In his speech at Dhaka, in February 1904, Curzon assured the Muslims that in the new province of East Bengal, Muslims would enjoy a unity, which they had never enjoyed since the days of old Muslim rule.

- The partition, instead of dividing the Bengali people along the religious line, united them. Perhaps the British administration had underestimated the growing feeling of Bengali identity among the people, which cut across caste, class, religion and regional barriers. By the end of the nineteenth century, a strong sense of Bengali unity had developed among large sections in the society. Bengali language had acquired literary status with Rabindranath Tagore as the central figure. The growth of regional language newspapers played a role in building the narrative of solidarity. Similarly, recurring famines, unemployment, and a slump in the economic growth generated an anti-colonial feeling.

### **Anti-Partition Movement**

- Both the militants and the moderates were critical of the partition of Bengal ever since it was announced in December 1903. But the anti-partition response by leaders like Surendranath Banerjee, K.K. Mitra, and Prithwishchandra Ray remained restricted to prayers and petitions. The objective was limited to influencing public opinion in England against the partition. However, despite this widespread resentment, partition of Bengal was officially declared on 19 July 1905.
- With the failure to stop the partition of Bengal and the pressure exerted by the radical leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Aswini Kumar Dutta, and Aurobindo Ghose, the moderate leaders were forced to rethink their strategy, and look for new techniques of protest. Boycott of British goods was one such method, which after much debate was accepted by the moderate leadership of the Indian National Congress. So, for the first time, the moderates went beyond their conventional political methods. It was decided, at a meeting in Calcutta on 17 July 1905, to extend the protest to the masses. In the same meeting, Surendranath Banerjee gave a call for the boycott of British goods and intuitions. On 7 August, at another meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall, a formal proclamation of Swadeshi Movement was made. However, the agenda of Swadeshi movement was still restricted to securing an annulment of the partition and the moderates were very much against utilizing the campaign to start a full-scale passive resistance. The militant nationalists, on the other hand, were in favour of extending the movement to other provinces too and to launch a full-fledged mass struggle.

## Spread of the Movement

- Besides the organized efforts of the leaders, there were spontaneous reactions against the partition of Bengal. Students, in particular, came out in large numbers. Reacting to the increased role of the students in the anti-partition agitation, British officials threatened to withdraw the scholarships and grants to those who participated in programmes of direct action. In response to this, a call was given to boycott official educational institutions and it was decided that efforts were to be made to open national schools. Thousands of public meetings were organized in towns and villages across Bengal. Religious festivals such as the Durga Pujas were utilized to invoke the idea of boycott. The day Bengal was officially partitioned – 16 Oct 1905 – was declared as a day of mourning. Thousands of people took bath in the Ganga and marched on the streets of Calcutta singing Bande Mataram.

## Boycott and Swadeshi Movements in Bengal (1905–1911)

- Such efforts, both organized and spontaneous, laid the foundation for a sustained campaign against the British. The boycott and swadeshi were always interlinked to each other and part of a wider plan to make India self-sufficient. G. Subramaniam, a nationalist leader from Madras, succinctly explained the aim of the swadeshi movement as ‘a revolt against their state of dependence...in all branches of their national life’. In the words of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, ‘the swadeshi movement is not only for the improvement of our industry but for an allround enhancement of our national life ...’ As the movement progressed, different definitions of Swadeshi appeared. However, for the larger part, the movement of Swadeshi and Boycott was practiced as an anti-colonial political agitation and not as a viable method to achieve dignity and freedom in life, a definition which would be later infused with the entry of Mahatma Gandhi.

## Evolution of the idea of Swadeshi

- During the freedom struggle, the idea of Swadeshi movement was conceptualized first during 1905 by a string of Congress leaders and then later in the 1920s under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.
- Swadeshi means ‘of one’s own country’. The origin of the idea can be traced to 1872 when Mahadev Govind Ranade, in a series of lectures in Poona, popularised the idea of Swadeshi. According to Ranade, the goods

produced in one's own country should be given preference even if the use of such goods proved to be less satisfactory.

- In the 1920s Gandhi gave a new meaning to the idea of Swadeshi by linking it to the fulfilment of a duty that all Indians owed to the land of their birth. For Gandhi, Swadeshi did not merely mean the use of what is produced in one's own country. Gandhi defined Swadeshi in following words "Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of more remote. I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they may be found wanting."

### (a) Constructive Swadeshi

- The constructive Swadeshi programmes largely stressed upon self-help. It focused on building alternative institutions of self-governance that would operate entirely free from British control. It also laid emphasis on the need for self-strengthening of the people which would help in creating a worthy citizen before the launch of political agitations.
- Rabindranath Tagore was one of the central figures who popularised such ideas through his writings. He outlined the constructive programme of atmashakti (self-help). Tagore called for economic self-development and insisted that education should be provided in swadeshi languages. He also made the call for utilising melas, or fairs, to spread the message of atmashakti. This became the creed of the whole of Bengal and swadeshi shops sprang all over the place selling textiles, handlooms, soaps, earthenware, matches and leather goods.

The idea of education in vernacular language made its appearance much before the swadeshi movement with the foundation of Dawn Society by Satish Chandra in 1902

- On 5 November 1905, at the initiative of the Dawn Society, the National Council of Education was formed. In August 1906, Bengal National College and a School were founded. A passionate appeal was made by Satish Chandra to the students to come out of 'institutions of slavery.' Such efforts, however, failed to attract many due to the bleak job prospects.

## (b) Samitis

- The other successful method of mass mobilization was the formation of samitis (corps of volunteers). The samitis were engaged in a range of activities such as physical and moral training of members, philanthropic work during the famines, epidemics, propagation of Swadeshi message during festivals, and organization of indigenous arbitration courts, and schools. By its very nature boycott was passive action and its aim was to refuse to cooperate with the British administration.
- But these mass mobilization efforts failed to flourish as they could not extend their base among the Muslim peasantry and the “Depressed Classes”. Most of the samitis recruited from the educated middle class and other upper caste Hindus. Besides this, the swadeshi campaigners often applied coercive methods, both social and physical. For instance, social boycott of those purchasing foreign goods was common and taken up through caste associations and other nationalist organisations.

## (c) Passive Resistance

- From 1906, when the abrogation of partition was no longer in sight, the Swadeshi Movement took a different turn. For many leaders, the movement was to be utilized for propagating the idea of the political independence or Swaraj across India. The constructive programmes came under heavy criticism from Aurobindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal, and other militant leaders. Under their new direction, the swadeshi agenda included boycott of foreign goods; boycott of government schools and colleges; boycott of courts; renouncing the titles and relinquishing government services; and recourse to armed struggle if British repression went beyond the limits of endurance. The programme of this nature required mass mobilization. Using religion, combined with the invocation of a glorious past, became the essential features of their programmes.

## **Militant Nationalism**

- As pointed out earlier, thanks to the campaigns conducted by Bal Gangadhar Tilak Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai, often referred to as the Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate, Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab, emerged as the epicentres of militant nationalism during the Swadeshi phase. Aurobindo Ghose was another influential figure in the militant leadership. The

nationalism of this form was more assertive compared to the early Indian nationalism.

- Both the groups, moderate and militant, were well aware of the evils or the wrong doings of the British rule. The moderates, however, worked under the belief that the British rule in India could be reformed by convincing the rulers through representation and petitioning. The militant nationalist, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the colonial rulers would never be amenable to reason, as they would not like to give up the advantages of an empire.
- Sometime around 1905, Aurobindo Ghose was asked by a man as to how to become a patriot. In response Aurobindo pointed to a wall map of India, and said “Do you see this map? It is not a map but the portrait of Bharat Mata: its cities and mountains rivers and jungles form her physical body. All her children are her nerves, large and small.... Concentrate on Bharat as a living mother, worship her with nine-fold bhakti.”
- Militant nationalism also changed the nature of political pressure from the earlier force of public opinion of educated Indians to the protesting masses. Despite these changes, the militant nationalism phase retained a continuity from the moderate phase. This continuity was evident in the inability to transcend the peaceful method of struggle and for the most parts militant nationalism remained tied to the idea of non-violence. However, they appealed to the patriotic sentiments of the people using the religious symbols.

### **Swaraj or Political Independence**

- One of the common goals of the militant leaders was to achieve Swaraj or Self Rule. However, the leaders differed on the meaning of Swaraj. For Tilak, Swaraj was restricted to the Indian control over the administration or rule by the natives, but not total severance of relation with Britain. In Bipin Chandra Pal’s view, Swaraj was the attainment of complete freedom from any foreign rule.
- The other point of departure of the militants from the moderates was over the rising extremism in Bengal, Punjab, and Maharashtra. Unlike the moderates, who were critical of the reckless revolutionaries, militant



nationalists were sympathetic towards them. However, the political murders and individual acts of terrorism were not approved of by the militant leaders and they were cautious of associating themselves with the cause of revolutionaries.

- The patriotism glued with the assertion of Hindu beliefs was not acceptable to the Muslims. Also much like their predecessors the leaders of the swadeshi movement failed to penetrate the larger section of the society. By 1908 militant nationalism was on the decline. The Surat split of 1907 was another contributing factor to this decline.

### Surat Split

- The tension between the militants and the moderates became more pronounced with the appointment of Lord Minto as the new Secretary of State to India in 1906. As the tension was rising between the two groups, a split was avoided, in the 1906 Calcutta session, by accepting demands of moderate leaders and electing Dadabhai Naoroji as president. Most of the moderates, led by Pherozeshah Mehta, were defeated in the election. The militants managed to pass four resolutions on Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education, and Self-Government.
- The next session of Congress was originally planned to be held in Poona, considered to be a stronghold of the militants. Fearing a repeat of the Calcutta session, the moderates shifted the venue to Surat. The militants proposed Lala Lajpat Rai's name for the next Congress presidency opposing the moderate's candidate Rash Behari Ghosh. Lala Lajpat Rai, however, turned down the offer to avoid the split. The matter finally boiled down to the question of retaining the four resolutions that were passed in the Calcutta session in 1906. The Pherozeshah Mehta group sought removal of those items from the agenda. In order to counter Mehta's manoeuvring, the militants decided to oppose the election of Rash Behari Gosh as president. The session ended in chaos.
- The Indian National Congress, born in December 1885, was now split into two groups – militant and moderate. The Congress which emerged after the Surat split was more loyal to the British than they were before. The new Congress, minus the militants, came to be known as Mehta Congress and the 1908 session of the Congress was attended only by the moderates who reiterated their loyalty to the Raj. The politics of militants, on the other

hand, could not crystallize into a new political organization. The primary reason was the repressive measures of the government by putting all the prominent leaders in jail.

### Revolutionary Extremism

- Around 1908, the decline of the militant nationalists and the rise of revolutionary activities marked an important shift from non-violent methods to violent action. It also meant a shift from mass-based action to elite response to the British rule. In Bengal, revolutionary terrorism had developed even earlier; around the 1870s, when the akharas or gymnasiums were setup in various places to develop what Swami Vivekananda had described as strong muscles and nerves of steel. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel, *Anandmath* also had a significant impact. *Anandmath* was widely read by the revolutionaries in Bengal. The Bande Mataram song, which is part of the novel, became the anthem of the swadeshi movement.
- During the Swadeshi movement three factors contributed to the upsurge in the individual acts of violence:
- The apolitical constructive programmes had little acceptance among the youth who was growing impatient under the repressive foreign rule.
- The failure of the militant nationalists to lead the young people into a long-term mass movement also contributed to the growth of individual action.
- The revolutionary action was part of an effort towards the symbolic recovery of Indian manhood, which the revolutionaries believed was often challenged and looked down upon by the British.
- Such actions, however, did not lead to any organised revolutionary movement as was the case in Russia. The revolutionary actions were mostly attempts to assassinate specific oppressive British officers.

#### (a) Alipore Bomb Case

- In Bengal, the story of revolutionary terrorism begins in 1902 with the formation of many secret societies. Most notable among them all was the Anushilan Samity of Calcutta, founded by Jatindernath Banerjee and Barindarkumar Ghose, brother of Aurobindo Ghose. Similarly, the Dhaka

Anushilan Samity was born in 1906 through the initiative of Pulin Behari Das. This was followed by the launch of the revolutionary weekly *Yugantar*. The Calcutta Anushilan Samity soon started its activities and the first swadeshi dacoity, to raise funds, was organised in Rangpur in August 1906.

- In the same year, Hemchandra Kanungo went abroad to get military training in Paris. After his return to India in 1908, he established a bomb factory along with a religious school at a garden house in Maniktala. In the same garden house, young inmates underwent various forms of physical training, reading classic Hindu text, and reading literature on revolutionary movement across the world
- A conspiracy was hatched there to kill Douglas Kingsford, notorious for his cruel ways of dealing with the swadeshi agitators. Two young revolutionaries - 18-year-old Khudiram Bose and 19-year-old Prafulla Chaki - were entrusted with the task of carrying out the killing. On 30 April 1908, they mistakenly threw a bomb on a carriage, that, instead of killing Kingsford, killed two English women. Prafulla Chaki committed suicide and Khudiram Bose was arrested and hanged for the murder.
- Aurobindo Ghose, along with his brother Barinder Kumar Ghose and thirty-five other comrades, were arrested. Chittaranjan Das took up the case. It came to be known as the Alipore Bomb case.
- The judgement observed that there was no evidence to show that Aurobindo Ghose was involved in any conspiracy against the British rule. Ghose was acquitted of all the charges. Barindra Ghose and Ullaskar Dutt were given the death penalty (later commuted to the transportation of life), with the rest being condemned to transportation for life. The year-long hearing of Alipore Bomb case made a great impact and portrayed the nationalist revolutionaries as heroes to the general public.

### **Trial and the Aftermath**

- After his acquittal, Aurobindo Ghose took to a spiritual path and shifted his base to Pondicherry, where he stayed until his death in 1950. The idea of bringing an armed revolution, envisaged by Aurobindo Ghose, never materialized. The reason for the gradual decline in the revolutionary activities in Bengal was a combination of government repression and

alienation from the people. Beside this, revolutionary terrorism suffered from certain social limitations too as most of the revolutionaries were drawn from the three upper castes – Brahmin, Kayastha, and Vaishya.

### **(b) British Repression**

- In December 1908 the Morley-Minto constitutional reforms were announced. The moderates welcomed the reforms. However, they soon realised that there was hardly any shift of power. In fact, measures taken by Minto were highly divisive as it institutionalised communal electorates creating Hindu-Muslim divide. Beside this, the colonial government also introduced certain repressive laws such as:
- The Newspapers (Incitement to Offence) Act, 1908. This act empowered the magistrate to confiscate press property which published objectionable material making it difficult to publish anything critical of British rule.
- Indian Press Act 1910 made it mandatory for publishers and the printers to deposit a security that could be seized in case they printed 'obnoxious material'.
- The Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act allowed summary trials and also imposed the prohibition of 'association dangerous to the public peace'.
- Even with the widespread repression, the charm of revolutionary action never disappeared from the Indian national movement. The centre of activities moved from Bengal to Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

### **Swadeshi Campaign in Tamil Nadu**

- Swadeshi movement in Tamil Nadu, notably in Tirunelveli district, generated a lot of attention and support. While the Swadeshi movement in Tamil Nadu had an all India flavour, with collective anger against the British rule remaining the common thread, it was also underpinned by Tamil - pride and consciousness. There was a deep divide in the Tamil Nadu congress between the moderates and the extremists.

### (a) Development of Vernacular Oratory

- Initially, the movement was more of a reaction to the partition of Bengal and regular meetings were held to protest the partition. The speakers, in such meetings, spoke mostly in the vernacular language to an audience that included students, lawyers, and laborers at that time. The shift from English oratory to vernacular oratory was a significant development of this time, which had a huge impact on the mass politics in Tamil Nadu.
- Swadeshi meetings at the Marina beach in Madras were a regular sight. The Moore Market complex in Madras was another venue utilised for such gatherings. During the period (1905- 1907) there are police reports calling students dangerous and their activities as seditious. Europeans in public places were greeted by the students with shouts of Vande Mataram. In 1907, Bipin Chandra Pal came to Madras and his speeches on the Madras Beach electrified the audience and won new converts to the nationalist cause. The visit had a profound impact all over Tamil Nadu. The public speeches in the Tamil language created an audience which was absent during the formative years of the political activities in Tamil Nadu.

### (b) V.O.C. and Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company (SSNC)

- The Swadeshi movement in Tamil Nadu came to national attention in 1906 when V.O. Chidambaram mooted the idea of launching a swadeshi shipping venture in opposition to the monopoly of the British in navigation through the coast.
- In 1906, V.O.C. registered a joint stock company called The Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company (SSNC) with a capital of Rs 10 Lakh, divided into 40,000 shares of Rs. 25 each. Shares were open only to Indians, Ceylonese and other Asian nationals. V.O.C. purchased two steamships, S.S. Gallia and S.S. Lawoe. When in the other parts of India, the response to Swadeshi was limited to symbolic gestures of making candles and bangles, the idea of forging a Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company was really spectacular. V.O.C invoked the rich history of the region and the maritime glory of India's past and used it as a reference point to galvanize the public opinion in favour of a Swadeshi venture in the sea.
- The initiative of V.O.C. was lauded by the national leaders. Lokmanya Tilak wrote about the success of the Swadeshi Navigation Company in his papers

Kesari and Mahratta. Aurobindo Ghose also lauded the Swadeshi efforts and helped to promote the sale of shares of the company. The major shareholders included Pandithurai Thevar and Haji Fakir Mohamed.

- The initial response of the British administration was to ignore the Swadeshi company. As patronage for Swadeshi Company increased, the European officials exhibited blatant bias and racial partiality against the Swadeshi steamship.

### (c) The Coral Mill Strike

- After attending the session of the Indian National Congress at Surat, V.O.C. on his return decided to work on building a political organisation. While looking for an able orator, he came across Subramania Siva, a swadeshi preacher. From February to March 1907, both the leaders addressed meetings almost on a daily basis at the beach in Tuticorin, educating the people about swadeshi and the boycott campaign. The meetings were attended by thousands of people. These public gatherings were closely monitored by the administration.
- In 1908, the abject working and living conditions of the Coral Mill workers attracted the attention of V.O.C and Siva. In the next few days, both the leaders addressed the mill workers. In March 1908, the workers of the Coral Cotton Mills, inspired by the address went on strike. It was one of the earliest organised labour agitations in India.
- The strike of the mill workers was fully backed by the nationalist newspapers. The mill owners, however, did not budge and was supported by the government which had decided to suppress the strike. To further increase the pressure on the workers, the leaders were prohibited from holding any meetings in Tuticorin. Finally, the mill owners decided to negotiate with the workers and concede their demands
- This victory of the workers generated excitement among the militants in Bengal and it was hailed by the newspapers in Bengal. For instance, Aurobindo Ghosh's *Bande Matram* hailed the strike as "forging a bond between educated class and the masses, which is the first great step towards swaraj.... Every victory of Indian labour is a victory for the nation...."

#### (d) Subramania Bharati: Poet and Nationalist

- The growth of newspapers, both in English and Tamil language, aided the swadeshi movement in Tamil Nadu. G. Subramaniam was one of the first among the leaders to use newspapers to spread the nationalist message across a larger audience. Subramaniam, along with five others, founded *The Hindu* (in English) and *Swadesamitran* (which was the first ever Tamil daily). In 1906 a book was published by Subramaniam to condemn the British actions during the Congress Conference in Barsal. *Swadesamitran* extensively reported nationalist activities, particularly the news regarding V.O.C. and his speeches in Tuticorin.
- Subramania Bharati became the sub-editor of *Swadesamitran* around the time (1904) when Indian nationalism was looking for a fresh direction. Bharati was also editing *Chakravartini*, a Tamil monthly devoted to the cause of Indian women.
- Two events had a significant impact on Subramania Bharati. A meeting in 1905 with Sister Nivedita, an Irish woman and a disciple of Vivekananda, whom he referred to as Gurumani (teacher), greatly inspired his nationalist ideals. The churning within the Congress on the nature of engagement with the British rule was also a contributory factor.
- As discussed earlier in this lesson, the militants ridiculed the mendicancy of the moderates who wanted to follow the constitutional methods. Bharati had little doubt, in his mind, that the British rule had to be challenged with a fresh approach and methods applied by the militant nationalists appealed to him more. For instance, his fascination with Tilak grew after the Surat session of the Congress in 1907. He translated into Tamil Tilak's *Tenets of the New Party* and a booklet on the Madras militants' trip to the Surat Congress in 1907. Bharati edited a Tamil weekly *India*, which became the voice of the radicals.

#### (e) Arrest and imprisonment of V.O.C. and Subramania Siva

- On March 9, 1907, Bipin Chandra Pal was released from prison after serving a six-month jail sentence. The swadeshi leaders in Tamil Nadu planned to celebrate the day of his release as 'Swarajya Day' in Tirunelveli. The local administration refused permission. V.O.C., Subramania Siva and

Padmanabha Iyengar defied the ban and went ahead. They were arrested on March 12, 1908, on charges of sedition.

- The local public, angered over the arrest of the prominent swadeshi leaders, reacted violently. Shops were closed in a general show of defiance. The municipality building and the police station in Tirunelveli were set on fire. More importantly, the mill workers came out in large numbers to protest the arrest of swadeshi leaders. After a few incidents of confrontation with the protesting crowd, the police open fired, and four people were killed.
- On 7 July 1908, V.O.C. and Subramania Siva were found guilty and imprisoned on charges of sedition. Siva was awarded a sentence of 10 years of transportation for his seditious speech whereas V.O.C. got a life term (20 years) for abetting him. V.O.C. was given another life sentence for his own seditious speech. This draconian sentence reveals how seriously the Tirunelveli agitation was viewed by the government.
- In the aftermath of this incident, the repression of the British administration was not limited to the arrest of a few leaders. In fact, people who had actively participated in the protest were also punished and a punitive tax was imposed on the people of Tirunelveli and Tuticorin.

Excerpts from the Judgment in the case of King Emperor versus V.O.C. and Subramania Siva (4 November 1908). "It seems to me that sedition at any time is a most serious offense. It is true that the case is the first of its kind in the Presidency, but the present condition of other Presidencies where the crime seems to have secured a foothold would seem to indicate that light sentences of imprisonment of a few months or maybe a year or two are instances of misplaced leniency. ...The first object of a sentence is that it shall be deterrent not to the criminal alone but to others who feel any inclination to follow his example. Here we have to deal with a campaign of sedition which nearly ended in revolt. The accused are morally responsible for all the lives lost in quelling the riots that ensued on their arrest".

#### **(f) Ashe Murder**

- Repression of the Swadeshi efforts in Tuticorin and the subsequent arrest and humiliation of the swadeshi leaders generated anger among the youth. A plan was hatched to avenge the Tirunelveli event. A sustained campaign in the newspapers about the repressive measures of the British



administration also played a decisive role in building people's anger against the administration.

- In June 1911, the collector of Tirunelveli, Robert Ashe, was shot dead at Maniyachi Railway station by Vanchinathan. Born in the Travancore state in 1880, he was employed as a forest guard at Punalur in the then Travancore state. He was one of the members of a radical group called Bharata Mata Association. The aim of the association was to kill the European officers and inspire Indians to revolt, which they believed would eventually lead to Swaraj. Vanchinathan was trained in the use of a revolver, as part of the mission, by V.V. Subramanianar in Pondicherry.
- After shooting Ashe at the Maniyachi Junction, Vanchinathan shot himself with the same pistol. A letter was found in his pocket which helps to understand the strands of inspiration for the revolutionaries like Vanchinathan.

### **The aftermath of the Assassination**

- During the course of the trial, the British government was able to establish that V.V.S and other political exiles in Pondicherry were in close and active association with the accused in the Ashe murder conspiracy. The colonial administration grew more suspicious with the Pondicherry groups and their activities. Such an atmosphere further scuttled the possibility of nationalistic propaganda and their activities in Tamil Nadu. As a fall-out of the repressive measure taken by the colonial government, the nationalist movement in Tamil Nadu entered a period of lull and some sort of revival happened only with the Home Rule Movement in 1916.

## Unit 5. Period of radicalism in Anti-imperialist Struggles

### Introduction

- The influence of the Left-wing in the Indian National Congress and consequently on the struggle for independence was felt in a significant manner from the late 1920s. The Communist Party of India (CPI) was formed, by M.N. Roy, Abani Mukherji, M.P.T. Acharya, Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan then in the Soviet Union in October 1920. This opened a new radical era in the anti-imperialist struggles in India.
- Even though there were many radical groups functioning in India earlier the presence of a Communist state in the form of USSR greatly alarmed the British in India. The first batch of radicals reached Peshawar on 3 June 1921. They were arrested immediately under the charges of being Bolshevik (Russian communist agents) coming to India to create troubles. A series of five conspiracy cases were instituted against them between the years 1922 and 1927. The first of these was the Peshawar Conspiracy case. This was followed by the Kanpur (Bolshevik) Conspiracy case in (1924) and the most famous, the Meerut Conspiracy case (1929). Meanwhile, the CPI was formally founded on Indian soil in 1925 in Bombay.
- Various revolutionary groups were functioning then in British India, adopting socialist ideas but were not communist parties. Two revolutionaries - Bhagat Singh of the Hindustan Revolutionary Socialist Association and Kalpana Dutt of the Indian Republican Army that organised repeated raids on the Chittagong Armoury in Bengal will be the focus of the next section. The Karachi Session of the INC and its famous resolutions especially on Fundamental Rights and Duties is dealt with next. The last two topics are about the world-wide economic depression popularly known as Great Depression and its impact on India and Tamil Society and the Industrial Development registered in India in its aftermath. The Great Depression dealt a severe blow to the labour force and peasants and consequently influenced the struggle for independence in a significant way.

## Kanpur Conspiracy Case, 1924

- The colonial administrators did not take the spread of communist ideas lightly. Radicalism spread across the British Provinces - Bombay, Calcutta and Madras - and industrial centres like Kanpur in United Province (UP) and cities like Lahore where factories had come up quite early. As a result, trade unions emerged in the jute and cotton textile industries, the railway companies across the country and among workers in the various municipal bodies. In order to curb the radicalisation of politics, especially to check what was then called Bolshevism, repressive measures were adopted by the British administration. The Kanpur Conspiracy case of 1924 was one such move. Those charged with the conspiracy were communists and trade unionists.
- The accused were arrested spread over a period of six months. Eight of them were charged under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code - 'to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty of British India, by complete separation of India from imperialistic Britain by a violent revolution', and sent to various jails. The case came before Sessions Judge H.E. Holmes who had earned notoriety while serving as Sessions Judge of Gorakhpur for awarding death sentence to 172 peasants for their involvement in the Chauri Chaura case. In the Kanpur Conspiracy case, Muzaffar Ahmed, Shaukat Usmani, Nalini Gupta and S. A. Dange were sent to jail, for four years of rigorous imprisonment. The trial and the imprisonment, meanwhile, led to some awareness about the communist activities in India. A Communist Defence Committee was formed in British India to raise funds and engage lawyers for the defence of the accused. Apart from these, the native press in India reported the court proceedings extensively.
- The trial in the conspiracy case and the imprisonment of some of the leaders rather than kill the spirit of the radicals gave a fillip to communist activities. In December 1925, a Communist Conference of different communist groups, from all over India, was held. Singaravelu Chettiar from Tamil Nadu took part in this conference. It was from there that the Communist Party of India was established, formally, with Bombay as its Headquarters.

13 persons were originally accused in the Kanpur case: (1) M.N. Roy, (2) Muzaffar Ahmad, (3) Shaukat Usmani, (4) Ghulam Hussain, (5) S.A. Dange, (6) M. Singaravelu, (7) R.L. Sharma, (8) Nalini Gupta, (9) Shamuddin Hassan, (10) M.R.S Velayudhun, (11) Doctor Manilal, (12) Sampurnananda, (13) Satyabhakta. 8 persons were charge-sheeted: M.N. Roy, Muzaffar Ahmad, S.A. Dange, Nalini Gupta, Ghulam Hussain, Singaravelu, Shaukat Usmani, and R.L. Sharma. Ghulam Hussain turned an approver. M.N. Roy and R.L. Sharma were charged in absentia as they were in Germany and Pondicherry (a French Territory) respectively. Singaravelu was released on bail due to his ill health. Finally the list got reduced to four.

M. Singaravelu (18 February 1860 – 11 February 1946), was born in Madras. He was an early Buddhist, and like many other communist leaders, he was also associated with Indian National Congress initially. However, after sometime he chose a radical path. Along with Thiru. V. Kalyanasundaram, he organised many trade unions in South India. On 1 May 1923, he organised the first ever celebration of May Day in the country. He was one of the main organisers of the strike in South Indian Railways (Golden Rock, Tiruchirappalli) in 1928 and was prosecuted for that.

### **Meerut Conspiracy Case, 1929 Communist Activities**

- The Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1929, was, perhaps, the most famous of all the communist conspiracy cases instituted by the British Government. The late 1920s witnessed a number of labour upsurges and this period of unrest extended into the decade of the Great Depression (1929–1939). Trade unionism spread over to many urban centres and organised labour strikes. The communists played a prominent role in organising the working class throughout this period. The Kharagpur Railway workshop strikes in February and September 1927, the Liluah Rail workshop strike between January and July 1928, the Calcutta scavengers' strike in 1928, the several strikes in the jute mills in Bengal during July-August 1929, the strike at the Golden Rock workshop of the South Indian Railway, Tiruchirappalli, in July 1928, the textile workers' strike in Bombay in April 1928 are some of the strikes that deserve mention.

## Government Repression

- Alarmed by this wave of strikes and the spread of communist activities, the British Government brought two draconian Acts - the Trade Disputes Act, 1928 and the Public Safety Bill, 1928. These Acts armed the government with powers to curtail civil liberties in general and suppress the trade union activities in particular. The government was worried about the strong communist influence among the workers and peasants.
- Determined to wipe out the radical movement, the government resorted to several repressive measures. They arrested 32 leading activists of the Communist Party, from different parts of British India like Bombay, Calcutta, Punjab, Poona and United Provinces. Most of them were trade union activists though not all of them were members of the Communist Party of India. At least eight of them belonged to the Indian National Congress. The arrested also included three British communists-Philip Spratt, Ban Bradley and Lester Hutchinson - who had been sent by the Communist Party of Great Britain to help build the party in India. Like those arrested in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case they were charged under Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code. All the 32 leaders arrested were brought to Meerut (in United Province then) and jailed. A good deal of documents that the colonial administration described as 'subversive material,' like books, letters, and pamphlets were seized and produced as evidence against the accused.

The British government conceived of conducting the trial in Meerut (and not, for instance in Bombay from where a large chunk of the accused hailed) so that they could get away with the obligations of a jury trial. They feared a jury trial could create sympathy for the accused.

## Trial and Punishment

- Meanwhile, a National Meerut Prisoners' Defence Committee was formed to coordinate defence in the case. Famous Indian lawyers like K.F. Nariman and M.C. Chagla appeared in the court on behalf of the accused. Even national leaders like Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru visited the accused in jail. All these show the importance of the case in the history of our freedom struggle.

- The Sessions Court in Meerut awarded stringent sentences on 16 January 1933, four years after the arrests in 1929. 27 were convicted and sentenced to various duration of transportation. During the trial, the Communists made use of their defence as a platform for propaganda by making political statements. These were reported widely in the newspapers and thus lakhs of people came to know about the communist ideology and the communist activities in India. There were agitations against the conviction. That three British nationals were also accused in the case, the case became known internationally too. Most importantly, even Romain Rolland and Albert Einstein raised their voice in support of the convicted.
- Under the national and international pressure, on appeal, the sentences were considerably reduced in July 1933.

## **Bhagat Singh and Kalpana Dutt**

### **Bhagat Singh's Background**

- Bhagat Singh represented a distinct strand of nationalism. His radical strand complemented, in a unique way, to the overall ideals of the freedom movement.
- Bhagat Singh was born to Kishan Singh (father) and Vidyavati Kaur (mother) on 28 September 1907 in Jaranwala, Lyallpur district, Punjab, now a part of Pakistan. His father was a liberal and his family was a family of freedom fighters. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre happened when Bhagat Singh was 14 years. Early in his youth, he was associated with the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and the Hindustan Republican Association. The latter organisation was founded by Sachin Sanyal and Jogesh Chatterji. It was reorganised subsequently in September 1928 as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (H.S.R.A) by Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Socialist ideals and the October Revolution in Russia of 1917 were large influences on these revolutionaries. Bhagat Singh was one of the leaders of the H.S.R.A along with Chandrashekhar Azad, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar.

“I began to study. My previous faith and convictions underwent a remarkable modification. The romance of the violent methods alone which was so prominent among our predecessors was replaced by serious ideas. No more mysticism, no more blind faith. Realism became our cult. Use of force justifiable when resorted to as a matter of terrible necessity: non-violence as a policy indispensable for all mass movements. So much about methods. The most important thing was the clear conception of the ideal for which we were to fight..... from Bhagat Singh’s “Why I am an Atheist”.

### **Bhagat Singh’s Bomb Throwing**

- The image that comes to our mind at the very mention of Bhagat Singh’s name is that of the bomb he threw in the Central Legislative Assembly on April 8, 1929. The bombs did not kill anybody. It was intended as a demonstrative action, an act of protest against the draconian laws of the British. They chose the day on which the Trade Disputes Bill, an anti-labour legislation was introduced in the assembly.

### **Lahore Conspiracy Case**

- Bhagat Singh along with Rajguru, Sukhdev, Jatindra Nath Das and 21 others were arrested and tried for the murder of Saunders (the case was known as the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case). Jatindra Nath Das died in the jail after 64 days of hunger strike against the discriminatory practices and poor conditions in jail. The verdict in the bomb throwing case had been suspended until the trial of Lahore Conspiracy trials was over. It was in this case that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death on 7 October 1930.
- A letter from them to the Governor of Punjab shows their courage and their optimism over the future of India even while facing death for the cause of freedom of their country. It says, ‘the days of capitalism and imperialism are numbered. The war neither began with us nor is going to end with our lives... According to the verdict of your court we had waged a war and we are therefore war prisoners. And we claim to be treated as such i.e., we claim to be shot dead instead of being hanged.”
- Some narratives describe Bhagat Singh and his fellow patriots as terrorists. This is a misconception. The legendary Bhagat Singh clarified how his group is different from the terrorists. He said, during his trial, that revolution is not

just the cult of bomb and pistol...Revolution is the inalienable right of mankind. Freedom is the imperishable birth-right of all. The labourer is the real sustainer of society.. To the altar of this revolution we have brought our youth as incense, for no sacrifice is too great for so magnificent a cause.' Symbolically, they also shouted Inquilab Zindabad after this defence statement of his in the court.

- Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged early in the morning of March 23, 1931 in the Lahore Jail. They faced the gallows with courage, shouting Inquilab Zindabad and Down with British Imperialism until their last breath. The history of freedom struggle is incomplete without the revolutionary strand of nationalism and the ultimate sacrifice of these revolutionaries. One more name in the list of such fighters is Kalpana Dutt.

### **Kalpana Dutt (1913-1995)**

- In the late 1920s a young woman, Kalpana Dutt (known as Kalpana Joshi after her marriage to the communist leader P.C. Joshi), fired the patriotic imagination of young people by her daring raid of the Chittagong armoury.
- To understand the heroism of Kalpana Dutt, you should understand the revolutionary strand of nationalism that attracted women like her to these ideals. You have already learnt that there existed many revolutionary groups in British India. The character of these organisations gradually changed from being ones that practiced individual annihilation to organising collective actions aimed at larger changes in the system.
- As Surya Sen, the revolutionary leader of Chittagong armoury raid, told Ananda Gupta, 'a dedicated band of youth must show the path of organised armed struggle in place of individual action. Most of us will have to die in the process but our sacrifice for such noble cause will not go in vain.' When revolutionary groups like the Yugantar and the Anushilan Samiti began stagnating in the mid-1920s, new groups sprang out of them. Among them, the most important group was the one led by Surya Sen, a school teacher by profession, in Bengal. He had actively participated in the Non-cooperation movement and wore Khadi. His group was closely working with the Chittagong unit of the Indian National Congress.



The H.S.R.A was a renewed chapter of the Hindustan Republican Association. Its aim was the overthrow of the capitalist and imperialist government and establish a socialist society through a revolution. The H.S.R.A involved a number of actions such as the murder of Saunders in Lahore. In that, Saunders was mistaken for the Superintendent of Police, Lahore, James A. Scott who was responsible for seriously assaulting Lajpat Rai, in December 1928, and Rai's subsequent death. They also made an attempt to blow up the train in which Lord Irwin (Governor General and Viceroy of India, 1926-1931) was travelling, in December 1929, and a large number of such actions in Punjab and UP in 1930.

### Chittagong Armoury Raid

- Surya Sen's revolutionary group, the Indian Republican Army, was named after the Irish Republican Army. They planned a rebellion to occupy Chittagong in a guerrilla-style operation. The Chittagong armouries were raided on the night of 18 April 1930. Simultaneous attacks were launched on telegraph offices, the armoury and the police barracks to cut off all communication networks including the railways to isolate the region. It was aimed at challenging the colonial administration directly.
- The revolutionaries hoisted the national flag and symbolically shouted slogans such as Bande Matram and Inquilab Zindabad. The raids and the resistance continued for the next three years. Often, they operated from the villages and the villagers, gave food and shelter to the revolutionaries and suffered greatly at the hands of police for this. Due to the continuous nature of the actions, there was an Armoury Raid Supplementary Trial too. It took three years to arrest Surya Sen, in February 1933, and eleven months before he was sent to the gallows on 12 January 1934. Kalpana Dutt was among those who participated in the raids.

On 13 June 1932 in a face-to-face battle against government forces, two of the absconders of the Armoury Raid were killed, while they in turn killed Capt. Cameron, Commander of the government forces in the village of Dhalghat in the house of a poor Brahmin widow, Savitri Debi. After the incident the widow was arrested together with her children. Despite many offers and temptations, not a word could the police get out of the widow. They were uneducated and poor, yet they resisted all the temptation offers of gold and unflinchingly could bear all the tortures that were inflicted upon them. –From Kalpana Dutt's autobiography Chittagong Armoury Raiders' Reminiscences.

## Women in Action

- While Bhagat Singh represented young men who dedicated their lives to the freedom of the country, Kalpana Dutt represented the young women who defied the existing patriarchal set up and took to arms for the liberation of their motherland. Not only did they act as messengers (as elsewhere) but they also participated in direct actions, fought along with men, carrying guns.
- Kalpana Dutt's active participation in the revolutionary Chittagong movement led to her arrest. Tried along with Surya Sen, Kalpana was sentenced to transportation for life. The charge was "waging war against the King Emperor." As all their activities started with the raid on the Armoury, the trial came to be known as the Chittagong Armoury Raid Trial.
- Kalpana Dutt recalls in her book Chittagong Armoury Raiders Reminiscences the revolutionary youth of Chittagong wanted "to inspire self-confidence by demonstrating that even without outside help it was possible to fight the Government."

## Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress, 1931

- The Indian National Congress, in contrast to the violent actions of revolutionaries, mobilised the masses for non-violent struggles. The Congress under the leadership of Gandhi gave priority to the problems of peasants. In the context of great agrarian distress, deepened by world-wide economic depression, the Congress mobilised the peasantry. The Congress adopted a no-rent and no-tax campaign as a part of its civil disobedience programme. Under the pressure of Great Depression, socio-economic demands were sharply articulated in its Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress.
- The freedom struggle was taking a new shape. Peasants organised themselves into Kisan Sabhas and industrial workers were organized by the trade unions, made their presence felt in a big way in the freedom struggle. The Indian National Congress had become a mass party during the 1930s. The Congress leadership, which was now taking a left turn under Nehru's leadership, began to talk about an egalitarian society based on social and economic justice.

- The Karachi session held in March 1931, presided over by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, adopted a resolution on Fundamental Rights and Duties and provided an insight into what the economic policy of an independent India. In some ways, it was the manifesto of the Indian National Congress for independent India. These rights and the social and economic programmes were derived from a firm conviction that political freedom and economic freedom were inseparable.
- Even a cursory look at the fundamental rights resolution will tell you that all the basic rights that the British denied to the Indians found a prominent place in the Resolution. The colonial government curtailed civil liberties and freedom by passing draconian acts and ordinances. Gandhian ideals and Nehru's socialist vision also found a place in the list of rights that the Indian National Congress promised to ensure in free India.
- The existing social relations, especially the caste system and the practice of untouchability, were also challenged with a promise to ensure equal access to public places and institutions.
- The Fundamental Rights, in fact, found a place in the Part III of the Constitution of India- Fundamental Rights - and some of them went into Part IV, the Directive Principles of the State policy. You will study more on these in unit 13 of the second volume in the discussion on the Constitution of India.

### **The Great Depression and its Impact on India**

- The Great Depression was a severe and prolonged economic crisis which lasted for about a decade from 1929. The slowdown of the economic activities, especially industrial production, led to crises like lockouts, wage cut, unemployment and starvation. It began in North America and affected Europe and all the industrial centres in the world. As the world was integrated by the colonial order in its economic sphere, developments in one part of the world affected other parts as well.
- The crash in the Wall Street (where the American Stock Exchange was located) triggered an economic depression of great magnitude. The Depression hit India too. British colonialism aggravated the situation in India. Depression affected both industrial and agrarian sectors. Labour

unrest broke out in industrial centres such as Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, United Province and Madras against wage cuts, lay-offs and for the betterment of living conditions. In the agriculture sector, prices of the agricultural products, which depended on export markets like jute and raw cotton fell steeply. The depression brought down the value of Indian exports from Rs. 311 crores in 1929–1930 to Rs 132 crores in 1932–33. Therefore, the 1930s witnessed the emergence of the Kisan Sabhas which fought for rent reduction, relief from debt traps and even for the abolition of Zamindari.

- The only positive impact was on the Indian industrial sector that could use the availability of land at reduced prices and labour at cheap wage rates. The weakening ties with Britain and other capitalist countries created a condition where growth was recorded in some of the Indian industries. Yet only the industries which fed the local consumption thrived.

### **Industrial Development in India**

- The British trade policy took a heavy toll on the indigenous industry. Industrialization of India was not part of British policy. Like other colonies, India was treated as a raw material procurement area and a market for their finished goods.
- Despite this, industrial expansion took place in India, because of certain unforeseen circumstances, first during the course of the First World War and then during the Great Depression.
- The first Indian to start a cotton mill was Cowasjee Nanabhoy Davar (1815–73), a Parsi, in Bombay in 1854. This was known as the Bombay Spinning and Weaving Company. The city's leading traders, mostly Parsis, contributed to this endeavour. The American Civil War (1861–65) was a boon to the cotton farmers. But after the Civil War when Britain continued to import cotton from America, Indian cotton cultivators came to grief. But Europeans started textile mills in India, taking advantage of the cheapness of cotton available. Ahmedabad textiles mills were established by Indian entrepreneurs and both Ahmedabad and Bombay became prominent centres of cotton mills. By 1914, there were 129 spinning, weaving and other cotton mills within Bombay presidency. Between 1875–76 and 1913–14, the number of cotton textile mills in India increased from 47 to 271.

- An important landmark in the establishment of industries in India was the expansion of the railways system in India. The first passenger train ran in 1853, connecting Bombay with Thane. By the first decade of the twentieth century, railways was the biggest engineering industry in India. This British-managed industry, run by railway companies, employed 98,723 persons in 1911. The advent of railways and other means of transport and communication facilities helped the development of various industries.
- Jute was yet another industry that picked up in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first jute mill in Calcutta was founded in 1855. The growth of jute industry was so rapid and by 1914, there were 64 mills in Calcutta Presidency. However, unlike the Bombay textile industry, these mills were owned by Europeans. Though the industrial development in the nineteenth century was mainly confined to very limited sectors like cotton, jute, etc., efforts were made to diversify the sectors. For example, the Bengal Coal Company was set up in 1843 in Raiganj by Dwarakanath Tagore (1794–1847), grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore. The coal industry picked up after 1892 and its growth peaked during First World War years.
- It was in the early twentieth century, industries in India began to diversify. The first major steel industry – Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) – was set up by the Tatas in 1907 as a part of swadeshi effort in Sakchi, Bihar. Prior to this, a group of Europeans had attempted in 1875 to found the Bengal Iron Company. Following this, the Bengal Iron and Steel Company was set up in 1889. However, TISCO made a huge headway than the other endeavours in this sector. Its production increased from 31,000 tons in 1912–13 to 1,81,000 tons in 1917–18.
- The First World War gave a landmark break to the industrialisation of the country. For the first time, Britain’s strategic position in the East was challenged by Japan. The traditional trade routes were vulnerable to attack. To meet the requirements, development of industries in India became necessary. Hence, Britain loosened its grip and granted some concessions to the Indian capitalists. Comparative relaxation of control by the British government and the expansion of domestic market due to the War, facilitated the process of industrialisation. For the first time, an industrial commission was appointed in 1916. During the war-period, the cotton and jute industries showed much growth. Steel industry was yet another sector marked by substantial growth.

- Other industries showing progress were paper, chemicals, cement, fertilisers, tanning, etc. The first Indian owned paper mill – Couper Paper Mill – was set up in 1882 in Lucknow. Following this, Itaghur Paper Mill and Bengal Paper Mill, both owned by Europeans, were established. Cement manufacturing began in 1904 in Madras with the establishment of South Indian Industries Ltd. Tanning industry began in the late nineteenth century and a government leather factory was set up in 1860 in Kanpur. The first Indian-owned National Tannery was established in 1905 in Calcutta. The gold mining in Kolar also started in the late nineteenth century in the Kolar mining field, Mysore.
- The inter-war period registered growth in manufacturing industries. Interestingly the growth rate was far better than Britain and even better than the world average. After a short slug in 1923–24, the output of textile industry began to pick up. During the interwar period, the number of looms and spindles increased considerably.
- In 1929–30, 44 per cent of the total amount of cotton piece goods consumed in India came from outside, but by 1933–34, after the Great Depression, the proportion had fallen to 20.5 percent. Other two industries which registered impressive growth were sugar and cement. The Interwar years saw a growth in the shipping industry too. The Scindia Steam Navigation Company Limited (1919) was the pioneer. In 1939, they even took over the Bombay Steam Navigation Company Ltd., a British concern. Eight Indian concerns were operational in this sector. A new phase of production began with the Second World War, which led to the extension of manufacturing industries to machineries, aircrafts, locomotives, and so on

Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, popularly known as J. N. Tata (1839– 1904), came from a Parsi (Zoroastrian) business family in Navsari, Baroda. The first successful Indian entrepreneur, he is called the father of the Indian modern industry. In order to help his father’s business, he travelled all over the world and this exposure helped him in his future endeavours. His trading company, established in 1868, evolved into the Tata Group. A nationalist, he called one of the mills established in Kurla, Bombay “Swadeshi”. His children Dorabji Tata and Ratanji Tata followed his dream and it was Dorabji Tata who finally realised the long term dream of his father to establish an iron and steel company in 1907. His enthusiasm was such that he spent two years in US to

learn from the American Iron Industrialists. His yet another dream to set up a hydroelectric company did not materialize during his life time. However, the first major Hydroelectric project – Tata Hydroelectric Company–was set up in 1910. With great foresight the Tatas founded the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

### **Industrial Development in Tamilnadu during the Depression**

- The industrial growth in the Madras Presidency was substantial. In Coimbatore, after Stanes Mill (Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills) was established in 1896, no other mill could come up. The objective conditions created by the Depression like fall in prices of land, cheapness of labour and low interest rates led to the expansion of textile industry in Coimbatore. Twenty nine mills and ginning factories were floated in the Coimbatore area during 1929-37. A cement factory started at Madukkarai in Coimbatore district in 1932 gave fillip to the cement industry in the state. The number of sugar factories in the province rose from two to eleven between 1931 and 1936. There were also proliferation of rice mills, oil mills and cinema enterprise during this period.