

APPOLO STUDY CENTRE

MODERN INDIA

Growth of Mililant Movement

10 ^h std	Unit -7	Anti-Colonial Movements and The Birth of Nationalism-(7.5)
12 th std	Unit - 1	Rise of Extremism and Swadeshi Movement (2.1 - 2.5)

10h Std Unit -7

Anti-Colonial Movements and The Birth of Nationalism Partition of Bengal

In 1899, Lord Curzon was appointed the Viceroy of India. Instead of engaging with the nationalist intelligentsia for handling the problem of famine and plague, Curzon resorted to repressive measures to undermine the idea of local self-government, autonomy of higher educational institutions and gag the press. Partition of Bengal in 1905 was the most unpopular of all. The partition led to widespread protests all across India, starting a new phase of the Indian national movement.

The idea of partition was devised to suppress the political activities against the British rule in Bengal by creating a Hindu-Muslim divide.

(a) Hindu-Muslim Divide

It was openly stated that the objective of partition was to curtail Bengali influence and weaken the nationalist movement. By placing Bengal under two administrative units Curzon reduced the Bengali - speaking people to a linguistic minority in a divided Bengal. Curzon assured Muslims that in the new province of East Bengal Muslims would enjoy a unity, which they never enjoyed since the days of the Mughals.

Instead of dividing the Bengali people along the religious line partition united them. The growth of regional language newspapers played a role in building a sense of proud Bengali identity.

(b) Anti- Partition Movement

The leaders of both the groups - extremist and moderate - were critical of partition. Initially, the objective of the anti-partition campaign was limited to changing the public opinion in England. So they protested through prayers, press campaigns, petitions, and public meetings. However, despite widespread protest, partition of Bengal was announced on 19 July 1905.

With the failure to annul the partition moderate leaders were forced to rethink their strategy and look for new techniques of protest. The boycott of British goods was one such method. However, the agenda of Swadeshi Movement was still restricted to secure an annulment of partition and the moderates were very much against utilising the campaign to start a full-fledged passive resistance. The militant nationalists, on the other hand, were in favour of extending the movement beyond Bengal and to initiate a full-scale mass struggle.

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.

(c) Boycott and Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1905-1911)

Boycott and swadeshi were always interlinked to each other and part of the wider plan to make India self-sufficient. Four major trends can be discerned during the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal.

1. The Moderate Trend - Faith in British rule and their sense of justice and democratic practice. The moderate leaders were not ready to wrest power from British in one single movement and therefore Boycott and Swadeshi Movement was of limited significance to them.

2. Constructive Swadeshi - Rejected the self-defeating modest approach of moderates and focused on self-help through swadeshi industries, national schools, arbitration courts and constructive programmes in the villages. It remained non-political in nature.

3. Militant Nationalism - A section of Indian nationalists who had little patience for the non-political constructive programmes. They ridiculed the idea of self-help and were more focused on a relentless boycott of foreign goods.

4. Revolutionary terrorism - A far more radical response to the British rule in India was to fight British with violent methods. British officials who were anti-swadeshi or repressive towards the native population were targeted. It also marked the shift from the mass-based movement to individual action.

Constructive Swadeshi

The constructive programmes largely stressed upon self-help. It focused on building alternative institutions of self-governance that would operate free of British control. It also laid emphasis on the need of self-strengthening of the people which would help in creating a worthy citizen for the political agitation. Swadeshi shops sprang all over the place selling textiles, handlooms, soaps, earthenware, match and leather goods.

Passive Resistance

From 1906 the Swadeshi Movement took a turn where the repeal of partition was no longer on the agenda. For many leaders, the movement was to be utilized for propagating the idea of the political independence or Swaraj across India. Under this new direction, the swadeshi programme included four points: boycott of foreign goods, boycott of government schools and colleges, courts, titles and government services, development of Swadeshi industries, national schools, recourse

to armed struggle if British repression went beyond the limits of endurance.

The method of passive resistance had no practical utility in a situation where there is a ruthless and mighty administration on the one side and on the other the militarily weaker people. Resistance in such a situation can be provided through relentless non-cooperation and disobedience.

(d) Militant Nationalism

Lala Lajpat Rai of Punjab, Bala Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra and Bipin Chandra Pal of Bengal were three prominent leaders during the Swadeshi period and were referred to as Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate. Punjab, Bengal, and Maharashtra emerged as the hotbed of militant nationalism during the Swadeshi Movement. In South India Tuticorin became the most important location of Swadeshi activity with the launch of a Swadeshi Steam Navigation company by V.O. Chidambaram.

Swaraj or Political Independence

One of the common goals of the extremist leaders was to achieve Swaraj or Self Rule. However, the leaders differed on the meaning of Swaraj. For Tilak Swaraj was the attainment of complete autonomy and total freedom from foreign rule. Unlike the moderates who were critical of the reckless revolutionaries, militant nationalists were sympathetic towards the extremists. However, the political murders and individual acts of terrorism were not approved by the militant leaders.

The British brutally crushed the Swadeshi Movement by jailing prominent leaders for long spells of imprisonment. Revolutionaries were hanged to death. The press was crushed.

12th history

2.Rise of Extremism and Swadeshi Movement

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.
