

# THE FIRST WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1857: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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## Course Content

The First War of Independence, 1857—causes and consequences.

## Scope

Causes (political, social, religious, economic and military) and consequences of 1857. Events need to be mentioned only for the purpose of continuity and better understanding.

India attained independence from British rule in 1947, but the popular struggle that led to independence had been a long-drawn process. **The Revolt of 1857**, widely regarded as the beginning of the country's struggle for independence, was a pathbreaking series of events that marked one of the high points in this process. Between 1757 and 1857, there had been a number of revolts throughout the Indian subcontinent against foreign domination.



Scene of the Revolt of 1857 in Meerut

However, the revolt of the **sepoys** at Meerut on 10 May 1857 was significant because, unlike earlier revolts, this did not remain an isolated incident. As the revolt progressed, the discontent of the soldiers was lapped up by the civil population as well, eventually culminating in a widespread popular

upsurge against the foreign rulers. The East India Company's government ceased to exist in large parts of North India and the British government was forced to take the administration directly into its own hands. British historians tend to overlook the **civil** and **national** aspects of the revolt, calling it merely a **Sepoy Mutiny**. The Indian historians, however, emphasise the interconnection between military and civil aspects, and regard the Revolt of 1857 as the **First War of National Independence**.

## MAIN EVENTS OF THE FIRST WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The immediate context of the First War of Independence was provided by the introduction of cartridges that had **greased** paper covers. At that time, a new rifle, called the **Enfield rifle**, was supplied to the soldiers. The cartridges to be used in the rifle were greased with fat. Before loading the cartridges on to the rifle, the soldiers had to bite off the ends with their teeth. A rumour spread that the cartridges were greased with the fat of cows and pigs.



The soldiers believed that the cartridges were intentionally greased with animal fat to hurt their religious sentiments. It was a taboo for Hindus to bite the fat of the cow and for Muslims to bite the fat of a pig. So, both, Hindu and Muslim sepoys refused to use these cartridges. When it was made mandatory to use the cartridges, the Indian soldiers were incensed. *Very angry*



The trouble first began at **Barrackpore** where many Indian soldiers refused to use the greased cartridges. A Brahmin sepoy of the 34th Infantry at Barrackpore, named **Mangal Pandey**,

spearheaded the protest of the discontented sepoys and attacked the Adjutant of his regiment. His action

*Army officer who as an administrative assistant*

was propelled by the fear in the sepoys' mind that the use of such cartridges would mean loss of their caste and religion. Mangal Pandey, however, was arrested and hanged on 8 April 1857. In the eyes of his fellow sepoys, he was not a criminal but a martyr who had laid down his life for the sake of religion. Within a month of this incident, uprisings started in **Meerut, Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Jhansi** and other places.

### Events at Meerut

On 8 May 1857, new cartridges were issued to the Indian sepoys. Eighty-five of them refused to bite off the cartridges. They were dismissed and sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment. They were disgraced and stripped of their uniforms in the presence of the entire Indian garrison. On 10 May 1857, the Indian sepoys at Meerut broke into open war, killed the officers, attacked the jail and released the prisoners. On the same day, these sepoys, along with thousands of civilians, marched to Delhi.

### Events at Delhi

When the revolutionaries reached Delhi, they killed thousands of British soldiers and captured the city. They proclaimed the then Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II, as the ruler of India. The rebel soldiers from other stations too poured into Delhi. The loss of Delhi lowered the prestige of the British. So, in order to restore their prestige, the British risked everything. **Sir John Nicholson**, with the help of the loyal Sikh soldiers from Punjab, besieged Delhi. After four months of fighting, the British succeeded in re-capturing Delhi. The old emperor Bahadur Shah was taken prisoner together with his two sons. He was found guilty of helping the rebellious soldiers. As a punishment, he was sentenced to life imprisonment and deported to Rangoon where he died in 1862. His two sons were shot dead in front of him. Thus, the mighty Mughal empire came to an end.



Mohammed Bahadur Shah Zafar – The Last Mughal Emperor

The proclamation issued by Bahadur Shah II, popularly known as Bahadur Shah Zafar, emphasised the status of Mohammed and the status of Mahavira (used for Hanuman). Thus, the defence of religion and the fight against the British were seen as being closely linked to each other. It further exemplified a struggle in which both Hindus and Muslims had an equal stake.



### ★ Events at Kanpur

The war of independence at Kanpur was led by **Nana Sahib**, the adopted son of **Peshwa Baji Rao II**. Being a brave and determined general, Nana Sahib captured Kanpur, ousted the British from there and declared himself the **Peshwa**. He had captured a large number of British men, women and children. Nana Sahib promised them a safe conduit to Allahabad. However, when they were getting into the boats to cross the river Ganga, they were shot down by an angry mob. Only a few women and children were saved from the fury of the mob.



Nana Sahib

On 17 June 1857, **General Havelock** captured Kanpur after defeating Nana Sahib. Nana Sahib fled to Nepal and nothing was heard about him again. The city of Kanpur was then taken by **Tantia Tope**, the commander of Nana Sahib's forces. But finally, the British defeated Tantia Tope and recaptured the city.

★ **Events at Lucknow** *Begum Hazrat Mahal wife of Nizam-ud-Daula Ali Shah*  
Lucknow was the capital city of Oudh where the revolt was led by the Begum of Oudh. The fighting was so fierce here that even the common men joined in to attack the British forces. The British took refuge in the Residency which was besieged and the siege lasted for five months. In the fight, Sir Henry Lawrence was shot dead and many other British soldiers died. At last, Sir Colin Campbell reached there with more reinforcements. He defeated the Indian soldiers and recaptured Lucknow in 1858.

### ★ Events in Central India

In Central India, Indian soldiers had two great leaders – **Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi** and

**Tantia Tope**—to lead them. Under the leadership of the Rani, soldiers of Tantia Tope and her own soldiers occupied Gwalior. Nana Sahib was proclaimed **Peshwa** by the revolutionaries from Central India.



Statue of Rani Laxmibai

Maharaja Jayaji Rao Scindia, from whom Gwalior was seized, was loyal to the British. He fled and took refuge with the British at Agra. Sir Hugh Rose advanced towards Gwalior and defeated the Indian troops. Rani Laxmibai, donning the garb of a warrior, died like a brave soldier after putting up a tough fight. Tantia Tope managed to escape. In 1859, he was betrayed by his own men and fell into the hands of the British. He was tried and hanged for his complicity in the war against the British.

The war had also spread to other places. In **Bihar**, it was led by **Kunwar Singh**, a **zamindar** of Jagdishpur who fought the British. He also joined Nana Sahib's force and fought in Oudh and Central India.

In **Faizabad**, the revolt was led by **Maulvi Ahmadullah**, a native of Madras. He roused the Muslim community against the British rule. But he was finally captured and put to death by the British.

### ★ CAUSES OF THE WAR

As stated in the beginning, the Revolt of 1857 that started as a revolt of the Indian sepoys in the British Army, assumed the proportion of a war of independence because of its interlinkage with the political, social, religious, economic and military discontentment. Let us take a look at the important causes of this revolt.



## Military Causes

### 1. General Service Enlistment Act:

In 1856, the General Service Enlistment Act was passed by the British Parliament. According to this Act, the Indian soldiers could be sent overseas. The Brahmin soldiers saw in it a **slander to their caste**. According to an accepted belief, it was considered a taboo for a Brahmin to cross the seas. Thus, the General Service Enlistment Act disregarded the feelings of the Indian troops, which led to resentment among them. As a consequence of this, they were angry with the British.

### 2. Numerical Strength of the Indian Soldiers:

In 1857, there were 40,000 British and two lakh Indian soldiers. The mere numerical strength of the Indian soldiers gave them courage to go against the British. On the Indian side, there were Rajput as well as Brahmin soldiers who were experienced in warfare activities and had won victories for the British.

### 3. Effect of Annexation of Oudh:

The Bengal army consisted mainly of soldiers drawn from Oudh. The annexation of Oudh hurt the feelings of soldiers from that province. Nearly one-third of the native sepoys came from Oudh, thus forming a homogeneous group within the army. Moreover, there was a provision of **extra pay (batta)** for the sepoys on foreign service. Once a province was annexed, it ceased to be "foreign" and the sepoys were deprived of the extra pay (batta). The unfair treatment accorded to Bahadur Shah II by the British also hurt the sentiments of many Indian sepoys. The native army was totally dissatisfied with the working of the British rulers.

### 4. Unjust Treatment:

Indian and British soldiers were not treated equally. The salary of the Indian soldiers was too meagre to support their families. While

the duties of both the British and the Indian soldiers were similar, the former were paid **eight times** the salary of the latter. The Indian soldiers were not promoted to high posts as these were reserved for the British. For an Indian soldier, chances of promotion were limited. He could only be promoted to the post of a subedar. This made the Indian soldiers dissatisfied.

An infantry sepoy got only seven rupees per month. A cavalry sawar got twenty-seven rupees a month, out of which he had to pay for his uniform, food and the upkeep of his mount.

### 5. Loss of British Prestige in Afghan War:

Indians were of the belief that the British were invincible. But, they were beaten back in the First Afghan War. This convinced the Indian soldiers that the British could also be defeated and gave them courage to wage a war against the British rule.

## Religious Causes

### 1. Social and Religious Reforms:

The British brought about several social changes which affected the religious traditions of the people. The practice of sati was made illegal and punishable by law. Laws were enacted to forbid infanticide, allow remarriage of widows and stop the practice of polygamy. In fact, such changes were strongly advocated by Indian reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati and others. But some people in India suspected that these changes were imposed by the British, and were a result of their vested interests. Ordinary people could not easily accept the social changes brought about by the British. In fact, the British



had failed to understand that these customs and practices were ingrained in the social fabric of India and could not be changed overnight by a legal ordinance. The people in India looked upon these changes as a comprehensive British strategy to destroll the Indian religious customs and to replace them with Christian beliefs and practices.

**2. Introduction of Railways and Telegraphs:** The rapid spread of modern civilisation made people suspicious. Even the introduction of railways and telegraphs were suspected by Indians. Some people spread the rumour that the telegraph poles were erected for the purpose of hanging people who were opposed to the British rule in India. Similarly, orthodox Indians felt humiliated to note that in the railway compartments, Brahmins and people from the backward classes were made to sit side by side. This practice, they believed, was intentionally introduced in order to defile their caste and religion. The Brahmin priests and the Muslim maulvis cried with concern, "Our religion and our customs are in danger." Modern innovations, they felt, threatened the old social rules and produced unrest among many common people in India.

**3. Government Support to Missionaries:** The British Government indirectly supported some activities of the missionaries by not objecting to them. Instructions, supposedly based on the ideas and morals of Christianity, began to be given in schools and jails. The Government also maintained a Christian priest in the army. Some missionaries, too, were not prudent. They are said to have condemned Hindu and Muslim customs inadvertently.

**4. Introduction of New Laws:** The Government imposed tax on property belonging to temples and mosques. It hurt the religious sentiments of the people. Furthermore, in 1850, Lord Dalhousie passed a law which entitled a person converted to Christianity to inherit his ancestral property. The orthodox Indians began to feel that the British were favouring conversion to Christianity.

**5. Introduction of Modern Education:** In the 19th century, the British introduced Western education and established schools to impart such education. It reduced the importance of the pandits and maulvis who had been running traditional educational institutions.

### Economic Causes

Popular discontent against the colonial rule also arose due to the policy of economic exploitation adopted by the British in India.

**1. Exploitation of Economic Resources of India:** The East India Company made huge profits at the expense of the people of India. The Company purchased textiles, indigo, spices and foodgrains from India and sold them abroad at exorbitant prices. By buying and exporting Indian goods, the Company encouraged their production in India. But gradually, the Indian textiles began to compete with the textiles manufactured in England. The British government put pressure on the East India Company to forbid the sale of Indian textiles in England. The British Government then put restrictions on the import of Indian textiles besides imposing heavy import duties on such goods.

**2. Subordination of Indian Industry:** After the Industrial Revolution, England developed its own textile industry. This affected the textile industry in India.



Hand or other means, back to India  
Goods manufactured in India could not compete in the foreign market because heavy duties were imposed on them. Secondly, the Company purchased raw cotton and jute from India at a cheaper rate for factories in England. Soon, India became a country supplying raw materials to England. The British manufactured finished goods from Indian raw material and exported them back to India, making an enormous profit.

Gradually, India became an economic colony of industrial England. The Company encouraged unrestricted entry of British manufactured goods into India. Instead of remaining an exporter, India thus became an importer of British made goods. While the raw materials were supplied to England at a very cheap rate, the finished goods were exported back to India and sold at a very high rate. Thus, the wealth of the country was getting transferred to England.

Trade with England did not benefit the Indian economy. The British never became an integral part of the Indian economy. They only exploited Indian resources for their benefit.

### 3. Collapse of Handicrafts and Cottage Industries:

As a result of the British policy of making India a raw material producing country, Indian handicrafts and cottage industries died out. Thousands of craftsmen and artisans were thrown out of employment. The manufacturers of silk and cotton goods got no profits from their work and began to look for other means of livelihood. As the economic situation deteriorated, the discontent against the British grew.

### 4. Draining of the Economy of India:

Besides exploiting the Indian economy

through commerce and trade, the British also exploited it in many other ways. In comparison to Indian workers, the British officials were paid huge salaries and allowances, which were repatriated to England. Regarding the British exploitation, John Sullivan, president of the Board of Revenue, Madras, aptly remarked, "Our system acts very much like a sponge, drawing up all good things from the banks of the Ganges, and squeezing them down on the banks of the Thames." - London

**5. Unemployment among People:** Due to Dalhousie's policy of indiscriminate annexation of the native states, many Indians lost their jobs. Such people had been working with the Indian princes. But when the British annexed the states from these princes, they failed to give employment to the erstwhile employees of the princes. For example, when Lord Dalhousie annexed Oudh, the estates of the zamindars and taluqdars were confiscated by the British. The British also disbanded the army of the **nawab**. The soldiers lost their means of livelihood. They turned out to be bitter enemies of the foreign rule in India and waited for a chance to join hands with the rebels when the war of independence broke out.

### 6. Resumption of Tax-free Lands:

Lord William Bentinck not only <sup>attached</sup> ~~attached~~ several jagirs in the Bengal region, but also resumed the tax-free lands. Lord Dalhousie had also confiscated jagirs belonging to the jagirdars of the Deccan region. As a result, the Indian aristocracy was reduced to utter poverty. This caused resentment among the landed aristocracy and the larger sections of the people who were dependent on the landed aristocracy.



Q. Name the last British emperor of India before the British crown declared India its colony

## 7. Unemployment, Poverty and

**Famine:** It was the British policy to appoint only their countrymen to high posts to the exclusion of educated Indians. With the collapse of the Indian economy, there was widespread poverty among the masses. In addition to this, there were severe famines which crippled the life and economy of people. They were so frustrated with their economic condition that they thought their lot would improve only after the British left India.

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Political Causes for the uprising of 1857

**1. Policy of Annexation:** The greed of the British for territorial expansion generated a deep hatred among the Indians. The political moves of the British were viewed warily as they had resorted to unfair and deceitful means while dealing with the native princes. Lord Dalhousie deceitfully annexed the states of Satara, Jhansi and Nagpur by using the **Doctrine of Lapse**. According to the doctrine, if a ruler died without an heir to succeed him, his adopted son could neither inherit the throne nor the title; and in such cases, the state was to be annexed to the British empire in India. Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi was not allowed to adopt a son. Similarly, Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, was not acknowledged as the rightful heir to the throne. This policy was resented by the local rulers and the people.

**2. The Annexation of Oudh:** The British also hurt the feelings of the Muslims by annexing Oudh under the pretext that the state of Oudh was not governed properly. The Nawab of Oudh did not put up much resistance. But this action of the British caused uneasiness and suspicion among



Lord Dalhousie

the ruling classes. No Indian ruler felt safe under the British.

The annexation of Oudh by Lord Dalhousie left many nobles, officers and soldiers unemployed. The British also confiscated the land

of the zamindars and taluqdars. Thus, the people of Oudh were angry with the British.

## 3. Disrespect Shown to Bahadur Shah:

The house of the Mughals was humbled when Lord Dalhousie announced in 1849 that successors of Bahadur Shah Zafar would not be permitted to use the Red Fort as their palace. They were required to shift to a place near the Qutab Minar. In 1856, Lord Canning announced that after the death of Bahadur Shah, his successors would not be allowed to attach imperial titles and dignities to their names. Bahadur Shah had remained under the protection of the Company and received a pension from the British. But the British decided to put an end to the titular (nominal) sovereignty of the Mughal emperor after the death of Bahadur Shah. Zeenat Mahal, the wife of Bahadur Shah, resented this move and began plotting against the British. This hasty decision of the British hurt the feelings of the Muslims and intensified people's aversion to the British rule in India.

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## 4. Disrespect to Nana Sahib and Rani of Jhansi:

Nana Sahib was the adopted son of the deposed Maratha Peshwa, Baji Rao II. After the death of the Peshwa, the British refused to recognise Nana Sahib as the ruler of the Marathas. The legitimate Indian practice of adopting an heir was

Q.3 What was Nana Sahib's grievance against the British?



not accepted by the British. The Rani of Jhansi (Rani Laxmibai) suffered in the same way when she was not allowed to adopt an heir to the throne. Nana Sahib and Rani Laxmibai became bitter enemies of the British. The remaining Hindu and Muslim rulers too, who were not adversely affected, became suspicious lest they should meet the same fate.

#### 5. Disbanding the Armies of the Annexed States:

The British not only annexed Indian states under some pretext or the other but also disbanded their armies. The soldiers of such disbanded armies lost their jobs and means of livelihood. They, together with their families, blamed the British for their displacement. They vowed to get back at the British by enflaming anti-British feelings among the people at large.

#### 6. Inefficient Handling of the Situation:

The British administration was corrupt and greedy. They did not take into consideration the feelings of the common people who were adversely affected by their policies. They limited the scope of many Indians to high administrative jobs when they deposed local rulers. This created more bitterness among the higher strata of Indian society. Besides, the high-handedness of the British officers and the insults they showered on Indians became intolerable.

**7. Spreading of a Rumour:** There was a common belief among the people of India that the rulers in India changed after every hundred years. The British had been ruling India since 1757, after they won the Battle of Plassey. The common people thought that the British rule would come to an end in 1857, after a century. This common belief made the people wait for the end of the British rule.

### CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR

The First War of Independence of 1857 did not succeed in achieving its aim. But it had several far-reaching consequences. Some of these are discussed below.

*Q. Mention 2 main changes that the British govt. made after the war.*  
**End of the Company's Rule & Transfer of power to British crown**

The first important consequence of the war was the end of the rule of the East India Company. In 1858, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act, by which the responsibility to govern India was transferred to the British Queen and the British Parliament. Thus, the rule of the Company came to an end.

This Act abolished the Board of Directors of the Company and the responsibility of the government of India was passed on to a separate minister in the British Parliament. This minister was known as the **Secretary of State for India**. He would be advised by a Council consisting of fifteen members.

**The Governor-General was made the Viceroy**, i.e. the representative of the British Sovereign in India. Lord Canning became the first Viceroy under this Act.

#### Queen Victoria's Proclamation

Queen Victoria was reigning in England at the time of the war. The decision to end the Company's rule in India and the transfer of the government of India to the British Crown was made public in India by Queen Victoria's Proclamation. This proclamation was made by Lord Canning in a grand Durbar at Allahabad on 1 November 1858.



Queen Victoria



There was a change in the policy of the new Government towards Indian princes in order to make them loyal to the British. It assured them that all treaties entered into with the Company would be honoured. Their territories would not be annexed to the British Crown. They were **given the right to adopt sons and successors**. The proclamation assured them that the British government would not interfere in their internal matters, except in case of "misconduct" and "anarchy". However, they were asked to restrict their armies.

The proclamation declared that the people of India would be eligible for all public offices if they were found fit for them, irrespective of their caste, creed or colour.

According to the proclamation, people were guaranteed full religious freedom and they were assured that the Government would not interfere in their religious beliefs and practices.

A general pardon was granted to all those who laid down arms by 2 January 1859, except those who were found guilty of murder of British subjects.

The proclamation promised that the Government of India would do its best to advance industries in India and to promote works of public utility in the country for the material as well as the moral progress of the people.

### Religious Freedom

The new Government guaranteed full religious freedom to the people of India. The Indians were assured that they would be appointed to high posts, irrespective of their caste or creed, provided they were otherwise qualified.

### Reorganisation of the Army

The army was reorganised. The proportion of the Europeans to Indians in the army was raised. Artillery and other effective weapons of

war were placed exclusively under the charge of the Europeans. To curb nationalism, Indian soldiers of different communities, castes and religions were all mixed up and they were kept away in secluded places. A despatch from Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India, to Lord Canning in 1861 sums up the thrust of British policy towards the army after the Revolt of 1857: "If one regiment mutinies I should like to have the next regiment so alien that it would be ready to fire into it." In brief, community, caste, tribal and regional loyalties were discouraged so as to obstruct the forging of solidarity that was evident among the sepoys from Oudh in 1857.

### End of Peshwaship and the Mughal Rule

The war also ended the Peshwaship and the Mughal rule. As Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa Bajji Rao II, who had taken part in the war could not be traced, the office of the Peshwa was abolished. Similarly, the title of the Mughal Emperor was also abolished with the death of Bahadur Shah II in 1862, who had taken an active part in the War.

### Economic Exploitation

After the war, the economic exploitation of India by the British became more prominent. India became a dumping ground for British manufactures. The British abused their political power for their economic interests. Economic exploitation was an inevitable consequence for a country under foreign rule. In the words of R. C. Majumdar, "The extinction of the East India Company's rule brought in grave economic perils to India. India now became a dumping ground of British manufactures and an almost inexhaustible field of investment of capital, for it offered unlimited scope for commercial and industrial enterprises like railways, steamers, tea and coffee plantation, etc."



*What did the British do to foster the feeling of Divide & Rule?*

### Policy of "Divide and Rule"

The British followed the policy of "Divide and Rule." During the war, the Hindus and the Muslims fought together. The British first victimised the Muslims and favoured the Hindus. After some time, they reversed the policy of treatment. This policy of "Divide and Rule" ultimately encouraged the Partition of India on the eve of her independence in 1947.

### Rise of Nationalism

The War of 1857 was a great struggle for freedom. It roused **national feelings** and paved the way for the rise of the national movement, which ultimately won freedom for India in 1947.

The sacrifices of Indians in general and of certain leaders such as Nana Sahib, Rani of Jhansi and Bahadur Shah gave birth to the spirit of nationalism in India. It served as a **source of inspiration** in the struggle for freedom. The war also became a **symbol of challenge** to the mighty British, as human's inborn desire for freedom could not be subdued.

Apparently, the war was a failure. But in its apparent failure, it contained the seeds of ultimate success. R. C. Majumdar aptly says, "It has been said that Julius Caesar when

dead was more powerful than when he was alive. The same thing may be said about the war of 1857. Whatever might have been its original character, it soon became a symbol of challenge to the mighty British power in India. It remained a shining example for the nascent nationalism in India in its struggle for freedom from the British yoke."

### CONCLUSION

Many European historians said that the War of 1857 was just a **Sepoy Mutiny** in which the deposed native princes had incited the discontented sepoys in some areas. These historians were of the opinion that such a local war could never be called a national war of independence.

On the other hand, Indian nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru have hailed it as the First War of Indian Independence. In this War, Hindus and Muslims, men and women, fought together for independence from foreign rule. The war was unsuccessful but it left an everlasting impression on the Indian people, thus becoming a symbol of challenge to the British rule in India. This challenge paved the way for the country's independence on 15 August 1947.

## RECAPITULATION

### Causes of the First War of Independence

1. **Political Causes:** Doctrine of Lapse—ill-treatment of the native princes.
2. **Social Causes:** New social changes were seen as a threat to the Indian social values.
3. **Religious Causes:** Support to missionaries—interference in social customs—tax on temples and mosques—law regarding the right of succession to property for converts—social discrimination.
4. **Economic Causes:** Economic exploitation of India—jobless people—general unemployment—unhappy landlords.
5. **Military Causes:** Ill-treatment of Indian soldiers—lack of promotion for Indians in the army—General Service Enlistment Act.
6. **Immediate Cause:** Greased cartridges.



7. **Main Centres of the Revolt:** Meerut, Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow and Central India.
8. **Consequences of the War:** Queen Victoria's Proclamation—end of the Company's rule—Viceroy—decentralisation—change of policy towards states—reorganisation of the army—end of Peshwaship and Mughal rule—economic exploitation—policy of divide and rule—rise of nationalism.

## EXERCISES

### PART I (Short Answer Questions)

1. Why was the Revolt of 1857 hailed as the First War of National Independence? *8 marks*
2. Give a brief outline of any one of the major causes of the war of 1857. Where did the Revolt begin? *2*
3. Name the soldier who refused to use the cartridges in the Enfield rifle. How was he punished? *2*
4. What was the Doctrine of Lapse? Who used this doctrine for the first time in India? *7*
5. Name three states annexed by the British using the Doctrine of Lapse. *7*
6. Who was Nana Sahib? Why was he not acknowledged as the rightful heir to the throne? *7*
7. Under what pretext did the British annex Oudh? What were the consequences of the annexation of Oudh? *7*
8. Which announcement of Lord Dalhousie in 1849 humiliated the Mughals? *7*
9. Which announcement of Lord Canning in 1856 adversely affected the Mughal dynasty in India? *7*
10. Why did Rani Laxmibai become a bitter enemy of the British? *7*
11. State one of the consequences of disbanding the armies of the native states annexed by the British. *2*
12. What was the common belief among the people of India in 1857, which made them wait for the end of the British rule? *2*
13. Mention any two social reforms advocated by the British that affected the religious traditions of the people. *4*
14. Name two Indian reformers who strongly advocated social reforms. *4*
15. How did people in India look upon the social reforms brought about by the British? *5*
16. What was the impact of the introduction of the railways and telegraph on the people of India in the middle of the 19th century? *5*
17. State two new laws passed by the British that hurt the sentiments of the people in India. *5*
18. Give an example to show how the British exploited economic resources of India. *5*
19. Give two reasons to show that trade with England did not benefit the Indian economy. *6*
20. With regard to handicrafts and cottage industries, what were the consequences of the British policy of making India a raw material producing country? *6*
21. How was the Indian aristocracy reduced to poverty because of the British policy in India? *7*
22. Why were the Indian soldiers discontented during the British rule in the 19th century? *4*
23. What was the General Service Enlistment Act? When was the Act passed? In what way did this Act disregard the feelings of the Indian troops? *4*
24. What advantage did the Indian soldiers have against the British in terms of the former's numerical strength in the 19th century? *4*
25. What impact did the defeat of the British in the First Afghan War have on the war of 1857? *4*
26. What was the immediate cause of the war of 1857? *4*



27. Why was the war of 1857 considered a forerunner to the national struggle for freedom? 1
28. Name two of the Indian rulers who remained loyal to the British during the war.
29. What was the consequence of the war of 1857 as far as the East India Company was concerned? 2
30. Who was the first Viceroy of India? 6
31. What assurance was given to the Indian princes in Queen Victoria's Proclamation? 9
32. What assurance did this proclamation give to the people regarding (a) religious freedom, (b) public offices? 9
33. How was the army reorganised after the war of 1857? 9
34. What impact did the war have on the Mughal rule and Peshwaship? 9
35. Give an example to show how the end of the East India Company's rule brought in grave economic perils to India. 9
36. How did the war of 1857 pave the way for the rise of the national movement? 10

#### PART II (Structured Questions)

1. Using the following points, briefly explain the causes which led to the war of 1857:
  - (a) Introduction of greased cartridges
  - (b) Doctrine of Lapse
  - (c) Economic exploitation of India.
2. With reference to the war of 1857, write short notes on the following:
  - (a) Military causes of the war
  - (b) Religious causes of the war.
3. During the great war of 1857, some Indian patriots fought bravely against the British. State briefly the contribution of the following:
  - (a) Nana Sahib
  - (b) The Rani of Jhansi.
4. With respect to the economic causes for the war of 1857, briefly explain the following:
  - (a) Decline of Indian handicrafts
  - (b) Subordination of the Indian economy to British interests
  - (c) Condition of disbanded armies and deposed taluqdars.
5. In the context of the war of 1857, explain why the following were against the British:
  - (a) Indian soldiers of the British army
  - (b) Jagirdars and zamindars.
  - (c) Rulers of native states.
6. The war of 1857 is regarded as a glorious landmark which produced far-reaching results in the history of India. In this context, explain briefly:
  - (a) The end of the Company's rule.
  - (b) British policy towards native states
  - (c) Rise of nationalism in India.



# THE RISE OF NATIONALISM AND FOUNDATION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

2

## Course Content

Factors promoting the growth of nationalism, foundation of the Indian National Congress – immediate objectives.

## Scope

All the factors promoting the growth of nationalism, including economic exploitation, repressive colonial policies, socioreligious reform movements—contribution of Raja Rammohan Roy and Jyotiba Phule, rediscovery of India's past, influence of Western education, role of the press, modern means of transport and communication need to be clearly understood along with the founding of the Congress. Special reference to Surendranath Banerjee's Indian National Association and Dadabhai Naoroji's East India Association as precursors to the Congress. Importance and significance of the first two sessions of the Congress.

plenty of... oppression by money lenders, landlords, revenue officials were the main reasons for the rising of the rebellion.

The Revolt of 1857 was an important landmark in India's struggle for freedom. The revolt was suppressed by the British, but the spirit of freedom, which had animated the revolt, could not be suppressed. The memory of the revolt inspired Indians to go ahead with their struggle for freedom, as a result of which armed revolts began to break out in many parts of the country.

Resentment of the people against foreign rule was expressed through the Indigo disturbances of 1859–61 in Bengal and the Santhal outbreak of 1871–72 in present-day Jharkhand. There were also movements based on the principle of non-cooperation. The **Kuka Movement** was one of them. In this movement, the Kukas, i.e. the religious leaders of the Sikh community in Punjab, boycotted the railways and post offices and established a sort of parallel government.

All these movements were confined to

to not hold the farmers to fulfill their existing contracts but also told them that they cannot refuse to produce indigo in future as it endangered the movements from the soil fear – take their land

small areas and involved only some sections of the Indian society. These uprisings failed, but they did create an anti-British feeling and prepared the ground for mass struggles at the national level. By the end of the 19th century, a systematically organised national struggle for freedom began to take shape. The struggle for freedom continued under the banner of the Congress, until India became free on 15 August 1947.

## WHAT IS NATIONALISM?

At a broad level, nationalism refers to the intense feeling emotive aspect of oneness. It is a feeling of togetherness and common consciousness based on political, historical, religious, linguistic, racial, cultural, psychological and other factors in a state. It is a strong sentiment evoking "a collective consciousness of fellowship".

H-13



People, roused by nationalism in a completely independent state, constitute a nation. For a nation to emerge and survive, it is important that its people feel that they are bound by ties of common race, common land, common emotions, common culture, common language and literature, common history, common religion, common joys and sorrows, as well as common political aims and aspirations. Though a particular nation may not have all these ties, the few that it has should be strong enough to rouse a collective political consciousness among the people. It is in the above light that we shall try to explore the reasons for the rise of nationalism in the period following the Revolt of 1857. It is important for us to take note of the fact that given the diverse nature of Indian culture and history, the presence of institutions such as caste and, most importantly, the colonial situation with deliberate policies like "divide and rule", the task of forging a sense of nationalism was never easy.

Many factors combined to create a strong reaction to British imperialistic policies and thereby foster a sense of shared or common struggle against this. Conscious and systematic efforts were also made to arouse nationalist feelings among the people.

## FACTORS THAT PROMPTED THE GROWTH OF NATIONALISM

### Economic Exploitation

The British followed the policy of economic exploitation in India. They collected land revenues without looking after the welfare of the peasants. The British exploited Indian agricultural production by shipping raw material to England at a cheap rate. Machine-made goods, produced in England, were supplied to India. This ruined the Indian cottage industries and increased unemployment in the country. Factory workers were exploited by the owners of

the factories, who were generally Englishmen. The British neglected the task of nation-building and welfare activities in key areas such as education, irrigation, health services and so on. Even during famines and epidemics, the Government did nothing to help the victims of such calamities. Economic exploitation by the British became a major cause of India's economic backwardness. All these factors made Indians resent British rule and realise that without unity there would always be exploitation.

### Impoverishment of Peasants

The British rule in India also hit the Indian peasants badly. By charging land revenue, which the peasants found difficult to pay, the British made them terribly poor. Furthermore, the British created a class of zamindars who merely collected rents and paid it to the Government, after keeping their own share. Owing to the negative impact of British policies, Indian agriculture became uneconomical.

The British also changed the land laws. Before the British came to India, a moneylender could not charge very high interest for his money. No land could be transferred to him, if a farmer failed to pay back the loan. Under the new land laws, a moneylender could charge a high rate of interest. He could also get the land transferred to him in lieu of the money the farmer owed. As people were largely illiterate, the moneylender, who was shrewd as well as literate, took undue advantage of his position.

By the time the British realised the folly of their policies, the pressure of population on land had increased. Tax rates remained unchanged, but grain prices increased and the population explosion made the agriculturists diffident. The condition of the farmer became worse because of the rigid manner in which land tax and revenue were collected.

H-14 - modest / shy due to lack of self-confidence



In brief, the peasant could not leave the land. There was no other work available for him. If he cultivated the land, a number of people would exploit him. If he did not till the land, he would die of hunger and poverty. In most cases, the circumstances compelled him to mortgage his land in order to pay the land revenue. This finally culminated in the peasant giving away the land to the moneylender.

The British land policies and the greed of the moneylenders finally uprooted the peasants and broke down the village economy. The artisan had no patrons; craftsmen, no work; and the farmer, no returns. India quickly became the poorest country in this part of the world. The village economy, which was largely self-sufficient, broke down completely.

### Industrial Stagnation

The British economic policy in India not only adversely affected the peasants, but it also brought about industrial stagnation. The British hardly made any attempt to revive or promote Indian industries. Instead of encouraging native capitalists to set up industries, the Government assisted the British industrialists to do so. They monopolised jute, tea and coffee industries. Large tea and coffee estates were purchased by the British farmers. They made use of Indian labour, as it was cheaply available. Workers had no rights; they were exploited. This state of affairs continued for a long time. Gradually, people came to the conclusion that the real cause of their poverty was the British rule in India.

### British Apathy to Famines

The British rule in India neither allowed the Indian capital to grow nor did it permit Indian agriculture or business to flourish. Added to this, there were frequent famines in India. In 1866, there was a terrible famine in Orissa (now Odisha) in which lakhs of people died. The British Government did not take proper

steps to prevent deaths by disease and starvation. The terrible famine of 1877 lasted for two years and affected several parts of the country. In the first year, it affected Madras (now Chennai), Mysore, Bombay (now Mumbai) and other southern and south-western areas. In the second year, it caused destruction in Central India and Punjab. The Bengal famine of 1943 was even more destructive in its impact as it killed about 35 lakh people.

The worst feature of these famines was that they were human-made. In fact, famines meant big gains to the Government and the greedy business community. Foodgrains were hoarded and sold at prices which the poor could not afford. During natural calamities, the British rulers in India remained aloof, disinterested and unconcerned.

### Influence of Western Education

The British introduced Western education in India through the medium of English to serve their own administrative and political ends. They wanted to train petty clerks to run the administration. They also wanted to foster their culture and win the goodwill of the educated Indians. But the introduction of western education produced results quite contrary to their expectations. Western education widened the horizon of the Indians. It gave the educated Indians a rational, secular, democratic and national outlook. They learnt about the national movements in European countries. The slogan of "Equality, Liberty and Fraternity" of the French Revolution and the American War of Independence impressed them. The American and French Revolutions inspired Indians to have a national goal for achieving freedom, brotherhood and equality. Revolutionary ideas of liberal thinkers like Rousseau, Mazzini and Thomas Paine brought about social awareness and national consciousness among the Indians.



Because of their contact with the Western world, Indians came to know that the English themselves had hanged their own monarch, King Charles I, in 1649 as he was cruel and despotic. They also studied how the British had made James II abdicate the throne in 1688. So, they concluded that they too had the right to throw away their cruel foreign rulers.

The English language played a leading part in this process. It was through this language that Indians from different parts of the country could meet and exchange ideas. English gave them linguistic unity and became the lingua franca and the vehicle of national awakening. Educated Indians felt disillusioned with the ways of the British Government in India. Their frustration got intensified with the Government's recruitment policy for the civil services. The Indian Civil Service Examination was held only in England and it was almost impossible for any Indian of average means to sit for the competitive examination. The lowering of the age for the examination from twenty-one to nineteen made it more difficult for Indians to compete with the British in a foreign language. The demand for the simultaneous holding of the examination in England and India as well as the demand for raising the maximum age was ignored. The expulsion from the ICS of **Surendranath Banerjee**, a brilliant young Indian, further added to the discontent. Surendranath Banerjee organised a political



Surendranath Banerjee

body known as the **Indian Association of Calcutta** in 1876 to protest against the recruitment policy of the British Government. He toured extensively in India and roused political awakening among the people.

Such enlightenment ended up in formulating a common political programme. In a country of diverse languages and dialects, he could touch the people's heart by using English, which was understood by educated people in those days.

### Administrative and Economic Unification of the Country

India had been united under the political banner of the British. The British established a strong central government and introduced a uniform system to govern people. India had never witnessed such political unity before. National sentiments began to grow among the people because India was unified under a single system. The existence of foreign rule and the anti-imperialist feeling gave rise to a national outlook.

### Racial Pride of the Rulers and the Policy of Discrimination

The British were proud of their race and culture. They did not mix freely with the Indians. Indians were kept out of European clubs and could not travel with the Englishmen in the same compartment of a train. **The Arms Act (1878) of Lord Lytton** laid down that it was criminal for Indians to keep arms and trade in them without a licence, but the Europeans were exempted from this law. Such discrimination in legal matters annoyed the Indians. It was Surendranath Banerjee who said, "The Arms Act imposed on us a badge of racial inferiority."

Even in matters of justice, the Europeans were given special treatment. Indians were tried in ordinary courts while the Europeans had separate courts. Indians were given severe penalty even for minor offences while the British were let off or lightly punished for grave offences.

G. O. Trevelyan, a British writer, said in 1864 about dispensing of justice in India: "The testimony of a single one of our countrymen has more weight with the court than that of any



number of Hindoos, a circumstance which puts a terrible instrument of power into the hands of an unscrupulous and grasping Englishman."

As discussed earlier, all promotions to high posts were reserved for the British officers, irrespective of their merit. Even in the army, there was a separate pay scale for Indian sepoys and British soldiers, both of whom did the same type of work. A British soldier was paid eight times the salary of an Indian soldier. The racial arrogance and the policy of discrimination of the British roused a feeling of resentment against them.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who later became the first Prime Minister of India after Independence, said that though the British and the Indians lived side by side, yet there was nothing common between them except a common dislike for each other.

### Modern Means of Transport and Communication (6)

In order to facilitate the shipment of raw materials at a low cost, the British constructed roads and railways so that goods could be sent to ports quickly. 19

The British built a network of roads and railways in order to promote their own commercial interests in India. This explains why there were no developmental activities in remote areas of India. The vast network of roads and railways helped the British to maintain a rigid administrative control over India.

21 The first railway line ran between Bombay and Thane. It was Lord Dalhousie who promoted railway construction in India. By 1905, railway lines had been laid over 45,000 kilometres. The railways benefited the British administration and its business. Indian goods and passengers were discriminated against. Only Europeans were allowed to travel in the first-class coaches.

The development of railways and communications, and the introduction of a regular postal system, however, made it easier for Indians to communicate with each other.

It proved to be a blessing in disguise for India in as much as the various parts of the country, separated by rivers, hills and mountains, were connected with one another. People living in far-away places could travel freely and mix with each other. Regional feelings began to disappear and people felt, for the first time, that they belonged to one country; they had one destiny. Thus, the means of transport made it possible to mobilise public opinion on a national scale. Some young men from India went abroad and saw how people lived in a democratic nation. They had an opportunity to study the functioning of free and democratic institutions in independent nations in Europe. 20

People could not always travel to communicate with one another. Now, they could communicate by sending and receiving letters through postal services. Thus, Indians began to share their views with their fellow countrymen. The time was ripe to inspire them to launch a movement for the liberation of India. 22

### (5) The Role of the Press and Indian Literature

1 The press and the newspapers enabled people to be informed and educated. 2 Through newspapers, it was possible to have a dialogue with the rulers. 3 Indians expressed their reactions to the unjust measures adopted by the rulers in newspapers. 23

4 The Indian press aroused feelings of national consciousness among the people. Many newspapers such as the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, *The Hindu*, *The Mahratta*, *The Kesari*, *The Indian Mirror*, *The Tribune*, *The Advocate* and *The Kohinoor* were published from different parts of the country. 5 They criticised the unjust policies of the Government and played a



vital role in fostering political ideas as well as patriotic sentiments among the people.

① Literature in Indian languages played a vital part in rousing the feelings of patriotism in India too. Writers such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Bharatendu Harishchandra, etc., played an important role in promoting national consciousness among the Indians and preparing them for the national struggle. Bankim Chandra's famous book *Anand Math*, regarded as the Bible of modern patriotism, inspired young nationalists in India. 'Bande Mataram', the national song of India, was taken from this book.



Bankim Chandra Chatterjee

② The vernacular press generally criticised the irrational policies of the British rulers. Because of this criticism, **Lord Lytton** passed the **Vernacular Press Act in 1878**. According to this Act, the vernacular papers could not publish any material that might incite feelings of dissatisfaction against the Government.

③ Therefore, it caused great discontent among Indians. **This Act was repealed by Lord Ripon in 1882.** However, it left deep scars of dissatisfaction among the people.



Lord Ripon

### Rediscovery of India's Past

The British did not consider the Indians to be mature and civilised enough to rule themselves. This had a demoralising effect on the Indian psyche. It made Indians lose their sense of self-confidence. It was just around this time that educated Indians became aware of the efforts

of the Orientalists to bring into the limelight India's past and glory. [The work of William Jones, Max Müller, John Marshall and M. G. Ranade made Indians realise their rich cultural heritage.] Indians became proud of their ancient art, architecture, literature and philosophy. This rediscovery of India's past roused the feelings of self-confidence, patriotism and nationalism among the people.

An Indian scholar said: "In the beginning of the 19th century, Ellora, Ajanta and Mahabalipuram meant nothing to us, nor did the magnificent sculptures of Elephanta and the temples of Orissa speak to us." But the studies of scholars like James Prinsep and Alexander Cunningham rediscovered the greatness of the Mauryas, the imperial Guptas, the Chalukyas and the Pallavas. Western education also enabled Indians to be proud of themselves. They were proud of their ancient religions and powerful kings.

Sir John Marshall, who was the Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India, is credited with the discovery of the ancient cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. He drew our attention to our rich cultural heritage that lay buried underground and remained hidden from our own eyes for thousands of years.

### Rise of the Middle Class 28

The middle class Indians, comprising businessmen and industrialists, could not progress in life because of the British policy of discrimination. They had to compete with goods supplied to India by the industrialists of England. The British wanted India to only supply raw material for their industries in England. Besides, severe checks were imposed on Indian industry in order to hamper its progress.

Almost all articles of daily use such as soaps, cosmetics, printing material, etc., were imported from England. The Government of India had to allow unrestricted entry of



British manufactured goods into India. Indian handmade goods were unable to compete with the cheaper products of British mills. India was thus thrown open to foreign goods, while Indian textiles had heavy duties imposed on them on entry into Britain.

The educated middle class realised that under the British rule, they could not make any progress in life. Being convinced of this reality, they joined the national movement.

The circumstances referred to above made Indians feel that they were treated like second-grade citizens. They needed an immediate cause and a national organ to express their resentment. Since they could not fight the British through an armed struggle, they looked forward to a political organisation which could take up their cause.

#### 29 Socio-religious Reform Movements <sup>Raja Ram Mohan Roy & Jyotiba Phule</sup>

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the rise of many religious and social reformers in India.

Reformers such as **Raja Rammohan Roy**, **Swami Dayananda Saraswati**, **Swami Vivekananda** and **Jyotiba Phule** prepared the ground for the national movement. Raja Rammohan Roy is called the "Father of Modern India". Swami Dayananda raised the slogan "India for the Indians". These reformers impressed upon the minds of people the greatness of India's ancient philosophy and culture and inspired them to bear self-confidence and self respect, which in turn regenerated the national movement. Movements for socio-religious reforms took off among the Muslim community as well. The contribution of **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**



Sir Syed Ahmad Khan



Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, now known as the Aligarh Muslim University

is notable in this regard. He founded the **Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1877**. It proved to be the main vehicle of diffusing scientific and liberal education in English language to the Muslim community. The contributions of Swami Vivekananda and Jyotiba Phule also deserve a special mention here.

**Swami Vivekananda** condemned the caste system and the importance given to rituals and ceremonies. He participated in the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago (USA) in September 1893 and raised the prestige of India and its culture to a very high pedestal. Vivekananda preached the message of strength and self-reliance. He asked people to improve the lives of the poor and depressed classes. He believed that service to mankind is service to God. He founded the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur in 1897.



Swami Vivekananda

**Jyotiba Phule** belonged to a low caste family from Maharashtra. He waged a life-long struggle against caste discrimination and Brahmanical supremacy. In 1873, he founded the **Satyashodhak Samaj** to fight against the caste system. He pioneered the widow remarriage movement in Maharashtra and



worked for the education of women. Jyotiba Phule and his wife established the first girls' school at Poona in 1848. *2-16*

Great Indian leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made the people conscious of their rights and duties, and aroused an urge for freedom in them.

Indian reformers not only fought against the social evils, but also instilled confidence and national pride in the people. Reformers like Swami Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswati and Mrs Annie Besant aroused an impulse for independence in people. They held that Indian culture was superior to that of the West. Thus, they awakened in the people a desire for national regeneration on the basis of "the best in the past".

### Repressive Colonial Policies

*2* The climate was favourable for the growth of nationalism in India. The people were convinced that they had become second-grade citizens in their own country. There was awareness among the people for the need to be united. People in several parts of India had organised themselves into groups or societies. All they needed was an immediate cause and a national organisation to express their resentment. The Revolt of 1857 had taught them the lesson that unarmed people could not achieve their objective against a superior and trained military power with money and means at its disposal. Since violence could not help their cause, Indians wanted a political organisation which would enable them to stand up to foreign rulers.

*31* The resentment against the British rule was heightened during **Lord Lytton's viceroyalty (1876-80)**. He abolished import duties which crippled the local textile industry. This created a wave of anger throughout India. The maximum age limit for the ICS examination was reduced from 21 to 19 years. This made

### THE ILBERT BILL CONTROVERSY

The Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill, or the Ilbert Bill as it came to be called, was in essence a measure to put Indian judges on the same footing as the European judges in dealing with all cases in the Bengal Presidency. The Bill was brought forward because Indians were now rising in the ranks of the judicial service. It involved the possibility of trial of Europeans by Indian judges for criminal offences. This provoked a storm of angry criticism among the Anglo-Indians. A systematic campaign to criticise Indian character and culture was launched through press and public meetings. Ultimately, the Government had to bow before this hostile opinion and the Bill was amended in such a manner that its very purpose was defeated.

The entire controversy has an important place in the circumstances leading up to the emergence of an all-India body. It is argued that Indians learnt their first lesson on political agitation from the Anglo-Indians on this occasion. Actually, this is not true. Indians had already realised the importance of this method and had organised an all-India agitation on the question of the Civil Services Examination.

it almost impossible for the Indians to compete for it. Lord Lytton held his **Delhi Durbar** in **1877** at a time when the people of South India were suffering from the effects of a severe famine. The Second Afghan War cost the Indian treasury a lot, on account of which the Indians criticised Lytton. In order to suppress public opinion, Lytton passed the Vernacular Press Act in 1878. The Act placed many restrictions on the publication of vernacular newspapers. However, the more the Government tried to suppress it, greater political consciousness was created in the minds of the people. In 1878,



Lord Lytton



Lytton passed the Arms Act according to which the Europeans could keep arms freely, while the Indians could not do so without a licence. Such a glaring discrimination hurt the self-respect of the Indians.

**The Ilbert Bill controversy** during the Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon further embittered relations between the British and the people of India. Sir Percy Ilbert, Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, introduced a Bill, named after him, to give Indian magistrates the power to try Europeans, putting the former at par with the British judges. The purpose of the Bill was to remove judicial inequalities in the powers of the Indian and the British

#### Factors precipitating growth of nationalism till the emergence of the Indian National Congress

- Memory of the Revolt of 1857
- Tribal and peasant movements (Indigo revolt, Santhal rebellion, Kuka movement, etc.)
- Economic exploitation by the British
- Impoverishment of the peasantry (land revenue policy, greed of moneylenders, breakdown of self-sufficient village economy)
- Industrial stagnation
- British apathy to famines
- Influence of Western education (instilling a rational, secular, democratic and national outlook)
- Administrative and economic unification of the country
- Racial pride of the rulers and the policy of discrimination
- Modern means of transport and communication (railways, roads, postal services, telegraph, etc.)
- The role of the press and Indian literature (in criticising Government policies such as the Vernacular Press Act, fostering political ideas and patriotic sentiments among the Indians)
- Rediscovery of India's past
- Rise of the educated middle class
- Reform movements
- The immediate context (Lytton's Viceroyalty – ICS age limit, Vernacular Press Act, Indian Arms Act, Ilbert Bill controversy).

magistrates. It was hailed as a liberal and reasonable measure. But the British opposed this measure and carried on a hostile propaganda against the Bill and the Viceroy responsible for introducing the Bill. This controversy created a gulf between the British and the Indians.

Due to bitter opposition from the British, the Bill could not be passed and was substantially modified to accommodate British interests. Lord Ripon became very unpopular among the British officials in India and had to be replaced. People of India were horrified at the racial bitterness and discrimination that the British had displayed to them. Before the effects of the Ilbert Bill controversy were over, some people had organised themselves into the **Indian National Conference** which was the forerunner of the **Indian National Congress** founded in 1885.

#### FOUNDING OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the formation of various political associations which were born out of nationalism and political consciousness. Such organisations emerged in different parts of the country but they had a common objective: that is, to unite the people for a common cause and to make them conscious of the ills prevalent under the British rule. These organisations were local or sectional in character. However, they played an important role in the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Therefore, they are called the forerunners of the Indian National Congress.

#### Early Associations

The earliest political organisation formed in India was the **Landholders' Society** founded in 1838. Its aim was to safeguard the interests of the landlords of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The Bengal British India Society was formed in 1843 to protect the interests of the general



public. Both these organisations merged in 1851 to form the British India Association of Bengal. These organisations were provincial in character and lacked national outlook.

Similar associations such as the Bombay Association and the Madras Native Association were formed in 1852. The aim of these associations was to make reforms in administration and to encourage educational activities. In 1870, the **Poona Sarvajanik Sabha** was founded by the nationalists of Poona under the leadership of **Justice Ranade**. Its objective was to arouse public opinion and focus the attention of the Government on the economic hardships of the people. In 1875, the Indian League was founded because prominent political leaders felt that they needed an all-India organisation to promote a sense of nationalism among the people. It merged with the Indian Association in 1876.

All these associations were local in character. They were dominated by wealthy aristocratic Indians who cooperated with the British. Educated people and the Indian masses looked for some organisation which would foster Indian interests. The East India Association formed by Dadabhai Naoroji and Indian Association formed by Surendranath Banerjee played a significant role amongst such organisations.

#### East India Association (1866)

**Dadabhai Naoroji**, the "Grand Old Man of India", made England the centre of his political activities. In 1866, he organised the East India Association in London. He thought that the British were basically just



Dadabhai Naoroji

and fair. Through his association, he wanted to make them conscious of the grievances of the Indian people so that they could find a remedy for their ills. Later, he opened branches in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Dadabhai Naoroji was one of the first popular leaders of India. He was an **economic thinker**. That is why he declared that the single cause for India's poverty were the faulty economic policies followed by the British in India. He articulated this through his "**Drain of Wealth**" theory.

#### Indian Association of Calcutta (1876)

The Indian Association of Calcutta was founded in 1876 by **Surendranath Banerjee**. It was the first organised political party to express the people's disillusionment with the British administration. Its main objectives were to create public opinion on political matters and to evolve a common political programme. Among other things, its chief demands were: (a) reform in the Indian Civil Service Examination; (b) repeal of the Arms Act; (c) repeal of the Vernacular Press Act and (d) protection of the rights of tenants against landholders and British planters. Surendranath Banerjee made an extensive tour of the country. He received a grand welcome wherever he went and his brilliant speeches criticising the Government roused considerable political consciousness.

Encouraged by the response he received in different parts of the country, Surendranath Banerjee conceived the idea of an **All-India National Conference**. This conference met in Kolkata in December 1883, and was attended by representatives from all parts of India. This was the first political organisation of an all-India character.

#### Indian National Congress (1885)

Educated Indians all over the country felt the need for an all-India political party to fight for



the rights of the people. Even liberal British officers sympathised with their aspirations and demands. One of them, **Allan Octavian Hume**, a retired civil servant, floated the idea of launching an all-India party. He was supported by the Indian nationalists. He circulated a letter addressed to the graduates of Calcutta University on 1 March 1883 regarding the formation of an organisation that would work for the material, moral and political advancement of the people in India. The idea also aimed to come to terms with the political reality of the emergence of educated Indians and to provide legitimate outlets for the grievances of this class and make efforts to satisfy its ambitions. Hume even asked for the support of the Government and of Lord Dufferin, who was then the Viceroy of India. They encouraged Hume to form such an organisation. Prominent leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Badruddin Tyabji and Pherozeshah Mehta too agreed to the proposed idea of forming such an organisation.



A. O. Hume

was changed to Indian National Congress. While the Congress was holding its meeting in Bombay, the All-India National Conference held its meeting in Kolkata. Both these organisations had the same objective. Therefore, the All-India National Conference was merged with the Indian National Congress in 1886.

At the first Congress meeting, 39 out of the total 72 members were lawyers. The old aristocracy including rajas, maharajas, big zamindars and very rich merchants were conspicuously absent. To begin with, even the peasants and artisans did not feel attracted towards it. The old aristocratic class did not participate in the Congress proceedings because it felt threatened by the new liberal and nationalist ideas. As for the peasants and artisans, the Congress made attempts to associate them with the movement only towards a later stage.

The Congress was a national organisation representing the interests of Indians, irrespective of their caste, creed and communities. It united all people for achieving a common goal. It gave self-confidence and leadership to the people to fulfil their aspirations to shun the yoke of foreign rule. It launched the freedom movement against the British in India. It achieved its objective when India became independent on 15 August 1947.

#### ○ Aims and Objectives of the Indian National Congress.

In 1884, Hume laid the foundation of the Indian National Union. A conference of this Union was to be held in Pune on 25 December 1885. This conference was to be attended by the representatives of different regions in India. However, plague broke out in Pune and the meeting of the Union was held at Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College, Bombay from December 28–31, 1885. The meeting was presided over by W. C. Bonnerjee, a prominent barrister from Bengal. Seventy-two members attended this meeting. At the suggestion made by Dadabhai Naoroji, the name of the Union

The Congress was founded as an organisation of educated persons such as teachers, professors, lawyers, medical men and businessmen. Its main aim in the beginning was to get the Indians recruited to higher positions in the civil services under the British administration. It was then a non-political association of Indians who wanted to get some concessions from the British rulers by petitioning and drawing attention to their grievances by public discussion.



The Congress soon attracted wide membership and held its sessions annually in different cities to rouse public opinion in favour of its aims.

The main aims and objectives of the Congress, as enumerated by the president of its inaugural session W. C. Bonnerjee, were:

1. Promotion of close relations between nationalistic workers from different parts of the country.
2. Development and consolidation of a feeling of national unity, irrespective of caste, religion or province.
3. Formulation of popular demands and their presentation before the Government.
4. Training and organisation of public opinion in the country.

The second session of the Congress was held in Calcutta under the presidentship of **Dadabhai Naoroji**. Badruddin Tyabji was the president during its third session in Madras. The number of delegates in the fourth session of the Congress held in Ahmedabad rose to 1248. In the beginning, the programme of the Congress was rather modest. It was mainly confined to the demands of administrative reforms which, in the form of resolutions, were submitted to the Government for consideration.

Moreover, the speeches were marked by moderation, earnestness and expressions of loyalty to the Crown. Such demands were in respect of the following:

1. Appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the working of the Indian administration.
2. Simultaneous examinations in India and England for the Indian Civil Service.
3. The right to carry arms.
4. Provision of more facilities for education.
5. Employment of more Indians at higher posts.
6. Appointment of Indians to the Executive Council.
7. Reduction of military expenditure.
8. Expansion of the Provincial and Central Legislative Assemblies.

In the initial stages, the British Government was friendly, towards the Congress as its goal was self-government within the empire. Besides, Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy, thought that the foundation of the Congress would act as a safety valve for popular discontent. But, gradually, the British began to distrust the Congress as its hold on the masses increased year by year.

## RECAPITULATION

1. **Impact of the Revolt of 1857:** Regional movements: Indigo disturbances, Santhal outbreak, Kuka movement.
2. **Factors Promoting Growth of Nationalism:** Memory of 1857—series of peasant and tribal revolts— influence of Western education—economic exploitation—transport and communication—policy of discrimination—rediscovery of India's past—reform movements—role of the press and Indian literature—unification of the country—rise of the middle class—immediate causes.
3. **Precursors of the Indian National Congress:** The Landholders' Society (1837), the Bengal British India Society (1843), the British India Association of Bengal (1851), the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1870), the Indian League (1875), the Indian Association (1876), the All-India National Conference (1883).
4. **Indian National Congress (1885):** Its founder—its first president—aims and objectives—its demands—attitude of the British.



## EXERCISES

### PART I (Short Answer Questions)

1. Why do you think that the Revolt of 1857 was an important landmark in India's struggle for freedom?
2. Give two instances of resentment of the Indians against the foreign rule towards the second part of the 19th century.
3. What was the Kuka movement?
4. What is meant by the term "nationalism"?
5. Give any two examples to indicate that the British followed a policy of economic exploitation in India.
6. Give a reason for the decline of cottage industries in India during the British rule.
7. In what way did the land revenue charged by the British, affect the Indian peasants?
8. What was the role of zamindars during the British rule?
9. What undue advantage did a moneylender have in the land laws introduced by the British?
10. How could a moneylender exploit farmers during the British period?
11. Give two reasons for industrial stagnation during the British rule in India.
12. How did Western education widen the outlook of the Indians in the 19th century?
13. Name two Western thinkers whose ideas brought about national consciousness among the Indians.
14. What inspiration did Indians get from the American and French revolutions?
15. Mention any incident in British history from which Indians concluded that they too had the right to do away with their cruel foreign rulers.
16. What role did English language play in the national awakening of Indians in the 19th century?
17. When and by whom was the Indian Association of Calcutta organised?
18. Give two examples to show that the British followed the policy of discrimination against the Indians.
19. Why did the British build roads and railways?
20. How did the railways prove to be a blessing in disguise for the Indians?
21. Name the British official who promoted railway construction in India in the 19th century.
22. How did the means of communication help to unite the Indians against the British?
23. What role did the press play in fostering political ideas and patriotic sentiments among the Indians in the national movement?
24. Who passed the Vernacular Press Act? When and why was it passed?
25. Who repealed the Vernacular Press Act? What impact did the Act have on the Indians?
26. Name any two foreign scholars who made Indians realise their rich cultural heritage.
27. What feelings did the rediscovery of India's past foster among the Indians?
28. In what way did the British trade policy affect the Indian middle class?
29. Who is called the "Father of Modern India"?
30. Name the reformer who raised the slogan "India for the Indians".
31. Give two reasons for the resentment of the Indians against the British during Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty.
32. What was the objective of the Ilbert Bill? Why couldn't this bill be passed?
33. Why did Lord Ripon become unpopular among the British officials in India?



34. Name the organisation which was the forerunner to the Indian National Congress.
35. State the objective of the Landholders' Society founded in 1837.
36. Name the two organisations which merged in 1851 to form the British India Association of Bengal.
37. Mention two objectives of the Bombay Association and the Madras Native Association which were formed in 1852.
38. Who organised the East India Association in London? When and why was it organised?
39. What according to Dadabhai Naoroji was the single cause of India's poverty?
40. When was the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha founded and by whom? What were its objectives?
41. Name the organisation which merged with the Indian Association in 1876.
42. Who founded the Indian Association of Calcutta in 1876? Give any two of its objectives.
43. Where and when did the National Conference founded by Surendranath Banerjee have its first meeting?
44. When and by whom was the Indian National Congress founded? Where was its first meeting held?
45. Name the first President of the Indian National Congress.
46. Name the organisation that merged with the Indian National Congress in 1886.
47. Give any two objectives of the Congress as enumerated by its first President.
48. Where, when and under whose presidentship was the second session of the Congress held?
49. Why is it said that in the beginning, the programme of the Congress was rather modest?
50. Mention any two demands submitted by the Congress to the Government in the beginning.
51. Why was the British Government friendly with the Congress in its initial stages?
52. Name the Viceroy who was well disposed towards the Congress when it was being established.

#### PART II (Structured Questions)

1. The second half of the 19th century witnessed the rise of the national movement. In this context, explain how each one of the following fostered the spirit of nationalism in India:
  - (a) English language and Western education
  - (b) The British policy of economic exploitation
  - (c) Reform movements.
2. With reference to the national movement, write briefly on each one of the following:
  - (a) Rediscovery of India's past
  - (b) The role of the press and Indian literature
  - (c) The rise of the middle class.
3. Briefly explain how each one of the following fostered a feeling of nationalism among the Indians:
  - (a) The Vernacular Press Act
  - (b) The Arms Act
  - (c) The Ilbert Bill controversy.
4. The roots of the Congress can be found in the separate political associations in various parts of India. In this context, answer the following questions:
  - (a) Name two of the associations formed in Maharashtra and give their objectives
  - (b) What were the aims of the Indian Association of Calcutta (1876)?
  - (c) State briefly the aims of the East India Association established in London in 1866.
5. The Indian National Congress gave leadership to the people to fulfil their aspirations to shun the yoke of foreign rule. In this context mention:
  - (a) The year when it was founded
  - (b) Its aims
  - (c) Its demands in the beginning.