

NATIONALISM IN INDIA

In this chapter we will address the question 'How nationalism emerged in India?'.
In India the emergence of nationalism is connected to the anti-colonial movement. People discovered unity in the process of their struggle with colonialism.

Timeline (🕒) 1920 - 1947



What was the impact of the
FIRST WORLD WAR?

- It created a new economical and political situation in India.
- Defence expenditure increased: customs duties were raised and income tax introduced.
- Prices of basic commodities doubled between 1913 and 1918, leading to the extreme hardship for the common people.
- Forced recruitment was done in rural areas which caused widespread anger.
- Crop failure in 1918-19 and 1920-21 resulted in acute food shortage.
- 12 to 13 million people perished as a result of outburst of influenza epidemic and crop failure.

Q. What is satyagraha?

Ans. The idea of satyagraha emphasised the power of truth and the need to search for truth. It suggested that if the cause was true, if the struggle was against injustice, then physical force was not necessary to fight the oppressor.

Places where Gandhi ji Organised Satyagraha Movements

- Champaran (1917): It was against the oppressive plantation system.
- Kheda (district in Gujrat): Against high revenue demands in 1917.
- Ahmedabad (1918): Gandhiji went to Ahmedabad to organise a satyagraha movement amongst cotton mill workers.

Q What was Rowlatt Act? [1919]

Ans It was an act passed by Imperial Legislative Council which gave government enormous powers to repress political activities and allowed detention of political prisoners without trial for two years.

Jallianwala Bagh Incident

Background

- Gandhi ji wanted non violent civil disobedience against Rowlatt act, which would start with a hartal on 6th April 1919.
- On his call rallies were organised in various cities, workers went on strike in railway workshops, and shops closed down.
- In reaction to this, the British administration decided to clamp down on nationalists and arrested local leaders from Amritsar.
- Gandhiji was barred from entering Delhi.
- On 10th April, the police fired upon a peaceful procession in Amritsar.
- People attacked banks, post offices and railway stations.
- Martial law was imposed and General Dyer took command.

Jallianwala Bagh Incident

- The infamous incident took place on 13 April 1919.
- A large crowd gathered in the enclosed ground of Jallianwala Bagh,



- unaware of the martial law that had been imposed in the city.
- General Dyer entered the area, blocked the exit points and opened fire on the crowd, killing hundreds.
- As the news spread, crowd took to the streets. There were strikes, clashes with the police and attacks on govt. buildings.
- The government responded with brutal repression. Satyagrahis were forced to rub their noses on the ground, crawl on the streets and to do Salami (Salute) to all sahibs.



What was Khilafat Issue?

- After the Rowlatt Satyagraha, Mahatma Gandhi felt the need to launch a more broad based movement in India. So, he took the Khilafat issue.
- The First world War had ended with the defeat of Ottoman Turkey and there were rumours that a harsh peace treaty was going to be imposed on the Ottoman Emperor [the Khalifa].
- To defend the Khalifa's temporal powers, a Khilafat Committee was formed in Bombay in March 1919.
- Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali began discussing with Gandhi ji the possibility of a united mass action.
- At the Calcutta session of the Congress in Sept 1920, Gandhi ji convinced other leaders of the need to start a non-cooperation movement in support of Khilafat as well as for Swaraj.

What was Non Cooperation Movement?

Swaraj: Gandhi ji defined Swaraj as self rule [Swa + Raj].

Gandhi's Plan to achieve Swaraj

Surrender of titles + Boycott of Civil services, army, police courts and legislative councils, schools and foreign goods



Congress and the Council Elections

- Many within the Congress were reluctant to boycott the council elections scheduled for Nov 1920. Intense tussle within Congress was observed during this time.
- Finally in Nagpur Congress Session [Dec 1920], a compromise was worked out and the Non-Cooperation programme was adopted.

Movement in the Towns

- The non-cooperation movement started with middle class participation in the cities.
- Students left govt. controlled schools, lawyers gave up their legal practices
- The council elections were boycotted in most provinces except Madras, where the Justice Party felt that entering the council was one way of gaining some power.
- Foreign goods were boycotted, liquor shops picketed, and foreign cloth burnt in huge bonfires.
- The import of foreign cloth halved between 1921 and 1922, its value dropping from Rs 102 crore to Rs 57 crore.

- In many places merchants and traders refused to trade in foreign goods or finance foreign trade

Q Why Non Cooperation Movement slowed down?

Ans The movement slowed down because of variety of reasons:

- 1) Khadi cloth was more expensive than mass produced mill cloth which poor people could not afford.
- 2) Students and teachers began trickling back to government schools and lawyers joined back work in government courts as alternative Indian institutions were not present.

[Gudem Hills and Raju]

Rebellion in the Countryside

- Baba Ramchandra led the peasants in Awadh, he was a sanyasi who earlier been to Fiji as an indentured labourer.
- The movement here was against talukdars and landlords who demanded high rent and taxes.
- Peasants had to do begar and work at landlord's farms.
- Nai-dhobi bandhs were organised by panchayats.
- Oudh Kisan Sabha was setup headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Baba Ramchandra and few others. Over 300 such branches had been set up in the villages around the region.
- Congress wanted to integrate the Awadh peasants into the wider struggle, however the peasant movement developed in forms that made congress leadership unhappy.
- Peasants attacked the houses of talukdars and merchants, looted bazars and took away grain hoards.
- Local leaders told peasants that Gandhiji had declared that no taxes were to be paid and land was to be redistributed among the poor.
- The name of Gandhi was being invoked to sanction all action and aspirations.

Tribal Peasants

- A militant guerrilla movement spread in the early 1920s.
- The colonial government had restricted them from entering the forests to graze their cattle, or to collect fuelwood and fruits.
- Peasants' livelihood and traditional rights were affected.
- Peasants also revolted against the practice of begar.

Alluri Sitaram Raju

- He claimed that he had a variety of special powers.
- It was said that Raju was incarnation of God.
- He persuaded people to wear khadi and give up drinking.
- The Gudum rebels attacked police stations, attempted to kill British officials and carried on guerrilla warfare for achieving Swaraj.
- Raju was captured and executed in 1924, and over time became a folk hero.

Swaraj in the Plantations

- For plantation workers in Assam, freedom meant the right to move freely in and out of the plantation.
- Under the Inland Emigration Act of 1859, plantation workers were not permitted to leave the tea garden without permission, they were rarely given such permission.
- When plantation workers heard of Non-Cooperation Movement, they left the plantations and headed home.
- However they never reached their destination, they were caught by police and brutally beaten up.

Q. Why Mahatma Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement?

Ans. Mahatma Gandhi withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement in Feb 1922.

- He felt that the movement was turning violent.

- When Gandhi ji heard of the incident at Chauri-Chaura he called a halt to the Non-Cooperation.

Civil Disobedience Movement - Background

- Some leaders wanted to participate in elections to the provincial councils.
- C.R Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Swaraj Party within the Congress.
- Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose pressed for more radical mass agitation and for full independence.
- Because of the effect of economic depression, agricultural prices began to fall from 1926 and collapsed after 1930.
- Simon Commission arrived in India (1928) to look into the functioning of the constitutional system in India and suggest changes.
- The commission did not have a single Indian member, thus it was greeted with the slogan 'Go back Simon'.
- The then Viceroy, Lord Irwin, announced a vague offer of 'dominion status' for India.
- In Dec 1929, the Lahore Congress formalised the demand of 'Purna Swaraj'.
- It was declared that 26th Jan 1930, would be celebrated as the Independence Day.

Salt March

- Mahatma Gandhi found in salt a powerful symbol that could unite the nation.
- On 31 Jan 1930, he sent a letter to Viceroy Irwin stating eleven demands, which includes the demand to abolish the salt tax.
- Irwin was unwilling to negotiate. So Gandhi ji started his famous salt march with 78 volunteers.

- The march was over 240 miles, from Sabarmati to Dandi.
- On 6th April he reached Dandi and ceremonially violated the law, manufacturing salt by boiling sea water.
- This marked the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Civil Disobedience Movement

- In Civil Disobedience Movement people were asked not only to refuse cooperation but also to break colonial laws.
- Thousands in different parts of the country broke the salt law, manufactured salt and demonstrated in front of government salt factories.
- As the movement spread, foreign cloth was boycotted, and liquor shops were picketed.
- People refused to pay revenue and chaukidari taxes.
- In many places forest people violated forest laws.

Effects Of Non-Cooperation

- The colonial government began arresting the congress leaders one by one.
- Abdul Ghaffar Khan was arrested in April 1930.
- In May 1930, when Mahatma Gandhi himself was arrested, industrial workers in Sholapur attacked all structures that symbolised British rule.
- Peaceful satyagrahis were attacked, women and children were beaten, and about 1,00,000 people were arrested.
- Mahatma Gandhi decided to call off the movement and entered into a pact with Irwin on 5th March 1931.

Q. What was Gandhi-Irwin pact?

- It was signed on 5th March 1931.

- By this pact, Gandhiji consented to participate in a Round Table Conference in London and the govt agreed to release the political prisoners.
- In Dec 1931, Gandhiji went to London for the conference, but returned disappointed.
- On his return he found that Ghaffar Khan and Jawaharlal Nehru were both in Jail.
- The Congress had been declared illegal, and a series of measures had been imposed to prevent meetings, demonstrations and boycotts.

How Participants saw the Movement

- In the countryside [for rich peasants]
 - Rich peasant communities [Patidars of Gujarat and the Jats of Uttar Pradesh] were active in the movement.
 - Trade depression and falling prices of commercial crops made it impossible them to pay the government's revenue demand.
 - For these rich peasants the fight for Swaraj was a struggle against high revenues.
 - They were deeply disappointed when the movement [CDSM] was called off without the revenue rates being revised.
 - Many refused to participate in the movement when it was restarted in 1932.
- For poor peasantry
 - They were not just interested in the lowering of the revenue demand but wanted the unpaid rent to the landlord to be remitted.

- The congress was unwilling to support 'no rent' campaigns.
- So, the relation between the poor peasants and the Congress remained uncertain.

— For business class

- During the First World War, Indian merchants and industrialists had made huge profits and became powerful.
- Keen on expanding their business, they now reacted against colonial policies that restricted business activities.
- They wanted protection against imports of foreign goods, and a rupee-sterling foreign exchange ratio that would discourage imports.
- To organise business interests they formed
 - The Indian Industrial and Commercial Congress — 1920
 - The Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) — 1927
- Prominent industrialists like Purshottamdas Thakurdas and G.D Birla attacked colonial control over the Indian economy, and supported the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- Most businessmen came to see swaraj as business without restrictions.
- But their participation diluted after the failure of the Round Table Conference.

— The industrial working class

- They didn't participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement in large numbers, except in the Nagpur region.
- As the industrialists came closer to the Congress, workers stayed aloof.
- There were strikes by railway workers in 1930 and dockworkers in 1932.
- In 1930 thousands of workers in chotanagpur tin mines wore Gandhi caps and participated in protest rallies and boycott campaigns.

- Participation of Women

- Civil Disobedience Movement saw large-scale participation of women.
- During Gandhiji's salt march, thousands of women came out of their homes to listen to him.
- Women participated in protest marches, manufactured salt, and picketed foreign cloth and liquor shops.
- Many women went to jail.
- They began to see service to the nation as a sacred duty.

The Limits Of Civil Disobedience

- Not all social groups were moved by the abstract concept of swaraj.
- For long the Congress had ignored the dalits, for fear of offending the sanatanis.
- So, Dalit participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement was limited.
- Some of the Muslim political organisations in India were also lukewarm in their response to the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Q Explain the measures taken by Gandhiji to eliminate the problem of Untouchability.

Ans Congress ignored the dalits for long but Mahatma Gandhi declared the swaraj would not come for a hundred years if untouchability was not eliminated.

- He called the 'untouchables' harijan - the children of God.
- Gandhiji organised satyagraha to secure them entry into temples, and access to public wells, tanks, roads and schools.
- He himself cleaned toilets to dignify the work of the bhangi.
- He persuades upper castes to change their heart and give up 'the sin of untouchability'.

- Gandhiji worked for their integration into society.

Q What was poona pact ?

Ans Dr B. R Ambedkar clashed with Mahatma Gandhi at the second Round Table Conference by demanding separate electorates for dalits.

- The British Government conceded Ambedkar's demand in response to which Gandhiji began a fast unto death.
- Gandhiji believed that separate electorates for dalits would slow down the process of their integration into society.
- Ambedkar ultimately accepted Gandhiji's position and the result was the Poona Pact of Sept 1932.
- It gave the Depressed classes reserved seats in provincial and central legislative council.

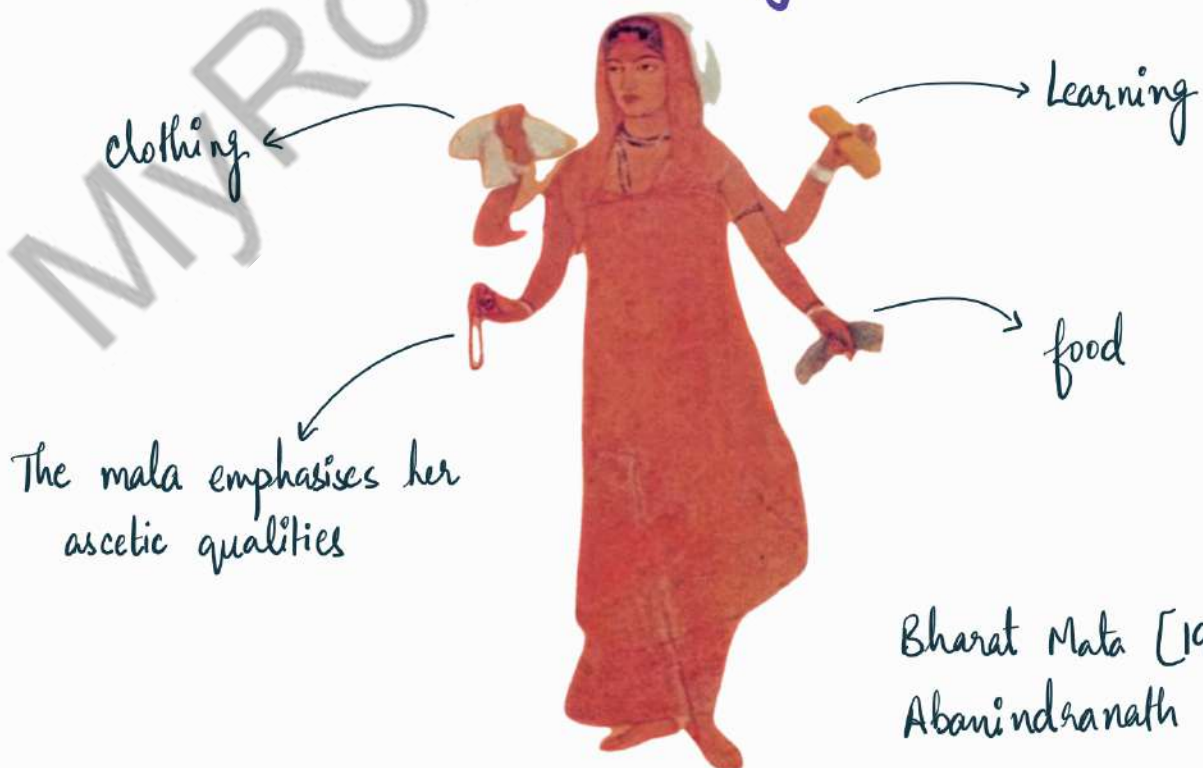
Q Explain the reasons for the lukewarm response of some Muslim organisations to the Civil Disobedience Movement.

- Ans After the decline of the Non-Cooperation-Khilafat Movement, a large section of Muslims felt alienated from the congress.
- From the mid 1920s the Congress came to be more visibly associated with openly Hindu religious nationalist groups.
 - The Congress and the Muslim League made efforts to renegotiate an alliance, and in 1927 it appeared that such a unity could be forged.
 - When the Civil Disobedience Movement started there was an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust between communities.
 - Muslim leaders feared that the culture and identity of minorities would be submerged under the domination of a Hindu majority.

Sense Of Collective Belonging

- Nationalism spreads when people begin to believe that they are all part of the same nation.
- This sense of collective belonging came partly through the experience of united struggles and variety of cultural processes.
- History and fiction, folklore and songs, popular prints and symbols, all played a part in the making of nationalism.
- The identity of India came to be visually associated with the image of Bharat Mata.
- The revival of Indian folklore also contributed to the development of a sense of collectiveness.
- Leaders became more and more aware of icons and symbols in unifying people.
- Feeling of nationalism was also created through reinterpretation of history.

Painting of Bharat Mata Abanindranath Tagore



Bharat Mata [1905]
Abanindranath Tagore

Other forms of Bharat Mata



Trishul

Elephant and lion are symbol of power and authority

Flags

- During Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, a tricolor flag [Red, Green, Yellow] was designed.
- It had eight lotuses representing eight provinces of British India, and a crescent moon, representing Hindus and Muslims.
- In 1921, Gandhiji had designed the Swaraj flag.
- Swaraj flag was also a tricolor [red, green, white] and had a spinning wheel in the centre.
- Carrying the flag, holding it aloft, during marches became a symbol of defiance.



The End

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