UNIT 10: EMERGENCE OF NATIONALISM AND FORMATION OF INC

UNIT STRUCTURE

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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- list the factors responsible for the growth of nationalism in India,
- describe the formation of different Political Associations,
- discuss the growth and role of Indian National Congress,
- discuss the growth of peasant and tribal movements.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

You have already studied about the East India Company which came to India for trade, transformed itself into a political power by acquiring Indian territories one after another. You have also come to know about the 1857 revolt, the first major uprising against the British. After the revolt of 1857 the spirit of nationalism grew in India. People became politically conscious and started to demand reforms in the British administration. But the continual denial of these demands by the British led the Indian mass into the path of movement. Thus, the Indian struggle for freedom from the British rule started. In this unit we will discuss about the growth of Indian Nationalism,

formation of Indian National Congress as well as about the growth of peasant and tribal movements.

10.3 EMERGENCE OF NATIONALISM

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the national political consciousness in India. Nationalism is a modern phenomenon. Compared with the Europeans, nationalist sentiment stimulated the Indians rather late. It was mainly the British rule which helped in the growth of nationalism among the Indians.

Following factors contributed to the emergence of nationalism in India–

- **Consequence of Foreign Domination :** Foreign domination is one of the most important factors for the growth of Nationalism in India. The British treated India as a field of exploitation. People came to realize that British rule was the major cause of economic backwardness of the country and this made the people united against the British rule.
- **Political and Economic Unity :** Under the British rule almost the whole of India was united. Nationalist sentiment could grow easily among the Indians because the British treated the whole of India as one administrative unit. They introduced the same administrative system throughout the country. At the same time they also treated the whole of India as a single economic unit. So they introduced same economic policy throughout India. All these resulted in the growth of the feeling of belongingness to one country i.e. India. All these have greatly contributed to the growth of national awakening.
- **Western Thought and Education :** Spread of western education and thought during the nineteenth century was an important factor in the growth of national awakening amongst the Indians. The modern concept of democracy, nationality, etc created a deep impression in them. English became the language of educated Indians irrespective of differences in religion, caste and region. Thus it became the best link of understanding and developing close contacts with one another. These educated Indians

were primarily responsible for creating political awakening and organizing the political movement in India.

- **Revival of the Glory of Ancient India :** Most of the British writers and officials of the nineteenth century put forward the view that Indians were uncivilized and they were destined to be ruled by the foreigner. However, many of the nationalist leaders tried to arouse self-confidence and self-respect among the people of India by countering this propaganda. Many Indian scholars who investigated the past history of India revealed the past glory of India. From the study of Indian history people come to know about the great rulers like Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka, Akbar and several others. All these inspired the educated Indians with a new spirit of patriotism and nationalism.
- **Role of Press and Literature :** The later half of the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented growth of Nationalist newspapers. Through these newspapers the people were asked to unite and work for national unity. Some of the prominent nationalist newspapers of this period were: Amrit Bazar *Patrika*, Hindu Patriot, Indian Mirror, *Sanjibani*, *Hindustani*, *Kesari, Bijuli*, *Jonaki,* etc. Newspapers like *Bijuli* and *Jonaki* played an important role in the growth of national consciousness in Assam.

  National literature also played an important role in arousing national consciousness. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore etc. in Bengali, LaksminathBezbaruah in Assamese, SubramanyaBharati in Tamil, BharatenduHarishchandra in Hindi and Altaf Hussainin Urdu were some of the nationalist writers of the period.
- **Developed Means of Communication and Transport :** The British constructed railways, roads, provided telegraph, wireless etc. and organize postal services all over India. The Indians of distant places could get the opportunity to come closer to one another. This provided them a sense of unity which contributed to organize an all India movement.
- **Racial Arrogance of the Ruler :** An important factor in the growth of national sentiments in India was the tone of racial superiority adopted by many Englishmen in their dealings with Indians. The British always

claimed their superiority over the Indians and exhibited arrogance towards them. All these things were given wide publicity by Indian newspapers. That inflamed the feelings of the Indians against the British.



ACTIVITY –10.1

Prepare a list of newspapers which played an important role in spreading the idea of Nationalism.

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10.4 FORMATION OF DIFFERENT POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The growth of the feeling of nationalism was soon to be seen in the formation of political associations. These associations were mostly rooted in the presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras.

Bengal was the hot bed of Indian nationalism. The first political association was called the *BangabhashaPrakashika Sabha* formed in 1836. The year 1838 saw the birth of *Zamindary Association* which was founded to protect the interest of the Zamindars. This association was also called the *Landholder's Society*. In 1843 the *Bengal British Indian Society* was founded to make the British aware of the actual plight of the people. On 29 October, 1851, the *Landholder's Society* and the *Bengal British Indian Society* merged together to form the *British Indian Association*. In September 1875, BabuSishir Kumar Ghose founded the *Indian League* with the object of "stimulating the sense of nationalism amongst the people" and to encourage political education. This association was soon succeeded by the *Indian Association* founded by Ananda Mohan Bose and SurendraNathBannerjee on July 26, 1876. The Association was soon able to bring the middle classes and the masses together.

In Bombay, the *Bombay Association* was formed in 1852, following the footsteps of the *British India Association* of Calcutta. It urged the British for representation of Indians in the new legislative councils which should be

formed. However, it could not survive for long. In 1885, the *Bombay Presidency Association* was founded by Mehta, Telang and Tayabji in the background of Lytton's policies and Illbert's bill controversy. The *Poona Sarvajanik Sabha* was established in 1867 at Poona. Both the *Sabha* and the *Bombay Presidency Association* worked together.

In Madras, a branch of *The British Indian association* was established by the name of *Madras Native Association* in Madras. There were some small local associations like the *Madras Mahajana Sabha* formed in 1884. The idea of a common political organization for the whole country was old one. But it was in the 1880s that few developments gradually pushed the leaders of the various regional associations for common and concerted action. Gradually the various local associations in the presidency towns were forging towards unity. In December 1883 the first Indian National Conference was held to which representatives from all major towns of India were invited. The second Indian *National Conference* met at Calcutta in December 1885. But the *Indian National Conference* was overshadowed by the more popular and representative *Indian National Congress* about which we are going to discuss in the next section.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State True/ False:

a) The British treated India as a field of exploitation.

b) The modern concept of democracy, nationality, etc created a deep impression in the minds of the Indians.

c) The BangabhashaPrakashika Sabha was formed in 1834.

d) The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was established in 1868.

Q 2: Write down four factors for the growth of nationalism in India.

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Q 3: Name three Political Associations formed before the Indian National Congress.

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10.5 INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

You have just heard the name of the Indian National Congress. It was through this organization that the Indian people continued their struggle for freedom from the British rule. The foundation of Indian National Congress in 1885 is a very important event in the history of Indian politics. The foundation of the Indian National Congress was not a sudden event. Setting up an all India organization was very much in the air for a long time. The final shape of this idea was given by A. O. Hume, a retired English civil servant. He is also known as the 'father' of the Indian National Congress. He mobilized leading intellectuals of that time and organized the first session of Indian National Congress in 1885. The first session of the Indian National Congress was attended by 72 delegates and presided over by Womesh Chandra Bannerjee at the premises of the Gokul Das Tejpal Sanskrit College in Bombay (Present Mumbai).

- **Aims and Objectives of the Congress :** The Indian National Congress initiated its function most moderately. It formulated the following objectives in its first session:
  - Promotion of intimacy and friendship among the earnest workers in different parts of the country, who had been working for the cause of the country.
  - Eradication of all possible race, creed or provincial prejudices in order to develop sentiments of national unity.
  - To discuss the mature opinions of the educated classes in India on important social problems.
  - To determine the methods of action to be pursued by the Indian politicians for public interest during the next one year.

  Apart from declaration of these four objectives of the Congress, the first session adopted a number of resolutions on the political and economic problems of India.

10.6 PEASANT AND TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

The grievances of the general masses against the British colonial rule were expressed in the Indian subcontinent for the first time in the form of a revolt in 1857. Though historians often call the Revolt of 1857 a Sepoy's Mutiny or the first struggle of Indians against the British, yet we may say that the foundation stone of this struggle was laid by some of the popular resistance movements pursued by various tribal and peasants groups. They raised their voices against a system which discriminated against them.

Peasants and tribal had their own reason to rise together against the colonial rule. To be very honest 80% of India's populations were peasants who were exploited by both the colonial Government and the landlords i.e. Zamindars. Due to the growing demand of land revenue the peasants became poor and were compelled to take loans, as well as to sell of their lands to the landlords. Introduction of the British land revenue settlement led to the decline of the autonomous Indian agrarian institutions like Panchayat and Gram Sabha. A new leadership of the exploiter class, comprising of the Zamindars, money lenders, mahaldars, etc emerged. Loss of their lands and indebtedness led them to such an impoverished state that they stood up against the British. But the Indian agrarian life did not have the inner mechanism to unite and raise its voice against exploitation. The British intentionally divided the peasantry into various land revenue settlement areas thereby making their grievances different from one region to another. As such before the launching of the Kisan Sabha movement in the 1920s, there were very few peasant movements in British India and were of isolated nature. Some of the prominent peasant movements were Fakir and Sanyasi Rebellion, Indigo Riots, Pabna Agrarian Movement, Phulaguri Uprising, Deccan Riots, etc.

The tribal too had some valid causes for resistance against British rule. After occupying the native land of the tribals, the British administration declared tribal chiefs as Zamindars and not as their kings. Moreover they abolished old taxation and revenue system of the tribals which was a grave concern for the tribals, prompting them to raise slogan against the British

rule. Due to the new administrative system introduced by the British government the tribal people start to lose their lands and were reduced to the position of agricultural labourers as well as rack-vented tenants on the land they cultivated. Thus a wave of resentment grew up against the British among the tribal people. Emergence of money lenders, traders, contractors and the protection given to them by the colonial rule was always a matter of conflict between tribals and the British. Tightening of control by the British over forest zones for revenue purposes, religious activities of the Christian Missionaries in their areas, British efforts to suppress certain tribal traditions and practices viz., like human sacrifices, etc and British efforts to recruit unpaid tribal labour for menial work are some of the major causes of tribal movements in British India.

However, the tribal movements were isolated outbursts against local grievances which were primarily economic in nature. The primary target was local vested interests. British official agencies were drawn into these conflicts, because grave questions of law and order were generally involved. So the tribal movements cannot be looked upon as an aspect of the anti-imperialist struggle even though they occasionally had a political overtone. They are important from the historical point of view because they throw light upon the suffering of a section of the people who were not politically vocal and whom the politicians engaged in the struggle for freedom did not consider mobilizing against foreign rule. The tribals comprised of virtually 13% the total population in British India. For centuries they lived in isolation and enjoyed local autonomy and led an isolated life and a self-sufficient economy. Shortly after the foundation of British rule their autonomy and self-sufficiency were disturbed, leading to the rise and growth of as many as 70 major tribal uprising in the 19thand early 20thcentury. These were however confined to the specific tribe and led by local tribal leader. Some of the major tribal movements are Santhal Uprising, Munda Uprising, Rampa Rebellion, Jayantia Rebellion, TanaBhagat Movement, etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Name some of the prominent peasant movements.

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Q 5: Name some of the prominent tribalmovements.

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Q 6: What was the percentage of the peasant by profession?

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10.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit you have learnt that,

- the foreign domination, political and economic unity of the country, western thought and education, roll of press and literature, racial arrogance of the ruler, developed means of communication etc. contributed to the rise of nationalism in India.
- with the rise of nationalism, different political associations were formed leading the way for the formation of the Indian National Congress.
- exploitativelandreform policies of the Colonial Government towards the peasants and tribal people led to organise them against the foreign government.



10.8 FURTHER READING

1) Bandyopadhyay, Sekhara. (2004). From *Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India.* New Delhi, India: Orient Longman.
2) Chandra, B., Mukherjee, A., Panikkar, K.N. & Mahajan, S. (Ed.). (1988). *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947.* Delhi, India: Penguin.
3) Majumdar, R.C., Raychaudhuri, H.C. & Datta, K. (1978). *An*

Advanced History of India (4th Ed.). New Delhi, India: Macmillan India



10.9 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to the question no.1 : (a) True (b) True (c) False (d) False

Answer to the question no.2 : (a) Political and economic unity of the country.

(b) Western thought and Education.

(c) Development of means of communication.

(d) Consequence of Foreign Domination.

Answer to the question no.3 : (a) British India Association

(b) Madras Native Association

(c) Madras Mahajan Sabha

Answer to the question no.4 : (a) Fakir and Sanyasi Rebellion

(b) Indigo Riots

(c) Pabna Agrarian Movement

(d) Phulaguri Uprising

(e) Deccan Riots.

Answer to the question no.5 : (a) Santhal Uprising

(b) Munda Uprising

(c) Rampa Rebellion

(d) Jayantia Rebellion

(e) TanaBhagat Movement

Answer to the question no.6 : 80% of the total population



10.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q.1 Name two Assamese nationalist newspaper of the Colonial Period.

Q.2 In which year the Indian National Congress was formed?

Q.3 Who was the first president of the Indian National Congress?

Q.4 What was the main cause of the tribal rebellions?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q.1 What were the main grievances of the peasants under the colonial rule?

Q.2 What were the main aims and objectives of the Indian National Congress.

Q.3 Write a short note on various political associations formed before the Indian National Congress.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in between 150-300 words)

Q.1 Discuss various causes of the rise of Indian Nationalism.

Q.2 Discuss about the peasant and tribal movements under colonial rule.

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