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Paper: Nationalism in India

Lesson: Swadeshi and Radicals

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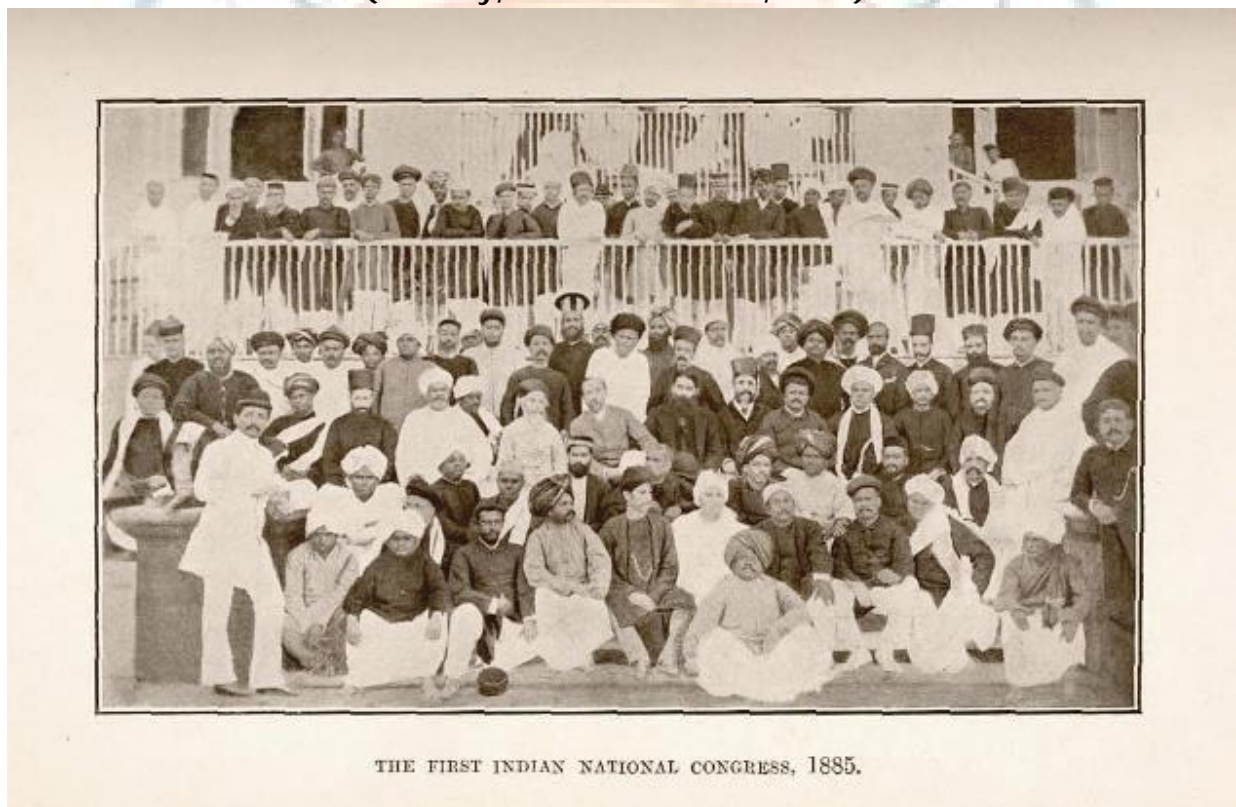
1.0 Introduction

"The historical development of Indian nationalism is marked by three great waves of struggle, each at successively higher level, and each leaving its permanent marks on the movement and opening the way to a new phase."

-R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*

Image-1

**First session of Indian National Congress
(Bombay, 28–31 December, 1885)**



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1st_INC1885.jpg accessed on 23 December 2013.

The Indian national Congress was founded in 1885 and during the first twenty years it was dominated by liberal constitutionalists. In all these years no basic claim for self government was made instead all their resolutions were confined for the representative institutions. They relied on the tactics of prayer, petition and peaceful procession but by these means they were not able to challenge British rule or create any mass movement in India. By the

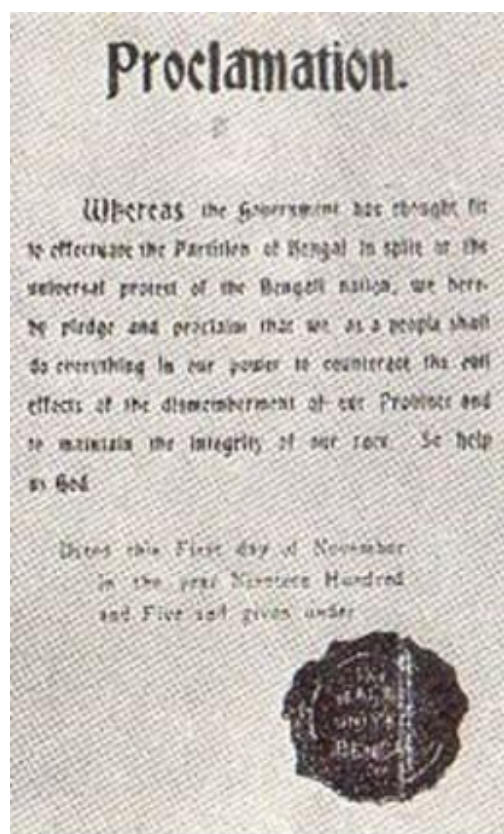
end of the nineteenth century, failure of moderate politics became quite apparent and a new set of leadership- radical or extremist emerged. Lord Curzon's notorious proposal of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 generated a powerful Swadeshi movement. This movement not only revolutionized the political life of Bengal, but also led to the emergence of radical politics and violent revolutionary movements in India. "It also helped in forging new and powerful instruments of national struggle- boycott, Swadeshi, passive resistance, national education and even armed resistance. Moreover, it sowed the seeds of mass movements and militant protests, which flourished and fructified under the dynamic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in subsequent years" (Pradhan: 2008, 93).

1.1 Partition of Bengal

"The tremendous upheaval of popular feelings, which has taken place in Bengal in consequence of the partition, will constitute a landmark in the history of national progress."

-GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE
(Source: Pradhan: 2008, 93)

Image-2
Proclamation against Partition of Bengal



Proclamation against Bang-Bhang

Source: [HTTP://INDIANSAGA.COM/HISTORY/BENGAL_PARTITION.HTML](http://INDIANSAGA.COM/HISTORY/BENGAL_PARTITION.HTML) accessed on 29 December 2013.

1.1.1 Lord Curzon and Nationalists

"Conceive the howls! They will almost slay me in Bengal" Lord Curzon wrote to Ampthill on 8 June 1905, conveying the news that the partition plan had been sanctioned. (Source: Sarkar, 1973, 20)

Image-3
Lord Curzon



Source: [HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE: GEORGE_CURZON2.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:George_Curzon2.jpg) accessed on 9 January 2014

Lord Curzon was appointed viceroy of India in 1899. Entire tenure of Curzon remained famous for his notorious acts in the name of efficiency of administration, leading to continuous confrontation between Curzon and the nationalist intelligentsia. To secure interests of European business community he reduced number of elected Indian members in Calcutta Corporation in 1899. To curb and control the freedom of the people and their institutions he brought the Official Secret Act. With the profound claim of 'raising the standard of education all round' he introduced the Universities Act of 1904. The act reduced the number of elected Senate members, transferred the power of ultimate decision in matter of college affiliation and school recognition to government officials. Therefore, this

act restricted autonomy of universities and brought them under strict government control. Educated Indian opposed this act on the ground of its undemocratic and restrictive nature (Sarkar: 1983, 105-6). However, his final blow to nationalists was his notorious idea of 'partition of Bengal'.

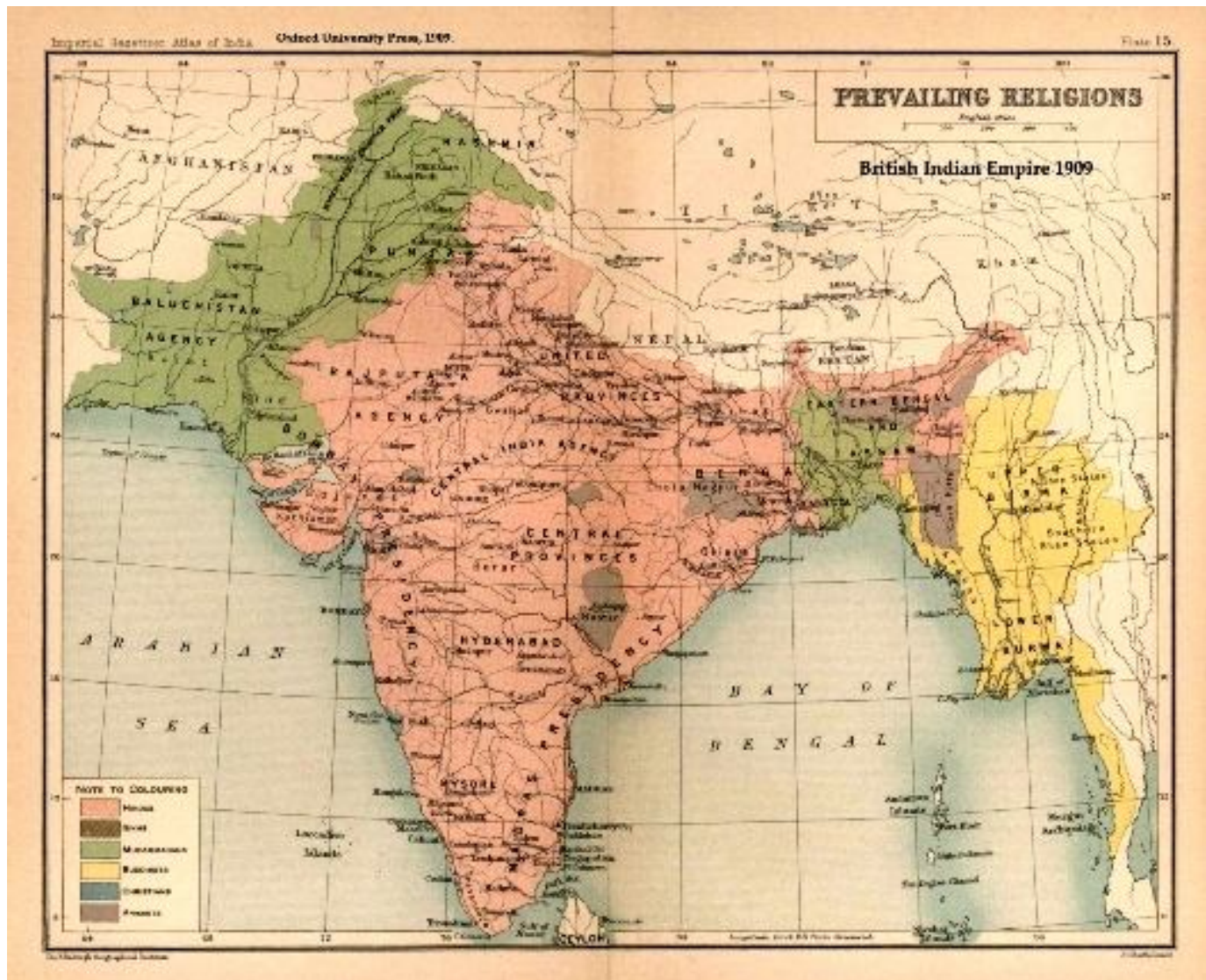
1.1.2 Plan of Partition

"Bengal united is a power. Bengal divided will pull in several different ways. That is what the Congress leaders feel: their apprehensions are perfectly correct and they form one of the great merits of the scheme. ...One of our main objects is to split up and thereby to weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule."

-Official note of Risley (6 December 1904), Home Secretary to Government of India
(Source: Chandra: 2009, 249)

Map-1
Religious Distribution of Indian Population at the time of Partition of Bengal





Source:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/47/Brit_IndianEmpireReligions3.jpg
 accessed on 5 February 2014

During the *Raj*, Bengal was a big province in terms of population and territory. In early twentieth century its population was about 78 million- constituting one-fourth of the total population of British India. 'Thus it was rightly considered to be administratively unwieldy and even unmanageable. It was on account of its unwieldy size that the division of Bengal Presidency was being considered, since the days of the Orissa famine of 1866. It is also relevant to note that since 1874, when Assam was separated from Bengal, many proposals were mooted to include some areas from Bengal to Assam' (Pradhan: 2008, 95). However, partition plan of Bengal was actually materialized during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon- with a deliberate objective of 'divide and rule'.

When Lord Curzon arrived in India and went on a tour of Assam in March 1900, the European tea garden planters demanded a maritime outlet nearer than Calcutta to reduce their dependence on the Assam-Bengal railways (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 252). Similarly,

in 1901, Sir Andrew Fraser (the then chief commissioner of the Central Province) suggested for some readjustments along the Bengal-CP border so as to solve the problem of Sambalpur, an Oriya enclave in a Hindi-speaking province (Sarkar: 1973, 10). Curzon responded to these demands through his Minute on Territorial Redistribution in India (19 May/1 June 1903), which was later published as the Risley Papers on 3 December, 1903. It proposed the transfer of Chittagong Division, Dacca and Mymensingh districts to Assam and Chota Nagpur to the Central Provinces; Bengal would receive in return Sambalpur and the feudatory states from Central Provinces and Ganjam district and the Vizagapatnam agency tracts from Madras (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 252). However, in course of East Bengal tour in 1904, Curzon hinted rather vaguely that "a more ambitious" scheme "for a larger readjustment in the east of Bengal" was being considered (Sarkar: 1973, 11). The final scheme of partition was embodied in Curzon's dispatch of 2 February, 1905 to the Secretary of State Broderick, who reluctantly accepted it without even a proper parliamentary debate. The partition of Bengal was formally announced on 19 July and implemented three months later on 16 October, 1905 (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 252).

1.1.2.1 British Arguments

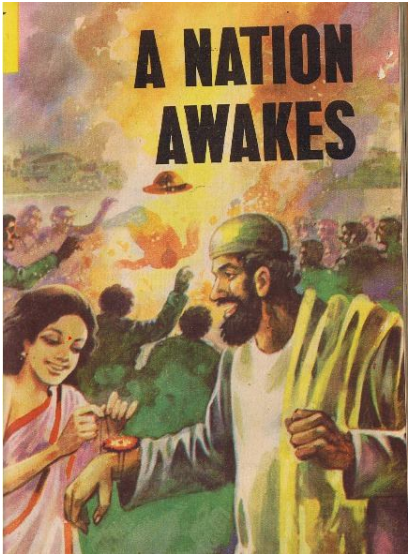
The colonial government defended the scheme of partition on administrative grounds:

- a) it would reduce the excessive administrative burden of the Bengal government;
- b) this would also solve the problem of Assam which would become a lieutenant governor's province with a separate civil service cadre;
- c) there would be substantial commercial benefits, as the interests of the tea gardens, oil and coal industries would be safeguarded;
- d) the Assam planters would be having a cheaper maritime outlet through the port of Chittagong; and,
- e) the Assam-Bengal railways, which was so vital to the economic development of north-eastern India, would be brought under a single administration (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 252-53).

1.1.2.2 Real Agenda

Even a cursory look of the partition scheme reveals that all arguments of the Curzonian administration were fallacious. It created a new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, consisting of all the districts in Chittagong, Dacca and Rajshahi divisions, as well as Hill Tippera, Malda and Assam. The new province would contain a population of 31 million, of which 18 million would be Muslims and 12 million Hindus, while the remaining province of Bengal would be having a population of 54 million, 42 million Hindus and 9 million Muslims. The Bengali Hindus would be outnumbered by the Muslims in the new province, and they would be a linguistic minority in the old, which would contain large numbers of Hindi and Oriya speaking population (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 252). In fact, partition was planned with pure political motives to divide people on religious ground and weaken politically articulate Bengali community.

1.1.2 Nationalist Response

Did you Know
Raksha Bandhan: A Symbol of Hindu-Muslim Unity
<p>During the nationalist opposition to Bengal partition, in 1909, <i>Raksha Bandhan</i> came to symbolize Hindu-Muslim unity against the communal divide and rule policy of the British.</p>  <p>Source: http://centreright.in/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/rb1.jpg accessed on 23 January 2014</p>

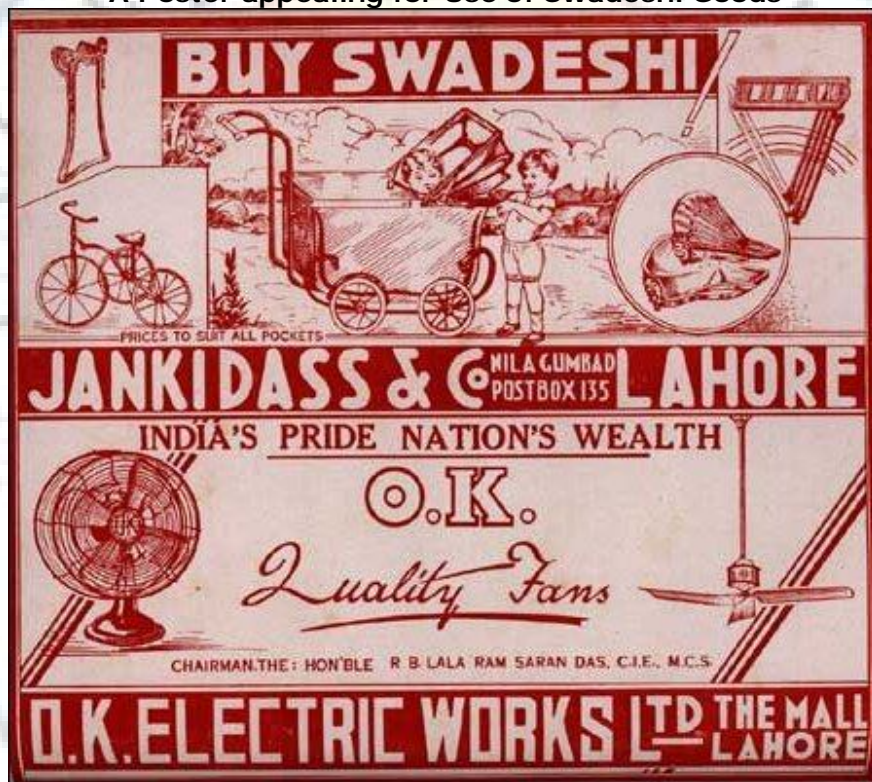
The partition instead of dividing and weakening the Bengali's, further united them through an anti-partition agitation. Curzon administration clearly underestimated the sense of unity among them- rooted to some extent in a history marked by long periods of regional independence and greatly fostered, at least among the literate, by the cultural development of nineteenth century. Calcutta had become a real metropolis for the educated Bengali *bhadralok*. Due to the advantage of earlier English education- Bengali were leading in professions, government services and politics over much of India. Preaching's of Vivekananda and literary works Rabindranath Tagore had got worldwide recognition. Further, international developments- British reverses in the Boer War, the unexpected Japanese victory over Russia in 1904-05 and news of the Chinese boycott of American goods in protest against immigration laws were giving boost to nationalists. In this atmosphere of strong regional unity and growing self-confidence and pride, Curzon's act of partition was regarded as a national insult. With startling rapidity, after July 1905, the movement against partition broke away from traditional moorings, developed a variety of new and militant techniques, attracted larger numbers than before, and broadened into a struggle for *Swaraj* (Sarkar: 1973, 107-09).

1.2 Swadeshi

Swadeshi movement was one of the major events in the history of Indian nationalism. It was started in 1905 as an agitation against the partition of Bengal and it spread to other parts of the country. In literary terms the word *Swadesh* refers to "one's own country", and thus Swadeshi means "pertaining to one's own country" (Ker: 1973, 6). An Important aspect of the Swadeshi movement was the emphasis placed on self-reliance or *Atmasakti*. Self-reliance meant assertion of national dignity, honour and self-confidence. Equally important aspect of the movement was technique of boycott. The boycott was mainly the boycott of all kinds of foreign goods, particularly those of English manufacture. With the new techniques the movement developed into a full-fledged political mass struggle for the attainment of *Swaraj*.

Image-4

A Poster appealing for Use of Swadeshi Goods



Source: <http://www.wondersandmarvels.com/2013/11/the-swadeshi-movement-the-first-step-toward-indian-independence.html> accessed on 12 January 2014

1.2.1 Anti-Partition Swadeshi Movements

British attempt to divide Bengali society by the act of partition, rather united them through anti-partition agitation. A "swadeshi coalition" came into existence through consolidation of the political alliance between the Calcutta leaders and their east Bengali followers, which according to Rajat Ray, was "nothing less than a revolution in the political structure of Bengal society" (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 255). The agitation against the partition had started in 1903, but became stronger and more organised after the scheme was finally announced and implemented in 1905. The anti-partition movement was initiated on 7

August, 1905. On that day a massive demonstration against the partition was organized in the Town Hall in Calcutta. From the meeting delegates dispersed to spread the movement to the rest of the province (Chandra: 2009, 250). The initial aim was to secure the annulment of partition, but it soon enlarged into a more broad-based movement, known as the Swadeshi movement, touching upon wider political and social issues.

At theoretical level, Sumit Sarkar has identified four major trends in Swadeshi movement of Bengal- the moderate trend, constructive swadeshi, Political Extremism and revolutionary terrorism. Periodisation of these trends, he argues, is not possible as all the trends were present more or less simultaneously throughout the period (Sarkar: 1983, 112-13).

1.2.1.1 The Moderate Tradition

The Congress leadership which was in the hands of moderates began to oppose the partition scheme ever since it was announced in 1903. They believed that it could be negotiated in its formative stage itself through means of prayers, petitions and public meetings. But this did not work and the partition was announced in 1905. Thus, moving away from their conventional political methods they took the first initiative to transform the narrow agitation into a wider swadeshi movement. Surendranath Banerjee at a meeting in Calcutta on 17 July, 1905 gave a call for the boycott of British goods and institutions. Further, a mass meeting was organized on 7 August, 1905 at Calcutta Town Hall and a formal boycott resolution was passed. This was also the first time that the moderates tried to mobilise other than the literate section of the population; some of them participated in the national education movement; some of them even got involved in labour strikes. But their political philosophy remained the same, as they only sought to pressurise British parliament to secure an annulment of partition and could not conceptualise boycott as a step towards the regeneration of national economy or start a full-scale passive resistance (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 255).

1.2.1.2 Constructive Swadeshi

This trend in the Swadeshi movement evolved through 'rejection of futile and self-demanding mendicant politics in favour of self-help through Swadeshi industries, national schools and attempt at village improvement organization. This found expression through the business ventures of Prafullachandra Roy or Niratan Sircar, Satischandra Mukherji's journal *Dawn* and his Dawn Society, the Saraswat Ayatan of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay and the Santiniketan Ashram of Rabindranath Tagore. In his "Swadeshi Samaj" address, delivered in 1904, Rabindranath Tagore outlined the constructive programme of self-help or atmasakti through a revival of the traditional Hindu Samaj or community. The Swadesh Bandhab Samiti in the district of Bakarganj claimed to have settled 523 disputes through its eighty-nine arbitration committees in its first annual report (September 1906). According to Sumit Sarkar 'these were clear anticipations of much of the later Gandhian programme of Swadeshi, national school and constructive village work (Sarkar: 1983, 113).

1.2.1.3 Political Extremism

In the wave of Swadeshi some leaders realized that without freedom no real regeneration of national life was possible. Thus they began to work on the new political ideal of political independence- complete and unadulterated *swaraj*, instead of demand of piecemeal constitutional reform. Leaders of this line proposed extension of the boycott into a full scale

movement of noncooperation or-'passive resistance' (Sarkar: 1973, 63). This programme needed the mass to be mobilized for the movement. For the same purpose the religion and culture were used as a tool. Religious revivalism therefore was a main feature of this new politics. 'Bhagavadgita became a source of spiritual inspiration for the swadeshi volunteers and Hindu religious symbols, usually *sakta* imageries, were frequently used to mobilise the masses. But, as Barbara Southard (1980) has shown, this also alienated the Muslims and failed to attract the lower caste peasants, many of whom were *Vaishnavites*' (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 257). The organization of samitis was another way which was used for the mass mobilization. Through samitis the programmes like physical training, propagation of the Swadeshi message were carried out.

1.2.1.4 Revolutionary Terrorism

Another notable aspect of the Swadeshi movement was emergence of revolutionary terrorism. Though, existence of 'secret societies' in Bengal was since 1902 but their activities grown tremendously with the beginning of the Swadeshi movement. The Dacca Anushilan Samiti was born in October 1906 through the initiative of Pulin Behari Das. This was followed by an all-Bengal conference of the revolutionaries in December and a revolutionary weekly called *Yugantar* started in the same year. A distinct group within the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti headed by Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Hemchandra Qanungo and Prafulla Chaki soon started action. The first swadeshi dacoity or robbery to raise funds was organised in Rangpur in August 1906 and a bomb manufacturing unit was set up at Maniktala in Calcutta. Attempts to assassinate oppressive officials and spies, robbery in the houses of wealthy Saha merchants who had earlier refused to stop dealing in foreign goods became the main features of the revolutionary activities since 1907-8. But the abortive attempt at Muzaffarpur on the life of the Presidency Magistrate Kingsford on 30 April, 1908 by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki and the following arrest of the entire Maniktala group, including Aurobindo and Barindra Kumar Ghosh, dealt a great blow to such terrorist activities (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 260).

1.2.2 Pan-Indian Character of Swadeshi Movement

The swadeshi movement which was erupted in Bengal soon captured the imagination of the people and leaders of the other parts of India. Movements in support of Bengal's unity and boycott of foreign goods were organized in Bombay, Madras and northern India. Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra, Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab, Sayed Haider Raza in Delhi, and Chidambaram Pillai from Madras Presidency, soon joined the movement giving it a pan-Indian character. The swadeshi movement witnessed massive participation of students, women, Muslims and other sections of the society. Large number of students practised and propagated ideology of swadeshi and took the lead in organizing picketing of shops selling foreign goods. Many of them were fined, expelled from their educational institutions, arrested and sometimes beaten by the police. The students, however, refused to be cowed down. The traditionally home-centered women of the urban middle classes joined processions and picketing. Many prominent Muslims joined the swadeshi movement

including Abdul rasul, the famous barrister; Liaquat Hussain, the popular agitator; and Guznavi, the businessman (Chandra: 2009, 250-52).

Image-5
V.O. Chidambaram Pillai



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/0/05/V.O.Chidambaram_Pillai_photo.jpg
accessed on 5 February 2014

1.2.3 Techniques of Swadeshi

Immediate cause of the swadeshi movement was partition of Bengal but it was not a matter of interest to the Bengalis alone, it had become an issue of all-India importance and the Slogans of Swaraj became new mantra for the nationalists in subsequent years. The movement made several distinct contributions to the cause of the Indian nationalism. Several new techniques like passive resistance, boycott and other effective methods of mass protests were evolved and experimented in this movement. The movement underlined need and significance of national education. The movement also led to the emergence of the trade union movement. Further, new forms of people's organisations like samities and associations were formed which proved to be quite an effective medium for popular protests in successive years of national movement.

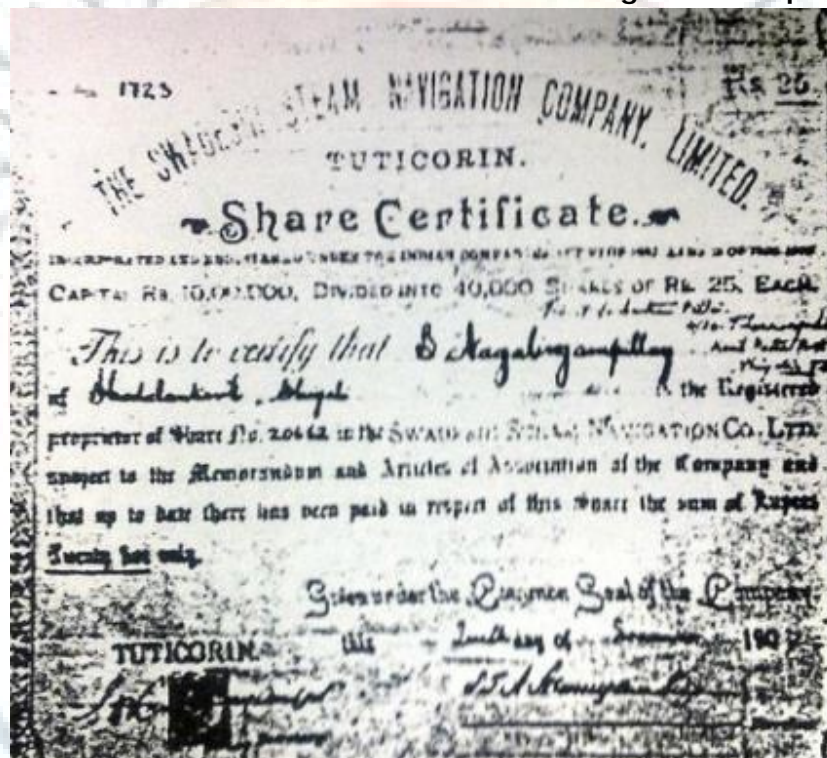
1.2.3.1 Economic- Swadeshi Enterprise and Boycott

In the economic sphere Swadeshi movement advocated for fostering indigenous industrial and other enterprises and boycott to foreign goods. According to Sumit Sarkar, swadeshi

may be defined as the sentiment-“that indigenous goods should be preferred by consumers even if they were more expensive and inferior in quality to their imported substitutes, and that it was the patriotic duty of men with capital to pioneer such industries even though profits initially might be minimal or nonexistent” (Sarkar: 1973, 92). This technique was frequently used in the swadeshi movement. Many textile mills, soap and match factories, handloom weaving concerns, national banks and insurance companies were opened. Acharya P.C. Ray organized his famous Bengal Chemical Swadeshi store. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore helped to open a Swadeshi store (Chandra: 2009, 251). The Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company (SSNCo) was established by V.O. Chidambarampillai in Madras Presidency (Kasthuri: 2013, 2-3).

Image-6

A share certificate of Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company



Source:

http://www.thehindu.com/multimedia/dynamic/01149/17july_masamnsb_Pr_1149676g.jpg
accessed on 5 February 2014

The complete boycott of foreign goods was obviously not a practical option. In fact the development of swadeshi industries stimulated import of the machinery and even certain varieties of raw materials. Even the *Bande Mataram* favoured no more than a 'graduated boycott', with Manchester piecegoods, Liverpool salt and foreign sugar as the principal targets to which might be added footwear, cigarettes and foreign liquors (Saarkar: 1973, 137). However, the boycott slogan united virtually all the sections of nationalist opinion and achieved some initial successes. It would be interesting to quote note of the Calcutta

Collector of Custom in September 1906 that records "a 22% fall in the quantity of imported cotton piece-goods, 44% in cotton twist and yarn, 11% in salt, 55% in cigarettes and 68% in boots and shoes in the previous month as compared to August 1905" (Sarkar: 1983, 116).

1.2.3.2 National Education

Development of national education was another notable tactics of the swadeshi movement. National education institutions where literary, technical or physical education was imparted were opened by nationalists who regarded the existing system of education as de-nationalising and, in any case, inadequate. On 15 August, 1906, a National Council of Education was set up. A National College with Aurobindo Ghose as Principal was started in Calcutta (Chandra: 2009, 251). A Bengal Technical Institute was established and about a dozen of schools were opened in Bengal and Bihar. Some schools of East Bengal survived for a longer period and later became virtually recruiting centers for revolutionaries. Sonarang National School (New Dacca) was most famous among them (Sarkar: 1983, 117-18).

1.2.3.3 Labour Unrest and Trade Unions

Another notable feature of Swadeshi movement was mobilizing labours, primarily in the foreign owned companies. Initially some strikes were organized on the issues of rising prices and racial insult. In September 1905, 257 Bengali clerks of Burn Company in Howrah walk-out in protest against a derogatory work regulation. In July 1906, a strike of clerks on the East Indian Railway led to the formation of a Railwaymen's Union. Jute strikes were also frequent between 1906 and 1908, affecting at various times 18 out of 18 mills. Some extremists journals occasionally speculated about the great potentialities of the 'Russian Method' of political general strike. However, there were no major labour unrests after summer of 1908 (Sarkar: 1983, 118-19).

1.2.3.4 Mass Contacts

To establish contact with masses leaders of the swadeshi movement relied in several new techniques. Newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, public meetings-all these forms of mass communication were useful and indispensable, but felt increasingly to be not quite sufficient in Indian circumstances. Rabindranath in his famous Swadeshi Samaj address (July 1904) made concrete suggestions regarding ways of bringing the gulf between the English educated elite and the masses. Bepinchandra Pal stated that "patriotism must be converted into a religion, with its own symbols, images vows and ceremonial" (Sarkar: 1973, 282-83). Thus religious and cultural symbols were frequently used in the movement to convey messages of patriotism. On the suggestion of Rabindranath, the partition day was observed as *Rakhi-bandhan* day, transforming a traditional popular rite into a symbol of the brotherhood and unity of the people of Bengal. Another rite observed every year on Partition Day was *arandhan*, suggested by Ramendrasundar Trivedi- the call to women not to light the home fires for the day. A large number of patriotic songs, plays and stories were written and efforts were made to bring out them in local dialects, suitable for village audience.

1.2.3.5 Swadeshi Organizations

Emergence of large number of swadeshi organizations in the form of associations, samiti and voluntary organizations was another notable dimension of the swadeshi movement. These were engaged in various forms of mobilising efforts, such as moral and physical training, philanthropic work, propagation of the swadeshi message, organisation of the swadeshi craft, education, arbitration courts etc. "Apart from Calcutta, with 19 samitis reported by the police in 1907, the main strength of the movement was in East Bengal. This included a central bloc consisting of Bakargunj, Faridpur, Dacca and Mymensingh districts (where originated the five principal samitis were to be banned in January 1909- Swadesh bandhav, Brati, Dacca Anushilan, Suhrid, Sadhana), strong organizations in Rangpur, Tippera, Sylhet and the parts of the old province lying to the east of the Hooghly river, and some societies in all districts except Sibsagar, Goalpara and Garo hills. A police report of June 1907 gave an estimate of 8485 volunteers for East Bengal; Bakargunj and Dacca topped the list with more than 2600 each" (Sarkar: 1983, 119-20).

1.3 Radicals

"The Extremists of today will be the Moderates of tomorrow, just as the Moderates of today were the Extremists of yesterday".

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

(Source: Pradhan: 2008, 102)

The 'partition of Bengal' and Swadeshi movement marked to the beginning of new era in the history of Indian nationalism. Now, the social base of Indian national movement was widened and new leadership with more radical approach emerged. At the same time, sharp differences emerged in the Indian National Congress which resulted in the split of two groups-moderates and radicals (or extremists). This division existed until the reunion of Congress in 1916. In this phase of national movement, leadership was in the hands of radicals and they set Swaraj and Swadeshi as their goal, and boycott and passive resistance as their means of struggle.

1.3.1 Growth of Radicals-Causes

By the end of the nineteenth century, it became quite apparent that moderate leadership of the Congress was unable to bring any significant change in the policies and administration of the British in India. It created reaction and thinking grew among young leadership that no good would be served without struggle. They gradually lost faith in the moderate tactics-prayer, petition and peaceful procession and therefore, proceeded ahead towards the path of confrontation. It resulted in the rise of radicals within the Congress and that of revolutionary outside it. The primary causes for the growth of radicals were as follow-

1.3.1.1 Recognition of the true nature of British rule

The political strategy of the moderates was founded on the belief that British rule could reformed within. But the spread of knowledge regarding political and economic questions gradually undermined this belief. The British continued to look towards Indians with apathy and behaved with racial arrogance and superiority. Indians badly suffered from the disastrous famines in the last decade of nineteenth century which took over 90 lakhs of lives but government paid no attention. The political events of the year 1892-1905 also disappointed the nationalists. The Indian Council Act, 1892 failed to satisfy Indian public opinion. On the other hand, even the existing political rights of the people were attacked. In 1898, a law was passed making it an offence to excite "feeling of disaffection" towards the foreign government. The Curzonian administration magnified this nationalist angst further.

Even socially and culturally, the British rule was no longer progressive. Thus an increasing number of Indians were getting convinced that self-government was essential for the sake of economic, political and cultural progress of the country and that political enslavement meant stunting the growth of the Indian people (Chandra: 2009, 243-45).

1.3.1.2 Social and Religious Awakening

The various social and religious movements which had revived the faith of Indians in their country and culture were increasing national awakening. They brought awareness that a vast country like India had been colonized by a handful of foreigners because of internal weaknesses of Indian social structure and culture. They also highlighted adverse impacts of foreign dominance and brought nationalist sentiments in the masses. For instance, Swami Vivekananda wrote-

"Moving about here and there emaciated figures of young and old in tattered rags, whose faces bear deep-cut lines of the despair and poverty of hundreds of years; cows, bullocks, buffaloes common everywhere- aye, the same melancholy look in their eyes, the same feeble physique, on the wayside, refuse and dirt; - this is our present day India! Worn out huts by the very side of palaces, piles of refuse in the near proximity of temples, the Sannyasin clad with only a little loin cloth, walking by the gorgeously dressed, the pitiful gaze of lusterless eyes of the hunger stricken at the well-fed and the amply-provided; - this is our native land! Devastation by violent plague and cholera; malaria eating into the very vitals of the nation; starvation and semi-starvation as second nature; death like famine often dancing its tragic dance;...A conglomeration of three hundred million souls, resembling men only in appearance; - crushed out of life by being down-trodden by their own people and foreign nations...without any hope, without any past, without any future-...of a malicious nature befitting a slave, to whom the property of their fellowmen is unbearable; - ...licking the dust of the feet of the strong, withal dealing a death-blow to those who are weak; - full of ugly, diabolical superstitions which come naturally to those who are weak, and hopeless of the future; - without any standard of morality as their backbone; - three hundred millions of souls such as these are swarming on the body of India, like so many worms on a rotten, stinking carcass; - this is the picture concerning us, which naturally presents itself to the English official" (Chandra: 2009, 219-20).

1.3.1.3 Failure of the Congress to attract Masses

"The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead".

Swami Vivekananda
(Source: Chandra: 2009, 245)

In the first twenty years of its existence the Congress remained an 'elite club' representing voices of educated middle class of India. The party was being governed by an undemocratic constitution. Although after repeated attempts by Tilak a new constitution was drafted and ratified in 1899, it was never given a proper trial. The Congress was also financially broke, as the capitalists did not contribute and the patronage of a few rajas and landed magnates was never sufficient. The social reformism of the moderates, inspired by Western liberalism, also went against popular orthodoxy (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 260). Further, aside from annual conferences of the Congress, which many termed as a 'three-day tamasha', there was hardly any other political activity for the rest of the year (Pradhan:2008, 105). Thus, the Congress under the leadership of moderates could not reach to the masses.

1.3.1.4 Revolutionary Cultural Nationalism

Rise of radicals in the national movement was not just a reaction to moderate failures; it drew its inspiration and ideology from a cultural and intellectual movement that developed simultaneously with and parallel to moderate politics of the Indian National Congress. These revolutionaries highlighted glory of ancient India and used religious and cultural symbols to imaging nationalism. Radicals "derived their inspiration from the literary works of writers like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya and religious leaders like Vivekananda and Dayanand. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya not only eulogised Lord Krishna as an ideal man and a nation builder but also for his basic message of Karmyoga in Bhagvad Gita, which subsequently became a major source of inspiration and motivation for nationalist leaders. Besides, his novel *Anandmath* gave a new dimension and momentum to the emergence of cultural nationalism. Not only that, his homage to the motherland in die form of his hymn Vande Mataram proved to be so emotive that it virtually touched the soul of the people of India" (Pradhan: 2008, 105).

1.3.1.5 Factionalism

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a good deal of faction fighting at almost every level of organised public life in India. According to some historians, this was also a leading cause of growth of radicals in the Indian national movement. Analyzing this factionalism Bandyopadhyay writes "In Bengal there was division within the Brahmo Samaj and bitter journalistic rivalry between the two newspaper groups, the *Bengalee*, edited by moderate leader Surendranath Banerjea and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, edited by the more radical Motilal Ghosh. There was also faction fighting between Aurobindo Ghosh on the one hand and Bepin Chandra Pal and Brahmabandhab Upadhyay on the other, over the editorship of *Bande Mataram*. In Maharashtra there was competition between Gokhale and Tilak for controlling the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha. The contest came to the surface when in 1895 Tilak captured the organisation and the following year Gokhale started his rival organisation, the Deccan Sabha. In Madras three factions, the Mylapur clique, the Egmore clique and the suburban elites fought among each other. In Punjab, the Arya Samaj was divided after the death of Dayanand Saraswati, between the more moderate College group and the radical revivalist group. One could argue therefore, that the division in Congress between the moderates and the extremists was just faction fighting that plagued organised public life everywhere in India around this time." (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 260).

1.3.1.6 International Developments

What one Asiatic has done others can do...if Japan can drub Russia, India can drub England with equal ease...Let us drive the British into the sea and take our place side by side with Japan among the great powers of the world.

-*Karachi Chronicle* 18 June 1905)

(Source: Chandra: 2009, 246)

Several events abroad during this period were another important factor that encouraged upsurge of radical politics in India. The rise of modern Japan after 1868 showed that a backward Asian country could develop itself without western control. In a short span of time, the Japanese leaders made their country a significant industrial and military power, introduced universal primary education and evolved an efficient, modern administration (Chandra: 2009, 246). Further, People's struggles in Ireland, Turkey and China inspired the people of India to take their national struggle to a higher plane. On the other hand, the defeat of Italy at the hands of Ethiopia (1896) and Russia at those of Japan (1904) exploded the myth of 'white-man's' supremacy, which emboldened our people to go in for a more decisive struggle (Pradhan: 2008, 105).

1.3.2 The Surat Split

With the beginning of twentieth century sharp differences emerged in the Congress. After the partition of Bengal, extremists came to occupy the centre-stage in the Congress politics pushing the Moderates in the background and even forcing them to toe their more militant line. Intense pressure of the moderates forced the Congress to define its political goal of India as 'self-government' like other colonies in its Banaras session (1905). Further, in his presidential speech of Calcutta session (1906) Dadabhai Naoroji emphasized that the political goal of the Congress is 'self-government or Swaraj like that of Canada and other colonies'. A resolution passed in the Calcutta session demanded that 'the system of government obtaining in the self-governing British colonies should be extended to India'. The four resolutions on self-government, boycott, swadeshi and national education passed by the Calcutta Congress (1906) were also a major lead of radicals in the party. However, there has been difference of opinion between the moderates and the radicals- the moderates talked of 'self-government' under the compulsion of circumstances, whereas for the radicals it was an article of faith. There was also disagreement on the use of tactics of boycott- The Moderates wanted the boycott movement to be confined only to Bengal whereas the Extremists really wanted to make it an all-India movement. Besides, the Moderates were satisfied with the boycott of British goods alone, whereas the Extremists included the organised resistance to the government too in its fold (Pradhan: 2008, 106-7).

The moderates were determined to revise resolutions passed in Calcutta session. The 1907 session of the Congress was scheduled to take place at Poona, which was an extremists' stronghold. The moderates, therefore, shifted the venue to Surat. The radicals proposed name of Lala Lajpat Rai for the next Congress President while the moderate candidate was Rash Behari Ghosh. But Rai, who did not want a split, refused to accept the nomination and so the ultimate fight between the two contending groups boiled down to the question of either retention or rejection of the four Calcutta resolutions. Pherozshah Mehta conspired to keep the resolutions out of the Congress agenda, while the extremists decided to oppose the nomination of Rash Behari Ghosh if the resolutions were not retained. The open session of the Congress at Surat ended in a pandemonium over the election of Rash Behari Ghosh, with shoes flying, chairs toppled and men running for cover (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 258-59). Things moved very fast soon after. At the annual session at Allahabad, the Congress came under the total domination of the Moderates. They framed a new constitution for the Congress and pledged their loyalty to the British and hoped that India would move towards self-government on the pattern of other self-governing colonies of the empire through constitutional means. However, there is no denial of the fact that the Surat-split weakened the strength of the national movement at a critical juncture of its history (Pradhan: 2008, 110).

Image-7
Radical Leaders after Surat Split



Source:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6e/Sri_Aurobindo_presiding_over_a_meeting_of_the_Nationalists_after_the_Surat_Congress%2C_with_Tilak_speaking%2C_1907.jpg accessed on 18 January 2014

1.3.3 Prominent Radicals- Lal, Pal and Bal

The prominent leaders of the radicals were Lala Lajpat Rai from Punjab, Bal Gangadhar Tilak from Maharashtra and Bipin Chandra Pal from Bengal - a triumvirate of Lal, Bal and Pal. Later on, they were joined by Aurobindo Ghosh and a host of others leaders.

1.3.3.1 Lala Lajpat Rai

Image-8
Lala Lajpat Rai



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/59/Lala_Lajpat_Rai.jpg accessed on 6 February 2014

Lala Lajpat Rai was a prominent radical leader from Punjab. From his childhood Lala Lajpat Rai was influenced with the activities of the Arya Samaj. His childhood experiences made him 'wedded to the idea of Hindu nationality' (Sarkar: 1983, 127). Lala Lajpat Rai and Hans Raj started the *Punjabee* (with the motto of- 'self help at any cost') in October 1904 (Sarkar: 1983, 127). Subsequently, he actively led the agitation against the partition of Bengal and was deported to a foreign country by the British Government. He went to the US and here too, he pursued his ideals and organised the 'Indian League of America' and edited *Young India*, to further the cause of Indian National Movement. After coming back to India he once again plunged into the national struggle. He was also active in the trade union movement and became the founding President of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). However, the greatest moment of his glory came when he was brutally assaulted by the British police while opposing the Simon Commission in 1928, which caused his untimely death (Pradhan: 2008, 103-4).

1.3.3.2 Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Image-9
Bal Gangadhar Tilak



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/58/Bal_G._Tilak.jpg accessed on 29 January 2014

Bal Gangadhar Tilak-better known as Lokmanya Tilak was among the most popular figure in the national movement in the pre-Gandhian era. He was the first Congress leader to suffer several terms of imprisonment and became an icon for radicals in the history of Indian nationalism. He was well versed in traditional Indian learning as well as modern western education. He authored famous books- *Gita Rahasya* and *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*. He edited two newspapers – Kesari in Marathi and Mahratta in English. He believed in mass mobilisation and to that end he popularised 'Ganpati Puja' and 'Shivaji Festival' in Maharashtra. He proudly declared that 'Swaraj is my birthright and I will have it'

1.3.3.3 Bipin Chandra Pal

Image-10
Bipin Chandra Pal

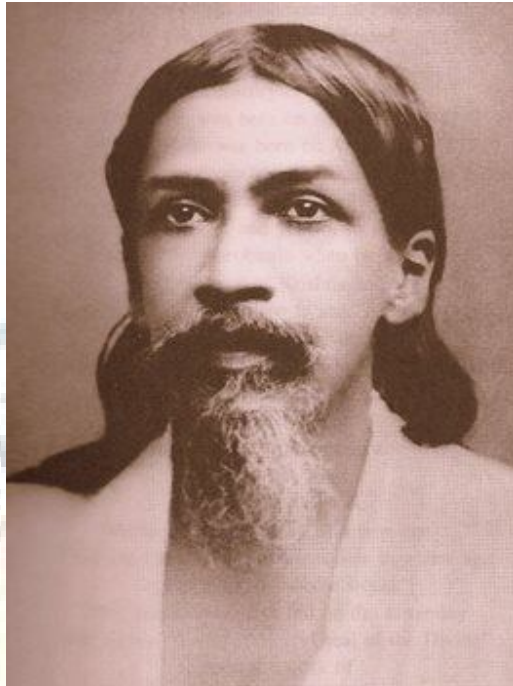


Source: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a0/Bipin-Chandra-Pal.jpg>
accessed on 8 February 2014

Bipin Chandra Pal was born in a wealthy Hindu Vaishnava family of Bengal. He was a teacher, journalist, orator, writer and librarian. In 1886 he joined the Indian National Congress. In the Madras session of congress (1887) he made a strong plea for repeal of the discriminatory Indian Arms Act (1878). He was an important pillar of the triumvirate of three famous radicals-the 'Lal-Pal-Bal'. He was recognised as the chief exponents of a new national movement revolving around the ideals of Purna Swaraj, Swadeshi, boycott and national education. He preached the use of Swadeshi and the Boycott of foreign goods to eradicate poverty and unemployment. He wanted to remove social evils from the form and arouse the feelings of nationalism through national criticism. He was extorted from Madras Presidency in 1907, on account of what the British thought, 'inflammatory' and 'seditious' speeches. He was once deported and even imprisoned in the cause of agitation against the partition of Bengal. After 1908, he virtually retired from active politics.

1.3.3.4 Other Radicals

Image-11
Other Radicals



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/71/Sri_aurobindo.jpg accessed on 8 February 2014

Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal were the prominent radical leaders. However, beginning of twentieth century brought a generation of radical leadership all across India. Some of the noteworthy figures include- Aurobindo Ghosh, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, M. Krishna Rao, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai etc. Aurobindo Ghosh was the first in India to declare publicly that the aim of political action was the total independence of the country. He served as the chief editor of *Bande Mataram* - a journal started by Bipin Chandra Pal and inspired national leaders through his powerful writings. He also started two journals - *Karmayogi* in English and *Dharma* in Bengali. However, he soon realised that the nation was not yet prepared for such a movement. He went to Pondicherry in 1910 to pursue his spiritual goal and remained there until his death in 1950 (Pradhan: 2008, 104).

1.3.4 Critiques of Radicals

The radicals have been subjected to a number of critical comments both by the Moderate leadership as well as by the scholars. In the first place, it is argued that the radicals new concept of nationalism was derived from glory of the past and religious and cultural symbols was motivated from the idea of 'Hindu revivalism' which led to the growth of anti-reformism-sidelining Muslim and lower castes. It is noteworthy to mention that the All India Muslim League was founded in 1906, at the time when the upsurge of the radicals was at peak (Bandyopadhyay: 2004, 234-47). Secondly, despite all their fury and bravado, and personal sacrifices, the radicals could not really build up a mass movement, except for a short span of time- during the anti-partition agitation. This is further proved by the fact that after the Surat-split and in face of repressive measures against the big leaders like Tilak and Aurobindo, the new Nationalist Party almost petered out. Thirdly, they took an ambivalent attitude on the issue of violence. Aurobindo, of course, did not rule out the violent method.

Even Tilak had consistently taken an ambivalent attitude on the issue of violence though he never openly supported violent methods. Thus it is argued that the Radicals became the ideological progenitor of the violent revolutionary movement which subsequently emerged and occupied some of the space vacated by the Radicals in our national life. Thus they were, in a way, responsible for inviting stringent repressive measures from the British against our people (Pradhan: 2008, 111-12).

1.3.5 Contributions of Radicals

Despite certain shortcomings, there is no denial of the fact that the Radicals made several significant contributions to nationalism in India and strengthened struggle against colonialism. Their concept of nationalism developed around the notion of motherhood which underlined the inalienable relationship between a nation and her children. Thus, in their new concept of cultural nationalism they presented the country in the form of a mother. Aurobindo wrote-'Nationalism is not a mere political programme; nationalism is a religion that has come from God; nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live' (Pradhan: 2008, 113). It was radicals who brought demand for *swaraj* instead begging for mere piecemeal constitutional reform. Further, by personal sacrifice and suffering they inspired a large number of people to work for the cause of the nation through national movement. Above all the Radicals took our national movement to a higher stage both in terms of its political goal and methods of struggle.

Summary

- In first twenty years, the Indian national Congress was dominated by liberal constitutionalists. They relied on the tactics of prayer, petition and peaceful procession but by these means they were not able to challenge British rule or create any mass movement in India.
- Lord Curzon's notorious proposal of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 generated a powerful Swadeshi movement. This movement not only revolutionized the political life of Bengal, but also led to the emergence of radical politics and violent revolutionary movements in India.
- The colonial government defended the scheme of partition on administrative grounds. However, partition was planned with pure political motives to divide people on religious ground and weaken politically articulate Bengali community.
- The partition instead of dividing and weakening the Bengali's, further united them through an anti-partition agitation.
- The agitation against the partition had started in 1903, but became stronger and more organised after the scheme was finally announced and implemented in 1905.
- The swadeshi movement which was erupted in Bengal soon captured the imagination of the people and leaders of the other parts of India.
- The Swadeshi movement made several distinct contributions to the cause of the Indian nationalism. Several new techniques like passive resistance, boycott and other effective methods of mass protests were evolved and experimented in this movement.
- In the first decade of the twentieth century, sharp differences emerged in the Indian National Congress which resulted in the split of two groups-moderates and radicals.

- The primary causes for the growth of radicals were- Recognition of the true nature of British rule, social and religious awakening, failure of the Congress to attract masses, revolutionary cultural nationalism, factionalism in the leadership and influences of international developments.
- The prominent leaders of the radicals were Lala Lajpat Rai from Punjab, Bal Gangadhar Tilak from Maharashtra and Bipin Chandra Pal from Bengal.
- The radicals have been subjected to a number of critical comments both by the Moderate leadership as well as by the scholars. However, the Radicals made several significant contributions to nationalism in India and strengthened struggle against colonialism.

Exercises

1. What were the causes of growth of the Radicals in the Indian national movement?
2. Partition of Bengal was planned with pure political motives of 'divide and rule'. Explain.
3. Write an essay on Swadeshi movement.
4. Critically examine reasons of Surat split of the Congress and its consequences on national movement.
5. Write short notes on:
 - a) Aurobindo Ghosh
 - b) Lala Lajpat Rai
 - c) Bipin Chandra Pal
 - d) Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Glossary

Bhadralok: A Bengali term used to describe the new class of 'gentlefolk' who arose during colonial times in Bengal.

Colonialism: Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another.

Raj: A commonly used term to refer the British rule in the Indian subcontinent.

Raksha Bandhan: A Hindu festival that celebrates the love and duty between brothers and sisters. On the day of partition of Bengal this festival was celebrated to Hindu-Muslim unity.

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