



Government of Tamilnadu

Department of Employment and Training

Course : TNPSC Group I Mains Material
Subject : Modern History of India and Indian Culture
Topic : Growth of militant movement

© Copyright

The Department of Employment and Training has prepared the TNPSC Group-I Preliminary and Main Exam study material in the form of e-content for the benefit of Competitive Exam aspirants and it is being uploaded in this Virtual Learning Portal. This e-content study material is the sole property of the Department of Employment and Training. No one (either an individual or an institution) is allowed to make copy or reproduce the matter in any form. The trespassers will be prosecuted under the Indian Copyright Act.

It is a cost-free service provided to the job seekers who are preparing for the Competitive Exams.

Commissioner,

Department of Employment and Training.

GROWTH OF MILITANT MOVEMENTS

Introduction

- By the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was conspicuous resentment against moderate politics within the Indian National Congress. This feeling of resentment eventually evolved into a new trend, referred to as the 'Extremist' trend. The extremist or what we may call radical or militant group was critical of the moderates for their cautious approach and the "mendicant policy" of appealing to the British by way of prayers and petitions.
- This form of militancy developed under the leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra, Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal and Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab. The primary reasons for the rise of this trend were: factionalism in the Congress, frustration with the moderate politics, anger against Lord Curzon for dividing Bengal.
- The partition of Bengal in 1905 – a prime example of the British divide and rule policy – acted as the catalyst for the growth of anticolonial swadeshi nationalism. The partition plan was first opposed by moderates but as the movement progressed, different techniques were improvised for the Swadeshi campaign.
- Swadeshi constructive programme included boycott of foreign goods and government administered educational institutions. The Swadeshi movement (1905–1911) is the most important phase of the Indian National Movement in the pre-Gandhian era, as, during the course of the movement, the character of the Indian national movement changed significantly in terms of the stated objectives, methods and in its social base.
- The mass base of the movement was expanded by exposing the problems of various social groups under the British governance and the underlying commonality in their lives – that is colonial exploitation. For the first time, in the history of Indian national movement, women, workers, peasants, and marginalised groups were exposed to modern nationalist ideas and politics. It was a period when the elite made a conscious effort to address the common people, calling upon them to join politics.

- ◆.....◆
- The other prominent development during the Swadeshi period was the growth of the vernacular press (newspapers published in Indian languages) in various parts of India. The nationalistic tone of the vernacular press became more pronounced during this time. The role played by *Swadesamitran* in Tamil Nadu, *Kesari* in Maharashtra, *Yugantar* in Bengal are a few examples.
 - As the movement gained support among the people, the government passed a series of repressive Acts such as the Public Meetings Act (1907), the Explosive Substance Act (1908), the Newspaper (Incitement and Offence Act 1908) and the Indian Press Act (1910) to crush the nationalistic activities of any nature.
 - One such measure was recording and monitoring of public meetings which were considered a matter of judicial scrutiny. (Shorthand was used by the police for the first time to record political speeches.) In this lesson, while discussing the Bengal as well as national scenarios, the Swadeshi Campaigns conducted in Tamilnadu with particular focus on the role played by V.O. Chidambaram, V.V. Subramaniam, Subramania Siva and Subramania Bharati.

Anti-Partition Movement

- Both the militants and the moderates were critical of the partition of Bengal ever since it was announced in December 1903. But the antipartition response by leaders like Surendranath Banerjee, K.K. Mitra, and Prithwishchandra Ray remained restricted to prayers and petitions.
- The objective was limited to influencing public opinion in England against the partition. However, despite this widespread resentment, partition of Bengal was officially declared on 19 July 1905. With the failure to stop the partition of Bengal and the pressure exerted by the radical leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Aswini Kumar Dutta, and Aurobindo Ghose, the moderate leaders were forced to rethink their strategy, and look for new techniques of protest.
- Boycott of British goods was one such method, which after much debate was accepted by the moderate leadership of the Indian National Congress. So, for the first time, the moderates went beyond their conventional political methods. It was decided, at a meeting in Calcutta on 17 July 1905, to extend the protest to the masses.



- In the same meeting, Surendranath Banerjee gave a call for the boycott of British goods and intuitions. On 7 August, at another meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall, a formal proclamation of Swadeshi Movement was made.
- However, the agenda of Swadeshi movement was still restricted to securing an annulment of the partition and the moderates were very much against utilizing the campaign to start a full-scale passive resistance. The militant nationalists, on the other hand, were in favour of extending the movement to other provinces too and to launch a full-fledged mass struggle.

Spread of the Movement

- Besides the organized efforts of the leaders, there were spontaneous reactions against the partition of Bengal. Students, in particular, came out in large numbers. Reacting to the increased role of the students in the antipartition agitation, British officials threatened to withdraw the scholarships and grants to those who participated in programmes of direct action.
- In response to this, a call was given to boycott official educational institutions and it was decided that efforts were to be made to open national schools. Thousands of public meetings were organized in towns and villages across Bengal. Religious festivals such as the Durga Pujas were utilized to invoke the idea of boycott.
- The day Bengal was officially partitioned – 16 Oct 1905 – was declared as a day of mourning.
- Thousands of people took bath in the Ganga and marched on the streets of Calcutta singing Bande Mataram.

Boycott and Swadeshi Movements in Bengal (1905–1911)

- Such efforts, both organized and spontaneous, laid the foundation for a sustained campaign against the British. The boycott and swadeshi were always interlinked to each other and part of a wider plan to make India self-sufficient. G. Subramaniam, a nationalist leader from Madras, succinctly explained the aim of the swadeshi movement as ‘a revolt against their state of dependence...in all branches of their national life’.

- ◆.....◆
- In the words of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, ‘the swadeshi movement is not only for the improvement of our industry but for an all round enhancement of our national life’ As the movement progressed, different definitions of Swadeshi appeared.
 - However, for the larger part, the movement of Swadeshi and Boycott was practiced as an anti-colonial political agitation and not as a viable method to achieve dignity and freedom in life, a definition which would be later infused with the entry of Mahatma Gandhi.

1. Constructive Swadeshi

- The constructive Swadeshi programmes largely stressed upon self-help. It focused on building alternative institutions of self governance that would operate entirely free from British control. It also laid emphasis on the need for self strengthening of the people which would help in creating a worthy citizen before the launch of political agitations.
- Rabindranath Tagore was one of the central figures who popularised such ideas through his writings. He outlined the constructive programme of atmashakti (self-help). Tagore called for economic self- development and insisted that education should be provided in swadeshi languages.
- He also made the call for utilising melas, or fairs, to spread the message of atmashakti. This became the creed of the whole of Bengal and swadeshi shops sprang all over the place selling textiles, handlooms, soaps, earthenware, matches and leather goods.
- On 5 November 1905, at the initiative of the Dawn Society, the National Council of Education was formed. In August 1906, Bengal National College and a School were founded. A passionate appeal was made by Satish Chandra to the students to come out of ‘institutions of slavery.’ Such efforts, however, failed to attract many due to the bleak job prospects.

2. Samitis

- The other successful method of mass mobilization was the formation of samitis (corps of volunteers). The samitis were engaged in a range of activities such as physical and moral training of members, philanthropic work during the

◆.....◆
famines, epidemics, propagation of Swadeshi message during festivals, and organization of indigenous arbitration courts, and schools.

- By its very nature boycott was passive action and its aim was to refuse to cooperate with the British administration. But these mass mobilization efforts failed to flourish as they could not extend their base among the Muslim peasantry and the “Depressed Classes”.
- Most of the samitis recruited from the educated middle class and other upper caste Hindus. Besides this, the swadeshi campaigners often applied coercive methods, both social and physical. For instance, social boycott of those purchasing foreign goods was common and taken up through caste associations and other nationalist organisations.

3. Passive Resistance

- From 1906, when the abrogation of partition was no longer in sight, the Swadeshi Movement took a different turn. For many leaders, the movement was to be utilized for propagating the idea of the political independence or Swaraj across India.
- The constructive programmes came under heavy criticism from Aurobindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal, and other militant leaders. Under their new direction, the swadeshi agenda included boycott of foreign goods; boycott of government schools and colleges; boycott of courts; renouncing the titles and relinquishing government services; and recourse to armed struggle if British repression went beyond the limits of endurance.
- The programme of this nature required mass mobilization. Using religion, combined with the invocation of a glorious past, became the essential features of their programmes.

Militant Nationalism

- As pointed out earlier, thanks to the campaigns conducted by Bal Gangadhar Tilak Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai, often referred to as the Lal–Bal–Pal triumvirate, Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab, emerged as the epicentres of militant nationalism during the Swadeshi phase.

- ◆.....◆
- Aurobindo Ghose was another influential figure in the militant leadership. The nationalism of this form was more assertive compared to the early Indian nationalism. Both the groups, moderate and militant, were well aware of the evils or the wrong doings of the British rule.
 - The moderates, however, worked under the belief that the British rule in India could be reformed by convincing the rulers through representation and petitioning. The militant nationalist, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the colonial rulers would never be amenable to reason, as they would not like to give up the advantages of an empire.
 - Militant nationalism also changed the nature of political pressure from the earlier force of public opinion of educated Indians to the protesting masses. Despite these changes, the militant nationalism phase retained a continuity from the moderate phase. This continuity was evident in the inability to transcend the peaceful method of struggle and for the most parts militant nationalism remained tied to the idea of non-violence. However, they appealed to the patriotic sentiments of the people using the religious symbols.

Swaraj or Political Independence

- One of the common goals of the militant leaders was to achieve Swaraj or Self Rule. However, the leaders differed on the meaning of Swaraj. For Tilak, Swaraj was restricted to the Indian control over the administration or rule by the natives, but not total severance of relation with Britain. In Bipin Chandra Pal's view, Swaraj was the attainment of complete freedom from any foreign rule.
- The other point of departure of the militants from the moderates was over the rising extremism in Bengal, Punjab, and Maharashtra. Unlike the moderates, who were critical of the reckless revolutionaries, militant nationalists were sympathetic towards them. However, the political murders and individual acts of terrorism were not approved of by the militant leaders and they were cautious of associating themselves with the cause of revolutionaries.
- The patriotism glued with the assertion of Hindu beliefs was not acceptable to the Muslims. Also much like their predecessors the leaders of the swadeshi movement failed to penetrate the larger section of the society. By 1908 militant nationalism

.....◆
was on the decline. The Surat split of 1907 was another contributing factor to this decline.

Surat Split

- The tension between the militants and the moderates became more pronounced with the appointment of Lord Minto as the new Secretary of State to India in 1906. As the tension was rising between the two groups, a split was avoided, in the 1906 Calcutta session, by accepting demands of moderate leaders and electing Dadabhai Naoroji as president.
- Most of the moderates, led by Pherozeshah Mehta, were defeated in the election. The militants managed to pass four resolutions on Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education, and Self Government. The next session of Congress was originally planned to be held in Poona, considered to be a stronghold of the militants.
- Fearing a repeat of the Calcutta session, the moderates shifted the venue to Surat. The militants proposed Lala Lajpat Rai's name for the next Congress presidency opposing the moderate's candidate Rash Behari Ghosh. Lala Lajpat Rai, however, turned down the offer to avoid the split. The matter finally boiled down to the question of retaining the four resolutions that were passed in the Calcutta session in 1906. The Pherozeshah Mehta group sought removal of those items from the agenda.
- In order to counter Mehta's manoeuvring, the militants decided to oppose the election of Rash Behari Gosh as president. The session ended in chaos.
- The Indian National Congress, born in December 1885, was now split into two groups – militant and moderate. The Congress which emerged after the Surat split was more loyal to the British than they were before. The new Congress, minus the militants, came to be known as Mehta Congress and the 1908 session of the Congress was attended only by the moderates who reiterated their loyalty to the Raj.
- The politics of militants, on the other hand, could not crystallize into a new political organization. The primary reason was the repressive measures of the government by putting all the prominent leaders in jail.



Revolutionary Extremism

- Around 1908, the decline of the militant nationalists and the rise of revolutionary activities marked an important shift from non-violent methods to violent action. It also meant a shift from mass-based action to elite response to the British rule.
- In Bengal, revolutionary terrorism had developed even earlier; around the 1870s, when the akharas or gymnasiums were setup in various places to develop what Swami Vivekananda had described as strong muscles and nerves of steel.
- Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel, *Anandmath* also had a significant impact. *Anandmath* was widely read by the revolutionaries in Bengal. The Bande Mataram song, which is part of the novel, became the anthem of the swadeshi movement.

During the Swadeshi movement three factors contributed to the upsurge in the individual acts of violence:

1. "The apolitical constructive programmes had little acceptance among the youth who was growing impatient under the repressive foreign rule."
2. The failure of the militant nationalists to lead the young people into a long-term mass movement also contributed to the growth of individual action.
3. The revolutionary action was part of an effort towards the symbolic recovery of Indian manhood, which the revolutionaries believed was often challenged and looked down upon by the British.

Such actions, however, did not lead to any organised revolutionary movement as was the case in Russia. The revolutionary actions were mostly attempts to assassinate specific oppressive British officers.

1. Alipore Bomb Case

- In Bengal, the story of revolutionary terrorism begins in 1902 with the formation of many secret societies. Most notable among them all was the Anushilan Samity of Calcutta, founded by Jatindernath Banerjee and Barindarkumar Ghose, brother of Aurobindo Ghose.

- ◆.....◆
- Similarly, the Dhaka Anushilan Samity was born in 1906 through the initiative of Pulin Behari Das. This was followed by the launch of the revolutionary weekly *Yugantar*. The Calcutta Anushilan Samity soon started its activities and the first swadeshi dacoity, to raise funds, was organised in Rangpur in August 1906.
 - In the same year, Hemchandra Kanungo went abroad to get military training in Paris. After his return to India in 1908, he established a bomb factory along with a religious school at a garden house in Maniktala.
 - In the same garden house, young inmates underwent various forms of physical training, reading classic Hindu text, and reading literature on revolutionary movement across the world. A conspiracy was hatched there to kill Douglas Kingsford, notorious for his cruel ways of dealing with the swadeshi agitators.
 - Two young revolutionaries - 18-year-old Khudiram Bose and 19-year-old Prafulla Chaki – were entrusted with the task of carrying out the killing. On 30 April 1908, they mistakenly threw a bomb on a carriage, that, instead of killing Kingsford, killed two English women. Prafulla Chaki committed suicide and Khudiram Bose was arrested and hanged for the murder.
 - Aurobindo Ghose, along with his brother Barinder Kumar Ghose and thirty-five other comrades, were arrested. Chittaranjan Das took up the case. It came to be known as the Alipore Bomb case. The judgement observed that there was no evidence to show that Aurobindo Ghose was involved in any conspiracy against the British rule.
 - Ghose was acquitted of all the charges. Barindra Ghose and Ullaskar Dutt were given the death penalty (later commuted to the transportation of life), with the rest being condemned to transportation for life. The year-long hearing of Alipore Bomb case made a great impact and portrayed the nationalist revolutionaries as heroes to the general public.

Trial and the Aftermath

- After his acquittal, Aurobindo Ghose took to a spiritual path and shifted his base to Pondicherry, where he stayed until his death in 1950. The idea of bringing an armed revolution, envisaged by Aurobindo Ghose, never materialized. The reason

◆.....◆
for the gradual decline in the revolutionary activities in Bengal was a combination of government repression and alienation from the people.

- Beside this, revolutionary terrorism suffered from certain social limitations too as most of the revolutionaries were drawn from the three upper castes – Brahmin, Kayastha, and Vaishya.

2. British Repression

- In December 1908 the Morley-Minto constitutional reforms were announced. The moderates welcomed the reforms. However, they soon realised that there was hardly any shift of power. In fact, measures taken by Minto were highly divisive as it institutionalized communal electorates creating Hindu-Muslim divide.
- Beside this, the colonial government also introduced certain repressive laws such as:
 - The Newspapers (Incitement to Offence) Act, 1908. This act empowered the magistrate to confiscate press property which published objectionable material making it difficult to publish anything critical of British rule.
 - Indian Press Act 1910 made it mandatory for publishers and the printers to deposit a security that could be seized in case they printed 'obnoxious material'
 - 'The Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act allowed summary trials and also imposed the prohibition of 'association dangerous to the public peace'.

Even with the widespread repression, the charm of revolutionary action never disappeared from the Indian national movement. The centre of activities moved from Bengal to Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

Questions :

1. Describe the Boycott and Swadeshi Movement in Bengal
2. Write a note on Surat split

◆.....◆

3. Describe the Alipore Baub Case.

