

I: SWADESHI MOVEMENT (1905-19011)

Dr. A. Ravisankar, Ph.D.,

1. This was a comprehensive movement that lasted 6 years.
2. Although this was regarded as a cultural movement celebrating the rich harvest of history- the rich traditions like folk music, paintings, the culture of Bengal was highlighted. But very soon, it got integrated with the political upheavals that followed after the partition of Bengal. Krishna Kumar Mitra, in his newspaper, 'Sanjivani' highlighted the prospects of national education and 'Economic Swadeshi'.
3. Very soon, this movement started gaining momentum with the help of the entire Bengali middle-class intelligentsia.
4. After the partition of Bengal, the Swadeshi movement got a big boost, because of the integration of the boycott movement with the Swadeshi movement.
5. Tilak called this movement "Bahishkar *Yoga*" and most of the Bengali intelligentsia that was initially not in favour of the boycott movement got integrated with the Swadeshi movement.
6. This was primary learning for the national movement. According to Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Lala Lajpat Rai, it was training in 'self-determination', 'self-help', and 'self-reliance'.
7. In fact, the Swadeshi movement can be called as a nursery of the further course that the Indian National Movement was to take. The programmes and ideas that were practised during the Swadeshi movement became the hallmark of the Gandhian movement as well.
8. Surendranath Bannerjee said that it is a 'protectionist movement'. And that it 'generates the material prosperity of the masses'.
9. Very soon, the Swadeshi movement spread to different parts of India, like Bihar, U.P., C.P., Bombay and Madras.
10. Radicalism also became a part of the Swadeshi movement after the partition of Bengal. After the partition of Bengal, industrial strikes became the hallmark of the Swadeshi movement.
11. There were strikes carried out in various cotton and jute factories of Bengal. Railway workers also went on strike. The Burnpur mill also went on strike.
12. But, the context of the anti-partition movement made it a very aggressive movement.

Problems with the Swadeshi Movement

1. But the problem with the Swadeshi movement was that it was not properly directed and it failed to unite the Hindus and Muslims because of the work of Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka and the establishment of the Muslim league.

2. The demand of separate electorates became an issue to seek political mileage for the Muslims. Thus, the Swadeshi movement lacked having a large mass-base. The grievances of the peasants were not at all taken into consideration- such as lack of uniformity of the land revenue system, rights of the tenants, prevention of land grabbing, were not taken up by the Swadeshi movement, and thus the peasants did not become a part of the Swadeshi movement.

3. But, overall, the period of 1903-1908, the partition of Bengal served as a catalyst for the Swadeshi Movement.

Context of various Scholars:

1. Surendranath Bannerjee said that it is a 'protectionist movement'. And that it 'generates the material prosperity of the masses'.

2. R.C. Majumdar opined that the Swadeshi Movement brought the realm of the national movement from 'theory to absolute practicality'.

3. Sumit Sarkar, a modern historian, said that one of the remarkable features of the Swadeshi movement was to 'shape the life of the people' which directed till 1947.

Note:

1. The Swadeshi Movement anticipated the movements which were later started by Gandhi.

2. The Non-cooperation movement, the Civil Disobedience movement which was labelled as a 'constructive boycott', had its genesis in the Swadeshi movement itself.

3. Even G.K. Gokhale who had firm opposition to the ideas of boycott accepted the programmes of Swadeshi in the Swadeshi Movement.

II: HOME RULE LEAGUE

The Home Rule League movement is an important event in Modern Indian History, and has been an area which has frequently featured in the Civil Services (Mains) and Civil Services (Prelims) Examination over many years now. In this article, we attempt at outlining the important headings under which this topic can be asked in the Civil Services Examination.

Background:

1. From 1907-1915/1916, the Indian National Congress (INC) was dominated by the moderates. It was in a formative stage and was dominated by the politics of Annie Besant, and some moderate leaders like G.K. Gokhale and Pheroze Shah Mehta.

2. Tilak was released from jail in 1914. But the release of Tilak was in no way an automatic reentry of Tilak into the INC, because of the firm opposition from Pheroze Shah Mehta and Gopal Krishna

Gokhale. But, the death of **G.K. Gokhale**, and **Pheroze Shah Mehta** in 1915, gave a possibility of the entry of Tilak into the INC. With Annie Besant's help, Tilak was able to reenter the INC.

Factors that Contributed to the establishment of Home Rule League:

1. This was the high-time of the First World War.
2. Unification of extremists and moderates
3. Unification of INC and Muslim League These factors created great enthusiasm in the Indian National Movement. Thus, Annie Besant and Tilak were very positive towards political reforms in India. The Home Rule league was 'self-government' based on the Irish model. Annie Besant and Tilak started this movement.

Comparison between Tilak's Home Rule League and Annie Besant's Home Rule League:

1. Annie Besant started the Home Rule League in September, 1916, and Tilak started it in April 1916.
2. Tilak's movement was confined to Maharashtra and Karnataka. And Annie Besant movement spread to other parts of India.
3. But as far as organization skill is concerned, Tilak's Home Rule League movement was more organized, and there were many volunteers who worked for Tilak.
4. Thus, the number of people who took part in Tilak's movement was much more compared to Annie Besant. Mohammed Ali Jinnah also had the first experience of participating in politics in India by taking part in the Home Rule League of Annie Besant.
5. Annie Besant tried to mobilize participation through the publication of her two newspapers: a) **New India** b) **Commonweal** However, Tilak continued writing in '**Kesari**', '**Mahratta**', and **Young India** to spread the message of the Home Rule League.

Thus the activity of Tilak and Annie Besant were very important to Indian Nationalism. **This period marks the transition from the moderate, or deliberate phase of Indian National politics to the agitational phase started by M.K. Gandhi.** Thus, it had a great impact. **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** got the title of '**Loknayak**' during the Home Rule League itself.

The decline of Home Rule League:

1. In 1918, the Home Rule League declined due to many factors.
2. In 1917: **Montford reforms** was presented before the British Parliament. The Montford reforms promised responsible Government in India.
3. It was the Montford reforms that turned Annie Besant 'pro-British'.

4. Bal Gangadhar Tilak went to England to file a legal suit against **Valentine Chirol**. Valentine Chirol had published, a book, “**Father of Indian Unrest**”, in which the Tilak featured as the hero of the title. He blamed Tilak for being responsible for the agitational politics that came to India. Thus Tilak became busy with filing the legal suit against Valentine Chirol.

5. The advent of Gandhi who actively took part in Indian politics, gave an opportunity to the Indian youth to get integrated into Gandhian politics, contributed to the decline of the Home Rule League. Nonetheless, it was the Home Rule League that marked the transitional phase between the deliberative and dormant phase of the INC to the mass-based politics of the Gandhian agitation.

III: ROWLETT ACT AND JALLIAN WALLA BAGH , 1919

The basic facts about the act

- Officially known as the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, 1919.
- Passed in March 1919 by the Imperial Legislative Council.
- This act authorised the British government to arrest anybody suspected of terrorist activities.
- It also authorised the government to detain such people arrested for up to 2 years without trial.
- It empowered the police to search for a place without a warrant.
- It also placed severe restrictions on the freedom of the press.
- The act was passed as per recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee chaired by a judge, Sir Sidney Rowlatt, after whom the act is named.
- The act was widely condemned by Indian leaders and the public. The bills came to be known as ‘black bills’.
- The act was passed despite unanimous opposition from the Indian members of the council, all of whom resigned in protest. These included Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Madan Mohan Malviya and Mazhar Ul Haq.
- In response to this act, a nationwide hartal was called by Gandhiji on 6th April. This was called the Rowlatt Satyagraha.
- The movement was cancelled by Gandhiji when it was marred by rioting in some provinces, particularly in Punjab where the situation was grim.
- The British government’s primary intention was to repress the growing nationalist movement in the country.
- The British were also afraid of a Ghadarite revolution in Punjab and the rest of the country.
- Two popular Congress leaders Satya Pal and Saifuddin Kitchlew were arrested.

The protest was very intense when the act came into effect and the army was called in was very short-lived, it had a great impact on Indian Nationalism.

JALLIAN WALLABAGH MASSACRE

- The situation in Punjab was alarming as there were riots and protests against the Rowlatt Act.
- Punjab was put under martial law which meant that it became unlawful for more than 4 people to assemble at a place.
- The Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab at that time was Michael O'Dwyer. Lord Chelmsford was India's Viceroy.
- On the day of the festival of Baisakhi on 13th April 1919 in Jallianwala Bagh, a public garden in Amritsar, a crowd of non-violent protestors had gathered. Also among the crowd were pilgrims who had come to celebrate Baisakhi.
- General Dyer came there with his troops and blocked the only narrow entrance to the garden.
- Then, without warning, he ordered his troops to fire at the unarmed crowd which included children as well.
- The indiscriminate firing went on for about 10 minutes until the 1650 rounds of ammunition were exhausted. This resulted in the deaths of at least 1000 people and injured more than 1500 people.
- This tragedy came as a rude shock to Indians and totally destroyed their faith in the British system of justice.
- National leaders condemned the act and Dyer unequivocally.
- However, Dyer was appreciated by many in Britain and the British in India although some people in the British government were quick to criticise it. Those who criticised his actions included Winston Churchill and former Prime Minister H.H Ashquith
- The government set up the Hunter Commission to inquire into the massacre. Although the commission condemned the act by Dyer, it did not impose any disciplinary action against him.
- He was relieved of his duties in the army in 1920.
- In protest against the massacre and the British failure to give due justice to the victims, Rabindranath Tagore gave up his knighthood and Gandhiji relinquished his title 'Kaiser-e-hind' bestowed on him by the British for his services during the Boer War in South Africa.
- Michael O'Dwyer, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, who had approved the actions of Brigadier-General Dyer, was assassinated by Udham Singh in London in 1940 as revenge against the massacre. Udham Singh is believed to have witnessed the massacre as a child.

IV: EMERGENCE OF GANDHI

Gandhi seemed to hover uncertainly on the periphery of Indian politics, declining to join any political agitation, supporting the British war effort, and even recruiting soldiers for the British Indian Army. At the same time, he did not flinch from criticizing the British officials for any acts of high-handedness or from taking up the grievances of the long-suffering peasantry in Bihar and Gujarat. By February 1919, however, the British had insisted on pushing through—in the teeth of fierce Indian opposition—the Rowlatt Acts, which empowered the authorities to imprison without trial those suspected of sedition. A provoked Gandhi finally revealed a sense of estrangement from

the British Raj and announced a satyagraha struggle. The result was a virtual political earthquake that shook the subcontinent in the spring of 1919. The violent outbreaks that followed—notably the Massacre of Amritsar, which was the killing by British-led soldiers of nearly 400 Indians who were gathered in an open space in Amritsar in the Punjab region (now in Punjab state), and the enactment of martial law—prompted him to stay his hand. However, within a year he was again in a militant mood, having in the meantime been irrevocably alienated by British insensitiveness to Indian feeling on the Punjab tragedy and Muslim resentment on the peace terms offered to Turkey following World War I
