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TOPIC: Factors for the Growth of Nationalism in India

Mr. PRANAY SANTRA (Asst.prof.dept of Geography, Haldia Government College)

Factors for the Growth of Nationalism in India

Many causes contributed to the emergence of the nationalist movement in India. They were as follows:

1. British Imperialism:

The British imperialism was the most important factor, which contributed to the rise of nationalism in India. It made the geographical unification of the country possible. Before the advent of the British, the people of the south were usually separate from the rest of India except for some short intervals. The British imperialism made the people to think as one nation.

2. Influence of the Western Civilization:

The establishment of British rule in India made closer relations with the Western world possible. Thus, the contacts with the European countries influenced the Indians immensely. The nineteenth century in Europe was the century of nationalism and liberalism. The Indians came to learn their lessons from the Europeans on both these ideologies.

Indians imbibed the ideas of nationalism and liberalism from the Western countries particularly from Germany, Italy, Greece, and Belgium. Besides this, the ideas of Western thinkers namely, Macaulay, Burke, Bentham, Mill, Spencer, Rousseau, and Voltaire also inspired and encouraged the ideas of independence among the Indians. Thus, there was a growth of political consciousness and awakening among the Indians.

3. Spread of English Language:

There was a rapid spread of English education in India especially after the revolt of 1857. The second half of the nineteenth century was a golden age of Liberalism in Europe, particularly England. The study of the political classics of English literature from Milton to Mill planted in the minds of English-educated Indians the seeds of liberalism in its two aspects—nationalism and democracy.

Thus with the spread of English education, the educated Indians gradually became politically conscious. The British introduced the English language in India with their own selfish interest in mind. At the beginning, they mainly needed Indian clerks educated in English in order to strengthen their rule in India. English education also facilitated people of different provinces to

come close to one another. Thus, it helped in raising, national feelings, and political consciousness among the Indians.

4. Development of Means of Communication:

The introduction of telegraphs and railways in 1852 and 1853 respectively gave India swift means of transport and communication. The modern means of communication shattered the age-old isolation of Indian villages and the people of remote part had the opportunity of coming closer to each other. They also promoted trade and commerce and helped people of different regions to develop social and intellectual intercourse.

The new social and economic link removed their orthodox ways and made them conscious of their social disabilities. The introduction of uniform system of administration in India also brought a feeling of unity among Indians. Thus, the improvements in the means of transport and communication also quickened the pace of nationalist movement in the country.

5. The Contribution of the Scholars:

Several scholars and religious reformers played their role in furthering the cause of progress of the nationalist movement in the country. They emphasized the past glory and the rich heritage of India. The study and publication of the ancient Indian literature by the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the scholars such as Max Muller, Monier Williams, Colebrooke, Ranade, Hari Prasad Shastri, R.G. Bhandarkar, Rajendra Lai Mitra, etc., revealed to the people of India the splendor of the Sanskrit language and also inculcated among them a feeling of pride in their past and their faith in the future.

6. The Contribution of the Social and Religious Reformers:

Religious and social reformers, namely, Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Debendranath Tagore, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Vivekananda, and others had left a tremendous influence on the people of India; and they also were responsible for inspiring the countrymen to treasure the ideals of freedom and liberty.

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English education also facilitated people of different provinces to come close to one another. Thus, it helped in raising, national feelings and political consciousness among the Indians. The social and religious reformers asked the people of India to look to their glorious past and try to bring back the same. They taught people to have faith in themselves.

9. The Development of Indian Press and Literature:

The Indian Press and literature both English and vernacular also used national conscious among the people of the country. Newspapers like the “Indian Mirror”, “Bombay Samachar” “The Hindu Patriot”, “The Amrit Bazar Patrika”, “The Hindu”, “The Kesari”, “The Bengalee”, etc., tremendously influenced the people of India and thus, left an indelible mark on the political life of the country. The writings of Din Bandhu Mitra, Hem Chandra Banerjee, Navin Chandra Sen, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, R.C. Dutta and Rabindra Nath Tagore also affected the minds of the people. The “Anand Math” of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee has rightly been regarded as the “Bible” of modern Bengalee patriotism. Thus, the writings of the patriots and scholars brought about a revolution in the minds of the Indians. It is these revolutionary minds that were responsible for the growth of Indian nationalism.

10. Economic Exploitation:

The primary objective of the British rule in India was the economic exploitation. They took away raw materials from India and brought here their manufactured goods. The policy of economic exploitation ruined the Indian industries; and the British were taking away the wealth of India to their country.

Their free trade policy proved ruinous for Indian trade and industries. Indian industries failed to compete with those of the British because the British had all the advantages and privileges on

their side. Moreover, the British officials working in India had become a drain on the Indian resources.

The economic system of India was molded to the needs of the people of England. Thus, the interests of the Indian people' were completely ignored. No wonder the relations between the Indians and the Britishers became strained.

11. Discrimination against Indians in the Appointment to Government Services:

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From the beginning, there was much discrimination shown in respect of appointment of Indians to the government services. No Indian was given high positions. The British did not trust the Indians and their sincerity.

The Proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1858 declared that Indians, henceforward, would be appointed to high posts on the basis of their merit irrespective of their caste, religion, or race. But this policy was not properly implemented.

The policy of discrimination, arbitrary, and unjust policy of the Government created a great discontent and unrest among the educated people of India. They started taking active part in the national movement with the aim of driving away the British altogether from India.

12. Racial Jealousies:

During the mutiny, the relations of the Europeans and the Indians were greatly embittered. Many Britishers were killed in the Mutiny. So, the Britishers were full of vengeance. The helpless and the innocent Indians became the victims of their vengeance.

The English killed their prisoners without trial and in a manner held by all Indians to be the height of barbarity. Some villages were marked out for destruction and all the men inhabiting there were slaughtered and indiscriminate burning of inhabitants occurred wherever the English armies moved.

Such of atrocities aroused discontent and unrest among the people of India. Though the mutiny was suppressed for the time being, they were not able to suppress the feelings of nationalism among the people of India.

Indians were prevented from travelling in the upper class railway compartment. Even the ruling chiefs were bullied into unlacing the boots shampooing the weary legs of the Sahibs just back from hunting expeditions. The administration of criminal justice was also scandalous.

13. The Events of the Reign of Lord Lytton:

The period from 1870 to 1884 was extremely tumultuous and was seen as the beginning time of Indian nationalism. The several acts of omission and commission in the time of Lord Lytton accelerated the nationalist movement. Lord Lytton held his famous Delhi Darbar in 1877 at a time when the people of South India were suffering from the effects of terrible famine.

Most of the import duties on British textile imports were removed to please the textile manufacturers of England. Indians interpreted the action as proof of the British desire to ruin small but growing textile industry of India. In 1878, the Arms Act was passed, which disarmed the Indians. It appeared that it was an attempt by the government to weaken the whole nation.

The second Afghan War cost the Indian treasury a lot. Lytton passed the Vernacular Press Act in 1878. The people belonging to all walks of life condemned the discriminatory provisions of the Act. It has been pointed out that the Act was a retrograde and ill-conceived measure injurious to the future progress of India.

At the same time in 1878, the government announced new regulations reducing the maximum age limit for sitting in the Indian Civil Service Examination from 21 years to 19. All these measures created a widespread discontentment among the Indians. Anti-Indian administration of Lord Lytton helped to intensify discontent against foreign rule.

14. Ilbert Bill Controversy:

During the viceroyalty of Lord Rippon, a controversy arose concerning the Ilbert Bill. Rippon tried to pass a law to enable the Indian district magistrates and sessions judges to try the Europeans in criminal cases. The Europeans in India organized a vehement agitation against the bill, which was drafted by Ilbert, the law member of Rippons government.

They poured abuses on Indians. Lord Rippon became the target of agitation. The Europeans declared that even the most highly educated among the Indians were unfit to try the Europeans. In the end, the government bowed before the Europeans. The Indians became conscious of the degradation to which foreign rule had reduced them. It increased racial bitterness, and led to the growth of national discontent.