

Indian National Movement (1905-1917)

Introduction

- The period from 1905 was known as the era of extremism in the Indian National Movement.
- The extremists or aggressive nationalists believed that success could be achieved through bold means.
- The influential extremist leaders were Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh.

Causes for the Rise of Extremism

- The failure of the Moderates to win any notable success other than the expansion of the legislative councils by the Indian Councils Act (1892)
- The famine and plague of 1896-97 affected the whole country, and the suffering of the masses
- The economic conditions of the people became worse.
- The ill-treatment of Indians in South Africa is based on the colour of their skin.
- The immediate cause for the rise of extremism was the reactionary rule of Lord Curzon: He passed the Calcutta Corporation Act (1899), reducing the Indian control of this local body.
- The Universities Act (1904) reduced the elected members in the University bodies. It also reduced the autonomy of the universities and made their government departments.
- The Sedition Act and the Official Secrets Act reduced the freedoms of all people.
- His worst measure was the Partition of Bengal (1905)

Methods used by the extremists

- Not cooperating with the British Government by boycotting government courts, schools and Colleges.
- Promotion of Swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods
- Introduction and promotion of national education.

Leaders of the Extremists

- The extremists were led by Bala Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak is regarded as the real founder of the popular anti-British movement in India. He was known as 'Lokamanya'. He attacked the British through his weeklies, The Maratha and the Kesari. He was jailed twice by the British for his nationalist activities and, in 1908, deported to Mandoli for six years. He set up the Home Rule League in 1916 at Poona and declared, "Swaraj is my birthright, and I will have it."
- Lala Lajpat Rai is popularly known as the 'Lion of Punjab'. He played an important role in the Swadeshi Movement. He founded the Indian Home Rule League in the US in 1916. He was deported to Mandalay on the ground of sedition. He received fatal injuries while leading a procession against the Simon Commission and died on November 17, 1928.
- Bipin Chandra Pal began his career as a moderate and turned into an extremist.
- Aurobindo Ghosh was another extremist leader, and he actively participated in the Swadeshi Movement.
- He was also imprisoned. After his release, he settled in the French territory of Pondicherry and concentrated on spiritual activities.

PARTITION OF BENGAL (1905)

- Curzon announced the partition of Bengal.
- The reason for partition was given as an attempt to improve administration.

- But the real aim was to 'Divide and Rule'. The partition was done to create a separate State for Muslims and introduce the poison of communalism in the country.
- However, the Indians viewed the partition as an attempt by the British to disrupt the growing national movement in Bengal and divide the Hindus and Muslims of the region.
- Widespread agitation ensued in the streets and the press. People of different parts of India opposed the partition of Bengal all over the country.
- This opposition was carried on by organized meetings, processions and demonstrations etc. Hindus and Muslims tied 'rakhi' in each other's hands to show their unity and protest.

Swadeshi Movement

- The Swadeshi Movement involved programmes like the boycott of government service, courts, schools and colleges and foreign goods, Promotion of Swadeshi goods, Promotion of National Education through the establishment of national schools and colleges.
- It was both a political and economic movement
- In Bengal, even the landlords joined the movement
- The women and students took to picketing. Students refused to use books made of foreign paper.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak realized the importance of boycott as a weapon that could be used to paralyze the whole British administrative machinery in India.
- The boycott and Swadeshi movements were instrumental in establishing swadeshi enterprises - textile mills, banks, hosiery, tanneries, chemical works and insurance companies. Swadeshi stores were opened.
- This made the British reverse the partition of Bengal and united it in 1911.

Hind Swaraj

- When the movement against the partition of Bengal was at its height, the annual session of the Congress was held at Calcutta in 1906 under the presidency of Dadabhai Naoroji.
- This session is significant because of the conciliation between the Moderates and Extremist
- Congress condemned the Partition of Bengal. In the words of DadaBhai Naoroji, it is a terrible blunder of England.
- The promotion of education was declared as the aim of Congress.
- Congress accorded the Swadeshi and the full Boycott support. For the first time, Boycott was authorised to be used as a political weapon.