

Home Rule Movement

Similar to the Ghadar movement, the Home Rule movement was India's peaceful response to World War 1. The major aim of the movement was to attain dominion status or home rule of India, like Australia and Canada.

Initially, the idea was campaigned by Annie Basant in 1915 through her newspapers, conferences, meetings, and public gatherings. However, in 1916, when extremists were admitted to the Indian National Congress, she started her movement and was later joined by Tilak. The Home Rule Movement created a patriotic environment throughout the country.

Need for Home Rule Movement

In the early 20th century, the Indian freedom struggle had lost its momentum because of these sole reasons which marked the need for the Home rule movement in India:

- The split of the National Congress Party in 1907: The National Congress party's differences had led to the emergence of Extremists and Moderates, which created a chaotic atmosphere in the air.
- Dissatisfaction among Indian aspirants concerning the Government of India Act, 1909.
- Lokmanya Tilak's arrest for six years - Following the split of INC, Tilak was arrested for six years after he heavily criticized and called out the British Government for their unruly actions in his newspaper Kesari.

After serving his sentence from 1908 to 1914, the freedom activist Lokmanya Tilak observed a lot of disconnect among the members of Congress and that the consequences of the Surat split were still fresh. He decided to take the reigns of freedom into his own hands and start a national movement (the Home rule movement) against the British.

Initially, he tried tracing his way back to the Indian National Congress and eliminating the differences by combining the Extremists and Moderates.

At the time, the face of Congress had changed after the Surat Split, and the need to put aside differences and work in unison was a priority. But since the need for self-governance was high, Tilak began his efforts to ignite a revolutionary change by setting up a Home rule league in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and central provinces in April 1916. Annie Besant set up her Home rule movement later in the same year.

Foundation of Home Rule League

Under the leadership of Tilak and Annie Basant, two home rule leagues were established-

- The **Indian Home Rule League** was started by Tilak at Belgaum in April 1916. The Indian Home Rule League headquarters was established in Delhi and had 6 branches.
- The madras Home Rule League was started by Annie Basant in September 1916. This league had 200 branches and was spread to almost all parts of the country.

Though they were formed at two different locations by two leaders, these two home rule movement had a common objective of achieving home rule or self-government in India. Tilak worked in the Central Provinces, Berar, Karnataka, and Maharashtra (except Bombay). At the same time, Annie Basant was active in other parts of the country. Though they worked closely together, perhaps to avoid friction between the two, these two leagues were not merged.

Objectives of Home Rule Movement

The major aims and objectives of the Home Rule Movement is as follows-

- To promote political education in India.
- To achieve self-government in India.
- To discuss agitation for self-government.
- To bring a revolution among Indians to raise their voice against their suppression by the British Government.
- To maintain the principles of the Indian National Congress and revive Indian political activity.
- To demand a broader political representation from the British Government for Indians.

Home Rule Movement Significance

The main aim of establishing the home rule movement was to create a government ruled by its people. Masses of Indians were educated about the idea of self-governance, which helped in sowing seeds for accelerating the Indian struggle and bridging the gap between Indians. Only peaceful methods of protest were condoned, and people were educated through newspapers and organized rallies.

The roar of political activism could be heard around India and paved the way for the extremists to get back into Congress. This led to the unification of Moderates, Extremists, and the Muslim League, which proved to be a huge positive. The home rule movement spread like wildfire, which led to attempts by the British Government to curb the movement by:

1. Enforcing the Indian Press Act 1910.
2. Provision of Newspaper 1908.
3. The arrest of Annie Besant in June-September 1917.

Eventually, though, the movement led Lord Montagu to release the August Declaration that stated that the Indians would be allowed to have a say in India's administration and the development of a self-governing institute. This also meant that the Home Rule movement would no longer be tagged as a radical movement.

Failure and Decline of the Home Rule Movement

Many factors contributed to the downfall of the Home Rule Movement. The following events can conclude the declining popularity of this movement:

- The home rule movement was derailed after Lokmanya Tilak fled to England for a libel case against Valentine Chirol, and Annie Besant could not demonstrate strong leadership skills.
- Everyone did not warmly accept the Home rule movement; there were serious objections from the Muslim, Anglo-Indian, and Non-Brahmin communities.
- The idea of Satyagraha, non-violence and Gandhian philosophy resonated more with the Indian people, ultimately dissolving this movement.
- Lastly, the movement was not propagated to all classes and sections of Indian society.

The Home Rule League was united by the Indian National Congress in 1920, with Mahatma Gandhi as the President. The Movement was driven to have more Indian representation in politics. While it helped India's freedom struggle significantly, it fell. Still, even changed, the home rule movement brought about positive changes in the country, such as the signing of the Lucknow Pact between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League to preserve the unity between the Hindu and Muslim Brotherhood.