

CHAPTER - I

THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL REVOLUTION IN A COLONIAL
STATE - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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CHAPTER - I

THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL REVOLUTION IN A COLONIAL
STATE - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

India became a classic colony of England in the 19th century and through its different phases the British rulers sought to exploit the country by devising different economic and political policies. The British government in India was completely opposed by Indians since its inception as different tribal and peasant uprisings took place. But these uprisings did not have a positive goal of the establishment of the alternative form of the society. But in the process of freedom struggle two alternative methods of over-throwing colonial state and ushering in on of national revolution were developed. The first method of non-violent political struggle was evolved by the Congress party which was culminated in the great Satyagraha mass movement of Mahatma Gandhi. The revolutionary terrorist movements were launched by individual terrorists since Vasudeo Balvant Phadke. The method of violent political struggle slowly graduated from its romantic nationalism to the ideology of national revolution in the broadly Marxian sense of the term in the writings of Bhagat Singh and his friends. Present dissertation is a modest attempt in understanding the development of the ideology of Bhagat Singh.

The British victory at Plassey (1751) laid down the foundations of a great empire in India which was initially called " the robber state " of Clive and Hastings. As Dr.Tara Chand says : " The conquest of Bengal and the transfer of power into the hands of the East India Company created a situation which had no parallel in the history of India "¹. It was a beginning of establishment of the colonial government in India. Slowly entire country was brought under control. In 1848, the conquest was complete. But the road to victory had not been easy. The Indian people resisted British rule from its very inception. Hardly a year passed till 1857 without any sort of armed rebellion in this or that part of the country.

But a powerful national struggle against British imperialism developed in India during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. This struggle, as shown by Bipan Chandra " was basically the product of the central contradiction between colonialism and the interests of the Indian people ".² To understand this clash of interests it is necessary to study the basic character of British rule in India and its impact on Indian society.

The expansion of the British power in India was marked by a few characteristics that largely determined the course of modern Indian history. The first and foremost of

them was the consistent exploitation of the Indian economy for the prosperity of British. As a result of this policy India became, as Jawaharlal Nehru has put it, an ' economic appendage of another country'. In fact the people of India became so many seeds in an oil mill of colonialism, to be crushed for the oil they yield.³ India has been conquered before but she had never been drawn into a political and economic system whose centre of gravity lay outside her soil. The people of India were never before subjected to a ruling class that remained interested in impoverishing them for the prosperity of a distant land.⁴ This exploitation became more acute with the development of the empire in different stages. In fact the British rule in India became " the most extensive and extraordinary system of crime which the world ever witness"⁵.

STAGES OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA :

British rulers had used their control over India to promote their own interests. But the nature of British rule changed with the changing pattern of Britain's own social, economic and political development.

In its first stage EIC wanted to establish a monopoly of the trade over India and East. The company required large amount of money to maintain powerful navy and army. Gradually, the company expanded its territories in India in order to enable it to levy more taxes over large areas and to increase financial resources. The company used its political power to acquire monopolistic control over Indian trade and production. Now the development of British capitalism needed immense capital for investment. Here the wealth drained out of India played an important part in financing Britain's capitalist development.⁶ Britain had in the meantime undergone the industrial revolution. The industrial capitalists became the dominant element. The colonial administration and policy in India were now to be necessarily directed to their interests. The company represented dying and not newly emerging force in British society. Now British rule in India entered its second stage.

In the second stage British capitalists needed outlets for their ever-increasing out put of manufactured goods. India's traditional economic structure had to be changed. In the economic field, British capitalists were given free entry into India. Britain in its second stage wanted India as a subordinate trading partner, as a market to be exploited and as a dependent colony to produce and supply the raw material and food stuffs Britain needed.⁷

The third stage of British rule in India started in the 1860's and it was the result of three major changes in the world economic situation. Firstly, the financial supremacy of Britain came to an end. Secondly, an extensive search for new and secure sources of raw materials and food stuffs now began and covered the entire world. Thirdly, the development of trade and industry and the extended exploitation of colonies and colonial markets began to produce an unlimited accumulation of capital in the developed capitalist countries. Once again the developed capitalist countries began a simultaneous search for areas where they could invest their surplus capital. The struggle for division of the world into a struggle for the redivision of colonial world began.

This period was one of stresses and strains for Britain. It now began as a vigorous effort to consolidate its control over its existing empire and to extend it further. The third stage of British rule in India was marked by a renewed upsurge of imperialist control which was reflected in the reactionary policies associated with the viceroynalties of Lytton, Dufferin, Lansdowne and above all Curzon. It should be noted here that a costly standing army absorbed nearly 52 percent of Indian revenues in 1904.⁸

BASIC FEATURES OF COLONIALISM IN INDIA :

After considering the stages of British rule in India the conclusion can be drawn that as a result of British rule, India was transformed by the end of the 19th century into a classic colony. " For the Britain, India was in total returns, the most profitable of imperial possessions and a place to make money in, a human cattle farm.⁹ It became a major market for British manufactures, a big source of raw materials and food-grains and an important field for the investment of British capital. Indian agriculture was taxed exorbitantly for the benefit of the imperial interests. India was placed in the paradoxical position of taxing the movement of its own goods while allowing the foreign goods to move freely.

In India the transport system mines and industries, foreign trade, shipping, banks were all under foreign control. Nearly one third of its revenue was spent in paying salaries to Englishmen. The Indian army acted as the chief instrument of maintaining protecting and promoting the British imperial interests in Asia and Africa and it was kept ready at the cost of Indian tax payers.

Above all, Indian economy and social developments were completely subordinated to British economy and social development. Indian economy was integrated into the world

capitalist economy to a subordinate position. During the very years after 1760 when Britain was developing into the leading developed, capitalist country of the world, India was being underdeveloped into becoming the leading backward, colonial country of the world. In truth the two processes were interdependent in terms of cause and effect. The entire structure of economic relations between Britain and India involving trade, finance and technology continuously developed India's colonial dependence and underdevelopment.⁷

THE IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE :

As a result of British rule there evolved the extremely regressive structure of agrarian relations. New social classes emerged at the top as well as at the bottom of the society. But the new pattern was neither capitalist nor feudalism. It was a new structure that colonialism evolved. It was semi-feudal and semi-colonial in nature. The colonial government behaved like a typical landlord. It was only interested in extracting high revenues and did not take any steps to modernise and develop Indian agriculture. The result was prolonged stagnation in agricultural production.

As the Indian economy was made colonial and dependent on world capitalism the growth in trade and industrial field did not represent a positive feature. It did not contribute to the welfare of the Indian people. India, no doubt, underwent commercial transformation but did not undergo an industrial revolution.

A major consequence of British rule in India was the prevalence of extreme poverty among its people. In fact the poverty of India was not a product of its geography or of the lack of natural resources; it was mainly a product of the history of the last two centuries. Bipan Chandra says " It is interesting, in this connection, to note that the dates of the beginning of the industrial revolution in Britain and the British conquest of Bengal Virtually Coincide." 8 In the words of Dr. Rutherford the British rule in India proved to be " the lowest and most immoral system of government in the world - the exploitation of one nation by another." 12

Different classes and groups of Indian society gradually realized that British rule was hindering their development in all basic aspects of life. The peasants, artisans and craftsmen and working class came to adopt a militant anti-imperialist posture. Slowly developing Indian capitalists gradually realized that they need a nation state

and government favourable for the growth of indigenous capitalists. They began to support the rapidly developing nationalist movement. For nearly half a century the modern Indian intellectuals believed in efficacy of the British rule and supported it. Gradually they realised the true character of British rule. Their understanding took time to develop. But by the end of the 19th century they had come to realise that what appeared to be modernisation in the beginning was in fact colonisation of India. In the end many National leaders came to conclude that "the country would be economically developed only if and when unadulterated British rule gave way to a political order in which the Indians played the dominant role."¹³ They now started nationalist political movement against British imperialism.

To sum up, the basic colonial character of British rule and its harmful impact on the lives of the Indian people led to the rise and development of powerful anti-imperialist movement in India.

RESISTANCE TO BRITISH RULE :

As we have pointed out "the first century of British rule in India was a period of mounting distress and unhappiness."¹⁴ Immediately after the victory of Plassery resistance movements

started in many parts of India against the extending domination of the EIC. "They were, of course, local, scattered and spontaneous in character but often very militant in form." The continuous resistance, wholly traditional in nature, took three broad forms : 1) Civil rebellion, (2) Tribal uprisings and (3) Peasant movements and uprisings.

CIVIL REBELLIONS :

Civil rebellion began with the very establishment of British rule in Bengal and Bihar. Popular revolts occurred in almost every district and province. For nearly 100 years popular discontent took the form of armed resistance led by traditional elements like the dispossessed chiefs, zamindars or religious leaders, ex-soldiers etc.

The famous Sanyasi rebellion led by religious monks and dispossessed zamindars lasted from 1763 to 1800. Manju Shah, a leader of the Sanyasi rebellion, used to adopt guerilla forms of struggle against the British. Then came the Chaur uprising in Bengal and Bihar which lasted from 1766 to 1772 and again from 1795 to 1816. In South India, the Raja of Vizianagara revolted in 1794, and the Paligars of Tamilnadu revolted in 1794. These were followed by many rebellions like rebellions of Malbar and Dindigal (1801) of Coastal Andhra (1801-05) of

Mysore (1800 and 1831) Vizagapatam uprising, and Travancore rebellion (1805). Maharashtra was, in fact, in perpetual revolt. The Kittur uprising (1824-29), the Kolhapur uprising (1824), the Satara uprising (1841) and the revolt of Gadkaris (1844) may be mentioned in particular. And even North India was no less turbulent.

The culmination of the traditional opposition to the British rule came with the Revolt of 1857 in which millions of peasants, artisans, and soldiers participated. It was product of the accumulated grievances of the people against the foreign government. An important element in the strength of the Revolt of 1857 lay in Hindu Muslim unity. As Bipan Chandra says " In fact the events of 1857 clearly bring out that the people and politics of India were not basically communal in medieval times and before 1858" 16

But it lacked plan, programme and funds. The failure of the revolt was almost a foregone conclusion. Dr. Tara Chand says " It was not inspired by any positive creative idea; it did not entertain either the vision of a higher social order or of a higher political system. There was no stable well-ordered organization behind the movement as a whole. There was no understanding of the character of the enemy's political organization".17.

So it can be said that they were backward looking and lacked any modern feeling of nationalism or a modern understanding of the nature and character of colonialism. The cause for which they fought can not be regarded unjust. With its demise the ground was cleared for the new forces to strike roots.

ADIVASI OR TRIBAL UPRISINGS :

The most militant outbreaks in the earlier periods were that of the tribal communities. In the words of Kumar Suresh Singh they "revolted more often and more violently than any other community."¹⁸ The tribal people participated in hundreds of uprisings. Amongst the numerous tribal revolts those of the Kols (1820 to 1837), the Santhals (1855-56), the Rampas (1879), and the mundas (1895) are prominent.

Santhal were deprived of the 'right to forest' wealth which they were enjoying from time immemorial. They under the leadership of Baba Tilaka Majhi (Murmy) resisted Cleaveland's (Collector of Bhagalpur) policy. In this heroic struggle casualty on both side was heavy. Cleaveland himself was killed in Jan. 1784. Tilka, too was seriously wounded and captured and then hanged in 1785. But Santhal rebellion continued and it was again renewed in the year 1885. As Chinmohan Sehanvis points out "Apart from the 1857 uprising..... the great santhal rebellion records the highest casualty figures of any mass struggle in India."¹⁹

The hill-tribes in Maharashtra broke out in resistance. Among them were Umaji Naik and his supporter Bapu Trimbkji Sawant, who carried on their activities during 1827-28 in the hills around the Torana. They were apprehended and tried. The Bhills and Kolis also resisted militantly. The best-known of the tribal rebellions of this period is of Birsa Munda Munde in the region south of Ranchi (1899-1900). Nearly 350 Mundas were put on trial three were hanged and 44 transported for life. Rebellion was put down.

Thus most of the tribal people objected to the penetration of their simple and sheltered life by the money lenders, traders, contractors, land grabbers who were the instruments of the Britishers in bringing the tribal people under the influence and control of colonial economy of exploitation. They used the British legal instruments to suppress the tribal people and sought to deprive them of their land.

PEASANT MOVEMENTS AND UPRISINGS :

The establishment of the British colonial rule, in India was accompanied by unmitigated disaster for Indian agriculture. "The main brunt of colonial exploitation was borne by the Indian peasantry which, consequently fought back at every step."20

In fact the peasants formed the back bone of the civil rebellion which were often led by zamindars and petty chieftains. This was, above all true of the Revolt of 1857. It is rightly pointed out by Dr. Kumar. He says " The first three decades of the 19th century were characterised by a series of peasant uprisings. The violent and rapid introduction of capitalist element into the agrarian economy of India were the chief causes of these revolts. A new layer of exploitation was superimposed on the top of the old. The zamindars and the money lenders intensified their exploitation of the peasants. The European planter also appeared on the scene to oppress them."²¹

The discontent of the Adivasi peasants of Chhota Nagpur burst into a number of open revolts before the Rebellion of 1857. The Munda rising (or rebellion) occurred during 1831-32. Then came Santhal uprising of 1855-57. It was a real peoples struggle on a mass scale. Fifty thousand Santhal peasants offered tenacious resistance. Then it was followed by many uprisings like Indigo cultivator's strike (1860), peasants uprising in Pabna and Bogra (1872-73), Deccan uprisings (1875), Birsa movement in (1881-1890) and Moplah uprising (1836-1896).

In the beginning, some peasant revolts took on a religious colouring. But very soon they revealed their agrarian origins by attacking the new zamindars, landlords, and moneylenders, irrespective of their religion. In the end they

clashed with British imperialism. Such were, for example, the Wahabi Movement that at one stage embraced Bengal, Bihar, Punjab and Madras, the Farazi movement of Bengal, and the Kuka Revolt in Punjab. Farazi leaders propagated that since land belonged to Allah, peasants need not pay land taxes to a zamindar. Mohammad Mohsin, generally known as Dadu Miah, was a son of the Muslim servant who preached among his numerous followers belonging to poor weaker community the excellence of egalitarianism. Not only Muslims but some Hindu peasant and artisans also joined Dadu Miah's movement.

There was certain shift in the nature of peasants' resistance to British rule after 1858. The peasants now fought directly for peasant demands and against the government, the foreign planters and the indigenous zamindars and moneylenders. "The ignorant and illiterate masses of India showed a better appreciation of the menace of colonialism than the newly educated or upper class Indians."²² These peasant actions against British imperialism shows the militant heritage of the Indian peasants. As Shive Kumar, in his book, 'Peasantry And The National Movement' says "The various struggles waged by the peasants enriched their revolutionary experience and raised their consciousness to a higher level..... These uprising though spontaneous and sporadic, resulted in the creation of forms of struggle which had relevance for the later period. They were the necessary dress rehearsals of the future struggle of the Indian Peasantry." ²³

MOVEMENT LED BY INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Discussing the nature of the revolt of 1857 Dr. Tara Chand says, "The Revolt of 1857 was the last attempt of a effete to recover its departed glory. With its demise the ground was cleared for the new forces to operate and for a new society to spring in existence." 24 During the second half of the 19th century the modern Indian intelligentsia created political associations in the country. It was slowly realising the true character of British colonialism.

Analysing the process Prof. A. R. Desai says "It was this economic unification of India which became the objective material basis for the steady amalgamation of the disunited Indian people into a united nation, for the growth of national sentiment and consciousness among them and for the rise and development of an all India national movement for their political freedom, and social and cultural progress." 25 The new educated class grew in the country and with the rise of Indian industries the class of industrial bourgeoisie came into existence. "These classes were the organizers of national movement ... The movement arose out of the conflict of British and Indian interests in the economic and other spheres. This conflict of interests is the genetic cause of the Indian national movement." 26 The politically conscious Indians were increasingly becoming aware of the need for an all India organisation.

Towards the end of the 19th century Hume observed that there was great economic discontent among the people. The object of the Congress, however, was to counteract revolutionary tendency by a body working along constitutional lines.*²⁷ He wanted to provide safety valve or a safe out let to the growing discontent among the Indians. As Bipan Chandra says, * He wanted to prevent the union of a discontented nationalist intelligentsia with discontented peasantry. By patronising a mild political movement he hoped to prevent it from getting out of control.*²⁸

With the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 the struggle for Indian freedom was launched in a small hesitant and mild but organised manner.²⁹ Early congressmen believed in gradualism and British methods of peaceful constitutional agitation. They wanted to mitigate the evils of British rule and not to terminate it. Their immediate political demands were extremely moderate. Therefore, the influence of the moderates declined with the rise of the extremists.

The basic weakness of the early nationalist movement was its narrow social base. Therefore, its influence was in the main limited to urban educated Indians. The masses were assigned a purely passive role as they backed political faith in the masses. The later nationalists or extremists differed from moderates in this respect. Extremists advocated a plan of militant mass

struggle against imperialism. Consequently they were forced to compromise with imperialism. Moreover, their programme was confined within the narrow limits of capitalism. They could not visualise India's development except along capitalist lines.³⁰ It has been rightly pointed out by Bipan Chandra in his book, "The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India," when he says, "It is also true, however, that their belief in the capitalist class as the economic saviour of India proved to be a major weakness historically as it was one of the factors which made the early Indian leaders rely on certain upper and middle strata of population for political support. This was one of the reasons why the national movement during this period lacked in depth and wide appeal and was therefore, ineffective."³¹

But the early nationalists represented the most progressive force of the time. The period from 1885 to 1905 was the seed time of Indian nationalism and the early nationalists sowed the seeds well and deep. Above all, they tried to modernize the politics by adopting secular approach to politics. Many extremist leaders of later period, unfortunately did not follow the wise postulates of secular politics expounded by moderates.

EXTREMIST AND TERRORIST MOVEMENTS :

The Congress movement during its early phase was not appreciated by the young nationalists who calimed that India could not win freedom unless she waged a violent struggle against the Britishers. Therefore, there was a long series of terrorist action against the imperialists. Unlike the early peasant and tribal uprisings the terrorists were educated modern nationalists and they had a clear goal before them. The terrorism grew with the development of extremist movement in the Congress.

From the beginning of the 1890's opposition began to coalesce against the current leadership of the Congress, against the kind of organisation it had become and the ideas which it represented.³² Government's refusal to accept the political and economic demands made by Indian leaders and its growing reliance on repressive mensures ultimately led to the loosening of faith of Indians in the ideology and technique of liberal nationalism.³³ As a result the extzemism or militant nationalism emerged in the closing years of the 19th century. It is rightly argned by Shankar Ghose when he says, " With the rise of extremism in India the glamour of England and English institutions gradually faded and English influence came to be replaced by the influence emanating from the European literature of revolt."³⁴ Mazini inspired many extrimists like Lala Lajpat Rai, Vinayak Savarkar and Many others.

B. G. Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Anrobindo Gosh and Lala Lajpat Rai were the chief exponents of militant school of nationalism or extremism. Tilak encouraged militant methods in politics "Tilak's method and approach were completely different from those of the westernised moderates who were impregnated with the Victorian ideas of liberalism and who believed in secularism."³⁵

As early as 1879, Vasudev Balwant Phadke, organised an armed revolt against the foreign domination. He heralded the dawn of revolutionary and extremist era in India's fight for freedom.³⁶ As Balshastri Hardas points out, "He was the first leader of guerilla warfare after the first war of independence and first martyr to dream of the setting up an independent Indian Republic."³⁷

One important factor which gave rise to the extremist ideology was the worsening of the economic condition of India right from 1885. It became very serious after 1890. In the words of Dadabhai Naoroji 'the poverty of the people was the greatest question and question of questions'. A part from the drain, the military policy of the government came in for much criticism. The imposition of duty on Indian inputs in 1893-94 on cotton goods clearly showed that "Indian interests were sacrificed to those of lancashire."

In many famines the people died like flies 'Mr.R.C. Dutta wrote " The six famines occurring between 1877 and 1900 carried off fifteen millions of people a population which was equal to half of England during those days. Out of all these the famine of 1846 was the most serious one."³⁸ The government negligence created a spirit of defiance among the people and caused riots. Tilak who did not care for government's comfort began to educate the people. Tilak even went as far as to say that no land revenue should be paid when the people were dying of starvation and had no capacity to pay."³⁹ He even directed the people to go to the collector and ask him to provide them with food and work as it was his duty to do so. ⁴⁰

The miserable plight of the people increased further with the occurrence of Plague epidemic of 1896 and 1897. The misery of the people increased by the mismanagement and unsymptheti unsympthetic dealings by bureacracy. The special Act horrified the people. Tilak wrote " people are afraid of government operations than of the prevalance of Plague."⁴¹ As a result, the people adopted terrorist methods. Rand was shot dead by Chaphekar brothers.

The extremists and terrorist leaders during this period were great patriots but they were influenced by religion. Leaders like Tilak and Aurobind used religion to

mobilise the people. Chaphekar brothers were the supporters of orthodox Hindu religion. Both in Bombay and Bengal national activity was considered as a religious work. Aurobindo wanted of religion and politics. The cult of Kali was popular among Bengali revolutionaries.

Terrorism that first emerged in 1897, reappeared in the middle of the first decade of the 20th century. In Bengal the cult of violence was developed and many secret societies were established. The Anushilan Samitee was established in Calcutta in 1902. It was followed by similar organisations in many other towns like Dacca, Anushilan Committee.

The revolutionary movement since 1905 grew in bigger dimensions and there appeared the cult of the Bomb with all its ruthlessness and ferocity.⁴² Further Lord Curzon's attitude and artition of Bengal was taken as national insult and acted as a match box to the already ablaze conditions. The high feelings of the people found expression in new papers like 'The Kesari', 'The Yungantar', 'The Sandhya' and 'The Nrisinh'. The Yungatar' and 'The Sandhya' began to preach revolution.

The rise of extremism and terrorism was linked to the dicatatorial policies of Lord Curzon especially his decision to divide Bengal. The extremist leaders in the Congress began

dominating the Congress in 1905 and 1906 and as a result of it the party was divided in 1907. As soon as the party was divided the government decided to suppress the extremists with heavy hand. Terrorists also launched their war against the Britishers.

The first bomb was made and meant for Sir B. Fuller, the Lt. Governor of Eastern Bengal. The task was entrusted to Shri Prafulla Chaki. He did not succeed. The next attempt was to blow up the train of the Lt. Governor of Bengal on December 6, 1907. Though the train had been derailed near Midanapur, yet no casualty took place. Then revolutionaries tried to assassinate Mr. Kingsford who was notorious as a vindictive judge during the Swadeshi movement. Two youths, Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki, threw a bomb on April 30, 1908, on Kingsford carriage. But he was not in it and two other ladies were killed. Khudiram was arrested and was hanged. Tilak wrote article on Khudiram in the 'Kesari' of June, 1908 for which he was sentenced to six years rigorous imprisonment.⁴³ Then the famous case was launched known as Alipore conspiracy case when police discovered bomb factory at Mraripakur Road. The 34 persons including Aurobindo Ghosh, Barindar Kumar Ghosh, Bhupendra Nath Gupta were arrested and tried. Alipore case ended in the conviction of Barindra Ghosh and others. One of the early revolutionaries was M.N. Roy who laid foundations of communist movement in India.

The activities of the revolutionary group were no longer confined to Bengal. They spread to other parts such as the Punjab, Delhi, U.P., and contacts were established in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Madras. The bomb was thrown on the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge on December 23, 1912 on the occasion of his state entry into Delhi. The Viceroy was severely wounded. Basant Kumar Balmukund, Avad Bihari, Amarchand were convicted and sentenced to death in the Delhi conspiracy case. Rashbehari Bose escaped the arrest.

Even though heavy punishments were given to the many accused revolutionaries in many conspiracy cases, but the movement instead of dying out, acquired vigour. Attempts were made to manufacture arms and revolutionaries were trained in the use of them. Now they required funds. Therefore, a number of political decoities were committed. On 12th Feb. 1915, M.N. Roy with two others looted the cash of Birds and Company in broad day light. This came to be known as Garden Reach political dacoity. One of the most important cases of procuring arms took place in 1914, when the revolutionaries managed to get packing of pistols from one of the employer of Rodda and Company. Then the Mainpuri conspiracy under the leadership of Gendalal Dixit created much sensation in northern India.

INDIAN REVOLUTIONARIES ABROAD :

The role of Indian revolutionaries abroad, too, was significant. Some of the terrorist revolutionaries went abroad and established centres in Europe. The activities of Indian revolutionaries like Shyamaji Krishna Varma, Madam Cama, S. R. Rana and Vinayak Savarkar with their headquarters in London and Paris reached new high after 1910-11. They were engaged in propagating the cause of Indian revolution through the new magazine ' The Indian Sociologist '.

After shymaji's exit from London the leadership of ' India House ' went to Savarkar; Indian House became the venue of all revolutionary activities. Savarkar knowing the importance of revolutionary literature wrote a book on the history of the 1857 rebellion. He had postulated that the 1857 revolt was not just a mutiny but was of part of a bigger national upsurge. ⁴⁴ He said that 50th the anniversary of 1857 should be celebrated as a national festival.

On July 1, 1909, Madanlal Dhingra a Punjabi Youth, shot dead Sir Curzon Wylie in London. In his statement he declared that the murder was committed as a revenge for the hanging and transportation for life of Indian revolutionaries. In his statement he further said, " As a Hindu, I feel that

wrong done to my country is an insult to God."⁴⁵ His statement became an important revolutionary document. Madanlal's action found an echo and Anant Kanhere, a student, shot dead Jackson at Nasik who had committed Ganesh Savarkar to the session court. Both Dhingra and Kanhere were sentenced to death. V.D. Savarkar was arrested and sentenced to transportation for life and was sent to the Andaman. With his arrest one phase in the terrorist movement ended.

The terrorists added a colourful and inspiring chapter to the history of our freedom movement. They took the freedom movement to the higher stage. But inspite of all their idealism and suffering they were bound to fail. Acts of individual violence, however heroic they may be can not mobilise the masses. The imperialist power could easily deal with these. It is important to note here that Savarkar, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bagha Jatin and others were thinking in terms of freedom but they were basically moved by patriotic feelings and advocated emotional religious nationalism.⁴⁶ Most of the time they were working without common plan and the central leadership. As Dr. Chousalkar points out they could not visualise clearly a new social order.⁴⁷ M.N. Roy stated, " They did not know exactly how these conditions could be changed. But they tried to change them any how." ⁴⁸

Our early revolutionaries were suffering from ideological and political immaturity which was inevitable at the early stage. They were not very clear about the content of the independence for which they were fighting. Their minds were dominated by, religious conceptions and finally they had faith in the hero-theory in which history is supposed to be made by heroes. ⁴⁹ Explaining the features of this era Manmath Nath Gupta says, " In the period under study, neither the bourgeoisie nor the working class were in a position to launch a mass movement for freedom. Naturally, the middle class youth took up the challenge in their own way, which was bound to take the form of individual actions in the beginning. This limitation was the outcome of a historic process."⁵⁰

Despite these limitations national revolutionaries have have won a lasting place in the annals of the freedom struggle of India. Later many have outgrown their early limitation and developed into communists. The Punjabi revolutionaries of this period, however, were free from the communalism from the very beginning. Sardar Ajit Singh, Lal Chand Falak, Sufi Ambaprasad, Lala Hardayal and all their associations were secular. Religion for them was a private affair.⁵¹

THE GHADAR MOVEMENT :

The new phase of revolutionary activities began with the Ghadar party which was active in Punjab, U.P. and Bengal. The Ghadar revolutionaries were active in Canada, U.S.A. and other countries. The movement was launched during the first world war was a joint action of the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims which culminated in the establishment of parallel government at Affganistan. The Ghadar movement played an important part in the Indian freedom movement.

The Indian revolutionaries abroad added a new dimension to the freedom struggle. Among these revolutionaries were the members of the Ghadar party. In America the Ghadar party movement was organised by revolutionaries from Punjab. It was founded not by the middle class youth but by Punjabi Peasants who had emigrated to U.S.A. to earn money working as labourers infarms and factories. The aim of the Ghadar party was to overthrow the imperialist British rule in India and substitute it with the establishment of national republic based on freedom and equality.⁵²

Lala Hardyal felt the need to co-ordinate the activities of all the organizations working in different parts of America. He convened the meeting of Indian revolutionaries living in America and Canada. The new organisation to be called

the ' Hindustani Association of the Pacific Coast ' was established in 1913. It was later renamed as Ghadar Party. Lala Hardayal was the President and Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna was the Secretary of the organisation. The Ghadar party started a paper with the title ' Ghadar '. The very first issue of this paper (Weekly) declared that its war against British Raj had started from its birth date only. This paper was published in English as well as in Hindi, Urdu, Gurmukhi, Bengali and Marathi.

In the every issue of ' Ghadar ' different articles explaining the true nature of British rule were published. It levelled 4 charges against the British rule. Some of the important charges made against the British government were as below.⁵³

- 1) British rule in India was constantly exploiting India for the economic benefit of Britain.
- 2) British government was spending more money on military expenditure than on education and health.
- 3) Army is sent to Afganistan and Burma and other countries at the Indian cost.
- 4) More and more people in India are living in a state of starvation and half starved condition.



- 5) Famine atrocities are increasing day by day but the government is not showing any serious concern in this regard etc. .

The ' Ghadar ' paper used to publish the translation of Savarkar's ' First war of Independence ' in Urdu and Punjabi languages. In one of its issues even it printed the picture of Savarkar in Andman showing that he was yoked to the oil mill.⁵⁴

The aims, rules and regulations of the party and the duties of the party members were framed by one committee only after long deliberations. It will be appropriate to mention these point which are given by Preetamsinh Panchhi in his book ' Ghadar ki Gunj ' .⁵⁵

AIMS : LIBERTY AND EQUALITY

RULES AND REGULATIONS :

- 1) Any man who desires freedom can join this party irrespective of his caste or country.
- 2) Any man can join the party irrespective of his religion. There will be no place for religion in the working of the Ghadar Party. No man will be allowed to enter the party with religious bias. There exist national relations

and not religious relations among its members. There will not be any discussion on religious matters in the party.

3) All men will be allowed to eat any thing, any type of meat or vegetables as he likes.

4) Vande Matram will be the national anthem of the party.

DUTIES :

1) It is the duty of every member to help the cause of the independence of India morally, physically and financially.

2) It is also the duty of every member to help the war of independence launched by any freedom loving and equality loving people of any country in any part of the world. Here also it is their duty to extend help to them morally, physically and financially.

3) It is the important duty of its members to try to end the British rule in India and to replace it by the republican form of government.

4) It is the duty of every member to remain loyal to these aims until the last.

" Ultimately the Ghadar party made serious efforts to raise fund and the procure arms and ammunition in order to take part in the armed revolutionary struggle in India. To help the Indian revolutionary movement in America, seed of ' insubordination ' and patriotism in Indian Army and the ideas of revolt in the public at large were also Sown.⁵⁶ . The Liberty pamphlets published by revolutionaries found their way into the army stations in India.

Berlin Revolutionary Committee approached the German and Turkish government and tried to get the help from them in a war against Britain. Raja Mahendra Pratam and Barkatullah went to Kabul where they met king Amanuliah and established the Azad Hind Sarkar. It was the first government in exile. Vajpeyi wrote " While the Indo-German conspiracy diverted its energies in trying to send arms and ammunition the Ghadar party busied itself in sending Indian revolutionaries back to their country to bolster up the revolutionary activities. A whirlwind campaign was organised. The movement was well responded by revolutionaries from all parts of the world Canada, Japan, Shanghai, Honkong, Manila, Singapore, British Guinea, Fizi and South Africa. As a result of it, about three thousand persons reached India to strike while the iron was hot.⁵⁷

The Kamagatu Maru episode and the return of large number of Sikhs from Canada and U.S.A. inflamed the situation at the very outset of the war. When the ship carrying angry passengers who were denied entry in Canada came to Calcutta they were asked to land at Budge Budge. The Government denied them free entry in Calcutta as they were likely to spread resentment and add fuel to disaffection in the war period. Special train was arranged to carry them directly to Punjab.⁵⁸ But it was not easy to force them to get into the train. Twenty passengers lost their lives in Police firing. The firing and the heavy death toll created furor in the country. This helped the Bengal Revolutionaries to push ahead with their plans for insurrection. Many Punjabi revolutionaries who escaped the police joined the Bengali revolutionaries.

The leader of Sikhs, Kartarsingh and Pingale retreated from America and they contacted the Bengali revolutionaries like Rash Behari Bose, Naren (M.N.Roy) and Jatin Mukharjee. The plan of insurrection was prepared in Benars meeting. The situation was tense and favourable for the uprising in Punjab after Kamagata maru episode. Many emigres were spread in towns and villages. Rash Behari established contacts with them through Pingale. Sachindranath Sanyal also helped in the work. Insurrection was to start on 15th Feb. 1915. But the police came to know about dates and even changed dates. The uprising did not materialise.

As a result number of prominent revolutionaries arrested and implicated in the Lahore consipracy case and the two supplementary cases. Rash Behari escaped arres and later went to Japan. In the first Lconspiracy case in all 22 persons including Pingle and Kartarsingh were given death sentences.

The plan of armed insurrection did not materialise because it lacked proper organization and co-ordination as well as required amount of arms for their uprising.⁵⁹ But the greatest defect of these plants was their failure to keep secrecy about their plans. The government always got prior information and so it prepared well itself to meet the situation.⁶⁰ Hence the party had to pay a heavy price.

However, in spite of its failure, the Ghadar party took a big step forward. * It freed its politics from religion and took to secularism. Religion was declared a private affair. The Ghadar party urged upon the Hindus and Muslims to give greater attention to economic matters as they affected all people equally. The problem was not one of Hindu versus Muslims. It was one of Indians versus British enslavers.⁶¹

The Ghadar revolutionaries were the first in India to realize that when religion was mixed with politics it became a deadly poison which slowly corroded the very vitals of the nation. Professor Sumit Sarkar rightly points out, " Indian revolutionaries abroad helped to end the intense Hindu religiosity relative parochialism, and rather limited social outlook of early militant nationalism."⁶² The second most important contribution of Ghadar movement was that it served to be the womb to give birth to many revolutionary communist leaders like M.N. Roy, M. Ahmed and others.⁶³ In many respects the Ghadar party was far ahead of their contemporaries because both moderates and extremists were co-operating with British government during the war period.

The failure of the Ghadar movement, the Home rule league movement of Besant and Tilak and declaration of Montague that the government wanted to make some political reforms were the factors that made politics of the country surcharged. The individual terrorists were suppressed. By 1918, Gandhi decided to enter Indian politics in a big way. During this phase politics of the country was surcharged.

POLITICAL MILITANCY IN PUNJAB :

In the second decade of this century, Punjab and U.P. forged ahead of Bombay and Bengal as far as revolutionary terrorism was concerned. The Ghadar movement was rooted in Punjab and the Punjab peasantry was in ferment. Under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh (Uncle of Sardar Bhagat Singh) the peasants launched many struggles. In 1919 Mahatma Gandhi entered the scene and launched his first mass movement in India when he decided to oppose the oppressive Rowlatt act which curbed the rights of the people. He received good response in Punjab. But in April, 1919 in the Jalianwala bag at Amritsar the British troops moved down hundreds of innocent and unarmed people who gathered to listen to the speeches of the Congress leaders. Due to massacre of hundreds of people the anger against the British rule increased. Along with this was the social reform movement of the militant Akalis who wanted to liberate the gurudwaras from the control of pro-government corrupt Mahants. The Akali Jathas launched unique non violent struggle against the Mahants.⁶⁴ They were supported by nationalists. This movement brought Sikh peasant in the national movement.

Thus, political situation in Punjab in 1920-21, was in the militant phase and politics of the state was greatly radicalised. Bhagat Singh and his friends were the product of this nationalist ferment.

While concluding our discussion we can say that the oppressive nature of the British rule was realised by the Indians and they revolted against it. But by the end of 19th century and early 20th century, the anger of the people got channalised through the nationalist movement and the revolutionary terrorist movement. After 1920, both these movements underwent lot of change because the classes of workers and the peasants became active and they began challenging the British rule. Second, major influence was that of the great Soviet revolution of 1917 and the success of new state in consolidating itself. This gave encouragement to spread of new ideas of socialism and revolution.⁶⁵

Bhagat Singh, whose family was greatly involved in national movement, was profoundly influenced by these factors and his ideas on the national revolution in a colonial state bear imprints of these events.

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