

CHAPTER - I :

BACKGROUND OF ESTABLISHMENT OF
THE CONGRESS PARTY : 1885

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CHAPTER - I :-

BACKGROUND OF ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONGRESS PARTY - 1885.

After the decay of Mughal Empire there existed many small states in North India but there was no central big power. At that time British East Indian Company was doing business in India. There were other foreign business companies also. British East India Company took the advantage of the situation and slowly established of her rule in India.

†:1 (A) ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA :

Vasco-da-Gama's discovery of the sea route to India paved the way for Portuguese and Spanish traders to come to India. The objectives of all these foreigners were to do business in India. But except the Britishers and the French other failed.

In 17th century Mughals were in power in India but Mughal power came to an end after the death of Aurangzeb. Due to Shivaji, Bajirao and other Maratha generals, Maratha confederacy became a great power in India. They established their hold on Delhi Emperor also. But the gradual decline of the Maratha power after 1761 no other Indian power was in a position to extend its power all over India.

The British and the French East India Companies were

playing a prominent role in the Indian politics after 1750. There was a prolonged war between French and British for the supremacy in South India known as 'Carnatic War'. The British victory in Carnatic War was one of the most important events, which paved the way for establishment of British rule in India. There were three important discoveries in Carnatic War i.e. first, hopeless incompetence of the Indian army pitted against superior the European military skill and discipline. Secondly, European trading companies could recruit native soldiers to fight against their own countrymen. Thirdly, the possibility of deriving important political and commercial advantages by taking sides in the contest between rival claimants for throne.¹

By the end of 18th century, the political conditions in Bengal were favourable for the British take-over. Siraj-Ud-Dauli's succession was challenged by Alivardi Khan's daughter. After settling the dispute, he had developed quarrels with British East India Company in Bengal - that gave shelter to his opponent, the son of Maharaja Rajbullabh. Siraj-Ud-Daulah demanded that the son of Rajabullabh should be returned to him. But the Company refused to oblige. Siraj invaded Calcutta and the British surrendered. But in the battle of Plassey in 1757 Robert Clive conclusively defeated the armies of the Navab and established the British control over Bengal.

Thus, the British Company established its power in

Bengal and Madras Provinces. The East India Company became the greatest power in India by the end of 18th century. Its further expansion was merely a question of opportunity and time. Wellesley and Margins of Hastings were mostly responsible for expansion of British rule in India. First of all Warren Hastings consolidated the British power in Eastern India. Then he established his control over Nizam of Hyderabad and Nawab of Avadha. Lord Wellesley continued the expansion and conquered Mysore and successfully destroyed Maratha power, which was the most powerful opponents of British rulers. The Emperor of Delhi Shah Alam, a protage of Sindhia, came under the British protection.

Hastings added different Maratha and Rajput territories to British empire. After that their existed no state outside the British empire or its sphere of influence between the Himalaya and Kanyakumari and except the Punjab and Sindh, on the West and Assam in the East.² But slowly, Sindh and in 1849 Punjab were conquered and attached to British Empire. Though the proclamation of 1858 declared the Indian princely states as a sovereign states but the Act of 1876 by which Queen Victoria assumed the title of "Empress of India" legally made them the subjects of British power. This act made the British legally the permanent power in India.

The British rule was responsible for starting the new age in India, as the British rulers introduced new secular education system in India that imparted superior knowledge to

Indians. They introduced several new reforms like Railways and Post and through English education gave birth to the Indian middle class that played a very important role in modernization of the country.

1:2 (B) EMERGENCE OF INDIAN MIDDLE CLASS DUE TO WESTERN EDUCATION AND FREE-PRESS :

British Government introduced the education system in India that changed the out look of the people. The British rule was responsible for bringing about two basic changes in the Indian Society. First, it is caused of Indian emergence of middle class and secondly it changed the out look of middle class. Due to lack of education, people living in the villages remained culturally and intellectually back-ward³.

What the revival of Greek learning had done in Europe in the 15th Century due to introduction of Western education, similar things occurred in India also. The British had started schools and colleges in India. They had established three universities in 1857. Because of expansion of educational facilities, slowly a new class was taking birth which initially supported the British rule. The middle class got new knowledge through these institutions and with the help of that knowledge, they started social and religious reform movements in India. The conflict between a social reformer and a traditionalist ensued.

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Before the British advent, India was backward in all the fields of knowledge and discipline. Indians started making efforts to improve the conditions. In 1816 the missionaries had started a news paper 'Bengal Gazette' (in English) in India. But its life was very short. The Indian language magazines started in 1818 by scrapur missionaries i.e. 'Digdarshan'. After that many magazines were published in different provinces in India, by different public spirited men.

Indian press was also one of the major causes of the emergence of the middle class in India. Through the newspapers Indians could acquire different type of knowledge of other countries. That created in them the consciousness of freedom. The educated class in India was influenced by the foreign events like movement of unification and liberation in Germany and Italy, Home-rule agitation in Ireland and division of Africa among European powers etc.⁴

Social and religious reforms were propagated by the early news papers. Religious reform movement emphasised the revival of ancient power and the glory of the Hindu community. The press during these period strongly assisted in mobilizing public opinion, convening provincial and national conferences, organizing political movements, building up public institutions and fighting out public controversies.⁵ It may be printed and that its influence was spread in rural as well as urban areas. For the village people, it became the principle means of political education. The Indian news papers

were in the nature of things, an activity of middle class and through them the middle class acquired the influence over the whole country.

The new middle class took lead in alleviating the social, economic and political problems of the country. For that purpose, it published newspapers in regional languages. It also learnt the technique of articulating one's own views through a platform of the association. It established different societies and associations to practice and to disseminate their own view points among the people. As they established societies for purpose of social and religious reforms. They established different all India associations to express their political views. Establishment of the Indian National Congress was the culmination of this process.

1:3 (C) THE ALL INDIA ASSOCIATIONS ESTABLISHED BEFORE THE RISE OF CONGRESS PARTY :

Indian National Congress can rightly be called the first all India association. But before the establishment of Indian National Congress, there existed some associations working in different provinces to safeguard the interests of Indian people. Some important associations were as follows :

(1) "THE BRITISH INDIA ASSOCIATION" :

It was founded at Calcutta in 1851-52. It was the major association among the three associations. The membership of the association was not large as there were only

200 members of the association, consisting of wealthiest, ablest and influential figures of the province.

Its function was to establish and develop the contacts between Indian and British people. It tried to influence British Demos in favour of its object. The association took keen interests in economic, social and political problems of the country.

The British Indian Association suggested such reforms like - legislature council should be established, judicial power should be separated from the executive etc. Due to these activities, the British India association was the most popular association in Calcutta upto 1860. It is said that the people of Bengal looked upon it as their parliament⁶. It lost its influence afterwards because some prominent figures of the association passed away.

(2) "THE INDIAN LEAGUE" :

On 25th Sept. 1875, a meeting was held at pavilion to establish new association. According to 'Indian Daily News' the purpose of the meeting was to establish a truly national and comprehensive association. Membership of the association was open to all people, who could pay annual fees of Rs. 5/-.

The Indian League demanded some reforms in municipal administration and took part in elections also. It had a very short life of two years.

(3) "THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION" :

A.M. Bose, who wanted to establish a broad based association founded the Indian association on 26th July 1876. The object of this association was to represent the people and promote the political, intellectual and national advancement of the people.

(4) "BENGAL ASSOCIATION" :

A disgruntled group of educated people formed Bengal association in Nov. 1876. The object of the association was to interpret the views of the Government to the people and to convey wants and wishes of the people to the Government.

(5) "BOMBAY ASSOCIATION" :

This association was established in 1851-52.

Jagannath Shankar Seth, was the president of the association. The Bombay association came to an end in 1867. There were 90 members of the association.

The functions of the association were as follows - They sent report of Licence Bill to the legislature assembly. The Bombay association demanded that the competitive examinations should be held in India simultaneously. It also demanded some reforms in municipal affairs and railway bill.

(6) "THE WESTERN INDIA ASSOCIATION" :

Some members of the Bombay association resigned

their membership and established a new association. The Western India Association was established on 19th April 1983. V.I. Shankarsheth was its president, and R.N. Khot was its Secretary. There were 150 members of the association. The association sent a report against the Revenue Jurisdiction Bill to Viceroy. It wanted to promote the interests of the Indian people. The death of Shankar Seth badly affected the functioning of the association.

(7) "THE POONA ASSOCIATION" OR ' SARVAJANIK SABHA ' :

The association was established on 2nd April 1870. R.G. Natu was its president and K.P. Natu was its secretary. M.G. Ranade was the brain behind the working of Sabha. There were 140 members of the Sabha mainly consisting of landholder, businessmen, Government Servants and intellectuals etc.

The object of the association was to communicate wishes and opinions of the people to the Government, to suggest the ways and means for improving the functioning of the municipalities, to establish good relations between the rulers and the ruled and to discuss the matter of public interests and importance. The Sabha organized Swadeshi Movement also. The Poona Association supported British rule because they thought that the British rule was in the interest of Indian people.

(8) "MADRAS NATIVE ASSOCIATION" ;

Like two other presidency associations it was established in 1851-52. It was more concerned with British than Bombay and Calcutta associations. It sent several representations to Britain and it represented the cause of India. In India also, it sent representations on such a subjects as administration, judicial reforms, religious riots etc. Madras Native Association was declined after 1862.

(9) "BRITISH INDIA ASSOCIATION OF OUDH" :

The association was the handiwork of a Bengaly, named Dakshinaranjan Mukharji. British had brought him to Avandha to teach Talukdar's the good intention of the Government. Its membership was restricted to Talukdar's only, who paid an anual revenue to the Government Rs. 5,000/- and more. But later on membership was extented to all Talukdar's. Maharaja Degvijaysing was the president of the association.

(10) "MAHOMEDAN ASSOCIATION"- (ANJUMANI - ISLAMI) :

It was founded on 6th May 1855 by the pleaders and Government employeess. Its object was to create interests in Muslims about Western knowledge, to promote social intercourse between Muslims and Anglo-Indians and to act as a pressure group to safegard interests of the Muslim community.⁷ There were approximately 500 members of the association Abdual Latif was the Secretary of the Society.

(11) "EAST INDIA ASSOCIATION" :

It was founded in 1866. Its declared objective was independence, disinterested advocacy and promotion by all legitimate means of the interests and welfare of Indians.⁸ Its membership was open to all people, including Britishers on the payment of annual fee of Rs. 10. There were 1000 members of the association in 1871.

These different associations tried to advocate the cause of the Indian people by making representation to the Government. All of them believed in necessity of the British rule but they also realized the necessity of the association to promote and advocate welfare of the Indians. As their brief history shows these associations were small and some of them last for only few years, but they made it clear that there was a need of All India Association. The Ilbert Bill controversy, which is called the white revolt of India, opened the eyes of all the educated Indians as the attitude of the white population sharply reminded the Indians that they were an inferior race.

1:4 (D) ILBERT BILL CONTROVERSY :

The efforts of all India associations to stimulate political consciousness of the people were accentuated by the two notable events in 1883. The first event was Ilbert Bill. Mr. Ilbert, Law member of Viceroy's council introduced a bill regarding the reforms in judicial system. In those days, Britishers enjoyed the special privilege of trial by a

judge of their own race. An Indian Judge could not give justice to an European. Ilbert tried through their^{is} bill to remove the racial inequality. The Englishmen and Anglo-Indian, opposed it, and called it a 'Black Act'. They organized defence associations against it and raised a banner of revolt. They collected a fund for launching an agitation. The Indian Association carried an agitation against them. Indian Associations of Bengal and Bombay fought hard for the bill and representation was made by them to the Viceroy. Due to the opposition of the white people, though the bill was not withdrawn but it was greatly amended, diluted and passed as a law.

The Ilbert Bill controversy helped the cause of Indian political advance as Indians learnt to their dismay that they were not treated equally. They also realised the importance of organization and combination in political struggle. Their eyes were opened to the ignoble status of the Indians in their own country. In spite of humiliation they learnt a great lesson from the white revolt.⁹ It is to be noted that the agitation against the Ilbert Bill stirred up the public mind only in Bengal and Bombay It produced little or no effect in Madras, and N.W. province and Punjab were perfectly silent.¹⁰

Second important event was Surendranath's contempt case. British Government brought a charge against Surendranath Banerjee for contempt of court on account of his

comments against the Chief justices of Calcutta high court. Banerjee was convicted and sentenced for two months imprisonment. The Indian people opposed the decision. This event also helped the advancement of Indian political development.

The imprisonment of Surendranath evoked sympathy and protest in remote parts of India. Public meetings were held in Agra, Amritsar, Lahor, & Poona etc. and many other towns in India.¹¹ The second important impact of Surendranath's imprisonment was that the people started collecting national fund for the political advancement, of India. They collected Rs. 20,000 and handed it over to the Indian Association, Calcutta.

The above events accentuated the process of establishment of All India Organization to discuss political affairs. At the same time, as opportunity was provided by the Government to hold an international exhibition at Calcutta in 1883. The Indian Association expected that large number of people would visit Calcutta on that occasion. They decided to take advantage of this occasion and planned to inaugurate All India Association. Thus the first National conference of Indians was held in Calcutta on 28th, 29th and 30th Dec. 1883. This Congress was a nucleus of the Indian National Congress.

1:5 (E) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS †

There was a great change in Indian politics after the establishment of All India Association in 1883. The

National conference took a definite shape in two sessions of National Conference at Calcutta. Mr. A.L. Mazumdar, President of Congress stated that the Calcutta National conference anticipated the congress by two years and in a large measure prepared the ground for it^{1,2}. But A.O. Hume had undoubtedly the credit of the establishment of the Indian National Congress. When Hume retired from Government service, he appealed to the Graduates of Calcutta University to take initiative in establishing an association. Hume had a good relations with Lord Ripon and Lord Dufferin. Hume acquainted Lord Ripon and Lord Dufferin with. The fact that he was planning to establish an all India association to furnish a platform for educated Indians to air their views. Both of them supported his idea.

Hume came to Bombay in Dec. 1884 to make it a centre of political movement. He discussed many important problems with Indian leaders and one of them was to organize central National Association. On 19th Jan, the meeting had passed the resolution to establish Indian National Association, in order to carry on a systematic agitations for redressal of Indian Grievances.

After that Hume visited Madras, Calcutta and many other cities and met local leaders there. He came back and apprised Lord Dufferin of the situation and told him that he was organizing a conference of representatives from all over India. He also told him that the movement for the

establishment of congress was the out-come 'of the labour's' of a body of cultured men mostly born native in India'. National Conference of Calcutta silently merged in the India National Congress. But there is not definate information of its merger. The Indian National Union formed by Hume decided in March 1885 to hold conference at Poona from 25th to 31st Dec. After that the date was changed by the association. The first conference of Indian National Union was held at Bombay on 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st Dec. 1885. It was christened as the Indian National Congress and S.C. Banerjee was elected as the first President of the congress. The conference was a significant development in the sense that it launched the first All India Association having its own organization and ideology.

The first session of the congress passed several resolutions, The main objectives of the congress party were as follows :-

- 1) Establishment of close relationship between all Indians who want to take part in public affairs.
- 2) Promotion of feeling of unity among the all Indians despite the existance of diversity in the country.
- 3) Promotion of social reforms.
- 4) Promotion of political reforms through gradual participation of the Indians in political affairs of the country.

5) Giving support to British rule, the congress desired the permanent British rule in India and its ultimate end was only to gain a share in the administration of the Government.

Thus, after the establishment of British rule in India, it took almost 100 years for the Indians to evolve an all India political association that wanted to promote political reforms in the country. The establishment of India National Congress was also a very complicated and protracted process and its emergence was made easy because of two important events (i) The Ilbert Bill controversy and (ii) the conviction of S.N. Banerjee. The Indian National Congress played the most important role in The Indian freedom movement and advocated the cause of Swaraj or self Government for the Indians.

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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7. Mehrotra, Emergence of Indian National
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8. Ibid. P. 224.
9. Ibid. P. 331.
10. Mazumdar, A.C. Indian National Evolution. P. 38.
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