

CHAPTER - II :

POLITICAL REFORMS AND
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CHAPTER - II :-

POLITICAL REFORMS AND AGITATIONS

FROM 1885 to 1909

Due to the establishment of all India organizations and Indian National Congress, there was political awakening in India and people started putting forward their demands to British Government. They demanded political reforms to fulfill the demand they had started propoganda in favour of their demands. They created consciousness among the people and got the support of the people for these demands. The Congress during its initial period was completely dominated by the moderate leadership which believed in providential character of the British rule. Their method of politics was moderate in attitude and constitutional in spirit.

2 : 1 (A) THE LIBERAL DOMINANCE
OF THE CONGRESS PARTY :-

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. A. O. Hume was the Chief Promoter of the Indian National Congress. He made efforts to call all Indian representatives' conference. The first session of the Indian National Congress was held at Bombay in 1885. At that time, Surendranath Banerjee was one of the prominent Indian leaders in Bengal. But his political ideas were far more radical than those of A. O. Hume, therefore, he was not invited to attend the meeting by the

Indian National Union. Bipin Chandra Pal is of opinion that some of the most prominent leaders of the first National Congress deliberately kept him out of it.¹ Banerjee's dismissal from the Indian Civil Service and his imprisonment during the Ilbert Bill controversy was a record which the ultra conscious organizers of the first Indian National Congress and A. O. Hume in particular, did not favour. Hence they preferred not to associate him with the first Congress.²

W. C. Banerjee, the first President of the Indian National Congress concluded his speech in the session by emphasising the fact that the Congress desired the permanence of British rule in India, and that its ultimate aim was only to gain a share in the administration of its Government.³

The members of the first Indian National Congress were supporters of the British rule in India. Dadabhai Naoroji, the President of the Second/^{Indian}National Congress made it clear in his presidential address that the congressmen were, 'loyal to the back bone' to the British Government. because they appreciated the benefits of the English education which revealed to them that, 'King is made for the people, not people for the King' - a lesson which they could learn, amidst the darkness of Asiatic despotism, only in the light of English civilization.⁴

The most prominent among the early leaders of the Congress were Pherozshah Mehta, Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerjee and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. All of these leaders were

supporters of British rule in India. They did not oppose British rule what they wanted was reforms within the British empire.

Dadabhai Naoroji said that British rule should be based on the British principles of justice and representative institutions. Dadabhai had a great faith in the British Parliamentary system and wanted the same to be gradually introduced in India.

The early Congress leaders demanded that the Indian Civil Service Examination should be held simultaneously both in England and in India. Resolution was passed by the House of Commons in 1893, which favoured simultaneous holding of Civil Service Examination both in India and in England.⁵ The bill was not implemented by British rulers in India. Gokhale and host of other leaders were the supporters of social reforms in India. They believed that Government should take active part in promoting social reform. He supported the Government intervention to bring about social reforms.

The early Congress leaders demanded liberal expansion of the legislative council and greater representation. They argued that Indians should get a chance to take part in Government of the country. They demanded that there should be greater proportion of the elected member than the nominated members in the Council. In 1905, the annual session of the Congress adopted resolution saying that "in opinion of this Congress, the time has arrived for further expansion and reform of the supreme and

provincial legislature council. So that they may become more truly representatives of the people, and non-official members there off may have a real voice in the Government of the country.¹¹ The Congress recommended an increase in the number of non-official and elected members and grant to them of right of dividing the council in financial matters. (Coming before them - the head of the Government concerned possessing the power of veto.⁶)

Liberal leaders demanded freedom of press. Many a times Government tried to curtail freedom of press. But the early Congress leaders opposed it. In 1879, a large meeting was held in Calcutta to protest against the vernacular press act.⁷

The seditious meeting Bill introduced by the Government in the Imperial Legislative Council was another step ~~with~~ which resulted in the curtailment of the civil liberties. The liberals opposed it in the Council. Gokhale said, "the act admittedly confers dangerously wide power on the executive, which if it used at all, are almost certain to be abused, and which must in practice paralise all activity in the country".⁸

2:2 (B) MEANING OF POLITICAL RIGHTS

OF EARLY CONGRESS :-

The meaning of political rights of the early Congress leaders was increasing the number of Indians in the administrative services, strengthening the parliamentary democracy by the

expansion of legislative council and the protection of Indian industry by the protective tariff walls.⁹ The specific demands which the early leaders of the Congress placed before the Government were in line with their general approach.¹⁰ G. K. Gokhale in his presidential address in the Congress session of 1905 grouped the main reforms as follows :-

- 1) Those which aim at serving for our people a large and longer share in the administration and control of our affairs; these include reforms of our legislative council, the appointment of Indians to secretary of state's council and the executive council in India, and a steady substitution of the Indian for the European agencies in the Public Service of the Country.
- 2) Those who seek to improve the method of administration such as the separation of judicial function from that of the executive function, police reforms and so forth.
- 3) Those which propose readjustment of financial arrangements with the object of securing reduction of the burden of the tax payer and a more efficient application of our resources; under their head comes reduction of military charges; the moderating of land assessment and so forth; and
- 4) Those which urge the adoption of measures calculated to improve the conditions of the masses of the people, these included a various extension of primary education, facilities of industrial and technical instruction, grant for improved

sanitation, and a real attempt to deal with the alarming indebtedness of the peasantry.¹¹ *gratification*

The first Congress demanded that the members of the legislative council should be empowered to interpolate the executive in regard to all branches of the administration.¹² Because of the existence of foreign rule in India the congressmen claimed that the right of interpellation, was more important in India than even in Britain. The Congress wanted to Indianise the Government Services and to liberalize the legislative council in the sense that the proportion of elected members should be increased and made preponderant.

The early Congress demanded political rights and introduction of several types of reforming in the Government. The most important demand was connected with the reforms of legislative council and to meet some of the demands of the Congress, the British Government passed the Council Act of 1892.

2:3 (C) THE COUNCIL ACT 1892 :-

The Council Act 1861 had made the provision of establishment of legislative council in India but the nature of the council failed to satisfy the Indian aspirations. The non-official members consisted only either of big zamindars, retired officials or the Indian princes and worst of all none of them had knowledge of problems of people. On the other hand, the

English educated class representing the Congress Party demanded that the great liberalization should be the policy of the Government. To meet their demand only the Government had to pass India Council Act 1892.

The Congress, however, had a support in the British Parliament. Charles Bradlaugh was the most powerful advocate of the Indian National Congress. Bradlaugh said in a reply to the Congress address in 1889, "I feel I should like to have the title that some have given me in sneer and some in hearty meaning of 'Mother of India'.¹³ In 1889, the Congress submitted to Bradlaugh a scheme suggesting the reforms in the nature of legislative council. The most important feature of the scheme was that, it was suggested that one-half of the members of Governor General's Council and provincial councils should be elected.

Bradlaugh had introduced his Bill in the Parliament. After that Lord Cross, Secretary of State, forwarded a Bill for reforms of the Indian Legislative Council. On 21st February, 1890, some of the proposals sent by Duffrin were incorporated in the Bill. Lord Duffrin advocated the liberalization of legislative council, but had also expressly disclaimed that he had no intention of setting up in India those representatives and parliamentary institutions which Britain had evolved, patiently and gradually, through the discipline of many centuries.¹⁴

THE PROVISIONS OF ACT :-

The act deals with the powers, functions and compositions of the legislative council in India. Main features of the act were as follows :-

- 1) The number of additional members may be raised to minimum 10 and maximum 16. The Governor General can make resolution for additional members, were to be non-officials.
- 2) The functions of the council were enlarged. It was now permitted to discuss the annual financial statement under certain restrictions. The Bill gave full opportunity to the members of the council to indulge in full, free and fair criticism of the financial policy of the Government.
- 3) The member could ask question on the matter of public interests, subject to such condition as restriction as may be prescribed in the rules made by the Governor-General or the Provincial Governors.¹⁵

In the Council Act 1892 the number of additional members was increased. Member had got the right to discuss the subjects of general public interest. They could discuss the policy of Government and could ask the questions to the Government, but for that purpose he had to give ~~six~~^{six} day's notice.

There was also a distribution of elected members in the Council Acts 1892. It is as follows :-¹⁶

Imperial Legislative Council

Maximum number of Additional Members

Official - 6	Nominated Non-Official - 5	Elected Non-Official - 5
Calcutta Chamber of Commerce - 1		Non-official of four Provincial Council - 4

Bombay Legislative Council

Maximum number of Additional Members : 20

Official - 9	Nominated Non-official - 4	Elected Non-officials - 7	
Chamber of Commerce - 1	University- 1	Corporation of Bombay - 1	Municipality & District Bombay - 4 Boards

The Indian Council Act 1892 had hardly any provision that supported the principle of the introduction of the elective principle. Therefore, this Bill was criticized by many liberals.

On 28th March, 1892, Gladstone spoke in the House of Commons on the Indian Council Bill. He supported the elected principle, but he also said that though parliament should lay down the general principles of Indian Administration. But the Government should generally be left to the Government of India.¹⁷

THE KIMBERLEY CLAUSE :-

The word 'election' was very carefully avoided in the Indian Council Act 1892. Their^{is} principle did not exist in original draft, but later on it was introduced in its second reading, as an amendment by Lord Northbrook, who was supported by Lord Ripon and Kimberley. The amendment, after a great discussion, was accepted.

The Act 1892, which retained official majorities in the Governor-General and the provincial legislative councils did not impair the authority of the Government of India, but the Act liberalized the legislative councils, though to a very limited extent. The Congress welcomed it and also expressed the hope that the rule for the selection of the members that were to be prepared under the Act, would be framed in the spirit of Gladstone's declaration in the House of Commons.¹⁸

2:4 (D) EMERGENCE OF EXTREMISTS :

The Indian National Congress was established in 1885. The Congress met once in every year and passed resolutions. In annual sessions, they discussed the problems of public interests,

focused the people's attention on the basic defects of the Government. A.D. Hume one of the founders of the Indian National Congress was the support^{er} of British rule. The early leaders of the congress were supporters of British rule. Most of early leaders of the congress: Pherozshah Mehta, Dadabhai Naoroji, G.K. Gokhale and M.G. Ranade supported the British rule. There was great impact of Western culture upon them. They thought that the British rule was a divine gift, and through the British connection we could achieve our redemption. But the policy and progress of the early leaders was slowly challenged by the new group of political leaders who advocated militant action and popular involvement in the congress movement. They derided the elitist character of the congress party and vowed to take politics to the people. They were aided and abetted in their efforts by oppressive and cynical policies of Governor General Curzon, B.G. Tilak, Shri Aurobindo and B.C. Pal were the three main leaders of this new group. They were called extremists.

Tilak and Aurobindo were dissatisfied with the working of Indian National Congress. They were critical of the deferential and supplicatory attitude of the congress and they pressed for more dynamic forms of political agitation.¹⁹ For the first thirty years, the congress was controlled by what might be called 'the centre party' - by men belonging to the upper middle class, who were highly educated and westernized, who stood for social reforms and representative government to be achieved by strictly constitutional means and who had firm faith in the liberal instincts of the British people.²⁰ The early national

Congress acted more as a political pressure group than as a popular movement.

By the last decade of the 19th Century, the political climate of India had begun to change. The number of educated persons was increasing, but employment opportunities did not increase. Draught and famines from 1896 to 1900 took a million of lives and caused wide spread misery. The colonial and imperialist exploitation of the peasants was responsible to change the political climate in India.

The emergence of extremists in Indian politics was to some extent a logical development. The decision of partition of Bengal into two provinces helped the emergence of extremists. The decision was taken for administrative purposes. What the British Government tried to do was to divide Bengal in Hindu majority and Muslim majority provinces the more Bengali Hindus opposed the most. The Bengali leaders opposed the scheme and they organized agitation against it. Many meetings were held all over India and several representations were made to the British government but government did not change the decision Lord Curzon created Muslim majority, province of East Bengal. G.K. Gokhale said in his presidential address at Banars Congress that the partition of Bengal was important question today. He said "A cruel wrong had been inflicted on our Bengally brother and the whole country has been stirred to its deepest depth in sorrow and resentment, as had never been the case before". The antipartition movement first time brought people to

streets and the masses all over India moved to oppose government decision. It served the cause of Indian nationalism and other extremists.

Tilak took advantage of the situation and asked the congressmen to give up the old policy of mendicancy. Under Tilak's superb leadership, the whole country voiced its annoyance against the unpopular move of partition of Bengal. Tilak succeeded in getting popular support.

The Indian National Congress was held at Calcutta in 1906 and it gave a limited support to boycott and Swadeshi movement because moderates were opposed to the theory and practice of extremist politics. The congress passed the resolution that the boycott movement might be inaugurated in Bengal because it was a legitimate way of protest against the partition of that province. The resolution was not passed unanimously because some moderates opposed economic boycott.. However, boycott as a political weapon was accepted for the freedom from alien rule. This was the one of the principles of extremist that separated them from moderate in the congress party.

Dadabhai Naoroji, known as the grand old man of India, in his presidential speech at Calcutta in 1906 congress, declared that Swaraj was the ultimate goal of the congress party. He said that as in the united kingdom and colonies all policies of taxation and legislation and power of spending the tax^{was} ~~who~~ in the hand of the representatives of the people of those countries, so should also be the rights of the people

of India. All financial relations between England and India must be just and on footing of equality. He pointed out that whole matter could be compressed in one word 'Self Government' or 'Swaraj' like that of the United Kingdom and the colonies.²¹ Tilak had advocated the concept of Swaraj from the very beginning which was given recognition in the Calcutta congress by Dadabhai Naoroji.

Another factor which helped the emergence of extremists was the worsening of the economic conditions of India right from 1885. Indian leaders deeply studied the economic conditions of India and drew the attention of Government Dadabhai drew the attention of government by expounding his drain theory. Recurrence of famines and draught was the problem of India but it was criminally neglected by the British Government. The misery of the people increased when these famines were accompanied by the spread of pestilences and diseases like cholera and plague., million of people lost their lives due to these killer diseases. The Government did not adopt proper preventive measures to stop it. Tilak created confidence among the people at the time of plague in 1897. Moderates did not speak that militantly, therefore, Tilak succeeded in getting the mass support.

The conflict between extremists and moderates was brewing as the congress was firmly controlled by sir Pherojshah Mehta and G.K. Gokhale and they were not willing to allow the extremists to use the congress platform for their militant

anti-government activities. But tide of mass upsurge was favouring the extremists ~~and~~ as they followed the strategy of involving people in political matters. The moderater leaders feared that extremists would dominate the session if it was held at Lahor or Nagpur hence, they changed the venue ~~and~~ and shifted it to Surat as it was a safer place for the moderates.

Surat spilt - Thus the intention of moderater became clear when the Indian National Congress met at Surat in 1907 after changing its ~~re~~ venue from Lahor to Nagpur and from Nagpur to Surat. Their ^{is} had been done by the Mehta group to word, of extremist treat. Because it was in the air that extremists were to propose, Tilak's name for the presidentship of the congress, Gokhale opposed Lajpatrai's proposal and Tilak at last withdrew his name because he had decided not weaken or spilt the congress. The moderates did not like the Calcutta resolution and extremists wanted that the congress executive should pass the resolution without making any modification. The moderates did not allow Tilak to p speak before the installation of Rash B. Ghosh as president. This decision sparked off a row as there was virtual battle between the two groups and calm could only be returned with the police intervention. Moderates immediately seized the opportunity and expelled all the extremists from the Congress.

At the close of 19th Century and the beginning of 20th Century the British administration changed their earlier

attitude towards Indian aspiration and became more ruthless.²² It was very difficult to get political demands granted from them in their political method. Moderates believed in constitutional ways to get the demands sanctioned. But the extremists were of the view that as India did not have constitution, we were not bound by that method. The extremists tried to turn the nation against foreign rule and also raised the slogan of unity and democracy within the organization.

EXTREMIST'S RELATIONS WITH
INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS :-

B. G. Tilak, Sri Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal were the leaders of the extremist function of the Congress Party. Tilak and other extremists advocated a policy of non-cooperation and boycott with the British Government. Tilak criticized the policy of moderate and their policy of ~~xxx~~ three P's-pray, please and protect - would never be effective. He said on 7th June, 1906, 'Look at the example of Ireland, Japan & Russia and follow their method.'²³ Though he had given the example of Russia, they opposed the use of violent method, they believed in agitation.

Tilak, Aurobindo and Pal criticized the policy of Government and actions of terrorists. In Jan., 1907, Tilak declared, "We have not armed, and there is no necessity of arms, either we have a stronger weapon, a political weapon in boycott."²⁴ Tilak also advocated the concept of Swadeshi. It

meant boycott of foreign goods.

The moderates were supporters of constitutional method. Tilak said that it was not useful to India because India has no constitution. The extremists suggested new passive resistance method. Aurobindo, Tilak and Pal asked the people not to rely at all on the foreign Government and not to cooperate with Government. Aurobindo said that, "no representation, no taxation," had been the example of the American Revolution. Similarly, "no control, no cooperation" should be the motto of the Indian nationalist.²⁵

2:5 (E) MODERATES V/s. EXTREMISTS :

Moderates and Extremists have a different political views. They advocated different methods for realising their aims. Moderates were the supporters of British rule in India. They had a great faith in the British sense of justice. But extremists opposed British rule and demanded Swaraja.

Moderates and Extremists had different ideology. Moderates believed that British rule was divine gift to India, because India was socially, economically and culturally backward nation and British rule was good opportunity for Indians to reform themselves. They wanted social and political reforms first and later political freedom.

But extremists had different ideology. They opposed British rule and advocated political freedom first. They gave

second preference to social reforms. They believed that the people of India were the masters of their own destiny and not any foreign power.²⁶

Moderates wanted Indianization of civil services and reduction in the military expenditure. They also demanded larger share in administration and wanted to end economic exploitation ~~and~~ of the country. As against their^{is}, the - extremists advocated boycott and Swadeshi method. It was recognized in 1906 at Calcutta Congress, as the Congress passed the resolution which emphatically stated that boycott movement was inaugurated in Bengal to bring political pressure on the Government was just and legitimate.²⁷ The extremists wanted to boycott English goods also as it would help them to draw the attention of British people on Indian grievances. On the contrary, some moderates were afraid that the boycott of British goods might be regarded as anti-British movement.²⁸

The moderates regarded the policy of boycott as a temporary measure adopted for the purpose of modifying the portions of Bengal. They had no sympathy for Sinn Fein Policy of a - permanent and a universal boycott of all English things.

Moderates did not desire revolutionary changes nor did they desire the severances of the British connection.²⁹ They wanted colonial self Government. But this was their ultimate ideal, immediately they wanted only a greater association of Indians in the Government of the country, They did not demand

full independence. They did not want to overthrow the British rule. They wanted to reform existing administration and not to replace it.

Extremists also did not demand full freedom but they demanded self Government within the empire so that the Indians could look after their own problems. At the Calcutta Congress Dadabhai Nouroji declared Swaraj as the goal of Congress.

Thus there were some basic differences in their view points as moderates gave more importance to social reforms and underplayed the role of religion in politics, but extremists gave more importance to political reforms and used religion to awaken masses. The moderates wrote in English and were elitist by temperament and profession but extremists used local languages, mixed with the people and suffered a lot in the cause of freedom. No moderate leader suffered a type of dangerous imprisonment. Tilak suffered at Mandale. Therefore, tactical victory of moderates in 1907 did not help the cause of Indian freedom movement.

The Congress split helped British Government to ruthlessly deal with the extremists on the one hand and win over and mollify the moderates by cancelling the partition of Bengal and by granting some more political rights to Indians. The Morley-Minto reforms was an important milestone in the history of Indian constitutional development.

2:6 (F) NATURE OF MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS :

The early Congress believed that, British Government particularly liberal party, might support the political demands of Indians. They felt that the Liberal Party Prime Minister Gladstone would support Indian demands like Irish people. But no political reforms were granted between 1895 to 1905. Some moderates expected sympathy from the Liberal Party as A. O. Hume told the Indians not to forget that the liberals would not do justice for India, simply because it was just unless Indians vigorously and persistently agitate for their just political rights.³⁰

Morley was a liberal philosopher and was considered as a friend and a guide by the Indian moderates. In 1905 the Liberal Party came to power in England. Morley became the Secretary of State. Moderates looked at him with a great hopes but Morley was not in favour of granting the Congress demands of colonial form of self Government. But due to the changed conditions he agreed to grant some political rights to Indians. The introduction of Morley-Minto reform strengthened the belief of moderates. Though Morley did not agree with ultimate political aims of the Congress, he yet believed that it was essential that political concessions or reforms should be granted to Indians.³¹ Morley agreed that it was impossible to govern India by bureaucracy alone. He also agreed that it was essential to have dialogue with the Congress movement. Minto

told that Government should make them friend.

There was a spilt in the Congress in 1907 at Surat. The extremists had passed boycott and Swadeshi resolutions at Calcutta Congress in 1906. They wanted to reaffirm and execute them but the moderates opposed it.

Morley-Minto reforms introduced the minimum elective principles. Government of India suggested the formation of an Imperial Advisory Council to be composed of chief and territorial magnates and of provincial advisory council to be composed of substantial number of landholders, representatives of small land holder, of industry, commerce etc. and other professional classes.³² Congressmen pointed out that the professional classes had a greater representation than landholder class.

The Morley-Minto reforms conceded to the members of the legislative council, The ~~right~~ right of asking supplementary questions and the right of moving resolution in all matters including the budget.

Morley-Minto reforms made provisions for granting the separate electorate for Muslims. Saiyad Ahmad Khan wrote to British Government that as there existed no such homogeneity in India, the interests of all people of India, and particularly that of Muslims would suffer if western representative system was introduced.³³ S. A. Khan suggested that the ~~is~~ electorate of Muslim councils should consist of Muslims only. Minto agreed

to give them representation not only on the basis of their numerical strength but on the basis of political importance of Muslim community also and their services to the British empire.

One of the most important reform suggested by Morley-Minto scheme was the appointment of an Indian in the Government Governor-General's Executive Council. The provision of appointing Indian members on Council was opposed by Curzon, who claimed that if plebescite was taken, then a large majority of Indians could vote against the admission of Indian in Viceroy in Councils.³⁴ At last the proposal was accepted due to the bold stand taken by Morley. The Congress welcomed the appointment of an Indian in the Viceroy's Council.

The regulation gave rise to much controversy. There was a controversy on the question of how much power Government should have to disallow the candidate seeking election to the legislative council. The Congressmen criticized various features of the Morley-Minto reforms, but yet they considered it a step towards the development of parliamentary institution.³⁶

While summing up our discussion, we can say that following were the main features of Morley-Minto reforms :-

- 1) The Act increased the size of legislative councils. The additional members of the Governor-General's Council were increased upto maximum number.
- 2) The act did not provide for any official majority in the provincial legislative councils. The majority of the members were to be non-officials.
- 3) The act provided for separate speech electorate for the

due representation of the different communities, classes and interest. The act creat^{ed} a separate electorate for Muslims community.

- 4) The functions of legislative council were increased.
- 5) The members were given the rights of asking questions and supplementary question.
- 6) The members were given the power to move resolution in the council.
- 7) The act provided appointment of Indians in Governor-General's Council.
- 8) The act raised the number of members of the executive council.

Political reforms and agitations from 1885 to 1909 resulted in the introduction of Morley-Minto reforms but the reforms failed to satisfy Indians as they wanted Swaraj or self Government within the empire. Therefore, the introduction of 1909 reforms did not stop agitations as within 5 years of its introduction there was agitation for establishment of Home Rule to India.

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