



The Origin of Indian Nationalism: The Evolution of Intellectual Society and Political Consciousness

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ABSTRACT

The awakening of nationalism among Indians began in the early 19th century. There is debate in historical circles about the extent of the role of British rule in this nationalist awakening. Many say that Indian nationalism was an unintended benefit of British rule. On the other hand, according to modern views, it was an unintended, undesirable result of British rule. However, whatever the debate, Indian nationalism emerged from its own cultural sphere. It is claimed that the awakening of the 19th century was distinct from the pre-Great Revolt awakenings. In the initial awakenings, the impression of opposition to colonial rule was largely indirect and the social base and goals of the uprisings were not pan-Indian. The desire to protect traditional rights, class and caste consciousness, the attempt to get rid of local economic oppression, etc. determined the character of all these mass uprisings. Initially, the members of the assemblies and societies were loyal to the British rule, and to show their loyalty, Indians started to express their demands with political awareness. In the 19th century, the 'Renaissance' or renaissance began through religious and social reforms, which sowed the seeds of nationalism. During this time, the spread of English education and the rise of an educated middle class made their political awareness in different parts of the country to become vocal against the British rule by forming public opinion. Native-owned newspapers published in Indian and native languages,



English, opposed the policies of the British government. The 'discriminatory behavior' of the British rulers was responsible for the development of Indian nationalism. For example, some of the activities during the period of Lord Lytton and Lord Ripon can be seen. Towards the end of the 19th century, Indian organizations became strong. They actively opposed the discriminatory policies of the British government and actively developed movements for the just demands of Indians. Eventually, the British government recognized the role of the educated, conscious middle class.

Main discussion: -

The second half of the 19th century is marked as the beginning of the political awakening of India and the people of India. Many English writers believe that after the establishment of British rule in India, the consciousness of nationalism and national unity developed in India. Indian nationalism was actually an unintended result of British rule. In support of their view, it is said that when the whole of India came under a centralized rule under British rule, the sense of national unity increased. The idea of political unity developed through 'administrative unity' in different regions of India divided into many races, communities, and languages. Modern researchers do not support the above view. They say that the imperialist rulers could not welcome the emergence of nationalism and political consciousness of the people of India for their own interests. If any of the policies of the British Empire helped in the emergence of Indian nationalism, it was an unintended, unintended consequence. The main policy of the British was 'Divide and Rule'. The British government did not have much trouble in awakening the national unity of the Indians and their political consciousness. Professor Partha Chatterjee has shown that long before the political struggle for power began, Indian society imagined the nation at the individual cultural level, although India was in the hands of the colonialists. This is where Indians imagined their sovereignty. They built Indian modernity, which was modern but not Western.¹ The journey of Indian nationalism began from the idea of building this autonomous sphere in the cultural field from the early nineteenth century.

On the other hand, C. A. Bailey finds the source of Indian nationalism before the colonial era. Indian nationalism was born from "traditional nativeism". That traditional nativeism was "an active social mentality of loyalty to land, language and religion". This mentality appeared in the subcontinent long before the process of Westernization began.² With the development of religious relations and mother



tongue, the identity of Indians developed. As the foundation of the East India Company became stronger, the traditional patriotism of the Indians was increasingly revealed through various criticisms of the foreign rulers. The result of the company's flawed governance was the Rebellion of 1857. The protests of the masses were expressed in this rebellion. After the rebellion, the development of railways, postal systems and above all the spread of English education led to the formation of an intellectual middle class in various cities of India. This created a modern field of politics in India.

After 1857, the political history of India was multifaceted. After the Great Rebellion, conservatism was seen in colonial policies. Initiatives were taken to strengthen and rehabilitate the landlords. The landlords were the real "leaders" of the people and they were the only ones who could demand the loyalty of the people. Therefore, the landlords could be reliable allies of the helpless colonial state.³ 1851 AD: The British Indian Association established in Calcutta was the first large-scale voluntary organization in India. The purpose of this organization was to protect the interests of local landlords. Under the Indian Council Act passed in 1861 AD, the members of the organization were nominated to the Legislative Council and their dominance continued until the limited electoral system was introduced under the Act of 1892 AD. In 1852 AD, the Madras Native Association and the Bombay Association emerged. Both these organizations and the British Indian Association sent petitions to the British Parliament stating the just demands of the Indian subjects. They wanted to participate more in the governance of their own country. They were not against British rule. But they felt, as the Calcutta Association's petition made clear, that "their connection with Great Britain had not yielded them as much benefit as they had hoped."⁴ Thus the educated members of the wealthy landlord community created a modern field in Indian politics.

Educated Indians did not hesitate to accept British rule. They condemned the peasant revolts of the 19th century and did not support the 1857 revolt. But there was a strong political consciousness behind this loyalty. There was also some hesitation in the unabashed loyalty of the educated people of Calcutta during the 1857 revolt. An introspective editorial in the Hindoo Patriot wrote, "The source of this loyalty is the brain, not the heart."⁵ In the 19th century, the intellectuals of Calcutta began to oppose the shortcomings of colonial rule. Rammohan Roy launched a constitutional movement with demands such as separation of powers, freedom of the press, trial by jury, and appointment of Indians to various government jobs.⁶ The New Bengalis again In 1841, at a session of the short-lived "Deshitaisini" Sabha, the young Derozio supporter Sharada Prasad Ghosh said with great anger, "The root cause of our misery and degradation is our deprivation of political freedom."⁷



The seeds of Indian nationalism were rooted in India's history and culture. New thinking about culture emerged in the 19th century through religious and social reforms, known in the 19th century as the "Renaissance." Its aim was to "rediscover and purify" Indian civilization. The Hindu awakening that Swami Dayanand brought about through his Arya Samaj movement strengthened nationalism. The Brahmo leader Keshav Chandra Sen preached the "ideology of free thought and equal rights of the individual in society." Rajnarayan Bose formed the "National Unity Support Society" in 1866 to promote Indian language education, national sentiment, and the ideals of Sanskrit education. Above all, Swami Vivekananda, the father of Indian nationalism, developed India's reawakened nationalism. The aim was to prove that Indian civilization was superior to Western civilization in spiritual qualities, which is evidenced by the search for national culture in the development of indigenous literature in the mother tongues of Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, etc., the development of art, classical music, and the creation of a new feminist ideal. In short, the aim of this movement was to modernize national culture. However, it would never be Western." ⁸ However, in the nineteenth century, religious and social reform movements were mainly characterized by Hindu character, as a result of which the Muslim community was pushed aside. However, religious and social reform movements served as the granite footing of the awakening of Indian nationalism.

"The spread of English education and the rise of an educated middle class" were a major factor in the emergence of Indian nationalism. Indians became vocal against colonialism by absorbing Western education. After the establishment of three universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857, higher education in India began to progress rapidly. Education became a free enterprise in 1882. The number of students in arts and professional colleges quadrupled - in 1874, the number of students was 4,499, in 1894, the number increased to 18,571. ⁹ The total number of students was a little over four million in 1896-97. By 1920, that number had more than doubled. ¹⁰ But this progress was very uneven and the development of political consciousness also became uneven.

An analysis of the class character of the educated upper caste middle class shows that in Bengal, Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaidyas and in Bombay, only Chitpavan Brahmins and Parsis received higher education. In Madras, only Tamil Brahmins and Iyengars, and in Bengal, Bengalis were ahead in higher education. On the other hand, Muslims were far behind in higher education. A large proportion of the Hindus, the lower castes and untouchables, were deprived of education. Those who moved towards higher education were the declining middle class. Their higher education was aimed at jobs. This situation created frustration. Anil Sheel believes that this created an atmosphere of 'increasing competition' between different groups and regions of India. ¹¹ The uneven progress of education in India



affected political activities in different regions of the country. Western education helped to criticize colonial rule. A. R. In Desai's words, it was this English education that introduced Indians to "modern Western democratic and rational ideas".¹²

In June 1857, the Hindoo Patriot wrote to the people of India, "The people of India have the courage and knowledge to proclaim the rights of citizenship with a strong voice".¹³ Indian language newspapers thus played a leading role in promoting nationalism. Native-owned newspapers published in English also opposed the activities of the British government. Keshav Chandra's "Indian Mirror", "Amritbazar Patrika", "Tilak's Marhatta", "The Hindu" of Madras and other newspapers published in the native language such as "Somaprakash", "Bangadarshan", "Sadharani", "Sanjeevani", "Keshari" in Maratha can be named. S.R. Mehrotra writes that due to the wealth of these newspapers "internal barriers in India were removed and inter-regional ties were strengthened".¹⁴ In the second half of the 19th century, there was intense dissatisfaction among the educated middle class against the British rule for various reasons. For example, the rights of Indians were curtailed through Christian conversion, and in the 1860s-70s, the British government-imposed income tax on the Indians in 1860. When they protested against the income tax, the income tax was withdrawn in 1865, but various It continues to increase under the pretext of English Indian. Through the English Indian newspapers, the British government was led to believe that Western education was one of the reasons for the Indians' rebellion against the British government. As a result, they proposed to reduce the allocation of funds to the higher education sector and spend the money on the development of public education through the mother tongue, which disappointed educated Indians. Due to the free opening of foreign goods, the cottage industry and the emerging mechanical industry in India were forced to retreat. They criticized the government for the 'embezzlement or outflow of wealth from India. They blamed the British policy for India's poverty.

Behind the rise of Indian nationalism, the 'discriminatory' behaviour of some English princes hurt national pride, and nationalism became stronger. Lord Lytton's I. C. S. examination age was increased from 21 to 19 years and the ban on Indians possessing firearms without a license led to protests among the educated middle class. Lytton's 'Native Newspaper Suppression Act', which caused a storm of protests everywhere. During the rule of the liberal Lord Ripon, the Vernacular Press Act was repealed in 1882 and the Arms Act was also amended. He proposed to introduce a system of local self-government. S. Gopal has shown that by 1884, "almost all of British India was brought under local self-government".¹⁵ During Lord Ripon's time, there was a heated debate over the opposition to the Ilbert Bill. "The British protest against the Ilbert Bill" exposed the racial arrogance of the British and their hatred of the Indians in



the eyes of educated Indians. Educated Indians became vocal in support of the Ilbert Bill. Finally, in 1884, Lord Ripon succumbed to pressure and withdrew the bill.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, instead of the landlord-controlled assemblies, the newly organized assemblies of the middle class professionals took on a special role in shaping public opinion. The Indian Association was formed in 1876 under the leadership of Surendranath Banerjee. The aim of this organization was to "represent the Indian people". The Poona Sarvajanika Sabha (1867) and the Madras Mahajana Sabha awakened political consciousness. Political life was also organized outside Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. New assemblies were established. For example, the Lahore Indian Association in the Punjab, or the Allahabad People's Association in the United Provinces. ¹⁶ C.A. Bailey has shown that in urban areas "old relations and new organizations" became much more closely intertwined. ¹⁷ New Sabhas These new organizations protested against the British government by raising several demands, such as the imposition of income tax, the draconian Native Press Act, and the racist Arms Act. However, the organizations' struggle was for limited reforms. Nevertheless, the organizations demanded equality and representative government. The role of all these Sabhas formed in the 19th century cannot be denied. By the end of the 19th century, the colonial British government recognized the political role of the middle class. The British rulers realized that these newly educated people needed a suitable platform to express their legitimate hopes and aspirations.

Finally, the limitations of Indian nationalism were seen. The upper caste Hindu leaders could not overcome their social conservatism. There were differences among the members of the Sabhas. Debates on Indian social and religious issues were seen. The Muslim class was kept away by the awakening of Hindutva. As a result, they moved in their own way against Hindu interests. Communal conflicts arose as soon as the Arya Samaj started the cow protection movement. Communal riots took on a large scale in North India from the 1870s. Due to the dominance of Hindus in North India, they did not try to get the support of the untouchables and lower castes in education, professions and new organizations. The consciousness of the lower class people came from the colonial educational policy, the social service work of the Christian priests and their own initiatives. As a neglected race, they considered the colonial government as their patron and liberator. The British administration took advantage of the distance between the educated middle class and the lower class, so that it was possible to weaken the emerging nationalism. It was in such a situation that the Indian National Congress was born in 1885. Later, the Congress took the responsibility of leading the nationalist movement. The National Congress spoke out with the desired demands of the Indians. It fulfilled its duty with mixed success.

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