

8. Beginning of Modern Nationalism in India

■ Factors in the Growth of Modern Nationalism:

- a. **Understanding of contradictions in Indian and colonial interests:** People understood that colonial rule was the major cause of India's economic backwardness.
- b. **Political, Administrative and Economic Unification of the Country:** British imposed professional civil service, a unified judiciary and codified civil and criminal laws throughout the country. They constructed modern means of transport and communication, all this for their benefits but it helped us in:
 - Political Unification of Nation.
 - Economic fate got interconnected as failure in one region would affect other.
 - Means of transport and communication helped in spread and exchange of ideas and it increased contact of leaders with masses.
- c. **Western Thought and Education:** The liberal and radical thought of European writers helped many Indians imbibe modern rational, secular, democratic and nationalist ideas. English language helped leaders from various regions in communication.
- d. **Role of Press and Literature:** This helped in dissemination of Modern ideas and urged people to Unite while criticising the government.
- e. **Rediscovery of India's Past:** According to theories of some European scholars, Indians and Europeans shared common ancestors. This burst the myth of latter's racial superiority (white man's burden) and that India had a long history of servility to foreign rulers. It helped in gaining self-respect and confidence against British.
- f. **Socio-Religious Reform Movements:** They were progressive and helped in unifying the society- important in growth of Nationalism.

g. **Middle Class Intelligentsia:** It provided leaders to INC at all the stages. They had sense of Unity of Purpose and of hope.

h. **Impact of Contemporary Movements in the World:** Rise of nations from ruins Spanish and Portuguese empires in South America, liberation movements in Greece, Italy and Ireland influenced Indian leaders.

i. **Reactionary Policies and Racial Arrogance of Rulers:** Deliberate policies of Discrimination hurt Indians like- **Lytton** reduced age limit for ICS exam to 19 years, **Grand Delhi durbar** (1877) despite famine in India, **Vernacular press act** (1878) and **Arms act** (1878) among others.

■ Political Associations before the Indian National Congress:

Most political associations in early half of 19th century were dominated by wealthy and were local or regional in nature.

Their main demands were:

- Administrative reforms.
- Association of Indians with the administration.
- spread of education.

Political Associations before the Indian National Congress			
Name	Founder	Objective	Significance
The Bangabhasha Prakasika Sabha, 1836	Associates of Raja Rammohan Roy	Welfare of Society	It worked to focus the attention of the Englishmen on the grievances of India and to asked for remedial measures
The Zamindari Association or 'Landholders' Society'	Landlords of Bengal	Safeguard the Interests of the landlords.	Marked the beginning of an organised Political activity
The Bengal British India Society, 1843		Dissemination of Information for welfare of People	
British Indian Association, 1851	Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society	(i) establishment of a separate legislature of a popular character (ii) separation of executive & judiciary (iii) reduction in salaries of higher officers; (iv) abolition of various duties	Demands were accepted in the Charter Act of 1853 - addition of six members to the governor-general's council for legislative purposes
The East India	Dadabhai Naoroji	Influenced public men in England to promote Indian Welfare	First such nationalist organisation in England
The Indian League, 1875	Sisir Kumar Ghosh	Spreading political education	It stimulated a sense of nationalism among the people
The Indian Association of	Surendranath Banerjee and Ananda Mohan Bose.	(i) create a strong public opinion on political questions , (ii) unify Indians in a common political programme	First All India conference in 1883 attended by 100 delegates. In 1886 merged in INC.
The Poona	S. H. Chiplunkar, Ganesh Vasudeo Joshi, Mahadev Govind Ranade	Serving as a bridge between the government and the people, and also to popularize peasant rights	
The Bombay Presidency	Badraddin Tyabji, Pherozshah Mehta and K.T. Telang		
The Madras Mahajan	M. Viraraghavachari, B. Subramaniya Aiyer P. Anandacharlu.		

Pre-Congress Campaigns:

- For Indianisation of govt. service (1878-79).
- Against Lytton's Afghan adventure.
- Against Arms Act (1878).
- Against Vernacular Press Act (1878).
- For right to join volunteer corps.
- Against plantation labour and against Inland Emigration Act.
- In support of Ilbert Bill.
- Campaign in Britain to vote for pro-India party.
- Against reduction in maximum age for appearing in Indian Civil Service; the Indian Association took up this question and organised an all-India agitation against it, popularly known as the Indian Civil Service agitation.

▪ Ilbert Bill Controversy:

What is the Ilbert Bill?

- Before the introduction of the bill, British subjects in 1873 had been exempted from trial by Indian magistrates. For cases that involved death or transportation, they could only be tried by a higher court.
- This scenario changed with the introduction of the Ilbert Bill in 1883.
- The contents of the bill stated that from now on, British and European subjects would be tried in session courts by Indian judges, who were senior enough in the civil service to preside over such proceedings. It was this provision that would be a source of great anger among the European community.

What was the controversy regarding the Ilbert bill?

- The mere possibility that an Indian, whom the Europeans regard as inferiors, could try a European was a point of much anger and resentment. The bill evoked furious protests among the Calcutta European business community that comprised of tea and indigo planters as well.
- There was even covert sympathy from many officials as well. The controversy of that time was rooted in deep-seated racial prejudices prevalent at the time. The propaganda that Indian judges could not be trusted in dealing with cases involving English females helped raise considerable support against the bill.

- English women who opposed the bill further argued that Bengali women, who they stereotyped as "ignorant", are neglected by their men, should therefore not be given the right to judge cases involving English women.
- Bengali women who supported the bill responded by claiming that they were more educated than the English women opposing the bill were. They pointed out that more Indian women had academic degrees than British women did at the time, alluding to the fact that the University of Calcutta became one of the first universities to admit female graduates to its degree programmes in 1878 before any of the British universities had done the same.
- The unsuccessful campaign in favor of Ilbert bill highlighted the need for an all-India organization.

▪ Indian National Congress:

- Many Indians had been planning to form an all-India organisation of nationalist political workers. But the credit for giving the idea concrete and final shape goes to **A.O. Hume**, a retired English Civil Servant.
- First Session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay in December 1885. It was presided over by **W C. Bonnerjee** and attended by 72 delegates. The aims of the National Congress were declared to be the promotion of friendly relations between nationalist political workers from different parts of the country, development and consolidation of the feeling of national unity irrespective of caste, religion or province, formulation of popular demands and their presentation before the government, and most important of all, the training and organisation of public opinion in the country.

Was INC Safety valve?

Congress was to provide a 'safety valve' or a safe outlet to the growing discontent among the educated Indians. But it is a theory. The National Congress represented the urge of politically conscious Indians to set up a national organisation to work for their political and economic advancement, they took Hume's help to avoid hostility of officers towards it.

- If Hume wanted to use the Congress as a 'safety valve', the early Congress leaders hoped to use him as a 'lightning conductor'

Aims of Indian National Congress:

1. Found democractic, Nationalistic Movement to Politically Educate the Masses.
2. Promote friendly relations among natioanalists, develop anti- colonial nationalists' ideology.
3. Promote and nuture Indian nationhood.