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Factors Promoting Growth of Nationalism, Foundation of the Indian National Congress

Scope of Syllabus

Factors leading to the growth of Nationalism – economic exploitation, repressive colonial policies, socio-religious reform movements (brief mention of contribution of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Jyotiba Phule) and role of the Press. Foundation of the Indian National Congress - the Indian National Association (Surendranath Banerjee) and the East India Association (Dadabhai Naoroji) as precursors. Immediate objectives of the Indian National Congress – the first two sessions and their Presidents should be mentioned.

3. Socio-Religious Reform Movements : In the 19th century, educated Indians began to examine afresh their religious beliefs and customs and their social practices in the light of new knowledge of Western science and philosophy which they had acquired. The result was various religious and social reform movements to reform Hindu religion like the *Brahmo Samaj*, the *Prarthana Samaj*, the *Arya Samaj*, the *Ramakrishna Mission*, the *Theosophical Society*. Similar movements reformed the Muslim, Sikh and Parsi societies also.

(i) In the religious sphere, the reform movements combated religious superstitions, attacked idolatry, polytheism and hereditary priesthood.

(ii) In the social sphere, these movements attacked the *caste system*, *child marriage*, *Sati system*, *female infanticide*, *untouchability* and other social and legal inequalities.

(iii) These movements were progressive in character for they sought **reorganisation of society** on **democratic lines** and on the basis of *ideas, individual equality, social equality, reason, enlightenment and liberalism*.

(iv) Most of the religious societies had no political mission, all the same whosoever came under their influence rapidly developed a **sense of self-respect, self-confidence and spirit of patriotism**. Since many reform movements drew their inspiration from India's rich cultural heritage, these promoted pan-Indian feelings and spirit of nationalism.

(v) As a result of these movements, significant advances were made in the field of **emancipation of women**. Some legal measures were introduced to elevate their status. The practice of *sati* and *infanticide* were made illegal. In 1856, a law was passed permitting *widow remarriage*. Another law, passed in 1860, raised the marriageable age of girls to ten which was a significant advancement in those days. Many superstitions also began to disappear. At the close of the century, it was no longer considered sinful to travel to foreign countries.

(vi) The reform movements differed from each other in many ways, but they all helped in **awakening the people** to the need for change. Most of these movements, were religious in character and appealed to one's own religious community. As most of the social evils had become

associated with religious practices, these social reform movements had inevitably to be religious as well.

(vii) The reform movements contributed a great deal to the **birth of Indian nationalism**. These were countrywide movements influencing people everywhere and not just in isolated areas. The reform activities united people, by attacking institutions like caste which hampered social unity and created a sense of oneness in the people. Therefore, they played an important role in the rise of nationalism.

Some Great Social Reformers

Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the Brahmo Samaj

(a) Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833 A.D.)

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first great socio-religious reformer of the 19th century. He is known as the *father of Indian renaissance*, because of his ideas and pioneering work in the field of socio-religious reforms.



Raja Ram Mohan Roy—Father of Modern India

(i) Religious Reforms : To purify the Hindu religion, Raja Ram Mohan Roy published Bengali translations of the Vedas and Upanishads. In this way, he placed the original text of these scriptures in the hands of the people. He founded the **Brahmo Sabha** in 1828. He advocated belief in a universal religion based on the worship of one supreme God. He opposed idol worship, useless rites and rituals and costly sacrifices. He also condemned **blind faith** and **superstitions**. He opposed **untouchability** and the rigid caste system prevailing in Hindu religion and society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy advocated equality and brotherhood of all men. He stood for respect of all religions.

(ii) Social Reforms : Raja Ram Mohan Roy's greatest achievement in the field of social reform was the *abolition of the evil of Sati* in 1829 with the help of **Lord William Bentinck**, who made it a crime punishable by law. He advocated the cause of women education. He wanted women to be given the right to inherit property. He desired that women should occupy a respectable position in society. He was opposed to polygamy, child-marriage and female infanticide. He favoured widow remarriage (legalised in 1856) and inter-caste marriages. Ram Mohan Roy laid the foundation of an *English School*, the *Hindu College* and the *Vedanta College*.

The Ideals and the work of Brahmo Samaj

(i) The Brahmo Samaj condemned evil customs like *sati*, *purda*, child-marriage, forced widowhood, polygamy, female infanticide, and discrimination against women.

(ii) The Brahmo Samaj began a struggle against the caste distinctions, prevailing in the society including the evil of untouchability.

(iii) The Brahmo Samaj stood for the spread of education of modern subjects, as well as English language in the schools, so that western knowledge could come within the reach of Indian students. The Brahmo Samaj opened many schools.

(iv) The Brahmo Samaj believed in only one God, who is the creator and sustainer of the universe.

(v) It was opposed to idol worship.

(vi) The Brahmo Samaj respected all religions and advocated that all religions were equal and alike. It brought about a synthesis in the philosophy of the **Upanishadas**, *ethical teachings of Islam* and *humanism of Christianity*.

(vii) The Brahmo Samaj applied a rational approach towards religion. So it was opposed to blind faith, irrational superstitions, useless rituals, rites and sacrifices.

(b) Jyotirao Phule

Jyotirao Phule was an activist, thinker, social reformer and revolutionary from Maharashtra. His remarkable influence was apparent in fields like education, agriculture, caste system, women and widow upliftment and removal of

untouchability. He is most known for his efforts to educate women and the lower castes as well as the masses.

(i) In 1873, Jyotirao formed '*Satya Shodhak Samaj*' (Society of Seekers of Truth). The main objectives of the organization were to liberate the *Shudras* and *Ati Shudras* and to prevent their 'exploitation' by the upper caste like *Brahmans*.

(ii) He opposed idolatry and denounced the caste system, rejected the need for a Brahman priestly class as educational and religious leaders.

(iii) Jyotirao firmly believed in a new social system based on freedom, equality, brotherhood, human dignity, economic justice and value devoid of exploitation.

(iv) Phule had a favourable opinion about the British Rule in India at least from the point of view of introducing modern notions of justice and equality in Indian society and taking India into the future.

(v) In **Brahmanache** Jyotirao Phule (1869) has exposed the exploitation of Brahmin priests. In **Gulamgiri** (1873) he has given a historical survey of the slavery of lower castes. In 1883, he published a collection of his speeches under the title **Shetkaryancha Asud** (The cultivator's whip-cord) where he has analysed how peasants were being exploited in those days.

7. Role of modern means of transport and communication :

- Introduction of railway in 1853 revolutionised the socio-economic life of the people.
- It enabled people to take long distance travel and thereby breaking geographical and cultural barriers.
- Telegraph, postal system proved helpful to organize an all India movement.
- Print of newspaper played a significant role in creating political awakening in the people.
- Newspapers reported on colonial misrule and encouraged nationalist activities.
- Press became an important medium to popularize political programmes, policies

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for various organisations like Indian National Congress which were involved in freedom struggle.

- Press brought the Indian people close to other countries.

In India, the growth of the Press started early in the nineteenth century and played an important part in the national awakening of the people.

The first newspaper in India was the 'Bengal Gazette' which started in 1780. However, the real development of the Press came early in the nineteenth century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy started two papers, 'Sambad-Kaumudi' in Bengali and 'Mirat-ul Akbar' in Persian, which were devoted to propagating the case for social reforms. Many other national leaders and social reformers were also associated with the growth of the press in India. Dadabhai Naoroji edited 'Rast Goftar', and Chandra Vidyasagar started 'Shome Prakash'. In 1890, an English weekly, 'The Indian Social Reformer' was started in Bombay (Mumbai) to propagate social reforms.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, many English dailies were started; many of these are still among the popular newspapers in India like the *Times of India* started in 1861, the *Pioneer* in 1865, the *Madras Mail* in 1865, the *Statesman* in 1875, etc. These papers usually supported the British government's policies, yet they kept people informed of the rapid political developments in the country. They criticized the unjust policies of the British government in India. They spread the message of patriotism and *liberal ideals* of liberty, equality, etc. There were other dailies which voiced the Indian opinion like the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* started in Bengal in 1868 and the *Hindu* started in Madras (Chennai) in 1878. There were many newspapers and journals in Indian languages also. By the end of the nineteenth century, about 500 newspapers and journals in Indian languages and English were published in different parts of the country. With the growth of the national movement, the Indian Press also grew and played an important part in rousing the national consciousness of the people. The bi-weekly, *Kesari*, a Marathi journal, started by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, was one such journal.



Through his paper, *Kesari*, Tilak made passionate appeals to the people to imbibe the virtues of patriotism, fearlessness and sacrifice.

(B) Establishment of All India Association

A number of Political Associations were formed before 1885. Some of the prominent ones are :

1. **Zamindari Association (1837)** also known as Landholder's society, was formed to safeguard the interests of the Landlords.

2. **British Indian Association (1851)** : British Indian Association demanded the separation of Judiciary from the executive, abolition of salt and stamp duty and reduction of salaries of high officials.

3. **London Indian Society (1865)** founded in England by Indian students under the direction of Dadabhai Naoroji to voice the grievances of the Indians.

4. **East India Association** : The East India Association was founded by Dadabhai Naoroji in London in 1866. The Association provided information on all Indian subjects to the British citizens and Members of Parliament. It voiced the grievances of Indians and suggested remedial measures. The association recommended the abolition of cotton duties and demanded the withdrawal of the **Vernacular Press Act**. Dadabhai Naoroji, the **Grand Old Man of India**, was of the opinion that the British were basically just and good. He wanted to place the true state of affairs in India before the people of England so that the grievances of the Indians may be solved. The association had its branches in Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai).

Dadabhai Naoroji (September 4, 1825 – June 30, 1917) was a Parsi intellectual, educator, cotton trader, and an early Indian political leader. His book, **Poverty and Un-British Rule in India**, brought into the limelight the drain of India's wealth into Britain. He was a Member of Parliament (MP) in the British House of Commons between 1892 and 1895, and the first Asian to be a British MP.



5. Poona Sarvajank Sabha : It was founded by Justice MG Ranade. It played an important role in arousing political consciousness and securing relief for the cultivators during drought in Maharashtra.

6. Bombay Presidency Association (1871) : Bombay Presidency Association demanded the reduction in Court fees and taxes on Salt and Sugar.

7. Indian Association : The premier Association among all the associations and the predecessor of the Indian National Congress was the **Indian Association**. The Association was established by Surendranath Banerjee in 1876 in Calcutta (Kolkata).

Objectives :

The objectives of the Indian Association included :

- (i) Creation of a strong body of public opinion.
- (ii) Integration of Indian people on the basis of common political interests.
- (iii) Promotion of friendly relations between Hindus and Muslims.
- (iv) Mass participation in public movements.

Achievements : It launched agitations against the oppressive Acts such as the **Licence Act**, the **Arms Act** and the **Vernacular Press Act**. It struggled against the lowering of the age limit from 21 to 19 years for the **I.C.S. Examination**.

- It also took up the cause of the workers on the British-owned plantations.

- The Association also struggled against the tyrannies and oppression by the zamindars.

8. Indian National Conference : Surendranath Banerjee convened the conference at Kolkata in 1883. Anand Mohan who presided described it as the first step to a National Parliament. It was merged with the Indian National Congress in 1886.

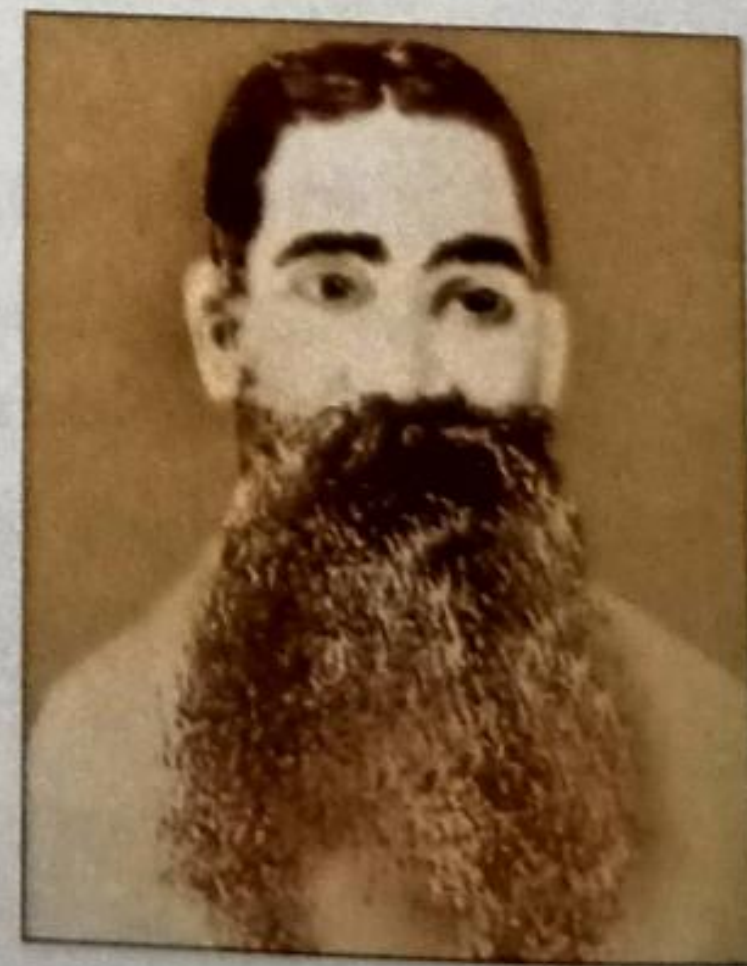
9. Madras Mahajan Sabha (1884) : founded by M Viraraghavachari, BS Aiyer and P Anandacharlu.

These associations criticised the unjust policies of the British government and helped the people to fight for their political rights. They could be rightly described as the forerunners of the Indian National Congress (INC).

INDIAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE :

Origin of the Indian National Congress (INC)

On 31st March, 1883, A.O. Hume, a retired I.C.S. officer, addressed an open letter to the young graduates of the Calcutta University. In that letter he appealed to them to form an association for the moral, social and political regeneration of India. He invited about 50 young Indians of courage and conviction to come forward for this purpose. He inspired them to form the National Congress. Hume had also the support of **Lord Dufferin**, the then *Viceroy of India*, and many prominent Indian leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, W.C. Bannerjee, etc.



Womesh Chandra Bannerjee

(v) So after 1887, the government declared it 'a microscopic minority of the people' and began to create obstacles in its progress.

(vi) Government servants were barred from attending the Congress sessions. The officials encouraged reactionary elements like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and others to organize the *United Indian Patriotic Association* to counter the Congress propaganda.

The Immediate Objectives of the Congress

Womesh Chandra Bannerjee, the President of the First Session of the Congress, held in Bombay (Mumbai), laid down the following immediate objectives of the Congress :

- (i) To enable national workers from all parts of India to become personally known to each other.
- (ii) To end all racial, religious and provincial prejudices and to promote a feeling of national unity among all the Patriots of the country. To promote friendly relations between the Hindus and Muslims.
- (iii) To formulate popular opinion on vital Indian problems and to present these before the Government.

(iv) To create, train and organize a strong body of public opinion in the country.

(v) To integrate the Indian people on the basis of common political tenets, and to encourage them to participate in public affairs and movements.

(vi) To decide upon the political tasks to be undertaken during the ensuing year.

The Second Session of the Congress was held in Calcutta (Kolkata) from December 28, 1886, under Dadabhai Naoroji as the President. It was attended by 406 delegates from all over India while there were only 72 delegates in the First Session, a year before. The Second Session passed six political resolutions, demanding administrative reforms. The Third Session was held at Madras (Chennai) in 1887 A.D., with Badruddin Tyabji as the President. About 100 delegates attended it. It passed three political resolutions.

Thus, the Congress continued to grow and gain more and more strength.



Answer: the following:

1. Discuss the reforms introduced by Raja Rammohan Roy.
2. How socio-religious reform movement led to the development of nationalism in India.
3. Discuss the achievements of Indian Association.
4. State the objectives of Indian National Congress.