

Chapter 2

Nationalism in India

Learning Objectives

- Describe Colonial domination and Indian Resistance.
- Focus on the First World War and its impact
- Describe the idea of Satyagraha
- Examine the impact of Rowlatt Act and Jallianwallan Bagh Incident
- Explain Women's role in India
- Explain common bonds and shared beliefs which gave rise to Collective Belonging

Learning Outcome:

- Sensitize learners about rise of Nationalism or National Consciousness
 - Analyze the nature of diverse social movements of the time
 - Get familiarized with the concept of our National identity in Bharat Mata
 - Enhance the feeling of nationalism and patriotism
 - Develop rational thinking, truth and equality among learners
 - Make a comparative chart of the Nationalism in India and Indo-China
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Modern Nationalism and Anti-Colonial Movement in India

- India's modern nationalism is rooted in its anti-colonial movement.
- The Congress, led by Mahatma Gandhi, aimed to unite diverse groups under a single movement.
- New symbols, icons, songs, and ideas strengthened national bonds and redefined community boundaries.

The First World War, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation

- The national movement in India underwent noteworthy changes after 1919. It expanded to new regions, involved diverse social groups, and embraced novel strategies for resistance.

Economic and Political Situation Post-War

- The war caused a surge in defense spending, funded through war loans, higher taxes, increased customs duties, and the introduction of income tax.
- Prices doubled between 1913 and 1918, resulting in significant hardships for ordinary people.
- Forced recruitment in rural areas sparked widespread anger.

Crop Failures and Famine

- In 1918-19 and 1920-21, India experienced severe crop failures and an influenza epidemic.
- These events resulted in widespread food shortages and an estimated 12 to 13 million deaths.
- Despite hopes that the end of World War I would bring an end to hardships, a new leader

emerged.

- This leader suggested a fresh approach to the national movement.

The Idea of Satyagraha

- Gandhi organized various satyagraha movements across India after his return from south Africa in 1915.
- He aimed to inspire people to struggle against oppression without using violence.



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Champaran Movement in 1917

- Gandhi traveled to Champaran, Bihar, to support peasants against the oppressive plantation system.
- His presence inspired the peasants to stand up for their rights and demand better working conditions.

Kheda Satyagraha in 1917

- Organized a satyagraha in Kheda district of Gujarat to support peasants affected by crop failure and a plague epidemic.
- Peasants demanded relaxation of revenue collection as they were unable to pay due to the crisis.

Ahmedabad Cotton Mill Workers Satyagraha in 1918

- Gandhi went to Ahmedabad to organize a satyagraha movement amongst cotton mill workers.
- The movement aimed to improve working conditions and wages for the workers.

The Rowlatt Act

- In 1919, Gandhiji launched a nationwide satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act.
- The Rowlatt Act allowed the government to detain political prisoners without trial for up to

two years.

- Non-violent civil disobedience was planned, starting with a hartal on 6 April.
- Protests and strikes took place in various cities, instilling fear in the British administration.
- Local leaders were arrested, and Mahatma Gandhi was barred from entering Delhi.
- On 10 April, the police fired upon a peaceful procession in Amritsar.
- This led to widespread attacks on government buildings and the imposition of martial law.

Jallianwala Bagh Incident (13 April 1919)

- On April 13th, General Dyer ordered his troops to open fire on a peaceful crowd gathered at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, resulting in hundreds of casualties.
- This massacre sparked widespread outrage and protests across northern India, leading to strikes, clashes with police, and attacks on government buildings.
- The government responded with brutal repression, humiliating and terrorizing people.
- Mahatma Gandhi called off the ongoing movement, recognizing the need for a broader, more inclusive movement to unite Hindus and Muslims.

Uniting Hindus and Muslims Through the Khilafat Issue

- Gandhiji saw an opportunity to unite Muslims and Hindus through the Khilafat issue.
- The Khilafat Committee was formed in Bombay in 1919.
- Leaders like Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali discussed the possibility of united mass action with Mahatma Gandhi.
- At the Calcutta session of the Congress in September 1920, Gandhiji convinced other leaders to start a non-cooperation movement in support of Khilafat and swaraj.

Non-Cooperation

- Mahatma Gandhi believed British rule in India relied on Indian cooperation and suggested a Non-Cooperation Movement to achieve swaraj (self-rule).
- The movement involved surrendering government-awarded titles, boycotting institutions, and foreign goods. If the government used repression, a full civil disobedience campaign would be launched.
- The proposal sparked concerns and opposition within the Congress, with members worried about potential violence and reluctant to boycott council elections.
- The Non-Cooperation-Khilafat Movement began in January 1921, involving various social groups with varying interpretations of its goals.

The Movement in the Towns

- The Non-Cooperation Movement began with the involvement of the middle class in urban areas.

- Students left government-controlled schools, teachers resigned, and lawyers gave up their practices.
- Council elections were boycotted except in Madras, where the Justice Party saw an opportunity to gain power.
- Foreign goods were boycotted, leading to a significant drop in the import of foreign cloth.
- Merchants and traders refused to deal in foreign goods, and the production of Indian textiles increased.

Challenges and Slowdown

- The movement faced several challenges, causing it to slow down eventually.
- Khadi cloth was more expensive than mass-produced mill cloth, making it difficult for the poor to continue boycotting mill cloth.
- The boycott of British institutions required alternative Indian institutions, which were slow to come up.
- Students and teachers began returning to government schools. Lawyers resumed their work in government courts.

Rebellion in the Countryside

- The Non-Cooperation Movement spread from cities to rural areas, involving struggles of peasants and tribals.
- The peasant movement in Awadh was led by Baba Ramchandra, who protested high rents, cesses, and forced labor (begar).
- They demanded reduced revenue, abolition of begar, and social boycott of oppressive landlords.
- The Oudh Kisan Sabha was formed in October 1920, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Baba Ramchandra.
- The peasant movement took forms that the Congress leadership did not approve of, such as attacks on landlords, grain hoarding, and rumors of land redistribution.
- Mahatma Gandhi's name was invoked to justify these actions.

Tribal Peasants and Swaraj Interpretation

- In the early 1920s, a guerrilla movement emerged in the Gudam Hills of Andhra Pradesh, India.
- The movement was a response to the colonial government's restrictions on access to forest resources, which affected the livelihoods and traditional rights of the hill people.
- Alluri Sitaram Raju emerged as the leader of the movement, advocating for the use of force to achieve swaraj (independence).
- Raju encouraged the wearing of khadi and the giving up of drinking but also engaged in guerrilla warfare against British officials and police stations.
- He was captured and executed in 1924, becoming a folk hero.

Swaraj in the Plantations Workers'

- Plantation workers in Assam viewed freedom as the ability to move freely and maintain connections with their villages.
- The Inland Emigration Act of 1859 restricted their movement, confining them to tea gardens.
- During the Non-Cooperation Movement, many workers defied authorities, left plantations, and attempted to return home, believing Gandhi Rai would provide them with land.
- Due to a railway and steamer strike, they never reached their destinations and were caught and beaten by the police.
- These movements were not solely defined by Congress programs, as workers interpreted swaraj in their ways, envisioning an end to suffering and troubles.
- Their emotional connection to the larger All-India agitation was evident through chants of Gandhi's name and demands for 'Swatantra Bharat,' indicating their identification with a movement beyond their immediate locality.

Towards Civil Disobedience

- Mahatma Gandhi withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922 due to increasing violence.
- C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Swaraj Party to participate in provincial council elections, while younger leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose pushed for more radical mass agitation.
- The worldwide economic depression led to falling agricultural prices, declining exports, and difficulty for peasants to pay revenue.
- The Simon Commission, set up by the British government to review the constitutional system in India, faced opposition due to the absence of Indian members.
- Viceroy Lord Irwin's offer of 'dominion status' and a Round Table Conference did not satisfy Congress leaders, leading to the demand for 'Purna Swaraj' or full independence for India at the Lahore Congress in 1929.

The Salt March & the Civil Disobedience Movement

- Gandhi sent an eleven-demand letter to Viceroy Irwin on January 31, 1930, with the abolition of the salt tax being the most important.
- The Congress threatened to launch a civil disobedience campaign if the demands were not met by March 11.
- Irwin refused to negotiate, prompting the start of the Salt March.
- Gandhi led 78 volunteers on a 240-mile march from Sabarmati to Dandi, covering approximately 10 miles per day.
- Thousands gathered to hear Gandhi's speeches on swaraj and peaceful defiance during the 24-day march.

- On April 6, Gandhi arrived at Dandi and broke the law by making salt from seawater.

The Civil Disobedience Movement

- Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement and agreed to participate in the Round Table Conference, after which the government released political prisoners.
- Negotiations in London broke down, and Gandhi returned disappointed.
- The government started a new cycle of repression, and Gandhi relaunched the movement.
- The Civil Disobedience Movement continued for over a year but lost momentum by 1934.

Participation of Different Social Groups in the Civil Disobedience Movement

- Rich peasant communities supported the movement to fight high revenues but were disappointed when it was called off without any revision.
- Poorer peasantry struggled with rent payments and joined radical movements due to Congress's reluctance to support 'no rent' campaigns.
- Business classes made huge profits during World War I and formed organizations to oppose colonial policies. They initially supported the Civil Disobedience Movement but later became apprehensive.
- Industrial working class participation was limited as Congress was reluctant to include their demands in its program.
- Women participated in various activities, including listening to Gandhiji, protest marches, manufacturing salt, and picketing liquor shops. They saw service to the nation as a sacred duty.
- Gandhiji believed women's primary duty was in the home, and Congress was reluctant to allow them in positions of authority within the organization.

The Limits of Civil Disobedience

- Gandhi aimed to eliminate untouchability, but dalit leaders sought political solutions.
- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar organized the Depressed Classes Association, demanding separate electorates.
- The Poona Pact provided reserved seats for Depressed Classes but with a general electorate.
- Muslim alienation from the Congress deepened due to communal clashes and disagreements over representation in future assemblies.
- Suspicion and distrust between Hindus and Muslims hindered Muslim participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The Sense of Collective Belonging

- Nationalism is fostered by a shared sense of identity within a nation.
- Cultural elements such as history, folklore, and symbols contribute to this unity.
- In India, the concept of Bharat Mata emerged in the 1870s, representing the country's identity.
- Figures like Tagore and Sastri promoted folklore as national literature.
- The Swadeshi movement introduced tricolor flags as a symbol of defiance.
- Nationalist histories aimed to inspire pride but faced challenges in unifying a diverse population.

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