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Part 1

Topics: 1,2,3,4,5

SAMPLE

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1A] POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF INDIA'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE

1] INTRODUCTION

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A] NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY AND WOMEN ISSUES

1] Introduction

Indian National Movement was a prolonged battle and involved various phases. The Revolt of 1857 marks the first organized efforts against the British Rule. This was followed by the period, where institutionalized efforts began against the British rule. For some time, the British were seen as positive agents of change. Social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy sided with the British to bring social change, and others saw them as a 'blessing in disguise'.

The disillusionment, however, started after the 1860s. As the economic exploitation by foreign hands became more visible, the resistance against it started growing. This struggle evolved in various stages, and different methods were adopted at various stages to oust the British. The earliest methods, called constitutionalism (prayers & petitions), dominated till 1905. The extremist leaders took over after that till the arrival of Gandhi in 1914. Gandhi marked the beginning of mass movements which ultimately led India to its liberation.

Various Stages of Indian Nationalism

1. Early Nationalism – Revolt of 1857
2. Moderate Nationalism (1880s to 1905)
3. Extremist Nationalism (1905-1914)
4. Gandhian Phase of Indian Freedom Struggle (1914-1947)

2] The Revolt of 1857

The suppressed feelings of Indians against the British East India Company were given a sudden vent in 1857. The disputes soon spiralled into a full-blown revolt of Indian soldiers against the East India Company. Although unsuccessful in throwing out the British, the revolt remains an important chapter in Indian history.

A] Views of V D Savarkar

VD Savarkar wrote a book in 1908 titled 'Indian War of Independence'. He was the first to call the 1857 revolt the war for independence. He presents the following argument in his book

1. The annexation of Oudh and the case of greased cartridges were merely but small excuses to what was already in the process
2. The rupture of local traditions, mockery of Indian customs and religion, not recognizing the adopted rulers (a tradition allowed by Hindu Dharmashastra) the promotion of Christianity –were the main factors for rebellion.
3. The unifying feature of the war was the desire for swadharma and swaraj.
4. The presence of secret organizations illustrates that the revolt had a plan and a purpose. – these secret cells spread the message, awakening a sense of purpose, pride and nationalistic consciousness. It involved a coded communication language, infiltration of garrisons and villages by activists dressed as fakirs, sanyasis, sadhus, maulvis etc. The start of the war was signalled by a symbolic distribution of chapatis and red lotuses.
5. Further, the restoration of Bahadur Shah was not a retrograde action but the consequence of nationalist re-awakening. A declaration that the long-standing war between Hindus and Mohammadens has ended (for the greater purpose of defeating the British).



Savarkar believed that though the attempt was defeated, the spirit of nationalism had survived and it will lead to another war for independence in future.

For the War of 1857 shall not cease till the revolutionary arrives, striking slavery into dust, elevating liberty to the throne.... The war began on the 10th of May 1857 is not over on the 10th of May 1908, nor shall it cease till a 10th of May-to come sees the destiny accomplished, sees the beautiful India crowned. - Savarkar in 'Oh Martyrs' speech 1908

B] British Historian's Perspective

Another discourse, calling the uprising to be a mere sepoy mutiny, was led by British Historians. According to them, triggered by a few disgruntled soldiers, the revolution was just an act of indiscipline within the army. A normal occurrence in the course of time for such a large organization. It was sporadic, unplanned and occupied only parts of India, and beyond the overthrow of the East India Company, the soldiers had no greater vision behind the revolt.

British historians have argued that there was no unity of purpose; while sepoys wanted to restore Mughal rule, the inhabitants of Oudh wanted their Nawab back, and so did the people of Zansi. Peasants, on the other hand, just wanted a reduction in their tax rates. There was no central leadership to the revolt. The feudal leaders, the queen of Zansi, Tantia Tope, and Kunwar Singh – all fought only to restore their former privileges.

3] Moderate Nationalism

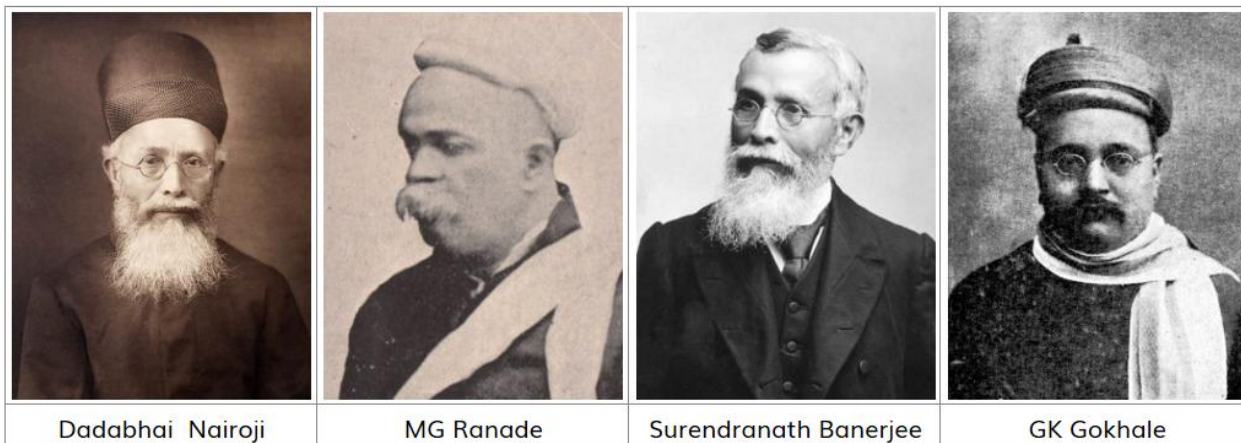
There are different types of political strategies adopted by the politicians or groups to achieve the political aim. Constitutionalism is a political strategy based on the philosophy of liberalism. An assumption that man is rational and hence political ends can be achieved by rational dialogue. There is no need of the use of violence in achieving political aims.

Constitutional methods can be called as institutional methods and includes prayers, petitions, popular demands etc. States can provide different institutions like parliament, gram-sabha, for representation of people's demands and their involvement in administration. Free and fair judicial system is another assumption of this method.

The early national leaders who led Indian freedom struggle are known as moderates, and their methods are called as constitutionalism. It dominated the scene till the extremist leader took the centre stage in Indian politics.

A] Aim of Moderates

Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 to institutionalize the process of nationalism. The objectives of INC included – to create and spread a national feeling among Indians, to politically educate and organize them, to create a political platform for political activities and to unify the Indian leadership.



Most of the Congress leaders were educated in western education and were impressed with values of liberalism. The aim of the Congress was piecemeal reform. Their complaint was only against un-British rule, and not foreign rule per se. They felt that the Indians at this stage cannot be left to themselves and the British rule is a source of modernization. They had great faith in British sense of justice. M G Ranade thanked British for introducing rule of law, expressed that British rule in India is a divine intervention to eradicate the evils of misrule of the past.

Surendranath Banerjee appealed to the British to introduce the institutions which are truly British in character so that Indians can rejoice in permanent union with British.

Dadabhai Naoroji held that British are justice loving people. Indians have to communicate their demand to the British in 'reasonable manner'. Ranade held that British rule is a source of inspiration, hope and confidence. He held that Indians are fortunate that they are ruled by the British.

Thus, they wanted greater autonomy within British empire like Canada and Australia. A greater participation, Indianization of civil services demands to share political power, control over purse of govt, over military expenditure. As a whole it focused on national issues than regional concerns and also failed to grasp the real nature of British rule.

For another reason, as suggested by Gokhale, constitutional methods were adopted according to the circumstances. Direct action required immense preparation and Indians were not ready for such action. According to C. Y. Chintamani, before introducing direct actions, we have to address internal divisions and disunity.

The means for the process speeches and articles, the use of press, intellectual debates and agitations against government economic policies, bringing resolutions in assembly, sending memorials to govt, prayers, petitions etc.

B] Achievements of Moderates

These leaders contributed to develop an economic critique of colonialism. It exposed the exploitative nature and the poverty created in India by British Raj. It demonstrated how the British rule was responsible for the loss of livelihood for many artisans and put forth the Drain of wealth theory. It became a major theme for future nationalistic movement.

C] Assessment of Moderate Nationalism

The idea of constitutionalism is itself an imported idea. Constitutionalism originated in Britain, and was introduced in India by the colonial masters along with modern institutions like rule of law, modern judicial system, civil services and assemblies.

Britishers ruled India not only by the use of coercive methods, but they also tried to build hegemony by doing certain good actions. To gain the legitimacy of British rule, they incorporated Indians in assemblies as well as in civil services, gave concession at times and

Early nationalists employed constitutional methods like bringing resolutions in the assembly, sending memorials, prayers, petitions, appeals to justice and protests.

Thus, constitutional methods differ from direct actions like passive resistance, satyagraha, non-cooperation, dharana, haratal, boycott, civil disobedience, rebellions, mutiny, terrorism, criminal actions, aiding foreign invasions, subversion.

1] Bipin Chandra

Bipin Chandra suggests that the early nationalist leaders were both learners and teachers. No readymade understanding of colonialism was available to them. There were many questions about nature of colonialism, contradiction of Indian bureaucrats within British government, the ability and the methods to fight British? Before it could be a struggle against colonialism, it was a struggle about colonialism.

He quotes Dadabhai Naoroji who wrote in 1905 The very discontent and impatience it (the Congress) has evoked against itself as slow and non-progressive among the rising generation are among its best results or fruit.

2] GK Gokhale

G K Gokhale remarked in 1907 'Let us not forget that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying.... We, of the present generation must be content to serve her mainly by our failures. For hard, though it be, out of those failures the strength will come which in the end will accomplish great tasks.'

3] Other Leaders

'Constitutional methods in front of alien bureaucracy is a political suicide' - Tilak

Constitutional methods reflect 'intellectual bankruptcy of the leaders'. Aurobindo Ghosh believed that Indians will have to strike at the roots of colonialism. That is - boycotting the foreign goods and adopting Swadeshi. - Aurobindo Ghosh

Constitutional methods will not work because India does not have constitutional government. - Pandit Nehru

M G Ranade held that 'The memorials are not addressed to the British, they are addressed to the Indians.'

4] Extremist Nationalism

The second generation of the leaders represented by Lal Bal Pal (Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal) are called as extremists. They were dis-satisfied with the achievements of early nationalists. The use of the term extremists and militants is relative. These leaders appear extremist in their demands and methods in comparison to earlier leaders which now appeared 'moderates'.



Prof. Bipin Chandra



Gopal Krishna Gokhale

There is not much basic difference between the two in terms of goals. The goal of both remained Swaraj. With the exception of Aurobindo Ghosh, Swaraj even for all extremist leaders was 'dominion statues' and self-rule.



The only difference was that they were getting impatient. Whatever reforms Britishers have introduced in the name of Indian council acts appeared too little and too late. It failed to meet the aspirations. No effective representation of Indians in law making, Indians only got gradual rights to ask questions on budget and to bring resolutions.

The main difference was in the strategy. Extremists favoured direct actions like passive resistance, boycott, Swadeshi,

national education, national courts etc. Tilak rejected the method of petition and asserted that Swaraj is the birthright of Indians. Tilak justified *prajadroh* i.e. the right of the people to resist the government which exploits.

A] Evaluation of Extremists

Extremists phase was the next logical step. Swadeshi movement can be considered as successful movement led by INC. Extremists could preserve the credibility of INC and created the base for the launch of Gandhi's mass movement.

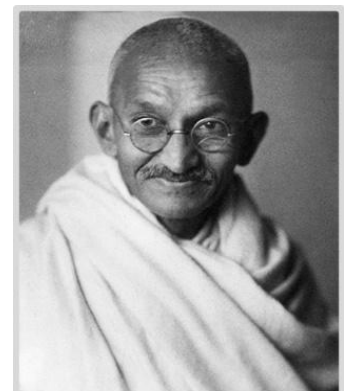
Extremists have given the stronger theory of nationalism based on cultural symbols. Unfortunately, it provided opportunity to the British to give communal colour to the movement, presenting INC as party of Hindus. To defeat the nationalist consciousness which emerged because of Swadeshi, Britishers had introduced Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, gave separate electorate to Muslims. Thus led the statutory foundation of the two-nation theory.

5] Gandhian Strategy

Gandhi led one of the biggest mass movements in the world, successfully.

Mass movements can be categorized into two basic types. 1) Uncontrolled mass movements - French revolution was spontaneous, uncontrolled mass movement. 2) Controlled mass movements - Russian revolution, Chinese revolution, Gandhian movements are examples of planned, directed and controlled mass movements.

We can also categorize mass movements in terms of strategy into two basic types.



MK Gandhi

1. Marxist - Leninist movement - The characteristic is they are sudden, comprehensive and achieve the immediate overthrow of the system. (Overnight movements.)

2. Gramscian and Gandhian movements - Gramsci and Gandhi were contemporaries and show unique convergence in context of the strategy. They suggested two-stage revolution in case of 'opaque states'. (Where it is difficult to understand the exploitative nature of state). Hence the movement has to be 'protracted movement'. There has to be a war of position, an ideological war before arriving at a point of direct action or war of manoeuvre/frontal attack.

According to Bipin Chandra, Gandhian mass movement was a long, protracted movement with its active and passive phases. Active phases included mass agitation; passive phases included constructive programs. Bipin Chandra calls Gandhi's strategy as a strategy of S-T-S (Struggle-Truce-Struggle). Gandhian strategy was based on the understanding of mass psychology. Masses have limited capacity to participate. Besides being a psychologist, Gandhi was a master strategist. Gandhi knew when to start the movement, when to call off the movement.

Gandhi's approach as 'proactive' rather than reactive. Gandhian movements are proactive in the sense Gandhi never left ball in the courts of enemy. He forced enemy to respond. It was always initiative of Gandhi. The time and place, issue was all choice of Gandhi. Gandhi was offensive rather than defensive.

A] Non-Cooperation Movement

It was first truly Gandhian movement at pan India level. Gandhi started the movement at that time because the political environment was conducive to start the movement. People were looking for action in background of:

1. Rowlett Act and suppression of civil liberties
2. Extreme pain because of Jallianwala bag tragedy
3. Extreme disappointment and frustration because of the report of Hunter commission, and the massive support by British public for General Dyer
4. Economic distress because of 1st WW
5. Khilafat movement as an opportunity to bring Muslims together

In Nagpur session of 1920, congress adopted the program of extra-constitutional mass struggle led by Gandhi. Right to refuse cooperation with the ruler who misrules. Gandhi's promised that such method can deliver Swaraj within a year.

1] Strategy of Non-Cooperation

1. Surrender of titles and honours
2. Boycott of government schools, colleges and foreign clothes
3. No tax campaign in case provincial congress committee approves
4. Opening of national schools, colleges, panchayat courts, promotion of Khadi, maintaining Hindu-Muslim unity, giving up untouchability
5. Strict adherence to non-violence
6. Congress to reach to mohalla levels

Congress described the movement as a peaceful, legitimate protest for attainment of Swaraj, by direct action rather than constitutional means.

However, Gandhi called off the movement abruptly after the Chaurichaura incident in February 1922.

2] Reaction Against Gandhi's Decision

Gandhi came under harsh criticism not only by non-congress leaders but even from congressmen. Even Pandit Nehru questioned the rationale of calling off the movement. Major criticism came from communists. They believed that Gandhi was fearful of masses acquiring power.

3] Analysis by Bipin Chandra

The real reason was that Gandhi wanted 'graceful exit'. By this time, masses were getting exhausted. There were violent incidents in some regions like Moppila revolt in Malabar. Moppila revolt would have taken communal colour. Gandhi realized that because of Chaurichaura incident, government will get excuse to use massive force. If government uses force, people will get scared and it will be difficult to rebuild the movement.

4] Assessment of Non-Cooperation Movement

Movement was failure in terms of stated objectives and the promises made by Gandhi and Congress. However, movement was successful in the sense Gandhi got all that he wanted.

Gandhi's wanted to test the capacity of masses for struggle. He wanted to establish Congress as the party of masses and not representing 'microscopic minority'. Gandhi wanted national movement to become mass movement. It means multi-class movement rather than just limited to the middle classes.

There were also some visible successes e.g.

1. boycott of the visit of prince of Wales,
2. Boycott of foreign goods.

B] Civil Disobedience Movement [CDM] (1930-31)

It is a finest example of Gandhian strategy. Non-Cooperation can be considered as mild in comparison to Civil Disobedience, which was more provocative. Civil Disobedience was direct challenge to the authority whereas NCM was just targeting the economic base of colonialism.

NCM was not cooperating with the state, but civil disobedience was 'wilful disobedience' of the authority. It is like questioning the legitimacy of the state.

CDM was more offensive than NCM. Gandhi wanted Britishers to use force. It would have challenged the myth of 'benevolent despotism'. In case British state does not use force, it meant 'collapse of the state', if it uses force, it meant the collapse of its hegemony.

Since the strategy of CDM has put colonial state in dilemma, expressed by Viceroy as 'dammed if you do and dammed if you don't.' It took them time to decide the arrest of Gandhi. This permitted Gandhi to complete his march. Once Gandhi completed his march, similar marches were organized. It