



Freedom Movement of India in the Period of 1905-1919

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Abstract: This research is about the freedom movement between 1905- 1919. In this time there is not big movement for freedom but there is some struggle for freedom. After the formation of the Indian National Congress, the Indian intelligentsia began to present their united demands to the government. The main aims were to promote the mutual friendship; to eradicate the provincial prejudices; to strengthen the national unity; to encourage the fullest discussion on important issues and press the political questions of the day; and to determine the line of action for Indian political leaders to work in the public interest. It was, undoubtedly, a great meeting of the educated Indians on a common platform 'for the common political good.

Keywords: freedom movement, provincial prejudices, British administration, Indian National Congress, swadesh goods.

Introductions: The leaders of the Congress showed moderation and loyalty to the British Crown. To liberalize the British administration in India was their will required in the given situation and to win over the public opinion in England. The educated Indian demanded the proper and legitimate share in all the branches of administration.³They showed their firm belief in British sense of justice and fair play. It is quite true that the Congress was founded with the blessings and patronage of the British rule. Despite its moderate beginning, it had to face the hostilities from many quarters i.e. British officials, Muslims and princely chieftains loyal to the British crown.⁴

The Indian National Congress was duly represented by the representatives of Haryana such as Lala Murlidhar, a pleader of Ambala. Munshi Jwala Prashad, a pleader of Ambala and a Brahmo Samaj leader, Satyan and Agnihotri. Murlidhar supported the resolution for the reform and expansion of supreme and local legislative councils. He advocated the opinion of the educated class that should be given priority in the form of the resolutions passed otherwise the opponents would misrepresent and even vilify them. Dispensation of justice, jury system, started by the British, oppressive British administration, separation of executive from the judicial function, economic conditions of the Indian masses, boycott of British goods and adoption of swadesh goods, creation of legislative council for Punjab province etc. were the important issues on which resolutions were passed.⁵ All the organizations started any where had a moderate beginning but, later on, changed their approaches and strategies in order to become a viable platform.

The attitude of the government in the beginning was antiCongress. But it came at the surface when its fourth session was to be held at Allahabad in 1888. This session was important for Haryana when a representative from Hisar attended it. The local authorities at Allahabad turned into hostility especially on the eve of its holding. All possible hurdles were created for holding the session. The provincial government did not want its session to be held at Allahabad. For Haryana, it was a memorable event when a new young personality emerged on this opportune. His name was Lala Lajpat Rai who had just started his political career as a pleader from Hisar.⁶

The representation of Haryana increased when Din Dyalu, Babu Balmukund Gupta, LalaLajpat Rai, Chhabil Das, Gauri Shanker started taking keen interest in the Congress activities. All these leaders of the region did not like the judicial system founded by the British that solely depended on the evidences. The



justice delivered earlier by the village panchayats was speedy, judicious and based on the truth and facts but new one was expensive, arbitrary and repressive. There was no proper check mechanism on the judges and no provision of appeal was there. Lala Murlidhar denouncing this system observed; “I can say that accused persons do not get that fair and impartial trial before Magistrate which they would get in a trial by jury. If one thing has been found to work well in one part of this country, why should not it work well in other very similar circumstanced province. It must necessarily be successful, it is not an exotic plant. India has known it from time immemorial; it is not a new system in the Punjab as it exists in every village and every community and even among the lowest classes of the people; who..... are wiser than we are in certain respects, as they manage their own affairs by their own juries and seldom go to courts.”⁷

Before further discussion, it is relevant here to tell those issues taken up between the years 1885-1905 by the Congress. These were the expansion of the legislative councils, Indianisation of the civil services and its exams to be held in India, British economic policies, poverty of India, British high-handedness, reduction of expenditure, taxation policy, technical and industrial education, separation of executive from judiciary, adoption of swadeshi, boycott of British goods, Land Alienation Act, foreign policy, military expenditure, partition of Bengal etc.

Partition of Bengal: The political situation became more precarious when some Acts were passed during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon. After Punjab Acts, he partitioned the Bengal in two parts on 20 July, 1905. Curzon declared that the partition was done due to ‘administrative convenience’ but the Congress leaders had thought otherwise. They treated it as a move to silent the rising tide of nationalism in Bengal. Curzon’s partition of Bengal created a great hue and cry in the whole of India. When the session of the Congress was held at Benares in 1905, it became a main issue.⁷ Hisar and other districts of Haryana did represent the session in large number. Such representatives were Lajpat Rai, Churamani, Dwarka Prasad, Lala Murlidhar, Duni Chand etc. who attended the session. It is important to tell here that the leaders of the Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharam Sabha did develop both the religious and nationalist awakening and were instrumental in creating a viable public opinion.⁸ The Diaries of Dr. Ramji Lai and confidential reports of the government confirm such facts.

Almost all the nationalist leaders roared heavily on the partition scheme. The Haryana leaders such as Lajpat Rai and others delivered fiery speeches and asked the adoption of concrete step against the partition. It was decided to adopt the boycott of foreign goods and adopt the swadeshi items in a massive use. A new type of political struggle was started for the first time based on the economic programmes. Lajpat Rai in defensive mood stated: “I believe and I believe earnestly that the political struggle has only commenced..... in our agitations and in our fight and struggle for liberty, we ought to be more manly than we have been here to fore..... Therefore, it is our duty to show Englishmen that we have risen to the sense of consciousness, that we are no longer beggars and that we are subjects of an Empire where people are struggling to achieve that position which is their right by right of natural law.... If, therefore, you want to be heard.....with respect you must approach with determination, with signs that you are determined to achieve your right at any cost”.⁹

Lalaji roared like a lion and challenged the colonial rule. This event, undoubtedly, had awakened them and affirmed that they would not stop till the annulment of the partition. Though the Indians always showed loyalty and moderation in their agitation, yet they were compelled to take bold steps. He cautioned that: “there are signs of the rising sun.... Let Government remember and let you gentlemen, also remember, that people once awakened rightly cannot be put down.... The wave of democracy is out.... There will be nothing



left for the people of this country to be loyal to the British Government if these things are taken away if the right of meeting, if the right of petition and if the right of constitutional agitation are taken away from us”.¹⁰ Lalaji left no stone unturned in challenging the government at the Benares session. Like other speakers, he tried to take maximum advantages of the situation prevailing in the Congress pandal. All the speakers expressed discontent and their anti-British feelings. He tried to tell the audience in a clearer term that the nationalist movement needed to be made mass movement in which the active participation of the common people could be possible. He exhorted the Congressmen to behave boldly and stick to their cherished goal. He further said: “Don’t conceal your heads, don’t behave like cowards. Once having adopted that manly policy, stick to it till the last..... It is no matter of shame for us that the National Congress in the last 21 years should not have produced at least a number of political sanyasis that could sacrifice their lives for the political regeneration of the country.”¹¹ His speech was full of anguishness and hatred towards the Congress leadership which failed to create a dynamic leadership that could unite and politically awakened the Indian people.

Swadeshi movement and Boycott: The two biggest movements created by the partition were the Swadeshi and Boycott which were instrumental in rejuvenating the political unity at all India level. Lajpat Rai told the Congressmen that “the first thing to promote Swadeshimism is to take our capital into our own hands and to devote it for our own people, followed by consecrating it to the production of house-made industries and help of our young men to distribute these articles.”¹² He affirmed that there was a dire need to spread the movement among the masses. It is significant to tell here that Lala Murlidhar was the first Indian who had told the Congressmen to adopt Swadeshi and Boycott at the Nagpur session in 1891. If Congress had adopted these resolutions, the activism in Congress movement could be seen quite earlier. No one showed seriousness at that time but could pose a challenge to the colonial rule. Perhaps that was not an opportune time.

Lajpat Rai firmly believed that the Swadeshi movement would change the psychology of the people on the one hand and weaken the British rule on the other. Before this, he had already popularized the AryaSamaj in the regions. Now it was the turn of swadeshi movement. The other AryaSamajists like Chandu Lai, LakhpatRai, Churamani, Ramji Lai and others extended the support to him in the district.¹³ The Muslims of nationalist thinking supported him when he took-up the industrial and economic issues. The press more especially the nationalist one also supported the movements as the Indian-made articles would give financial help to the artisans as the Muslim artisans and workers had been producing a variety of articles.

Reform Proposals of 1909: The communal representation in the reform proposals of 1909 was not acceptable to the Congress leaders as their views at the Lahore session in 1909 made it evident. The Congress leaders did not like the principles of communal representation as it would definitely divide social fabric of the country and create tension in various sections of the society. The leaders of Haryana showed anguishness when the new reforms were introduced. Two leaders from Haryana i.e. Jawahar Lai Bhargava, advocate of Hisar and Chaudhary Lai Chand, advocate of Rohtak district, were made members of the Punjab Legislative Council.¹⁴

Home Rule League: From the thirty-first session of the Congress held at Bombay, Annie Besand had called upon the Congressmen to start the Home Rule League as founded by the Irish Nationalists. She was happy when Ireland got home rule. The Congressmen did not approve his programme. She established All India Home Rule League at Madras on 3 September, 1916. In order to extend support to her, Tilak also convened a meeting of the like-minded politicians and discussed the issue and his future course of action. Hence, he formally launched the Home Rule League on 28 April, 1916.¹⁵



In a meeting held at Poona, Tilak explained the meaning of his Home Rule League in the following lines: “Our domestic affairs must be in our own hands. We do not want separation from England. The Home Rule League’s mission is to propagate the right of Swaraj, Home Rule, and the spirit behind it is eternal and indestructible. No weapon can cut its spirit, no fire can burn it, no water can wet it, no wind can dry it. The Congressmen assemble only once a year, and then they have to wait till the next year. But the object of the Home Rule League is to work all the year round.”¹⁶ It was indeed a new experiment in Indian politics which was to attract the attention of the masses for working throughout the year.

Government of India Act, 1919: Government of India Act, 1919, popularly known as Montagu-Chelmsford Act, general elections were to be held. The Congressmen started meeting the voters. Neki Ram toured Hisar and other regions where he addressed many public meetings in April 1920. LalaLajpatRai also accompanied him in such election tours of Haryana.¹⁶ During the tours, he was amazed to see several ambitious persons interested in contesting the coming elections. Some contestants tried to show themselves as their wellwishers but Neki Ram did not like such activities. He not only exposed such persons but also cautioned the electors: “I have come across numerous persons who are ambitious for elections, but having no mass contact and contributing nothing in politics. I am sure that they will try to befool the people claiming: “they are the bonafide members of the Congress”; they have contributed a lot to the constitutional development of India; and they are ‘the great nationalists’. Apart from it, they may even pose themselves as ‘Karnas’ and make other false promises.”¹⁷ He was unhappy to see such opportunistic elements in the politics for their own vested interests.

Neki Ram toured several regions in order to expose such ambitious persons who were contestants in the coming elections. What should be the qualifications of the candidates? How to choose the best candidates for the legislatures? First of all, he wanted to tell the contenders their duties to be performed after being elected. Secondly, only meritorious candidates should allow to contest¹⁰⁵ the elections. He made it in clearer terms: “All the voters of a constituency should assemble at a place to discuss the merits and demerits of the candidates. The preferred candidate should then be asked to pledge himself like a member of the House of Commons that he, after being elected, will do nothing against the wishes of his people and will step down, if he could not prove himself upto their expectations.”¹⁸ How he was in advance in his views as the Indian people have felt such thing in 2012 while he had already supported such views in 1920.

Conclusion: The Partition of Bengal is big mistake of British Government because of this partition The Savdeshi and Bycott movement started. The provincial and regional leaders started participating in the Congress sessions. Movement began to widespread when the Mont Ford Reform proposals, 1918, Hunter Committee Report, Rowlatt bills, promulgation of martial laws, Jallianwala Bagh massacre etc created great resentment among the Indian people. A new leadership in the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi emerged and gave a national call to the movement. He converted the organization into a mass organization and a new era in the nationalist movement began. The Congressmen of Hisar district moved towards Gandhiji and actively associated with the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements. The Congress achieved tremendous support from the upper classes such as the Brahman and Bania in Haryana. The leaders like Chhotu Ram were also there in the Congress but were in the minority. When the Congress started Non-cooperation movement and the demand of the non-payment of the land revenue came, Chhotu Ram and his associates left the Congress and joined the Unionist party founded by Fazl-i-Hussain and Sikander Hayat Khan in 1923. When the Congress withdrew the Non-cooperation movement in February 1922, there was a flat criticism of Gandhiji for withdrawing the movement when going on the climax. It was, indeed, a great blunder as pointed out by many Congress leaders. The leaders of Haryana were not



happy at this turn of event. The boycott of different kinds had created a lot of problems to the British Government.

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