

CBSE Class 8 Social Science History Notes

Chapter 9 - The Making of the National Movement: 1870s-1947

The National Movement of India played a significant role in the independence of the country. The commencement of the National Movement started in the year 1947, and it was a process that took several years to become successful. Several reasons contributed to 'The Making of the National Movement' in India, such as the emergence of nationalism, Rowlatt satyagraha, growth of mass nationalism, Quit India, etc. While preparing these CBSE Class 8 Social Science History notes of Chapter 9 - The Making of the National Movement: 1870s-1947, we have covered all crucial topics, as mentioned in the chapter.

The Emergence of Nationalism

India was the people of India irrespective of class, colour, caste, creed, language, or gender. Even its resources and systems were meant for all of them. But, the British were exercising control over the resources of India and the lives of its people. This consciousness began to be clearly stated by the political associations formed after 1850, especially those that came into being in the 1870s and 1880s. The more important ones were the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, the Indian Association, the Madras Mahajan Sabha, the Bombay Presidency Association, and the Indian National Congress.

These associations functioned in specific parts of the country and their goals were stated as the goals of all the people of India. They believed that the Indian people should be empowered to take decisions regarding their affairs.

In 1878, the Arms Act was passed which disallowed Indians from possessing arms. During the same year, the Vernacular Press Act was enacted in an effort to silence those who were critical of the government. Under this Act, the government was allowed to confiscate the assets of newspapers including their printing presses if anything that was published was found "objectionable". In 1883, the Ilbert Bill was introduced which provided for the trial of British or European persons by Indians and sought equality between British and Indian judges in the country.

The Indian National Congress was established in December 1885. The early leaders were Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, W.C. Bonnerji, Surendranath Banerji, Romesh Chandra Dutt, S. Subramania Iyer, among others largely belonged to Bombay and Calcutta.

A nation in the making

In the first twenty years, Congress demanded Indians in the government and in administration. It wanted the Legislative Council to be more representative, more powerful and introduced in provinces where none existed. It demanded Indians to be placed in high positions in the government. The demand for Indianisation of the administration was against racism since most important jobs were monopolised by white officials. Indianisation would reduce the drain of wealth to England. Other demands included the separation of the judiciary from the executive, the repeal of the Arms Act and the freedom of speech and expression.

The Congress raised a number of economic issues. The British rule led to poverty and famines. They demanded reduction of revenue, cut in military expenditure, and more funds for irrigation. The Congress also passed many resolutions on the salt tax, treatment of Indian labourers abroad, and the sufferings of forest dwellers.

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The Moderate leaders published newspapers, wrote articles, and showed how British rule was leading to the economic ruin of the country. They felt that the British had respect for the ideals of freedom and justice, and so they would accept the demands of Indians.

“Freedom is our birthright”

Many Indians raised questions against the political style of the Congress. In Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab, leaders such as Bepin Chandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai criticised the Moderates for their politics of prayers and emphasised the importance of self-reliance and constructive work.

Bengal got partitioned in 1905 which was the biggest province of British India. The British divided Bengal for reasons of administrative convenience. The British instead of removing the non-Bengali areas from the province, separated East Bengal and merged it with Assam.

The Moderates and the Radicals opposed the partition of Bengal. The mass protest and large public meetings led to the Swadeshi movement, strongest in Bengal and in deltaic Andhra, it was known as the Vande Mataram Movement.

The Swadeshi movement opposed British rule and encouraged the ideas of self-help, swadeshi enterprise, national education, and use of Indian languages. Some individuals suggested that revolutionary violence would be necessary to overthrow British rule.

All India Muslim League was founded by a group of Muslim landlords and nawabs at Dacca in 1906. It supported the partition of Bengal. The League desired separate electorates for Muslims, a demand conceded by the government in 1909. The Congress split in 1907. After the split, the Congress came to be dominated by the Moderates with Tilak's followers functioning from outside. The two groups reunited in December 1915. The Congress and the Muslim League signed the Lucknow Pact and decided to work together for representative government in the country.

The Growth of Mass Nationalism

After 1919 the struggle against British rule gradually became a mass movement, involving peasants, tribals, students and women in large numbers and occasionally factory workers as well.

After the First World War India's economic and political situation got altered which led to a huge rise in the defence expenditure of the Government of India. Taxes on individual incomes and business profits were increased. During the war, Indian industries expanded and Indian business groups began to demand greater opportunities for development. The war also demanded expansion of the British army. In 1917 there was a revolution in Russia.

The advent of Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a mass leader. He arrived in India in 1915 from South Africa. Gandhi led Indians in non-violent marches against racist restrictions. His South African campaigns had brought him in contact with various types of Indians. He spent his first year travelling throughout the country, understanding the people, their needs and the overall situation.

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The Rowlatt Satyagraha

In 1919 Gandhiji called for satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act. The Act curbed fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression and strengthened police powers. Gandhiji and people of India observed 6 April 1919 as a day of non-violent opposition to this Act. Satyagraha Sabhas were set up to launch the movement.

In April 1919 there were a number of demonstrations and hartals in the country and the government used brutal measures to suppress them. The Jallianwala Bagh atrocities, inflicted by General Dyer in Amritsar on Baisakhi day (13 April), were a part of this repression.

During the Rowlatt Satyagraha, the participants ensured that Hindus and Muslims were united against British rule. Mahatma Gandhi saw India as a land of all the people who lived in the country – Hindus, Muslims and those of other religions.

Khilafat agitation and the Non-Cooperation Movement

In 1920 the British imposed a harsh treaty on the Turkish Sultan or Khalifa. The leaders of the Khilafat agitation, Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali initiated a full-fledged Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhiji supported their movement and urged the Congress to campaign against Jallianwala massacre, the Khilafat wrong and demanded swaraj.

The Non-Cooperation Movement gained momentum through 1921-22.C. British titles were surrendered and boycotted the legislature. The imports of foreign cloth fell drastically between 1920 and 1922. Large parts of the country were on the brink of a formidable revolt.

People's initiatives

Some people resisted British rule non-violently. People from different classes and groups interpreted Gandhiji's call in their own manner, protested in ways that were not in accordance with his ideas. In some cases, people linked their movements to local grievances.

In Kheda, Gujarat, Patidar peasants organised nonviolent campaigns against the high land revenue demand of the British. In coastal Andhra and interior Tamil Nadu, liquor shops were picketed. In the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, tribals and poor peasants staged a number of "forest satyagrahas", sometimes sending their cattle into forests without paying grazing fee.

In Sind, Muslim traders and peasants were very enthusiastic about the Khilafat call. In Bengal, the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation alliance gave enormous communal unity and strength to the national movement. In Punjab, the Akali agitation of the Sikhs sought to remove corrupt mahants from their gurdwaras.

The people's Mahatma

Gandhiji believed in building class unity, not class conflict. Peasants believed that Gandhi would help them in their fight against zamindars, and agricultural labourers believed he would provide them land. At the end of a powerful movement, peasants of Pratapgarh in the United Provinces managed to stop illegal eviction of tenants; but they felt it was Gandhiji who had won this demand for them.

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The happenings of 1922-1929

Mahatma Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement. When the Non-Cooperation movement was over, Gandhi's followers stressed that Congress must undertake constructive work in rural areas. Other leaders argued that the party should fight elections to the councils. In 1930, the Civil Disobedience movement was launched. Two important developments of the mid-1920s were the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu organisation, and the Communist Party of India. By the end of the decade, the Congress resolved to fight for Purna Swaraj in 1929 under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Consequently, "Independence Day " was observed on 26 January 1930 all over the country.

The March to Dandi

In 1930, Gandhiji marched to break the salt law. According to this law, the state had a monopoly on the manufacture and sale of salt. The Salt March related the general desire of freedom to a specific grievance shared by everybody and thus, did not divide the rich and the poor. Gandhiji and his followers marched for over 240 miles from Sabarmati to the coastal town of Dandi where they broke the government law by gathering natural salt found on the seashore, and boiling seawater to produce salt.

Peasants, tribals and women participated in large numbers. The Government of India Act of 1935 prescribed provincial autonomy and the government announced elections to the provincial legislatures in 1937. In September 1939, the Second World War broke out. Congress leaders were ready to support the British war effort, but in return they demanded independence. The British refused to concede the demand and the Congress ministries resigned in protest.

Quit India and Later

Mahatma Gandhi initiated a new phase of movement against the British. He wanted the British to quit India immediately. To the people, he said, "do or die" in your effort to fight the British, but non-violently. The movement attracted peasants and the youth who gave up their studies to join it. In many areas, people set up their own governments. The first response of the British was severe repression. The rebellion ultimately brought the Raj to its knees.

Towards Independence and Partition

In 1940 the Muslim League demanded "Independent States" for Muslims. From the late 1930s, the League began viewing the Muslims as a separate "nation" from the Hindus. The provincial elections of 1937 convinced the League that Muslims were a minority, and they would always have to play second fiddle in any democratic structure. The Congress's rejection of the League's desire to form a joint Congress League government in the United Provinces in 1937 also annoyed the League.

At the end of the war in 1945, the British opened negotiations between the Congress, the League and themselves for the independence of India. In 1946, elections to the provinces were held again. The League demanded for Pakistan. In March 1946 the British cabinet sent a three-member mission to Delhi to examine and to suggest a suitable political framework for a free India. This mission suggested that India should remain united and constitute itself as a loose confederation with some autonomy for Muslim-majority areas.

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After the failure of the Cabinet Mission, the Muslim League decided on mass agitation for winning its Pakistan demand. It was announced 16 August 1946 as "Direct Action Day". By March 1947 violence spread to different parts of northern India. Partition meant that India changed, many of its cities changed, and a new country Pakistan was born.

