

Sub: History (Major) Paper: India under the Crown (6th sem)

Topic: Rise of Extremism

In the year 1905 Bengal was partitioned on the pretext of administrative convenience. It was Lord Curzon who made this partition which made many young leaders of National Congress angry. They strongly protested this action of the British government and started demanding Swaraj which they wanted to achieve through self-reliance. This type of nationalism was more aggressive and threatening. This new leadership came to be known as Extremist who were different from the earlier leaders known as Moderates. The Moderates had full faith in British justice and they followed the policy of prayers and petition to realise their demands. But these newly emerged young leaders were different from the moderates and they wanted to achieve Swaraj by expelling the British.

Factors responsible for the rise of Extremism: -

Firstly, some of the young Congress leaders were greatly disappointed with the attitude of the British Government towards their demand. These young leaders thought that the policy of prayers and petitions had gone. It would bring nothing for them. Therefore they proposed for direct action method instead of prayers and petition.

Second cause was the impact socio-religious movement which reminded the elite section of the society about their glorious past. The love for their own culture promoted the feeling of patriotism and extreme nationalism.

Thirdly, the misery and the sufferings caused by the famines of 1896-97 and 1899-1901 greatly enraged the people of India which ultimately enhanced the anti British feeling among the young people and thereby increased the numbers of the extremists.

Fourthly, the partition of Bengal also played an important role in the growth of extremism. Though Curzon said that he had done this for the administrative convenience yet his main motive was to bring division between the Hindus and the Muslims to check the growing wave of nationalism. This action of Curzon greatly resented the people of India and they were determined to get the partition cancelled by hook or crook. Some of the young leaders of the

Congress even wanted to achieve Swaraj by creating terror in the minds of the British for which they even did not hesitate to adopt violent and direct methods.

The main objectives and methods of these extremist leaders were different from the moderates. The three main extremist leaders, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal popularly known as Lal, Bal, Pal adopted different programmes. They tried to create a feeling of self reliance and confidence amongst the people of India and tried to promote love for liberty for which Bal Gangadhar Tilak even raised slogan like “Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it.” He told the Indian people that without Swaraj there would be no industrial progress, no social reforms and no useful education. Thus the extremist leaders asked the Indian people not only to boycott the foreign goods but also to quit the schools and colleges established by the British. Apart from this the extremist leaders put lots of emphasis on passive resistance and non cooperation.

Alarmed with the activities of the extremist leaders the British government took up several repressive measures to suppress the extremist movement. They arrested a large number of extremist leaders and prohibited them from holding meetings. British government even imposed restriction on Press. As a result of these stern measures adopted by the British government, most of the extremist leaders went underground. But still the extremist movement continued secretly for some time. However after 1919 the extremist movement lost its former vigour and gradually disappeared.

Causes responsible for the decline of extremist movement in India.

There were various causes which contributed to the decline of extremist movement in India.

Firstly, the British government took very stern measures to suppress the Extremist movement. They not only arrested most of the important extremist leaders but also deported many of them to other countries which reduced the spirit of the extremist movement.

Secondly, the unsympathetic attitude of some the congress leaders towards the extremist leaders was also one of the important factors for the failure of

the extremist movement. The moderates leaders openly supported the British Government which demoralised the extremists.

Thirdly, although the Indian people were sympathetic towards the extremist movement yet they did not want to take active part in this movement. As a result of this the extremist movement gradually lost its spirit.

Though the extremist movement failed to achieve its goal yet it left a deep impact on the course of the National movement in India. It paved the way for aggressive nationalism in India. Henceforth Indian people learnt how to sacrifice their life for their motherland. Apart from this the extremist movement made congress a mass organization. Because the extremist leaders had close contact with the common people and that helped the Congress to get the support of the mass in the freedom struggle. Above all the extremist movement directly or indirectly compelled the British government to cancel the partition of Bengal.