

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RISE OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

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Introduction : The Indian nationalism, as rightly stated by Bipin Chopra, Tripathi and De in 'Struggle for Freedom' were sowed well and deep by the early nationalists and the period from 1858 to 1905 was the seed-time of Indian nationalism. However, a variety of factors were responsible for the rise and growth of nationalism in India. The most significant and notable of them can be enumerated below.

1. British Imperialism

The most important and prime factor that was responsible for the rise and growth of nationalism in India was the British Imperialism. Owing to the British rule and its imperialistic policy the scattered and divided territory of India was brought under one rule, bringing about political unification of the country. This led to the feeling of one nation among the Indians in spite of the several discordant elements in Indian society.

2. Western Education

The British introduced western education in India. The western education had a great influence on the educated Indians. It imbibed the ideal of political liberalism on their minds. They were highly influenced by the liberal thoughts and philosophies of Burke, Milton and Macaulay, which kindled in them aspiration for liberty, equality, nationalism and constitutionalism.

3. English Language as Lingua Franca

The country of India was full of diversities, especially linguistic. Due to that it was difficult for the Indians to communicate easily and come together as a member of a single nation. However, English language facilitated such communication. It served as a Lingua Franca between different people, speaking different languages in India.

4. Role of Indian Social Reformers

The Indian social reformers and religious leaders played a vital role as torch-bearers of the national movement. Raja Rammohan Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Keshav Chandra Sen, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Mahadev Govind Ranade etc. served as inspirers of the national movement.

5. Economic Exploitation of India by the British

The ruthless economic exploitation by the British led to the growth of agitation, discontent and anti-British feeling among Indians. This anti-British feeling, ultimately took the form of nationalistic forces.

6. A Deliberate policy

The British Government, though, on one hand proclaimed and assured non-discrimination between Indians and English with regards to appointment to higher position in services in India, on the other hand, deliberately followed a policy of excluding Indians from the higher ranks of the services. To make it more effective they even lowered the age-limit for Indians for taking up the Indian Civil Services (I.C.S.) examination, so as to make it impossible for Indians to take up the exam. This policy caused agitation and discontentment among Indians against the British rule.

7. Improved means of Transport and Communication

The development of means of transport and communication, such as railways, highways, posts and telegraphs connected various part of the country facilitating the Indians to travel and contact each other across the country. These improved means of transport and communication made it possible for Indians from different States and Provinces of the country to meet and organize themselves for their national movement. This helped to kindle the spirit of unity and political consciousness among Indians.

8. Role of the Indian Press

The Indian press, in spite of the control and constraints by the British Government, by way of various Press Laws and Ordinances, did a tremendous contribution to the national awakening and movement. It moulded and projected public opinion for the freedom of the country from the foreign rule. The Indian press helped tremendously to arouse national awakening and political consciousness among Indians.

9. British Policy of Racial Discrimination Against Indians

The British policy of racial discrimination against Indians created bitter feeling against the British among them. The British meted out racial discrimination against Indians condemning them as 'half stock of Gorilla, half Negro'. This discrimination could be seen at different levels and sectors. One such

example was that of the plantation workers who were regularly assaulted by the English. These English assaulters who were tried by European judges, as a general practice would get off scot free. This British policy of racial discrimination directly caused to generate anti-British feeling and kindle pro-national spark among Indians.

10. Role of Autocratic, Imperialistic-minded Governor Generals

Some Governor Generals, who were highly autocratic and imperialist-minded, helped to provoke national awakening among Indians. Lord Lytton (1876-1880) was one of such Governor Generals, whose measures provoked discordant and agitation among Indians, which included a costly Durbar on the face of terrible famine, the Second Afgan war draining Indian treasury and causing loss of Indian lives, the abolition of import duties on English Cotton harming the Indian Cotton Industry and causing loss of revenues, the Vernacular Press Act, termed as 'Gagging act', putting strong restrictions on the Indian Press, the Arms Act, forbidding Indians to use and possess arms without license, Thus, As rightly observed by S.N. Banerjee, one of the early nationalist leaders, the bad rulers were often a blessing in disguise, helping indirectly to evolve political progress.

11. Conducive Role of some Governor Generals

Some Governor Generals, such as Lord Ripon (1880-1884) played very conducive role, giving a boost to national spirit in India. He attempted to undo the mischiefs done by his predecessor, Lord Lytton by putting an end to the harmful Second Afgan War and repealing the Vernacular Press Act and also boosting Local Self Government. The Ilbert Bill introduced by him in 1883 with the provision to give an equal status to Indian and European judges, though was a failure, proved to be a blessing in disguise, generating anti-British feeling and kindling national spirit among Indians.

Conclusion:-

From the above observations it becomes clear that the English education and socio-religious reform movements form an integral part of the evolution of national consciousness in India. These reform movements either inspired by the western religions and rationalism or ancient Indian religious-cultural traditions aimed at democratization of the society and nationalization of religious beliefs and practices. In doing so these movements along with reforming the society attempted to instill a sense of self-respect and pride among the people and made them to realize the need to be free from an alien domination.

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