Understanding the Nature and Growth of Indian Nationalism in the Latter Half of 19th Century
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Abstract: Since the time immemorial India has been the abode of various castes and religions. There was no reason for the development of nationalism here; however, the spirit of nationalism emerged in India owing to the impact of the British rule. R. Coupland remarks, “Indian Nationalism was the child of the British Raj, and the British authorities blessed its cradle.” This opinion is not justified because in spite of a range of diversities, there was a deep-seated unity in India for which its people always felt proud of being Indians. As a result of their living together for a long time, a feeling of synthesis developed between them. But the British regime created various differences among them as a result of which there emerged a spirit of nationalism in India. The first revolt of Indian independence, the rebellion of 1857, was mercilessly crushed by the English, however, it shook the country from the slumber and she began to make efforts for her independence. No doubt the British authority made some dummy reforms to pacify the Indians and also started taking cooperation and support of the Indians in the administration of the country, but this was not enough. The reality was that the speed of the reforms was too slow to satisfy the sentiments of nationalism. After the establishment of All Indian National Congress (1885), various regional political organizations were established and these together contributed a lot to the national awakening in India.

Keywords: Colonialism, East India Company, Economic exploitation, Indian National Congress, Western Education

Objectives of the Study: The paper focuses on the social, economic and political factors that had inspired the people to define and achieve their national identity in the late 19th century. This study also interprets the course and reasons behind the process of struggle against colonialism.

Methodology: An elaborative research methodology was used to investigate and interpret the genesis and growth of nationalism in India in the second half of 19th century. The researcher has relied both on primary sources as well as secondary sources for collection of data. Primary data has been gathered from archival records; whereas secondary data is based on analysis and discussions.

I. Introduction
The term nationalism is essentially a sentiment of unity arising among a number of people usually of the same territory, sharing a common language, similar history and traditions, common interests with common political association and common ideals of political unity. The presence or absence of any one or more factors does not necessarily imply the presence or absence of a spirit of nationalism. What is important is the will of the people to live together free from all external control (Grover, 2004; Desai, 1946). Indian nationalism arose due to many factors and forces. Basically it arose to meet the challenge of foreign domination. The very nature of the British rule facilitated the growth of national sentiment among the Indian people. It was the British rule and its consequences, direct and indirect, which supplied the necessary conditions, material, moral and intellectual for the rise of a national movement in India. At the root of the matter lay the conflict of interests of the ruler and the ruled. The British had brought India under their political control chiefly to promote their own interests and they ruled it mainly with that end in view. Naturally the British interests were given precedence over Indian welfare (Kumar, 1982).¹ British rule over India was held responsible for the cultural and intellectual stagnation of India. This feeling came to be shared by an increasingly larger number of Indians.

In the context of world history, the rise of nationalism is reflected in the spirit of Renaissance in Europe when freedom from religious restrictions led to the enhancement of national identity (Sarkar, 2014). Initiated in the mid of 15th century, this expression of nationalism was intensified by the French Revolution (1789) where the

¹ The Indians did not take a long time to realize that their interests were sacrificed in order to promote the interests of the British authority. Soon they started attributing India’s economic backwardness to the British rule.
political changes resulted in the passing of sovereignty from the hands of an absolute monarch to the French citizens. The immortal slogan of the French Revolution—Liberty, Equality and Fraternity inspired the whole world (Datta, 1964). Likewise the American Revolution also strengthened the idea of nationalism. For India, the making of national identity was a long course whose roots can be drawn from the ancient period. Indian emperors like Ashoka (269 BC-232 BC), Samudragupta (335-75 AD) Harshvardhan (606-47 AD), Akbar (1556-1605 AD), etc. tried to maintain the sentiment of unity throughout the length and the breadth of the country. But, it was only in the 19th century that the concept of a national identity and national consciousness emerged to a large extent which was ultimately connected to the anti-colonial movement.

Indian nationalism passed through various phases of development. As it advanced from one phase to another its social basis broadened, its objective became more clearly defined and bold, and its forms of expression were more varied. As a result of the impact of world development, of the Indian people evolved a national consciousness and outlook and were drawn into the orbit of the nationalist movement (Azad, 2009). This national awakening found expression in varied spheres of national life- social, political and cultural. The first phase of Indian nationalism, in the early 19th century, was directed by those who came in contact with western education in Calcutta and Bombay. The intellectuals who were the products of the modern education imparted in the new educational institutions greatly assimilated its democratic and nationalist ideas, formed the first stratum of the Indian society to develop a national consciousness and aspirations. We can say Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his group of enlightened Indians were pioneers of Indian nationalism. They were the exponents of the Indian nation and tried to define the sphere of nationalism through socio-religious reform movements. They made endeavours to restructure the Indian society and religion in the spirit of the new principle of democracy, rationalism and nationalism (Gordon, 1974). In fact, these movements were the expression of the rising national democratic consciousness among a section of the Indian people. They also spoke for the freedom of the press, India for the Indians, etc.

II. Popular debates

It is hazardous to assume that Indian nationalism was a growth of 19th century political reform activities. As Indian political figures of the late 19th century reflects that the earlier political activities in various parts of the country were concerned chiefly with local or provincial issues and they represented the interest of groups which had little sense of identification with the entire nation (Owen, 2008). At the beginning of 19th century India came into close contact with Europe and England that was experiencing varied forms of nationalism. It is commonly assumed that nationalism in India is a product of English education and the impact of the West. But few scholars are also of this view that Indian nationalism is not mere offspring of modern education but it was the outcome of the new social conditions created in India.

The establishment of British rule brought about political and administrative unification in India. In the pre-colonial period the Indian masses were not socially and economically integrated in the absence of a unified administration and national economy. Common subjection, common institutions, common laws began to unite India in a common bond (Farley, 1942; Chandra, 1966). In the words of Edwyn Bevan, “The British Raj was like a steel frame which held the injured body of India together till the gradual process of internal growth had joined the dislocated bones, knit up the torn fibres and enabled the patient to regain inner coherence and unity.” Thus, establishment of political unity, uniform system of administration, uniform reign of law and a uniform currency system generated the idea of India as a nation.

Prior to the revolt of 1857, the British treated India as one nation as this outlook satisfied the demands of colonial government. They were attempting to conquer India, therefore, they pleaded that the conquest of the entire sub-continent would alone provide administrative and political unity to India. Thus, the conquest of India was justified on the ground of benefitting the people of this country. But, after the revolt of 1857, the British rule reversed their stand. They left the policy of conquest and annexation because the existence of the native states was found more useful safe for them (Dirks, 2006). After the revolt, the policy of dividing the Indians was pursued in a direct manner. Therefore, it became necessary to discard the concept of one Indian nation. The British historians and scholars then upheld that India was never a nation. It was a land of different languages, dresses, social customs, religions and races. Politically too, it was never united. Rather, the attempts to unite it politically always failed miserably. The Indians developed the concept of nationalism only during the British rule. Thus, the British scholars have maintained that Indian nationalism is the heritage of the British. The Indian historians, however, have refuted this opinion of the British scholars. They have argued that India, of course, is a country of diversity. It is primarily because of the geographical vastness of the country and the liberal cultural attitude of Indians. But behind all this variety in its culture, religions of the people, manners, customs etc. there has always existed a fundamental unity among the natives of India (Chatterjee, 1986). India, of course, had remained divided politically and the efforts to bring about its unity always failed but culturally India has always remained united. Vedic religion, Sanskrit language, Hindu customs, places of pilgrimage which are spread all over India, values of life etc. have always provided unity to India. The Indians, therefore, have always felt that they belong to one country. Even the Indian Muslims have become part and parcel of this
country politically and culturally in medieval times. It was the British authority which deliberately divided the Hindus and the Muslims leading to communal differences between the two groups. Thus, all those factors which contribute towards the formation of nationalism were already existed in India. Yet, it is accepted that nationalism, in the scientific sense, developed in India only during the British rule in the latter half of the nineteenth century. But then the spirit of nationalism in Europe is also a product of the nineteenth century. It is quite interesting to know that if we try to find out primary causes leading to the growth of nationalism, we would say that the rise of nationalism in the entire world which sprang during the course of the revolution of 1789 in France, the Indian Renaissance leading to social and religious movements in the 19th century, the modernization of India during the British rule, colonial policies of the British in India particularly in the field of economy and the leadership provided by intellectuals among the English educated class were primarily responsible for the emergence of the Indian national movement (Gupta, 2012). To quote A. R. Desai, "Indian nationalism was the outcome of the new material conditions created in India and the new social forces which emerged as a result of the British conquest. It was the outcome of the objective conflict of interests, the interest of Britain to keep India politically, economically subjected to her and the interest of the Indian people for a free political economic and cultural evolution of the Indian society, which was intruded by the British rule."

III. Causes behind the Development and Extension of Nationalism

The existed a number of primary forces in the Indian political, socio-religious and economical infrastructure that were responsible for the rise of national identity in the latter half of 19th century. India was united politically and administratively again under the British rule and remained the same for a long period than it had ever been before. Codified laws, integrated judiciary, administrative officers which were transferred from one place to another all over India etc. provided the basic concept of one nation among the Indians (Satya, 1990). The English language was made as the medium of instruction of education in 1835. It became the language of the educated people of India irrespective of differences in region and religion. It provided the best means of understanding and developing close contact with each other. The educated Indians came in contact with the western ideas of liberty, equality, democracy, socialism etc. through the medium of English. Many Indians went abroad and came in direct contact with the western world. It was these English educated Indians who developed the sentiment of nationalism and organized it. In 19th century Indians came in contact not only with Britain but with other foreign countries as well. The movements in other countries, their economic developments, their problems and conflicts affected Indians in an intensive manner (Keay, 1993). B. B. Majumdar has rightly remarked that, “Western education and the Indian press were the two of the most important agencies destined to infuse into the people of India the spirit of national unity and to inspire them to achieve independence without bloodshed.”

The development of the means of communication and transport led to the rapid progressive transformation of India. Administrative handiness, military defense and intensive economic exploitation were the primary forces behind the development of modern means of transport. Railways, telegraph, wireless, postal services, construction of roads and canals facilitated communication among the people (Metcalf, 1998). All these brought them nearer to each other and provided the facility to organize the national movement. In the words of Edwin Arnold, "Railways may do for India what dynasties have never done what the genius of Akbar the Magnificent could not, not the cruelty of Tipu Saheb by violence, they have made India a nation.” The transport system of India before the beginning of railways was fragile and weak. The introduction of railways marks a turning point in the transport system of India. In a sense, the Indian railway was the result of a vast European scientific movement. The economic implications which inspired the British to launch the movement in India were obvious. Even though the British started railways for serving the needs of Industrial Revolution in England, but it became a boon to India (Dutt, 1950). Eminent historian of Modern India history, Bipan Chandra and others described the railway structure as the cradle of nationhood in India. They mentioned that railways were the veins of independence movement. Hence, the modern means of communications and transport enabled people living in different parts of the country to maintain regular contacts with one another which provided them not only a sense of unity but also the facility to organize an all India movement.

The social and religious reform movements of the 19th century contributed a lot in the growth of nationalism. Bipan Chandra rightly remarks that, "The Indian national movement was a part of the Indian Renaissance of India in the 19th century contributed a lot in the growth of nationalism."
India which manifested in the form of a general reform movement and produced striking religious and social reforms long before it issued in a movement for political emancipation.” Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand, and Anie Besant were all patriots. They revived the glory of ancient India, created faith among the people in their religion and, thus, gave the message of love to their motherland (Cohn, 1996). Swami Dayanand was the first who used the word Swaraj, and declared Hindi as the national language of India. Many Arya Samajist leaders were in the fore-front of the national movement and were primarily responsible for the rise of extremism in the Congress.

The establishment of printing press helped in wide circulation of ideas. A large number of newspapers were published in different regional languages of India. In 1875 the total number of newspapers was four hundred ninety eight. All these newspapers were mostly anti-British and gave publicity to racial arrogance, economic exploitation, personal misbehavior etc. of the British towards Indians (Chatterjee, 2004). They created anti-British feeling among common people of India and united them against a common oppressor. Among these newspapers Samvad kaumudi, Bombay Samachar, Banga Doosta, Rust Guftar, Amrit Bazar Patrika and Tribune were quite popular. During this period, many people helped in building up the national feeling through their writings. Bankim Chandra wrote his novel Anand Math and the national song Bande-mataram. Among other prominent writers, Madhu Sudan Datt wrote in Bengali, Bhartendu Harish Chandra in Hindi, Narmada in Gujrati, Chiplunkar in Marathi and Bharti in Tamil. These and a host of other writers, writing in different languages prepared a vast national literature. This literature aroused national feelings of the Indians.

The revolt of 1857 left permanent bitterness between the British and the Indians. The policy to rule India by sword was upheld by the British authority. Therefore, the British asserted themselves not only administratively but their personal behavior also became arrogant towards the Indians. Disrespect to Indians, beating of Indian servants and cultivators, disrespect to their women etc. became common events. These happenings were given wide publicity by the Indian newspapers. This inflamed the feelings of the Indians against the British which helped in the growth of national consciousness (Rao, 2014; Bahadur, 1983).

Racial arrogance of the British united the Indians against the British rule. In medieval times conquerors like the Turks, the Afghans and the Mughals who came to India accepted India as their motherland and settled here. But the British remained perpetual foreigners in modern India. Because of the white colour of the skin they adopted a feeling of racial dominance while dealing with Indian society and administration (Hulme, 1987). They branded all Indians irrespective of their caste, religion or clan with the badge of inferiority. They were kept out of European clubs, restaurants and were not allowed to travel in the same compartments. It is ironical to mention that every administrative office, railway compartments, hotels and clubs were adorned with placards displaying “Indians and Dogs are not allowed.” This racial arrogance hurt the sentiments of the Indian people and they became conscious of this national humiliation. Moreover, the Indians were denied of higher posts in administration and these posts were reserved only for the white Englishmen. The charter Act of 1833 laid down that fitness was to be the criterion of eligibility for jobs. It was again reiterated in the Queen’s proclamation of 1858. However, deliberate attempts were made by the British to debar Indians from higher posts specially the Indian Civil Service. S. N. Banerjee, Aurobindo Ghosh etc. were denied entry into Indian Civil Service on fragile grounds (Guha, 2010). In 1877 the entrance age to ICS was reduced from 21 to 19 just to reduce the prospects of Indian candidates from the Indian Civil Service. This decision led to a countrywide agitation and marked the beginning of the unity of action and solidarity of purpose. S. N. Banerjee started an all India campaign for restoring the entrance age of 21 and for simultaneous ICS examination in India. It helped the educated Indians to unite for promoting their interests.

The tenure of Governor-General Lord Lytton (1876-80) and Lord Ripon (1880-84) are also considered as a milestone in the rise of nationalism in India (Gopal, 1975). Lytton arranged the grand Delhi Durbar (1877) to declare Queen Victoria as the Empress of India at a time when a larger part of India was under the grip of famine and epidemic. He passed the Vernacular Press Act (1878) which curbed the liberty of the Indian press. The second Afghan war (1878-80) fought during the period of Lord Lytton adversely affected the economic resources of India. His Arms Act was a means to prevent the Indians from keeping arms. Another discriminatory measure was the reducing of the import cotton duties by five percent to appease the Lancashire mill-owners. All these measures created widespread discontentment among the Indians and they tried to unite themselves in an unparallel manner. Similarly, the Ilbert Bill Controversy (1882) provoked the Indian masses.3 The Ilbert Bill was presented in the Central legislature during the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon. Through this it was proposed that the Indian judges would have the right to try Europeans as well. It was opposed by the British residents in India. They collected fund for this purpose, organized a systematic movement against the Bill both in England and

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3 The Ilbert Bill controversy during the period of Lord Ripon exposed the racial bitterness of the British authority and united the Indians. Ripon had to modify the bill which almost defeated the innovative objective. The whole episode became an eye-opener for Indians. They became fully conscious of the degradation to which foreign rule had reduced them. Henceforth, they realized the significance of united and concerted political action. The Indian leaders learnt the lesson that the way to improve their condition was to organize, agitate and press their demands rather than rely on benevolence of the British government. Consequently, demands began to arise for a permanent nationwide organization to ventilate the grievances of the people.
India and, ultimately, succeeded in getting the Bill amended so that it lost its very spirit. The opposition to the bill antagonized the Indian public opinion (Brown, 1985). It made them clear the policy of racial discrimination of the British.

The economic policies followed by the British rule led to the rapid transformation of India’s economy into a colonial economy whose nature and structure were determined by the needs of the economy of Britain. The economic policies pursued by the colonial government in India were concerned more with the protection and promotion of the economic interests of Britain rather than with the development of the Indian economy (Dutt, 1906). Such policies brought about a fundamental change in the structure of the Indian economy and transformed India into mere supplier of raw materials and consumer of finished industrial products from Britain. Their policies led to the commercialization of Indian agriculture which in the final run led to the ruralisation of Indian economic structure. Early nationalist leaders of Indian freedom struggle concluded that the decay of traditional industries, inadequate development of modern industries and increasing dependence of the people on agriculture during the British period were largely due to the overall impact of British policies. The ruthless exploitation under British colonial rule completely devastated India’s economy. Throughout the British rule Indian population faced frequent famines, had one of the world's lowest life expectancies, suffered from pervasive malnutrition and was largely illiterate. The British conquerors totally disrupted the traditional structure of the Indian economy. They exploited Indian resources and carried away Indian wealth as tribute (Kohli, 1987; Datta, 2000). The results of this subordination of the Indian economy to the interests of British trade and industry were many and varied. As per British economist, Angus Maddison, India's share of the world income went from 27% in 1700 AD to 3% in 1950. The Industrial Revolution in Britain completely transformed Britain’s economy and its economic relations with India. During the second half of the 18th century and the first few decades of the 19th century, Britain underwent profound social and economic transformation and British industry developed and expanded rapidly. In 1769, the British industrialists compelled the company by law to export raw-material every year British manufactures amounting to over £ 380,000 even though it suffered a loss on the transaction. In 1793, they forced the company to grant them the use of 3,000 tons of its shipping every year to carry their goods (Michael, 1963). Another important malaise of this period was the drain of wealth from India. It all began in Bengal in 1757, when the Company’s servants began to carry home immense fortunes extorted from Indian rulers, zamindars, merchants and common people. In 1765, the Company acquired the Diwani of Bengal and thus gained control over its revenues. The Company even more than its servants soon directly organized the drain (Owen, 2008). The drain took the form of an excess of India’s exports over its imports for which India got no return.

IV. Conclusion

The rise of national consciousness in the late 19th century was fundamentally the consequence of the British rule. The economic, political and social changes brought by the British rule resulted in the oppression of all classes giving rise to a wide spread dissatisfaction among the masses. The uniform system of administration, development of postal and telegraph, railways, printing press and educational institutions created by the British with an aim of running an effective administration also become instrumental in providing favourbale conditions for the development and expansion of national movement. A new consciousness was developing in the educated sections and middle classes. It was this middle class consciousness, which became the chief medium for the channelization of popular discontent, and was instrumental in the development of national consciousness in India. The impact of modern western culture and consciousness of defeat by a foreign power give birth to a new awakening. Thoughtful Indians began to look for the strengths and weaknesses of their society and for ways and means of removing the weaknesses. They were impressed in particular by modern science and the doctrines of reason and humanism. They also came to hold that elements of modern western thought have to be imbibed for the regeneration of India. The modern educational systems familiarized the educated classes with the ideas of equality, liberty and nationalism. They were exposed to the works of liberal writers and thinkers. The Indians who were studying in England found on their return to India that they were denied all the rights which were

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6 Commercialization of agriculture is a process where peasants start producing agricultural products primarily for sale in distant markets, rather than to meet their own need or to sell in local markets. These agricultural products were needed by the British industries or could fetch cash gain to the British in the European or American market, e.g. cotton, indigo, jute, etc.

7 The Industrial Revolution took place in Europe in general and England, in particular, during the mid of eighteenth century. It can be defined as the application of power driven machinery to manufacturing, which accelerated output significantly. Historical researches prove that the colonies of East India Company, particularly in Asia and Africa, contributed immensely in rapid industrialization.

8 The Drain of Wealth theory was systemically initiated by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1867 and further analyzed and developed by R. P. Dutt, M. G Ranade, etc. Their focal point of critique of colonialism was the drain theory. They pointed out that a large part of India’s capital and wealth was being transferred or drained to Britain in the form of salaries and pensions of British civil and military officials working in India, interests on loans taken by the Indian government, profits of the British capitalists in India and the home charges or expenses of the Indian Government in Britain.
taken for granted in the European countries. These factors gave a new vision of nationalism in the second half of 19th century.

References