

Nationalism in India

Page No: 74

Write in Brief

1. Explain: (a) Why growth of nationalism in the colonies is linked to an anti-colonial movement. (b) How the First World War helped in the growth of the National Movement in India. (c) Why Indians were outraged by the Rowlatt Act. (d) Why Gandhiji decided to withdraw the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Answer

(a) Colonisation affected people's freedom, and nationalist sentiments surged during the process of struggle against imperial domination. The sense of oppression and exploitation became a common bond for people from different walks of life, and this resulted in the growth of nationalist ideals. Thus, growth of nationalism in the colonies is linked to anti-colonial movements.

(b) During the First World War, the British army conducted forced recruitment from rural areas in India. To finance the defence expenditure, high custom duties and income taxes were imposed. Also, during 1918-19 and 1920-21, crops failed in many parts of India, thereby resulting in acute food shortages. All this caused extensive anger and opposition against the British colonial rule, and the national movement of India headed towards a stronger, more definitive direction.

(c) The Rowlatt Act was passed hurriedly through the Imperial Legislative Council despite opposition from Indian members. It gave the government autocratic powers to repress political activities besides allowing it to detain political prisoners without a trial, for two years. The Indian were outraged by this act as it was clearly undemocratic and oppressive, and hurt national sentiments and dignity.

(d) Gandhiji decided to withdraw the Non-Cooperation Movement due to various incidents of violence perpetrated by the masses, especially the Chauri Chaura incident in 1922 where the people clashed with the police, setting a police-station on fire. Gandhiji felt that the people were not yet ready for a mass struggle, and that satyagrahis needed to be properly trained for non-violent demonstrations.

2. What is meant by the idea Satyagraha?

Answer Satyagraha was a novel method of mass agitation. The idea of Satyagraha emphasized upon the power of truth and the need to search for truth. It suggested that if the cause was true and if the struggle was against injustice, then physical force was not necessary to fight the oppressor.

Through non-violent methods a Satyagraha could appeal the conscience of the oppressor by the power of truth, which was bound to win.

3. Write a newspaper report on:
- (a) The Jallianwala Bagh massacre
 - (b) The Simon Commission

Answer

a) On 13th April 1919, a large crowd gathered in the enclosed ground of Jallianwala Bagh – some to protest against the British government's repressive measures, others to attend the annual Baishakhi Fair. These people were unaware of the imposition of Marshal Law in the city. General Dyer, the Commander, blocked the exit points from the Bagh and opened fire upon the innocent citizens. Dyer's intention was to produce a 'moral effect' and terrorize satyagrahis. Hundreds of innocent people including women and children were killed and wounded due to this indiscriminate firing by the British soldiers, which ultimately led to nation-wide outrage. Jallianwala Bagh incident was the most brutal incident in the History of India.

b) The Simon Commission was constituted by the Tory Government in Britain, under Sir John Simon. The objective of the Commission was to look into the functioning of the constitutional system in India and suggest some constitutional changes. But nationalists in India opposed the Commission because it had not a single Indian member. Therefore, when the Simon Commission arrived in India in 1928, it was greeted with

the slogan “Go Back Simon”. All parties, including Congress and the Muslim league, participated in the demonstrations.

4. Compare the images of Bharat Mata in this chapter with the image of Germania in Chapter 1.

Answer

→ The image of Germania was the symbol of German nation whereas; the image of Bharat Mata was the symbol of Indian nation.

→ Both images inspired nationalists who worked very hard to unify their respective countries and to attain a liberal nation.

→ The image of Bharat Mata is different from that of Germania in the sense that former reflects the religious basis of its making.

→ The image of Bharat Mata painted by Abanindranath Tagore is bestowed with learning, food, clothing and some ascetic quality also. Another painting of Bharat Mata in which we find Mata holding Trishul and standing beside a lion and an elephant – symbols of power and authority. This image appears to be more akin to the image of Germania where she holds a sword and a shield.

Discuss

1. List all the different social groups which joined the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921. Then choose any three and write about their hopes and struggles to show why they joined the movement.

Answer The different social groups that joined the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921 were the urban middle class comprising lawyers, teachers and headmasters, students, peasants, tribals and workers.

→ The middle class joined the movement because the boycott of foreign goods would make the sale of their textiles and handlooms go up.

→ The peasants took part in the movement because they hoped they would be saved from the oppressive landlords, high taxes taken by the colonial government.

→ Plantation workers took part in the agitation hoping they would get the right to move freely in and outside the plantations and get land in their own villages.

2. Discuss the Salt March to make clear why it was an effective symbol of resistance against colonialism.

Answer The Salt March was an effective symbol of resistance against colonialism because it was done in revolt against a commodity- salt, used by the rich and the poor alike. The tax on salt, and the government monopoly over its production was a severely oppressive administrative move. The Salt March was effective also because Gandhiji met a large number of commoners during the march and he taught them the true meaning of swaraj and non-violence. By peacefully defying a law and making salt against government orders, Gandhiji set forth an example to the whole nation of how the oppressor could be confronted in a non-violent manner. This also led to the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930.

4. Why did political leaders differ sharply over the question of

separate electorates?

Answer Political leaders differed sharply over the question of separate electorates because of differences in opinion. While those supporting the cause of minorities and the dalits believed that only political empowerment would resolve their social backwardness, others like Gandhiji thought that separate electorates would further slow down the process of their integration into society. Also, it was feared that the system of separate electorates would gradually divide the country into numerous fragments because every community or class would then ask for separate representations.