

Voices of Indian Nationalists

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ABSTRACT

British colonial rule had a tremendous impact on all sections of Indian social. There were a series of civil rebellions led by rulers who were deposed by the Britishers, ex-officials of the conquered Indian states, impoverished zamindars and poligars. It brought together people having different ethnic, religious and class background against the British rule. The protest and resistance was mainly offered by the displaced ruling classes, peasantry and tribals. For example, when Warren Hastings attacked Banaras and imprisoned King Chet Singh to fulfill his unjustified demand of money and army, the people of Banaras rebelled. In Madras Presidency, Poligars rebelled, when the British tried to snatch away their military and land rights. Interference in religious practices was another cause of these popular rebellions. Often these revolts were anti-Christian. This was due to the socio-religious reforms introduced by the British which were unacceptable to the people. In some other rebellions, difference between the religion of the ruler and exploited classes became the immediate cause for the rebellion. This happened in Mappila Rebellion of Malabar region. Here the Muslim peasantry fought against the Hindu landlords and moneylenders. The Faqir and Sanyasi Rebellions (1770–1820s), The Bengal famine of 1770 led peasant, the Indigo Rebellion (1859-1862), Jaintia and Garo Rebellion (1860-1870s) gave a stiff Resistance to British rule in India. The non-violent movements, such as the Non-cooperation movement and the Salt Satyagraha, as well as armed uprisings, such as the revolt of 1857 and the Quit India Movement sparked the agitation.

Keywords: Rebellion, British rule, resistance, tribals, policies.

Introduction:

Formal statements like public speeches by Gandhi and other INC leaders, letters of opposition including Gandhi's correspondence with the viceroy, mass petitions, Slogans and symbols, newspaper and journal articles from Gandhi's own journals, masterful use of the international press, leaflets and pamphlets, lectures by INC activists on trains to a "captive audience"; Group Representations' like delegations to persuade officials, picketing of liquor stores; symbolic public acts like displays of flags (independent India), prayer and worship (Gandhi's daily prayer meetings) gave impetus to the people's resistive movements against the British Raj. Singing, dancing, and drums at public gatherings and among the crowds greeting the marchers as they arrived in village after village were the other forms. Processions include the Salt March itself, which for Gandhi was also explicitly a religious as well as political procession. The political mourning of the thousands of unarmed demonstrators killed or wounded by British soldiers at Amritsar in 1919—Gandhi deliberately planned for the march to

arrive at the seacoast on the anniversary of their death. Social Non cooperation Ostracism of persons, social boycotts of persons not engaging in non-cooperation with the British government.

Economic Non cooperation Action by consumers: national boycott of British cloth and shops selling it, as well as liquor stores; rent withholding. Limited strikes, hartals, and economic shutdowns, Political Non cooperation, Rejection of authority like withholding of allegiance and refusal of public office by Indians further strengthened their resistance. Noncooperation with government as resignations of government employment and positions, withdrawal from government educational institutions, refusal to disperse, civil disobedience of British laws, especially the salt tax; boycott of schools and nonviolent invasions, especially of the Dharasana Salt Works, nonviolent occupation of the seashore to make salt; new social patterns, overloading of facilities (especially jails), alternative markets (salt, cloth) and institutions, such as ashrams and

communities that cut across caste, class, and religious-communal lines. Alternative economic institutions such as salt manufacturing and the khadi (homespun) cloth industries tried to make Indians more self-Dependent. Civil disobedience of “neutral” laws, dual sovereignty, making the Indian National Congress a de facto ruling entity in an attempt to side line the colonial government were all kind of resistance that the Indians did to tackle the selfish run British government .

Political Resistance During The Colonial Rule

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, colonialism had a profound impact on the economic, social, and political structures of India in various ways.

The British introduced a series of economic policies that aimed to extract maximum resources and wealth from the country. The British introduced new forms of agriculture, such as indigo and opium cultivation, which led to the displacement of traditional farming practices and the exploitation of local farmers. The British also established a network of railways and ports, which facilitated the export of Indian raw materials and the import of manufactured goods from Britain. This led to the deindustrialization of India and the creation of a dependent economy. Exploitive Policies included the imposition of high tariffs on Indian goods, the establishment of a series of monopolies, and the introduction of a new land revenue system that aimed to increase the amount of money extracted from Indian farmers. These policies had a negative impact on the economy, as they reduced the competitiveness of Indian industries and increased the burden on farmers.

The British introduced a system of parliamentary democracy, but this was only available to a small elite minority of the population. They also imposed a centralized system of administration, which led to the erosion of traditional forms of governance and the loss of local autonomy.

Tribal Resistance Against British Rule

The struggle against the British rule in India did not begin suddenly. It began from the time of the very inception of the British rule. The reason for this was its very nature of rule i.e., colonial nature. The latter destroys the country and the society where its rule is established. It creates a situation in which the ruled

would resort to rebellion to drive out the alien rulers and save themselves from oppression, exploitation etc. For example, the Britishers dethroned several native rulers and chieftains in India. They removed the land rights of rulers, chieftains etc. They collected heavy tribute from all of them. Several of their rights were removed. Similarly, heavy ‘rent’ was collected from the peasants. In case of failure to pay their rent they were removed from their landholdings. They were even harassed, tortured, arrested and ‘confined’ for the same reasons. Even the then existing Acts, Judiciary etc., stood by the British. There was no development of agriculture and irrigation facilities. The ancient and medieval irrigation systems spreading all over the country were neglected and were transformed into historical ruins. There was widespread corruption in all the departments of the British government. Indian trade and commerce was destroyed through various measures. The privileges of the elite in the society i.e., of the villages, castes, sects, religions, servants of villages like headmen etc., were removed. Even the rights of the tribal’s were denied.

In the beginning, the opposition to British rule took the character of sporadic but heroic and self-sacrificing peasant struggles. The peasants and artisans driven to desperation often rose, arms in hand, against the colonial rulers and their native agents . One among the great peasant and adivasi rebellions which aimed at overthrowing colonial rule was the revolt of the ‘Sannyasins’ and ‘Fakirs’ of Bengal. This was the first widespread peasant revolt against the British rule. It began in 1763 and went through different phases until it was finally suppressed in 1800.

The peasant revolts had significant implications due to the aggressive economic policies of the British, which disrupted India’s traditional agrarian system and exacerbated the hardships faced by peasants. While these revolts were not explicitly aimed at overthrowing British rule, they played a crucial role in raising awareness among Indians about the need to organize and resist exploitation and oppression. They set the stage for subsequent uprisings, including the Sikh Wars in Punjab and, ultimately, the Revolt of 1857.

Social Resistance by the Reformers and Revivalists.

A number of Socio-Religious Reform

Movements were carried out throughout India in the 19th century. These socio-religious reform movements aimed to modernise Indian society through social restructuring. The Socio-Religious Reform Movements and their leaders were characterised by a recognition of the interconnection between religious and social issues. The British invasion of India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries exposed some significant flaws and shortcomings in Indian social institutions.

The Wahabi Movement (1830s-1860s) was led by Syed Ahmed Bareilvi of Rae Bareilly, who was strongly influenced by the teachings of Abdul Wahab of Arabia and Shah Waliullah, a saint from Delhi. Initially, the movement had a religious foundation, but it gradually evolved into a class struggle in certain regions, particularly in Bengal. Regardless of communal distinctions, peasants united against their landlords in this movement.

As a result, a number of people and movements worked to change social and religious customs with the goal of reforming and reviving society. This also has to do with how Indian society was changing and how new classes were emerging. According to this viewpoint, the socio-religious movements represent the social aspirations of colonial India's newly emergin

Economic Resistances:

Dadabhai Naoroji made several contributions in the Indian Economic Thought. He laid down the foundation of studying the problems faced by India during British rule from a practical angle and devised the necessary statistical tool for it. He was basically motivated by a deep sense of patriotism. He was always emphasizing the basic duty which the British government had towards its subjects in India and advocated that Britain was morally not authorised to benefit at the cost of Indian interests. Dadabhai Naoroji contributed a number of writings on the subject of Indian poverty and the consequences of British rule. One of his greatest contributions is 'The Drain Theory'.

The Indian people tried to make them self sufficient during the colonial times by moving towards Swadeshi and Boycotting British product to boost the Economy without the involvement of foreign markets. Initially the step was taken as an action against the

Partition of Bengal in 1905 but look a turning effect by Gandhiji's introduction of Khadi and Charkha. The Swadeshi movement was a part of the Indian independence movement, promoting self-sufficiency and contributing to Indian nationalism. Mahatma Gandhi saw it as essential for self-rule (swaraj). The movement gained momentum as wealthy Indians donated funds and land for Khadi and Gramodyog societies, fostering local cloth production. This movement extended to other village industries, aiming to make villages self-sufficient. The Indian National Congress utilized the Swadeshi movement as a tool in its struggle for freedom.

Intellectual Resistance

“Just as street lights and the rounds of police constables bring to light anything wrong or unjust happening on the roads in the dark, the editorial pen brings to light the injustices and the wrongs of the administration.”

The above quote is from the first issue of Kesari, the Marathi weekly, which was founded in 1881 by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Before Mahatma Gandhi, there was Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He is widely seen as the first leader of the Independence movement and was in charge of two publications—Kesari in Marathi, and Mahratta in English. The papers were started along with Gopal Agarkar and Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, who were both noted figures in the freedom movement. Both papers regularly published nationalist articles, criticising the British on several occasions.

Many English-educated young Indians of the post-mutiny period emulated their British mentors by seeking employment in the ICS, the legal services, journalism, and education. The Few Indians, however, were admitted to the ICS; and, among the first handful who were, one of the brightest, Surendranath Banerjea (1848–1925), who became a Calcutta college teacher and then editor of The Bengalee and founder of the Indian Association in Calcutta. In 1883 he convened the first Indian National Conference in Bengal, anticipating by two years the birth of the Congress Party on the opposite side of India. After the first partition of Bengal in 1905, Banerjea attained nationwide fame as a leader of the swadeshi movement, promoting Indian-made goods, and the

movement to boycott British manufactured goods.

During the 1870s young leaders in Bombay also established a number of provincial political associations, such as the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha (Poona Public Society), founded by Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842–1901), who had graduated at the top of the first bachelor of arts class at the University of Bombay (now University of Mumbai) in 1862. Ranade found employment in the educational department in Bombay, taught at Elphinstone College, edited the *Indu Prakash*, helped start the Hindu reformist Prarthana Samaj (Prayer Society) in Bombay, wrote historical and other essays, and became a barrister, eventually being appointed to the bench of Bombay's high court. Ranade was one of the early leaders of India's emulative school of nationalism, as was his brilliant disciple Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866–1915), later revered by Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi (1869–1948) as a political guru (preceptor). Gokhale, an editor and social reformer, taught at Fergusson College in Poona (Pune) and in 1905 was elected president of the Congress Party. Moderation and reform were the keynotes of Gokhale's life, and by his use of reasoned argument, patient labour, and unflagging faith in the ultimate equity of British liberalism, he was able to achieve much for India.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920), Gokhale's colleague at Fergusson College, was the leader of Indian nationalism's revolutionary reaction against British rule. Tilak was Poona's most popular Marathi journalist, whose vernacular newspaper, *Kesari* ("Lion"), became the leading literary thorn in the side of the British. The *Lokamanya* ("Revered by the People"), as Tilak came to be called after he was jailed for seditious writings in 1897, looked to orthodox Hinduism and Maratha history as his twin sources of nationalist inspiration. Tilak called on his compatriots to take keener interest and pride in the religious, cultural, martial, and political glories of pre-British Hindu India; in Poona, former capital of the Maratha Hindu glory, he helped found and publicize the popular Ganesha (Ganapati) and Shivaji festivals in the 1890s. Tilak had no faith in British justice, and his life was devoted primarily to agitation aimed at ousting the British from India by any means and

restoring *swaraj* (self-rule, or independence) to India's people. While Tilak brought many non-English-educated Hindus into the nationalist movement, the orthodox Hindu character of his revolutionary revival (which mellowed considerably in the latter part of his political career) alienated many within India's Muslim minority and exacerbated communal tensions and conflict.

Helena Blavatsky (1831–91), the Russian-born cofounder of the Theosophical Society, went to India in 1879 to sit at the feet of Swami Dayananda Sarasvati (1824–83), whose "back to the Vedas" reformist Hindu society, the *Arya Samaj*, was founded in Bombay in 1875. Dayananda called on Hindus to reject the "corrupting" excrescences of their faith, including idolatry, the caste system, and infant marriage, and to return to the original purity of Vedic life and thought. The Swami insisted that post-Vedic changes in Hindu society had led only to weakness and disunity, which had destroyed India's capacity to resist foreign invasion and subjugation. His reformist society was to take root most firmly in the Punjab at the start of the 20th century, and it became that province's leading nationalist organization. Blavatsky soon left Dayananda and established her own "Samaj," whose Indian headquarters were outside Madras city, at Adyar. Annie Besant (1847–1933), the Theosophical Society's most famous leader, succeeded Blavatsky and became the first and only British woman to serve as president of the Congress Party (1917).

Conclusion:

In response to colonial rule, a number of forms of resistance and rebellion emerged in India. These included non-violent movements, such as the Non-cooperation movement and the Salt Satyagraha, as well as armed uprisings, such as the revolt of 1857 and the Quit India Movement.

Mahatma Gandhi played a pivotal role in the popular resistance against British rule through his philosophy of non-violent civil disobedience, known as Satyagraha. Gandhi's leadership during movements like the Non-Cooperation Movement, Salt Satyagraha, and Quit India Movement galvanized the masses. His emphasis on *Swadeshi*, *Khadi*, and the

principles of truth and non-violence resonated with people across different sections of society. Gandhi's ability to unite people from diverse backgrounds under the umbrella of a non-violent struggle significantly contributed to the success of the Indian independence movement.

Some groups in India, such as the revolt of 1857, Ghadar Party and the Indian National Army (INA), and various other revolutionaries sought to use armed force to drive out the British. These groups carried out acts of sabotage and guerrilla warfare against British military and civilian targets.

Some Indian nationalists used cultural expression as a means of resistance to colonial rule. This included the promotion of Indian languages, literature, and art as a way of asserting Indian identity and rejecting British cultural domination. Some religious leaders and movements in India, such as the Arya Samaj, sought to resist colonial rule by promoting a "purified" version of Hinduism that rejected Western influence and sought to unite Hindus against the British. There were also instances of labour strikes and other forms of collective action by Indian workers to protest against colonial policies and demand better working conditions. The effectiveness of these movements in bringing about change varied. Non-violent movements, such as the non-cooperation movement, were able to exert pressure on the British and eventually achieve independence for India. However, armed uprisings, such as the Indian Mutiny, were largely unsuccessful in achieving their objectives. Ultimately, it was the combination of both non-violent and violent resistance that contributed to the end of colonial rule in India.

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