

Major Trends of Historiography of Revolutionary Movement in India- Phase II

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SUMMARY

The Indian freedom has not only attracted the attention of Indian scholars but the western scholars also. Many of them have termed this movement as a struggle between the British Imperialism and Indian Nationalism. With the spread of Indian education, press, means of communication and transportation created a new class known as the educated middle class which gave leadership to the freedom struggle. The Indian leaders started challenging the oppressive and exploitative nature of the British rule in Indian. This set of leadership in India politics comprised of the dominant sections of the Indian society known as the liberal nationalists. But parallel to the realm of this elite politics, there emerged a new set of leadership which prominently believed in the people's movement, This leadership is popular known as the revolutionary-terrorists who waged a relentless struggle against the anti-people policies of the British imperialism in India. When the Indian National Congress emerged, there came a challenging force in Indian politics more especially on the economic policies of the British raj. Surender Nath Banerjea, M.G. Ranade, Dadabhai Naoroji, R.C. Dutt, William Digby etc. were pioneers who became severe critics of the British economic policies as is evident from their speeches, writings and correspondences. Thus the nationalist historiography emerged that started decrying the British policies and programmes as anti-India. The nationalists in the formative years of their organisation believed in the British fair-play and justice but they gradually opposed the over-all functioning of the raj as far as the body politics of the nation was concerned.

No change came in the imperial policies for a long period. Such tendencies created desperation among the Indian youth who became critic of both the Indian nationalists and British imperial masters. The Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon gave an appropriate opportunity to the Congress stalwarts as well as to the youth for opposing anti-Indian policies. The youth started organising themselves during the Bengal partition and founded many revolutionary organisations throughout India. This stream was quite a distinct and had different ideology and programme as far as the Congress movement was concerned. Their strenuous efforts in championing the cause of India's liberation movement definitely occupies an important place in the history of modern India. Many revolutionaries went abroad in order to seek support from the anti-imperialist and anti-

exploitative forces of the world for India's struggle for independence. Though many struggles were initiated by the Indian people against the British Imperialism yet the most viable was the struggle of the Indian revolutionary-terrorists. Their movement was genuine to further and develop the national consciousness among the Indian masses which started realising the ruination and cultural degradation was primarily due to the British raj and its anti-people's programme and policies. So keeping their contribution in liberation movement in view, it becomes quite relevant here to know the views of different schools of thought in modern Indian history. A moderate effort has been made in this research work to highlight the major trends of historiography of the revolutionary movement in India during the second phase (1924-31).

Most of the scholars have admitted that the British oppressive policies and anti-India attitude gave birth to different groups in Indian politics which in their own way and limitation started opposing the functioning of the imperial regime under masters the official leadership of the Indian National Congress which was dominant in the nationalist stream while the group of Indian revolutionaries was quite different and even significant that was ready to sacrifice their lives for the liberation of their country. This steam became popular among the youth within a very short period while the long standing politics of the Indian National Congress continued to rally the British bureaucracy for a long period in Indian politics.

Like other countries of the world, the growth of English education and impact of western ideas and concepts gave a new turn to the growth of nationalist views. With the expansion of new education system, the people of one region started interacting with the people of other regions casting off the existing regional barriers. The introduction of press and means of communication and transportation were further realized by the people for the common purposes and objectives. The period gave birth to several local and national organisations such as Kirti Kisan Party, Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Hindustan Republic Association, Hindustan Socialist Republic Association etc. whose primary aim was to liberate the country politically, materially and economically. The leaders of such nationalist organisations were Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Chandra Shekhar Azad, B.N. Sanyal, Manmath Nath Gupta, J.N. Sanyal, Batukeshwar Dutt, Jaigopal, Shiv Verma, Yashpal, Bhagwati Charan Vohra etc. Along with the fight for freedom, they wanted to

establish the hegemony of the peasants and workers so that the real socialism could be established in India. This was their most cherished dream to be fulfilled at the earliest.

The most significant turn and opportunity came when the British Government sent Simon Commission to study and report about the India constitutional problems. No Indian was made member of this Commission and this issue greatly angered the Indian people. Thus they not only opposed the Commission but greeted with 'black flags' wherever it visited. Under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai, people shouted 'Simon Go Back' and 'Down with Imperialism' in Lahore. Lala Lajpat Rai received a serious injury from the police lathis. His death ultimately sent a wave of indignation thought out the country. A British officer, Saunders, was responsible for the lathi-charge on Rai and the former was shot dead by Bahgat Singh and Rajguru. Their heroic activities made them popular among the Indian masses. They wanted not only to liberate their country but also to form a socialist society in the country. In order to highlight their activities, in different trends of historiography such as Imperial, Nationalist, Marxist, Regional and Communal in regard to India's revolutionary movement during the second phase have been highlighted.

Russian Revolution (1917), Montagu-Chelmsford Report (1918), Rowlatt Committee Report (1918), Hunter Committee, Marital Laws followed by the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy created great auguishness among the Indian youth. In such situation, Congress launched, Non-Corporation movement for gaining Swaraj within a year. The Congress under the leadership of Gandhiji became convinced that the present representative of the Empire' had become dishonest and unscrupulous' To enrage the people, Gandhiji suggested the way of non-cooperation to secure redress for the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs. He suggested the total non-cooperation with the rulers with the intention 'so far to paralyse the government as to compel justice from it'. A mob violence took place at Chauri Chaura village in Gorakhpur district of U.P. on 4 February, 1922 Twenty two policeman were killed. This was followed by more mob violence at Bareilly. Gandhiji viewed the tragedy as a red signal and suspended the Non-Cooperation movement on 12 February. Its sudden withdrawal questioned by many Congressman. The youth was also desperated and attracted towards the revolutionary terrorism as the only alternative to the then Indian political situation. Emergence of working class movements

all over the world had been spreading the message of socialism and marxism all over the world. Many other global developments greatly influenced the Indian youth who started founding several organisations as mentioned above. They wanted to organize the workers and peasants to create spirit of patriotism among the youth to work for economic, industrial and social movements free from communal sentiments.

Now it would be proper to discuss different Trends of historiography of revolutionary movement in India. First trend was the Imperial Trend basically initiated by the British bureaucracy which was deadly against the Indian youth who were involved in revolutionary terrorism. The government constituted a committee to enquire about the movement. After consulting different records and discussions with many officials of the Criminal Intelligence Bureau (like today's CBI) a Blue Book was prepared in which they were found in dialogue with the Russian. The book throws ample light on the adoption of marxist strategy by the Indian revolutionaries. In the Russian Revolution, they found only the Russian methods to be quite appropriate for the liberation of the world. Lenin in his Manifesto had made it clear from the platform of the Communist International that the time had come now to eradicate the exploitation and oppression wherever existed. So the British officials held Russian Revolution responsible for the outbreak of revolutionary terrorism in India'.

The second trend of historiography known as National Trend began after the formation of the Indian National Congress A.C. Mazumdar, Girija Kumar Mukherjee, Pattabhi B., Sitaramayya, P.C. Ghose, R.C. Majumdar, B.R. Nanda, Tara Chand etc have worked on the rise and growth of the Congress role in nationalist movement of India. Most of the scholars of this trend failed to give due care to the revolutionary activities. They did not like the revolutionary movement which had different technique and strategy from the Congress movement as far as the Indian politics was concerned. These scholars did not highlight any revolutionary activities but simply ignored their activities knowingly.

The third trend is the Marxist Trend which supported their movement. Many revolutionaries were greatly influenced with the Russian Revolution which had strong urge for the formation of the socialist state in which peasants and workers would be in the decision making process of state. This trend was started by D.D. Kosambi who was

professionally a mathematician. It was further developed by R.P. Dutt, A.R. Desai, M.N. Roy, Hiren Mukherjee, Bipan Chandra, Sumit Sarkar, Devendra Kaushik, L.V. Mitrokhin, ashok Patnaik Bhagwan Josh, Shashi Joshi etc. All the scholars of this trend greatly appreciated their activities as they had a new vision to be applied in Indian polity after independence. They say that no other politicians had any planning and programme for the future of India as they had in their minds. Even the writings of these revolutions clearly indicate their ideology and programme in a more clear cut way. Most of these revolutionaries had become ardent exponents of application of socialism in all walks of the society.

The fourth trend emerged after 1980s when some communal and regional organisations came into being. These organisations started branding them with regional and communal identity in order to popularize their communal and regional politics. The scholars of this stream have analysed the personalities and movements keeping society, religion, caste in view.

Naresh Suri, Ragni Mitra, Nahar Singh, Kripal Singh Narang, Gul Charan Singh, G.S. Deol, Nathan Singh and followed by many Arya Samajists and Akalis have given regional and communal colour to these stout personalities in their Writings. They say that the growth of thinking of an individual basically depends on many things such as religion, caste, society, family etc. which play a significant role in the formation of his mental Vision. They say that Bhagat Singh had immense impact of these traits on his personality. Many scholars linked Bhagat Singh with Arya Samaj and others with Sikhism while he had no linkage with any one. Which is mentioned- Why I am an Atheist. Like Bhagat Singh, many people and leaders of the other castes have also started hero-worshipping keeping caste syndrome and sentiments in view. Bengalis are giving due consideration to their Bengali revolutionaries. Chandra Sekhar Azad, Ram Prasad Bismil, Yashpal, B.C. is a clear cut example of his personality and perspective Now Jat Mahsabha is making all feasible efforts to brand Bhagat Singh, Raja Mahendra Pratap as the Jat heroes. Vohra are more popular in the Brahmins as they belonged to Brahman community.

Now the question arises : What were the results of the movement? Or up to what extent this movement succeeded? The Indian revolutionaries started their movement soon

after the partition of Bengal but it came to an end during the I World War due to limited means for its support. Without proper financial aid, it was most difficult to sustain the movement for long. Their activities needed required financial support from the Indian people so that it could be spread and developed throughout India. Due to very limited means, they could not spread and developed throughout India. Due to very limited means, they could not spread their movement in the whole of India as they had no money at their command. The Indian National Congress became not only a viable force but also became an all India body due to its strong financial position which was strengthened by rich people like G.D. Birla, Yamuna Lal Bajaj, Purushotamdass Thakurass etc. The Indian revolutionaries, however, started looting banks, treasuries, trains and robbery but all such activities did not solve their problems. The general masses started hating them for such unwanted and unethical activities in the country.

The Indian revolutionaries studied the western ideas and concepts but Russian Revolution became their harbinger. Russia Revolution became an exponent of workers and soldiers who constituted the bulk of the society. Pro-workers and pro-soldiers policies were made in Russia. Like Russia, they started giving more prominence to the workers and peasants who were in the dominant position in India. The Russian socialism was deemed proper to be adopted in order to establish socialist state in India. The landlords, zamindars, big peasants, money-lenders and other rich sections of the society opposed their policies and programme and saw a big challenge to their properties and other comforts in future in the country.

The revolutionaries did challenge the British imperial policies and adopted violent methods. Many of them differed as far as the violent methods were concerned because such methods would soon be exposed and no one would render assistance to their ideology and programme. The Congress movement firmly believed in non-violence and Satyagrah means perhaps akin to the Indian masses. The Indian people due to British oppressive and suppressive measures could not dare to render support to them. Due to fear, long imprisonment, execution, informers a large section of the youth started restraining itself from the movement. In such a situation, it could not attract the youth at a large-scale.

The Indian masses had no attraction towards marxism and socialism but believed in attaining freedom first and adoption of socialism afterwards. Even the revolutionaries had no identical views on its adoption and application in Indian's political and social structures. No coordination became possible among them on such crucial issues.

The British Intelligence Department, its agents and Indian informers gave a great set-back to the movement. Whenever they chalked out many plans and framed policies, the government agencies came to know of their planning and strategies in time. Such activities gave great jolts to their programmes. Though they were valiant and patriots to their nation but failed to mobilise the people in such political atmosphere. People knew the functioning of the secret service of the government and in such situation their movement was bound to fail.

The revolutionaries had no linkage with their counterparts in other provinces like the Indian National Congress. Subhas, Patel and Nehru had to some extent sympathy with their movement but could not dare to render support to them openly. Their execution is an evident example when Gandhiji did not save them from execution as generally believed. Though they had many organisations working secretly in several provinces yet there was no linkage or coordination among them as far as the vital issues were concerned. Without proper coordination and dialogue among them on national issues, how their movement could be successful in such a situation?

The revolutionary movement failed yet many Congressmen supported their programmes as they had clarity of ideas and perception as far as the socialistic urge and understanding of the situation was concerned. The Indian revolutionaries after their executions became very popular and the leaders like Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Batuskeshwar Dutt became legends. Their names became quite popular even in every house hold of the country due to self-sacrificing spirit, zeal, heroism, socialist thinking, international outlook etc. Due to their popularity and influence, Congress had to adopt the programme of complete independence and socialism due to their pressures and strategies in the given situation. By giving their supreme sacrifices for the liberation of the nation, they became heroes and even the source of inspiration for the young and coming generations of India. So their contribution in India's freedom struggle was quite significant and praiseworthy.