CHAPTER - II
Historical movements do not remain confined in isolationism. A movement which springs up in one particular region of the globe almost invariably transcends the physical limits and produces repercussions in other countries. The great political philosopher Voltaire significantly observed in the mid-eighteenth century; “The first cannon shot fired in our lands will set the mat to all the batteries in America and in Asia.” As a matter of fact the echoes of all the movement in the Western world, political, economic or cultural, reached the distant shores of our country and also of most of the other countries in Asia. Through the nineteenth century the political ambitions of the different European powers hand the relations amongst them molded the foreign policy of Great Britain and of the British Indian Government. The effects of the triumphs of science and the march of industrialism in the Western world were felt in the socio-economic phases of Asiatic life. Imperialism, particularly new Western Imperialism after 1870-71 was a potent factor in the history of the east. We may also to note the revolutionary effects of the penetration of the cultural, educational and social ideas of the West into the different countries of the east.
Reawakening of the East in the twentieth century introduced a new and potential factor into world history. If the West introduced the East in the nineteenth century, the East awakened into a new surprise of life in the present century and has been the scene of actions and movements, the influence of which on human history can hardly be overestimated.

The year 1905 proved to be a turning point in the history of Persia as well as Central Asia. There occurred two most important events outside Iran which affected immensely for the development in Iran caused great mass awareness. Brief descriptions of these events are as follows:--

(a) Russo-Japanese War (1904-05):-

This was the first great war of the 20th century. Russia sought a warm water port on the Pacific Ocean for their navy as well as maritime trade. Vladivostok was only operational during the summer season but Port Arthur would be operational all year. From the end of the First Sino-Japanese war and 1903 negotiations between Russia and Japan had proved impractical; Japan offered to recognize Russian dominance in Manchuria in exchange for recognition of Korea as a Japanese sphere of influence. Russia refused this so Japan chose war to counter the Russian aggression in Asia. After discussions broke down in 1904, the Japanese Navy attacked the Russian eastern fleet at Port Arthur, a naval base in the near China, which led to war. The Russian were poorly organized and the Japanese defeated them in a series of battle in land and at sea.
(b) The Russian Revolution in 1905:—

This was a wave of mass political and social unrest that spread through vast area of the Russian Empire. Some of it was directed against the government while some was undirected. It included worker strikes, peasant unrest and military mutinies. It led to the establishment of limited Constitutional monarchy, the state Dumas of the Russian Empire, the multy-party system and the Russian Constitution of 1906.

The revolt started on January 22, 1905 when a peaceful mildly reformist protest march in St. Peterburg was shooting at by troops with more than 1000 killed or injured. This day became known as Bloody Sunday. Rather than squelch the protests the repression fanned the flames of rebellion.

All across the Russia different section of the people moved into active protest. The peasants and workers joined with the middle classes, intelligentsia and minority national groups against the absolutism and oppression of the Tsarist monarchy.

As a result The Soviets (which was established by the workers) had challenged the power of Nicholas-II and the general strike forced him to issue the October Manifesto with its Parliament, freedom of press, assembly and association or a Constitution. Finally in February 1917 a similar wave of mass had driven out him from power.

The Russo-Japanese War, which was an almost inevitable clash between the long-treasured imperialistic ambitions of Russia in the East and the rising power of Japan, resulted in the victory
of the latter which ushered in new forces in world diplomacy. It left England comparatively free to turn her attention more to Europe and other countries. In fact the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907 was in a sense a logical sequel to the defeat of Russia at the hands of Japan. Japan victory was hailed as a glorious triumph of an Asiatic power against white imperialism and generated new enthusiasm and hope of liberation in different quarters of this continent.

These two important catalytic events occurred outside Iran-the Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution of 1905. The simultaneity of Asian revolutionary and constitutional movements from China to Turkey in the period 1905 to 1912 is surely largely due to these two major events impinging on countries which had been subject for decades to the disruptive and contradictory effects of the Western impact. The Russo-Japanese War revealed to Iranians as to other Asians that Western power was not as invincible as they had appeared, while for Iran the weakening of the Russian government was of direct importance. The Tsar was shaken further during the Russian Revolution, so that fear of Russian intervention which had helped restrains anti-Qajar movements up to this point, largely disappeared. In addition both these events especially the Russian Revolution put the issue of constitutionalism to the fore many. In the Russian-Japanese War it was seen that the only Asian constitutional power had defeated the major European non-constitutional power; and in the books and articles about Japan which suddenly began to appear in Iran
as elsewhere in Asia, this point was often noted. The inspiration of the Russian Revolution, which was initially successful in forcing Constitutional promises from a former autocrat was even more direct echoed those of the Russians.

Lord Minto spoke in Jan. 1910, “When I took up the reign of Government in the late autumn of 1905, all Asian was marveling at the victories of Japan over a European power, there were indications of popular demands in China, in Persia and in Turkey.”

Here some length from the memorandum drawn up by of British Legation in support of the condition of Iran before the Constitutional Movement have been quoted:

“The condition of Persia had been for some time growing more and more intolerable. The Shah was entirely in the hands of a corrupt ring of courtiers who were living on the spoils of the Government and country. He had parted with the treasures inherited from his father and with most of the Imperial and national domain. He had thus been obliged to have recourse to foreign loans, the proceeds of which he had spent in foreign travel or had lavished on his courtiers. There was a yearly deficit and the debt of the country was growing daily.

A new Grand Vizier had been appointed whose moving principal was believed to be independence of foreign control. His first act was to attempt some sort of financial reform the object of which was to render the country independent of foreign financial assistance. But as soon as he had obtained control of the
Government, it was apparent that his main and principal object was to make money. He made an alliance with the Shah’s chief adviser for a division of the spoil. Governments were put up for sale grain was hoarded and sold at extortionate prices, the Government domain were stolen or sold for the benefit of the two constipations rich men were summoned to Tehran and forced to disgorge large sums of money oppression of every sport was countenanced for a consideration; the property and even the lives of all Persian subjects were at their mercy. Finally there was every reason to believe that a conspiracy was on foot to dethrone the foolish and impotent Shah and to oust the Valiahd. In their place was to be put Shua-u-Saltana, the Shah’s younger son, who was a by word even in Persia for extortion and injustice.

The policy of the Atabeg and his friends had thus aroused the opposition of all classes in Persia. Of the few more or less patriotic statesmen, who knew to what a goal the country was being led; of the priests, who felt that their old power and independence would perish with that of their country and of the great mass of the population and the mercantile classes, who were the daily victims of the tyranny of their oppressors.1

The granting of a modern constitution in Iran in 1906-07, a constitution that has lasted for six years although often more honoured in the breach than in the observance was peculiar from several points of view.2 It was not preceded by any sizable constitutional movement the very word constitution, “mashrutiyyat,” was hardly voiced in the protest movement which
led to its granting. Also the revolutionary movement had the backing of the most important leaders of the Shi'ia ulama of Tehran and of the shrine cities in Ottoman Iraq. This siding of the leaders of a traditional orthodox religion with a modernist constitutional revolution that would ultimately undermine the power of religious orthodoxy appears to be unique in history. In addition the Iranian constitutional movement at various stages won to its side courtiers, ministers and conservative landlords who were not at all revolutionary in their outlook but who had particular grudges against the government.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905 to 1911 cannot then be understood as an outgrowth of a very powerful movement for constitutional government. Rather it brought to a head a number of grievances that had been growing for decades among different sections of the population and that came largely under the impact of the Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution of 1905 to focus rather suddenly on the demand for a constitution. The grievances themselves were largely similar to those felt in order Asian countries that experienced the nineteenth century Western impact.

The Qajar dynasty which had been hated in Iran since its coming to power in the late 18th century was bolstered up by the British and Russian governments who wished in general to retain their treaty privileges and the political status in Iran. The exploitative possibilities before the Shah were multiplied by the attractive bit of concessions and loans, which offered immediate
increments to the royal treasury while repayment could come from increased taxes or from the national resources. Particularly the contraction of Russian loans by Muzaffaru’d Din Shah in the early twentieth century, which went to finance extravagant trips abroad brought Iran to the verge of bankruptcy and caused great nationalist and religious indignation. The social and economic dislocations brought by the Western impact undermined traditional structures at the same time as Westerners were bolstering the old regime. The process of gradually selling Iran to the foreigner which was realistically seen as likely to culminate in Russian rule, was probably the greatest cause of opposition to the government, and certainly the main focus of numerous protest movement before the Constitutional Revolution. Already the notorious Reuter concession of 1872, which granted virtually all of Iran’s resources to a British concessionaire, brought forth national as well as Russian protests, in the face of which it had to be cancelled. Concession-granting became particularly active again from 1888 to 1890 when Sir Henry Drummond Woltt was British Minister in Tehran and pushed successfully for a concession for bank with all the privileges of a state bank, including the exclusive issue of currency and also for the opening of the Karun River in the south to British navigation. Russian protests brought some counter-concessions. Then in 1890 a concession for the purchase sale and export of all Iranian tobacco was given to a British company. This concession, which more than previous ones affected existing economic interests of Iranians, became the focus
of a huge protest movement in 1891-92 which reached revolutionary proportions in some areas. The leaders of this movement were the ulama in Iran and the shrine cities of Iraq and the terms of their protest were frequently religious. The religious dangers of increased dealings with unbelievers were noted as was the sale of the country to unbelievers. The movement came to a head when the leader of the shrine ulama declared tobacco religiously unlawful smoking ceased completely and protest movements in several cities forced the Shah to cancel the concession. Although the only broader aim generally voiced at the time of the tobacco movement was the end of all foreign concession, the movement was important in creating the first example of successful united nationwide protest against the government and in forging an alliance between the ulama the modernists and the city populations which was again important during the Constitutional Revolution.

Despite the fact that it was more backward economically and politically and more isolated from the West than countries like Turkey and Egypt, Iran did not completely lack awareness of Western progress. Although few students were permitted to go abroad there was considerable travel by merchants to Istanbul and the Russian Transcaucasia, Where they became aware of more advanced ideas and conditions and the contacts of ordinary workers who travelled to Baku and the surrounding of 1905. Before 1896 a small but influential group of intellectuals who had to operate mostly outside Iran first popularized Western ideas,
often trying to prove that they were not incompatible with Islam. One of the most important was Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani who was in fact a native Iranian, though he claimed Afghan birth. On his two trips to Iran just before the tobacco movement he gathered a considerable following through his eloquence and persuasiveness in arguing against the selling of Iran to the foreigners and in favour of self-strengthening reform. Also important was Mirza Malkam Khan, who was dismissed as Iranian minister in London in 1889, after which he began to publish and send into Iran a newspaper Qanun which advocated the rule of law in Iran. Because of the religious faith of the majority of Iranians and the serious penalties for unbelief, the *ulama* were alienated from the Shahs. Afghani, Malkam Khan and their followers consciously adopted a policy of trying to work with the *ulama* against the government and trying to show that the new ideas they advocated were really Islamic.

The tactic of the modernizers of arguing in Islamic terms, and trying to gain the support of the *ulama* is one of the reasons why comparatively little was said about very specific constitutional demands before the revolution. Opposition discussion was rather focused on the points on which all member of the disparate opposition might agree an end to foreign loans and concessions strengthening the army and economy of Iran and some protection against the arbitrary rule of the Shah and the provincial governors, involving some kind of rule of law. By law the *ulama*
generally meant the religious law administered by them while the modernizers thought in Western terms.\textsuperscript{5}

Political and economic realities more than ideological arguments were behind the series of protest movements which rapidly in the first years of the twentieth century. The two large Russian loans of these years were met by \textit{ulama}-led disturbances as the realistic fear grew that Russia was out to reduce the position of the Shah to that of a vassal like the Khan of Bokhara. The traditional structure of Iranian society which had provided some safeguards against excessive exploitation through the power of the guilds, the ties of the middle classes to the \textit{ulama} and certain limits on the power of landlords had been undermined through the nineteenth century through the effects of the Western impact, so that few safeguards against a purely exploitative government structure were left besides demonstrations and revolts. The empty treasury and foreign loans brought tax increases high officials were continually involved in cornering grain and creating artificial scarcities and bread riots and other economic protests became frequent in the late 19th and early 20th century. There were also protest by merchant against European trading privileges, Russian and Belgian control of the customs and the exclusive banking privileges given to the British Imperial Bank of Iran. At the same time the government was approaching bankruptcy and all schemes of financial reform proved abortive since the only way to increase tax revenue significantly was to cut into the privileges and pensions of the upper classes who were the
very ones represented in the government. Thus by 1904 both government crisis and widespread discontent existed but they were not yet focused on a demand for a constitution.

The Constitutional Movement of Iran began with a minor incident that took place in the month of December, 1905 A.D. On the order of the administration of Tehran a respected Sayyid and a reputed businessman of Tehran named Sayyid Hasim was arrested on the charge of creating artificial scarcity of sugar. In a protest the merchants of Tehran shut down their shops. The leading ulama of the time like Sayyid Abdullah Bahbahani and Sayyed Md. Tabatabai also supported them and took refuge in the holy shrine of Shah Abbas Azim. They refused to leave the shrine until the Shah had promised to dismiss the Prime Minister, Aynud Daula, convene an Adalat-Khana or house of Justice, abolish favoritism and make all Persian subjects equal before the Law. In January, 1906 the Shah agreed to the demand but unfortunately did not take any steps to carry out these promises. Meanwhile as a result of dispute between government and the opposition a student, who was also a Sayyid, was killed in Jan. 1906. After which there was an uprising in the holy city of Qum and southern Tehran. This time the Movement became more vigorous, now the revolutionarists had gained enough strength to put forward a specific demand for a Majlis or a regular Constitution. Pressure was renewed on the Shah and in August, 1906 a constitution was granted, the rule of Laws declared and the first Majlis was opened. In January, 1907 Muzaffaru'd Din
Shah died, his son Muhammad Ali Shah taking advantage of dissension with rank of the constitutionalist tried to restore absolute royal power. Then the Persian Cossacke Brigade commanded by the Russian Colonal Liakhoff bombarded the Parliament building in 1908 A.D with several causalities and Majlis was dissolved. The rules of Law were suspended. The popular leader were arrested and put behind the Bar. The people however having tasted of liberty were no longer prepared to tolerate the old rule. They took arms and rallied gallantly to the cause of Constitution. At Tabriz the revolutionarists held the city for nine months until a Russian force entered and with considerable violence suppressed the movement. Revolutionary forces regrouped at Rashed and Isfahan and the Isfahan forces consisting of 5000 Bakhteyaris (tribes) led by Sipahdar and Sardar-i-Asad, one of their chiefs marched towards Tehran. The Persian Cossack Brigade was defeated outside of Tehran in July 1909 and liberal forces entered into city. Muhammad Ali Shah took refuge at Russian Legation to Russia. Majlis was reinstalled and eleven years son of Muhammad Ali Shah, Ahmad Shah was appointed as the ruler of Iran. The Majlis reopened in 1909 and stood firm and rejected concession to foreigners. Consequently, fighting had broken out in between Russian troops and Iranians in various parts of the country. Russia gave a final proposal for treaty, after getting negative reply, they started heavily bombarding on Tabriz and a series of aggression was started by Russia. They also bombarded at Mashhad on the shrine of Imam
Reza. Under foreign pressure the second Majlis was also forcibly dissolved in 1911. The Iranian cabinet ministers became puppet in the hands of Russia and Britain. The central government broke down completely, meanwhile First World War broke out in 1914 and Tehran became hot bed for Russian, British and German diplomats. In 1920 uprising in Gillan and Tabriz, brought the country to the verge of civil war, confusion and social collapse. Ahmed Shah the last ruler of Qajar dynasty left Iran never to return. Finally Reza Shah Pahlavi declared himself the King of Iran in 1925 and a new Pahlavi period was formally inaugurated.
BACK NOTE:-

   pp 400-401
2. Ibid-403
3. Ibid-405
4. Malkom Khan, Persian Civilization, Contemporary Review.
   pp-238-244
5. Ibid-245
7. Ibid-24
8. Browne, E.G. The Persian Revolution.p-114)
9. Ibid-115
10. Ibid-420
11. Chaurasaria, Dr.R.S., History of Middle East. p-310
12. Ibid-311