CHAPTER 3:
INDIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT, THE INTERNATIONAL LINKAGE
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In this chapter, we intend to survey the influence of various nationalist movements of other countries of the world on Indian nationalist movement. In the previous chapter we have seen how the idea of nationalism had emerged in the mind of Indians. Indian nationalism emerged during the period of struggle against British oppression. The revolt of 1857 was the first Indian struggle against British rule. Though it began as a mutiny of soldiers, but soon turned into a revolt against British raj. The leaders of the great revolt became national heroes to many freedom fighters in later years. This movement immensely helped the growth of national sentiment.

Introduction of English education and consequently the contact with western culture bolstered the growth of patriotic and national sentiment. The Indians learnt new concepts like nationalism, freedom, patriotism from western culture, and freedom struggles there. Middle class western educated men began to adopt a bold approach to politics. Indian League (1875) came to be formed, followed by the establishment of Indian Association (1876). The foundation of Indian Association was a landmark in the growth of nationalism in India. ‘The Association sent Surendra Nath Banerjea as a special delegate to other parts of the country to canvas support for the agitation. He was perhaps the first modern Indian to gain all-India popularity.’¹ Mr. Banerjea and Anando Mohan Bose also formed the Student’s Association in 1875 with a view to develop the growth of political consciousness among the youngmen. Later on, Bengal Land Holders Society, Bengal British India society, British

Indian Association, Indian Association came to be united for the formation of a large political organization, Indian National Congress in 1885.

The credit of establishing the INC belongs to Allan Octavian Hume, a retired civil servant. ‘The first session of the Indian National Congress, attended by seventy two invitees from different parts of India, was held in Bombay, in December 1885, under the presidency of W.C Bannerjea, an eminent Bengali lawyer.’

From 1885 onwards the INC met every year and its cause spread rapidly among middle class Indians. The first two decades of INC are described in history as the moderate era. Among some of the prominent moderate leaders were Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Mahadev Gobinda Ranade, Feroze shah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Ananda Mohan Bose. They had a sense of confidence in British justice and their generosity. Their aim was not militant or aggressive nationalism for attaining independence. They believed in constitutional method and favored the policy of protest, prayer and petition. ‘The programme of the early Congress did not include the demand for immediate independence for India. In the eyes of its leaders, the question of political freedom required a long period of apprenticeship.’

So, they wanted to continue with British rule. ‘The crux of their argument was that the participation of Indians in their government would improve the quality of that government.’

They went on pleading with the British government for reforms. The basic demands of the Congress at this time were constitutional, and stressed on the larger share of the Indians in the governance of the country, Indianization of higher grade of service, expansion of the legislative council and its power within British Empire. The only

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achievement of moderate leaders of the Congress was the spread of national consciousness among the Indian people and the introduction of democratic conceptions. But they failed to draw attention of the common masses at large and were confined mostly to educated middle class and the elite population. ‘Even they could not see that India was an economic colony of British capitalism and as such Britain could not permit the free economic development of the country. . . . The liberals could not perceive this objectively existing conflict of interests of Britain and those of India.’

The prominent Moderate leaders, like Surendra Nath Banerjea was very much influenced by the Italian freedom movement. ‘They acquainted the youth of the country with the life and deeds of the great Italian revolutionary, Joseph Mazzini.’ The moderate period extended from 1885 to 1905. The young leaders like Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh were dissatisfied with the working of moderate Congressmen. They began to realize the futility of the constitutional methods. It became necessary for them to adopt independent and honorable means. They were opposed to the soft policies of moderates. They believed that independence could not be begged, but achieved through sacrifice. Tilak started the Ganapati festival in 1893 and Shivaji festival in 1895 for creating awareness among the public and wanted to regenerate a sense of unity among the people.

The partition of Bengal was the great challenge to the nationalist leaders. On Aug. 7, 1905, a resolution to boycott British goods was adopted at a meeting of INC held in Calcutta. Slogan of Bande Mataram, Swaraj, Swedeshi, Boycott and National education, emerged during this movement. ‘The ideas of Swadeshi and Boycott, born of the popular

feelings in 1905, were not new. The Americans, the Irish and the Chinese had adopted them before. Patriotic poems and songs of Rabindra Nath, Dwijendralal Roy, Rajnikanta Sen and others composed in this time, which increased passionate faith in the country’s future. In Bengal, all sections and classes of people, even Muslim community pledged their support to the Swadeshi and Boycott ideas. The date of partition, October 16, 1905 was observed, on the suggestion of Rabindra Nath, as the Rakhi Bandhan Day. All the nationalist leaders, Tilak, Aurobindo, and Rai organized an all-India campaign for this programme. But at the 23rd session of the INC at Surat, the moderates and extremists came into conflict. The split was caused due to the differences of opinion on the resolution of Swadeshi and Boycott passed by the Calcutta session of congress in 1906.

Tilak became a most popular all India extremist leader of the nationalist movement from swadeshi movement. Kesari and Maratha of Tilak in Bombay, and Bande Mataram and Yugantar in Bengal educated the people with new nationalist movement. He was inspired by Italian freedom fighter Mazzini. Aurobindo Ghosh was also a renowned leader of Indian nationalist revolutionary movement. While Tilak was still for responsive co-operation, Aurobindo resolved upon aggressive resistance of the Russian terrorist type. The Anushilan Samity received active help from him. Anushilan Samity was established by Promotha Mitra at Calcutta and by Pulin Das at Dacca. Like other secret societies, this samity functioned under the guise of physical culture club. Sister Nivedita, Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Sarala Devi, Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay were associated with this society. History of freedom struggles in various nations especially the history of French revolution and its main three principles- liberty, equality and fraternity; and

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autobiographies of three Italian leaders were acquainted with the members of Anushilan Samity.

The revolutionary nationalists had added a significant chapter to the history of Indian freedom movement. They advocated the mobilization of the lower middle classes, the students, workers and peasant into nationalist movement.  ‘The struggle of the French revolutionaries and the Italian nationalists served as models for the militant Indians. . . . .
The Sandhya of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, the Bandemataram edited by, Aurobindo, the Yugantar edited by Bhupendra Nath Dutta, the Navasakti etc. were the most well known among the revolutionary papers and journals.’\textsuperscript{10} The well known among the revolutionary associations was Mitramela and Abhinava Bharat. Savarkar brothers had a close contact with these societies. The young revolutionaries took to the pursuit of violent activities like bomb-throwing and the pistol, dacoity and individual acts of terrorism. ‘They preferred to follow in the footsteps of the Irish terrorists and the Russian Nihilists and assassinate individual officials, who either because of their anti-Indian attitude or because of their repressive actions had become unpopular’\textsuperscript{11} They were operating mainly in Bengal, Punjab, Maharashtra.

Indian revolutionaries knew the history of the European revolutionaries and their freedom fighters. Outside the country, revolutionary movements were organized in U.K, France, U.S.A. ‘Indians were showing increasing interest in the exciting events which were


\textsuperscript{11} Chandra, Tripathi, De, Op.cit. p. 96.
happening abroad - movements of unification and liberation in Germany and Italy, Home Rule agitation in Ireland.\textsuperscript{12}

Dr. Annie Besant, inspired by the Irish rebellion, started a Home Rule Movement in India in Sept. 1915. The movement spread rapidly and branches of the Home Rule league were established all over India. Tilak supported and joined in this movement. ‘The activities of the Home Rule leagues consisted in organizing discussion groups and reading rooms in cities, mass sale of pamphlets, and lecture tours - no different in form from older moderate politics but significantly new so far as intensity and extent were concerned. ’\textsuperscript{13}

Mahatma Gandhi completely dominated the Indian politics from 1920 to 1948 so much that this period is called the Gandhian era in Indian history. He had spent 21 years of his life in South Africa, fighting for the rights and dignity of Indians in Africa. He was influenced by the writing of Tolstoy, Ruskin, Emersan and Thoreau. In the course of his fight for Indians in South Africa, he had developed his philosophy of action, Satyagraha. Its two major component were truth and non-violence. Gandhi explained that Satyagraha meant intense political activity by large masses of people. It was a legitimate form of political action by people against injustice of state and active mass resistance to unjust rule. His first great experiment in Satyagraha came in Champaran in Bihar. ‘Gandhiji’s early Satyagrahas among the indigo workers of Champaran in Bihar in 1917, amongst the peasants of kheda (Karira) in Gujarat in 1917 and the mill workers of Ahmedabad in 1918, established him as a major political figure. ’\textsuperscript{14} These movements brought him into close


\textsuperscript{14} Masselos, \textit{Op.cit.}, p. 158.
touch with the masses both peasants and workers. He could arouse the masses and this was one of the greatest contributions of Gandhi to the national movement.

In 1919, the Rowlatt Act gave powers to the British government to arrest and imprisons suspects without trial. The act caused a wave of anger among all section of people. Gandhi decided to fight against this Act. A general hartal was called all over the country on 6 April, 1919. This was a unique success. This movement was known as the Rowlatt Satyagraha. And then occurred the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh on 13 April 1919. The arrest of Dr. Kitchlu and Dr. Satya Pal, under the Rowlett Act in connection with Satyagraha, caused serious unrest in Punjab. When a public meeting was held On 13 April in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, where thousands of people assembled, General O’Dwyer ordered heavy firing on the crowd and the people had no way out to escape. As a result, hundreds of men were killed and more than 1200 people wounded. This massacre inspired the people to provide a more unrelenting fight for freedom. In protest, Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood. Under the pressure of public demand, the Hunter Committee was appointed to inquire into this incident. But this report did not satisfy the people. ‘The year 1919 was marked by a phenomenal growth of the mass movement. Political demonstrations, hartals, and strikes were growing. The nationalist movement was acquiring for first time a mass basis. ’

The Caliph, Sultan of Turkey, was looked upon by the Muslims as their religious head. The welfare of the Ottoman Empire was threatened by the Treaty of Versailles, and thereby weakened Caliph’s position. The landing of Greeks and Italians in Turkey seemed to herald the destruction of the holy places. Muslim community felt that any weakening of the Caliph’s position would adversely affect the position of Muslim in other countries.

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Gandhi decided to start a Satyagraha movement on the khilafat issue. At the Calcutta session in Sept, 1920, the Congress resolved in favour of the non-violent, non-cooperation movement and defined swaraj as its ultimate aim. ‘The Non-cooperation-Khilafat alliance made 1921-1922 was possibly the point of greatest strength and unity in the entire history of the national movement in Bengal.’

Boycott of educational institutions and law courts was successful in Bengal, Punjab, Bombay, U.P, Orrisa, Assam, and Madras. The non-cooperation movement also saw picketing of shops selling foreign cloth and liquor. All the Congress candidates having withdrawn from elections, this movement mobilized various sections of people - workers, peasants, capitalist, students, lawyers and other professional classes, above all women, in the nationalist upsurge. But the act of violence spread when the leaders of non-cooperation organized a hartal to protest against the visit of the Prince of Wales in India. The climax of violence came when a case of mob violence occurred at Chauri Chaura in U. P. In response to police firing, some peasants set fire to a police station and caused to death of twenty-two policemen. The event deeply shocked Gandhi and he called off the Non-Cooperation movement. This incident convinced Gandhi that the nation was not yet ready for the mass-disobedience ‘Violence on a menacing scale, indiscipline amongst the rank and file, the resurgence of Hindu-Muslim antagonisms and the questioning by the educated leaders of the fundamental principles of Non-Cooperation, all indicated to Gandhiji that India was not ready for Swaraj.’

‘Jawaharlal Nehru latter recalled that Gandhi’s abrupt and unilateral decision to suspend the entire movement after Chauri Chaura, was deeply resented by almost all the prominent Congress leaders and naturally even more by the younger people.’

His decision came in for severe criticism

17 Ibid. p. 225.
from his colleagues like Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and N.C. Kelkar who organized the Swaraj Party in 1923. It proposed to continue the struggle in a new form and wanted to enter legislative council in order to use moral pressure to compel the authority to concede to the demand for Swaraj. In Bengal, this was the largest party, but unable to say of the majority of people. Within the Congress, a left wing had grown, which was not satisfied with the goal of Dominion status. They insisted on a programme of struggle for complete independence.

To review the fitness of India for further reforms and extension of parliamentary democracy, the British government appointed the Simon Commission in 1927. All the members were Europeans. Indian political leaders felt insulted and decided to boycott the commission. All the major cities and towns observed a complete hartal and people were out on the street participating in the mass rallies, processions and black flag demonstration and shouts of ‘Simon, go back.’ In one such procession, Lala Lajpat Rai was seriously injured in a police assault on the agitators. Within Congress party, a small faction was committed to certain socialist ideas. Leading this faction were some youthful leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, S. Srinivas Iyenger. Nehru wanted social and economic freedom for all sections of society in place of poverty, inequality and exploitation. He was the most vocal spokesman of socialism. ‘In February 1927, Nehru attended the International Congress of oppressed Nationalities in Brussels as the representative of the Indian National Congress. Besides, establishing personal contacts with several communists, socialists and nationalists from Europe and Asia, the meeting also led to the foundation of the League against imperialisms in order to foster closer ties between nationalist forces in colonial countries and labour movements in Europe.’

In 1929, the Lahore session of congress
formally made Purna Swaraj its objective and elected Jawaharlal Nehru as President. ‘The Lahore session committed the congress definitely to an uncompromising demand for Purna Swaraj, total, that is, full independence.’\textsuperscript{20} To achieve the goal of complete independence, Gandhi launched Civil Disobedience Movement. He started his famous march from Sabarmati Ashram on March 20, 1930 for the small village Dandi to break the salt law. On reaching the seashore on April 6, 1930, he broke salt law by picking up salt from seashore. This was followed by another round of boycott of foreign goods picketing liquor shop and it took the shape of a nation-wide Civil Disobedience Movement in which middle-class women also participated. To give India a constitutional reforms, a Round Table Conference was held on 1930 but the Congress was absent from this Conference. But after negotiations, the Gandhi – Irwin pact (1931) was concluded. Under the terms of the pact, government agreed to release political leaders from jail and Gandhi agreed to discontinue the Civil Disobedience Movement and to participate in the next Round Table Conference. But the second Round Table conference failed as Gandhi could not agree with British Prime Minister on his policy of communal representation.

The last manifestation of Gandhi’s charismatic leadership came in 1942 Quit India movement In its meeting in Bombay, the congress passed this resolution, whereby Gandhi asked the British to quit India and gave a call for Do or Die to countrymen. Though Gandhi could not provide leadership to the Quit India Movement as he along with other Congress leaders were arrested at Wardha. But violence spread throughout the country, several government offices were destroyed and damaged, and communication paralyzed. The movement was suppressed by the British government. The Cabinet Mission came to India to constitute a constituent Assembly to frame constitution in 1946.

Within the Congress, one of the prominent socialist oriented leaders was Subhas Chandra Bose. He was not only interested in political freedom; social, cultural and economic emancipation was, too, in his mind. In his Presidential address at All India Naojawan Bharat Sabha’s Karachi session in 1931, he expressed his desire that India will be a socialist Republic. He thought about complete al-round total freedom. It means not only free from British Empire but also total economic freedom. During his period of exile in Europe (1933-37), he met Mussolini and discussed with him, the prospect of India’s struggle for independence. The rift between the Right and Left wings of the Congress was deepening. Subhas Chandra Bose stood for second term in the Congress presidential election in 1939. Socialists expressed their willingness to canvas support on his behalf. The right wing under Gandhi’s leadership decided to oppose Bose’s bid for re-election. But he had the support of the radical section of the Congress. Gandhi lent his support to the candidature of Pattabhi Sitaramayya as the president of Tripuri session. Subhas Chandra differed fundamentally from Gandhi on India’s attitude towards the British government during the world war. Even ‘Gandhi saw a dangerous challenge of his own dominant leadership in Subhas Chandra Bose.’21 But in spite of opposition from Gandhi, Subhas Chandra defeated Sitaramayya by a wide margin of votes. ‘Bose’s success was an indication of the rapid growth of radical forces in the Congress as also of the dissatisfaction growing against the policies of the Right wing leadership.’22 Gandhii issued a statement describing Sitaramayya’s defeat as his own defeat which rallied a large section of Congressmen against Subhas Chandra Bose, that caused a complete deadlock in the organization and disciplined left party. So, he resigned from president ship and founded the Forward Bloc.

In 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose formed the Azad Hind Fouj in Singapore and gave his famous call ‘Delhi chalo’. He aimed military campaign for the independence of India. The INA was joined in large numbers by the Indian residents of South-East Asia; and by the Indian soldiers and officers captured by the Japanese forces in Malaya, Singapore and Burma; and even a women’s regiment called Rani Jhansi was formed. One INA battalion also accompanied the Japanese Army to the Indo- Burma front to participate in Imphal. But with the defeat of Japan in 1944-45 the INA also died out.

Finally, Lord Mountbatten came to India with a dubious objective of partition of country and transferring power in form of dominion status to the newly formed dominions of India and Pakistan. Though at first the national leaders were reluctant to agree to the partition of India, but the situation could not prevent the partition. In accordance with the Indian Independence Act, 1947, India was partitioned an Aug. 15 1947 into India and Pakistan. The Act made India and Pakistan in dependent dominions.

From above discussion we know that the message of European nationalism was carried to India by some Indian nationalists who had gone abroad for their education. After being acquainted with the nationalist struggles, they visited many countries. Moderate leaders like Anandamohan Bose visited Ireland, Italy and other countries. These educated youths in India were inspired by works and ideas of their freedom fighters. Swaraj, Swadeshi and Boycott emerged during the movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905. But these ideas were not new. The Americans, the Irish and the Chinese had adopted them before. Extremist leaders like Tilak were inspired by the techniques of violent struggle employed by Sinn fern activists in Ireland. History of freedom struggle in various nations especially the history of French revolution and its main three principles – liberty, equality and fraternity and autobiographies of three Italian leaders were acquainted with the members of Anushilan Samity of India. Even Indian nationalist leaders knew the history of the European revolutionaries. Indian revolutionaries preferred to follow in the footsteps of
the Irish terrorists and the Russian Nihilists and assassinate individual officials. Indians were showing increasing interest in the exiting events which were happening aboard - movement of liberation in Italy, Germany, Home rule agitation in Ireland, etc. Dr. Annie Besant, inspired by Irish rebellion, started a Home rule movement in India in 1915; and Tilak supported it and joined this movement. Jawaharlal Nehru was impressed by the international events. During the period of his exile in Europe, Subhas Chandra Bose met with some European countries like Italy, Germany, and Japan and discussed about the prospects of India’s independence with their leaders. So, we must conclude here that Indian national leaders were acquainted with the leaders of various international freedom struggle; and adopted their techniques for achieve Indian liberty.