



## **GROWTH OF ANTI-COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN INDIA: ROLE OF SURENDRANATH BANERJEE AND DADABHAI NAOROJI.**

**Dr.R.Visveswar**

*Assistant Professor. Department of History, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning – Prasanthinilayam. Andhra Pradesh.*

[Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. More than a decade prior to this we have two prominent nationalists namely Surendranath Banerjee and Dadabhai Naoroji who exposed the exploitative nature of colonial rule of the British. In 1876 Surendranath Banerjee founded the Indian National Association. He authored a book titled “A Nation in the Making” in 1925. He was inspired by Edmund Burke, and vehemently opposed heavy taxation by the British. He was also inspired by Giuseppe Mazzini. Dadabhai Naoroji was known as the “Grand Old Man of India”, and his reputed work was “Poverty and Un-British Rule in India”. In 1867 Naoroji founded the East India Association to educate the British public about the problems of Indians under the British rule.]

It did take quite some time for the Indians to understand the true nature of colonialism. Realization slowly dawned in the Indians that the Europeans landed in our country with the single point agenda of exploitation. Founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 provided a nationwide platform for the people to unite and fight against the main colonial power in India, the British. British India became independent in 1947 and it had a cascading effect on the people under the French rule. Pondicherry was the administrative center of the French and it was liberated 7 years after the Indian Independence.

Two patriots need to be remembered who were the precursors of Indian National Congress and they did yeomen service to instil the feeling of nationalism among Indians. They were Surendranath Banerjee and Dadabhai Naoroji.

Surendranath Banerjee (10<sup>th</sup> November 1848 – 6<sup>th</sup> August 1925), Founded the Indian National Association. His sobriquet was Rashtraguru. In 1868 he travelled to England with a strong desire to compete in the Indian Civil Service exam. He successfully cleared the exam in 1869, but British barred his entry into the service on the allegation that he misrepresented his age; once again he cleared the exam in 1871 and was posted as an assistant magistrate of Sylhet. He was inspired by Edmund Burke. Surendranath Banerjee was against heavy taxation by the British in India as Burke was in England. In 1876 on July 26, he along with Anandmohan Bose founded the Indian National Association. He vociferously condemned the racial discrimination followed by the British. He was the editor of ‘The Bengalee’ newspaper started by W.C. Bonnerjee in 1879. After the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 this Association lost its importance. He was twice elected as the president of the congress, once in Pune in 1895 and next at Ahmedabad in 1902. He aimed at spreading education and creating political consciousness and communal unity among Indians during the time when gap between the Hindus and Muslims was widening, which led to the partition of Bengal in 1905. He was instrumental in compelling the British to annul the partition of Bengal. Mainly because of his efforts Bengal was united again in 1911. British referred to him as “Surrender Not Banerjee”. He authored a book titled “A Nation in the Making” in 1925.



His book 'A Nation in the Making' highlights his ideas about self-government. He vehemently protested the lowering of the age for the ICS examination from 21 to 19. He exposed the evil intentions of the British in restricting the entry of Indians into this prestigious and influential service.

As the editor of 'The Bengalee' newspaper he expressed his dissent against the Ilbert Bill, Arms Act and Vernacular Press Act. His principle was "opposition where necessary and cooperation where possible". He was inspired by Giuseppe Mazzini (1805 – 1872), the great leader who unified Italy. Surendranath Banerjee was the first one to realize the importance of the Railways in unifying the Indians, and instilling the feeling of nationalism among them. He travelled about 10,000 Kilometres and gave many public speeches. He was praised as the "Trumpet Orator".

Dadabhai Naoroji (4<sup>th</sup> September 1825 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 1917) was popular as the "Grand Old Man of India". He was a member of the House of Commons of the British Parliament from 1892 to 1895. The three important people instrumental in founding the Indian National Congress in 1885 were A.O. Hume, Dadabhai Naoroji and Dinshaw Edulji Wacha. Naoroji's reputed work "Poverty and Un-British Rule in India" discusses at length the British exploitation of India and the flow of Indian wealth into England.

In 1867 Naoroji founded the East India Association to educate the British public about the problems of Indians under the British rule. He was also a member of the Indian National Association founded by Surendranath Banerjee. Dadabhai was the president of the second session of the congress held at Calcutta in 1886.

His renowned work "Poverty and Un-British Rule in India" was published in 1901. In his book he observed that the 'British Empire Building' in and out of Indian borders is with Indian money. All the wars of expansion in and out of Indian were fought by Britain with Indian money. All the high paid jobs in India were occupied by the British and much of the Indian wealth drained out of India into England in the form of salaries. British introduced Railways in India; the huge profits earned through them were pocketed by the English shareholders in the form of profits and dividends. Through railways East India Company carried much of the raw material at cheaper rate to the port cities of India and from there it was transported back to England and finished product was imported and sold at a high rate in the domestic market, which fetched them huge profits. One solution he suggested to arrest this drain of wealth was the industrialization of India, which was unlikely as huge amounts of wealth had drained away from India to England.

Various causes can be attributed for the rise of Indian National Congress. 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe was an age of Enlightenment. Enlightenment has been defined by Immanuel Kant as "Man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity to use of one's own understanding without another's guidance". Famous philosophers of the age were Voltaire, Jean – Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, David Hume, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes. All these philosophers of the Enlightenment age preached secularization of learning, religious toleration, individual liberty, rational thought, basic civil rights, separation of powers, separation of church and state and they also questioned existence and continuation of monarchy and hereditary aristocracy.

French Revolution spread the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. Writings of Jean – Jacques Rousseau, John Locke and Baron de Montesquieu inspired French people. These enlightened thinkers questioned the authority of absolute monarchy and protested against the rigid class divisions of



feudalistic society. French Revolution spread the ideas of Democracy. Democracy as defined by Abraham Lincoln (1809 – 1865) is “Government of the people, by the people, for the people”. The Jacobians propagated the importance of the voting rights to the people and their participation in the election of a government to run a country.

By 1857 A.D three universities were started in India. They were the University of Bombay, University of Madras and the University of Calcutta. Many Indians were educated in them and they became familiar with the intellectual developments in the west and they realized the importance of democracy and the self-rule. Thus in 1885 a common platform was created with the efforts of A.O. Hume, Dadabhai Naoroji and Dinshaw Edulji Wacha to convey the public opinion to the British and that organization was Indian National Congress. British were also favourable towards this initiative from A.O. Hume and other prominent Indians, since they believed that an unpleasant incident like the rebellion of 1857 could be avoided and Congress would serve as a “Safety Valve” as it would enable the Indians to vent out their grievances against the British in a democratic way as opposed to the violent incident like the rebellion of 1857. Popular participation, agitation and mobilization are the essence of modern politics, but these are new to India. The notion that the politics was not the preserve of the few but the domain of everyone was not yet familiar to the people. The effort of the congress had in the early stages been precisely this; they made efforts to create public opinion against colonialism. The word Congress became popular and synonymous with Indian freedom struggle with the entry of one great personality and that was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

### References

1. Mukherjee, BratindraNath (2001), Nationhood and Statehood in India: A historical survey, Regency Publications.
2. Parthasarathi Gupta (1997). Towards Freedom 1943–44, Part III. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
3. Panikkar, K. M. (1953). Asia and Western Dominance, 1498–1945, by K.M. Panikkar. G. Allen and Unwin. London.
4. Nanda, B. R.(1977). Gokhale: The Indian Moderates and the British Raj, Legacy Series, Princeton University Press. New Jersey.