

INTRODUCTION

The fall of Constantinople, the capital of Eastern Roman Empire in 1453 at the hands of the Ottoman Turks, witnessed the emergence of nationalism as a politico-economic force in Europe, since with the decline of the Holy Roman Empire, the idea of Christian unity gave way to the rise of nation states. Geographical explorations led to the colonisation of the world, coupled with the matamorphosis of merchant capitalism into industrial capitalism. ~~The~~ Renaissance and the Reformation wars leading to the formation of colonial empires in Asia, Africa and America again paved the way to the rising tide of national self-determination in the colonial countries. Thus the force of nationalism acted as a catalytic agent to the disintegration of the Roman Empire in

Europe, the Asiatic empires of the Ottoman Turks, the Mughals in India and the Manchu rulers in China. It also prepared the ground for the rise of national liberation movements in the colonial countries. Rapid industrialisation of Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries not only strengthened authority of the national bourgeoisie of the imperialist powers in Europe, it also gave rise to the challenging authority of the national bourgeoisie in the colonial countries. In India also the class of merchant capitalism in collaboration with the British industrial capitalism not only played the role of an agent in demolishing the last vestiges of the Mughal empire, it also challenged the British finance capitalism when British colonial empire had been badly hit by the totalitarianism during the two world wars. Thus in the contemporary world nationalism is one of the strongest political forces, functioning both as unifying and divisive elements in Asia and Africa. The object of the present study is to analyse the play of the forces of nationalism in the twentieth-century India in order to show how these historical forces unified India under the banner of Indian National Congress, while the same factors under the guise of Muslim nationalism led to the partition of the Indian subcontinent struggling to achieve independence from the foreign yoke.

The time-frame of this operation of the force of nationalism as the mainstream of Indian struggle for freedom, the subject-matter of this thesis, covers the crucial years between 1929 and 1939 which witnessed the outbreak of the Second World War leading

ultimately to the transfer of power in 1947. The importance of the period lies in the fact that within this time-frame the exploitative nature of the British imperialism provoked popular resistance movement against the Raj throughout India reaching its climacteric point in 1939 with the outbreak of the war. The year 1929 marks the beginning of the world-wide economic crisis which led to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

The annals of the English Revolution, the American War of Independence, the French Revolution, the Greek War of Independence, the struggle for the Italian independence from the Austrian hegemony and its eventual unification stirred the imagination of Indian nationalist leaders and served as eye-opener to lead the resistance movement against British imperialism in India. Indian nationalism may be said to have come into being when in 1885 seventy-two Indians from various parts of India attended the first session of the Indian National Congress.

The Indian National Movement which triggered off protest against colonialism in Asia was also the by-product of the international events which severely affected British imperialism in India. In fact, two international events exploded the myth of European military invincibility and technological superiority. The first was the defeat of Italy by Abyssinia in 1896. The second, the defeat inflicted by Japan on Russia in the 1904-05 war, was hailed as the symbol of emergence of Asia in the world politics.

It infused new hopes in India and accelerated the growth of nationalist aspirations.

The First World War broke out in August, 1914. India being a dependent constituent of the British Empire, found itself automatically at war. This war acted as a booster to the nationalist movement in India. Britain and the USA proclaimed their readiness for fighting for peace, freedom, democracy and self-determination. Wilson talked about making the world safe for democracy. The Indian nationalist leaders, even Gandhi, supported the British war efforts. There was noticed a sense of unity between the Hindus and Muslims, and between the Moderates and the Extremists. The Russian Revolution of 1917 had its indirect impact on the freedom movement. It opened before the Indian revolutionary leaders a vision of an unattainable utopia of a classless society free of any alien rule and class exploitation. The Indian leadership was inspired by professions made by Britain, and the USA regarding Indian freedom since the Wilsonian principle of self-determination stimulated the Home Rule Movement in India. After the conclusion of the First World War, the enactment of Rowlatt Act, which gave the authorities unlimited powers of arrest and detention, followed by the Amritsar massacre, was to give the signal for the outbreak of a mass political movement under Gandhi leadership which paved the way for Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement (henceforth C D Movement). The story of development of Indian nationalism growing under the impact of international forces is the focal point in this study, bringing out the interaction

between the forces of indigenous resistance movements against the British rule and the international economic and diplomatic forces which shaped the British attitude towards India by exerting pressure on the Raj to transfer power. During the critical war years between 1939 and 1945 this interaction was heightened, the period which partially includes the time frame of the present study.

A study is possible to analyse the impact of various international events on the freedom struggle of the Indian people because, it may be presumed, international, economic and diplomatic forces shaped the attitude and behaviour of national leaders both in England and in India. This independent probing would aim at avoiding the limitations of the already existing literature on the subject. The previous investigators held views derived from different angles of vision but a composite picture is still to emerge. It may be argued that Indian independence as well as the partition was the cumulative result of all the forces which shook the foundation of the British Raj. This very significant point has remained relatively untouched in previous studies. In fact, many of the treatises did not contain archival materials, some of them collected only factual details; but no analytical approach could be discerned. Many of these treatises overlooked politico-economic developments at the grassroots level and as a result, regional aspects of the resistance movement which were shaped by international forces were neglected.

These limitations prompted the present author to study the interaction between the indigenous forces and the international events which shaped the freedom movement in India during the crucial years between 1929 and 1939. Recent trends in research endeavours to analyse the impact of colonial rule and the response which it evoked at the grassroots level may be taken into consideration. Without going into the detailed discussion on the historiography of the subject, the studies already done may be classified into four broad categories.

The first category includes the studies on the declining agrarian economy and legislations to protect peasant interests in Bengal, particularly, works by Binay Chaudhury, Asok Sen and Partha Chatterjee. Mention may be made of studies by Partha Chatterjee and Hites Ranjan Sanyal which aimed at discussing the background of peasant unrests in undivided Bengal, particularly of Midnapur, leading to two successive legislative amendments of B T Act of 1885.

The next trend is to analyse the peasant movements in the context of de-peasantisation process under the changing agrarian relations of Bengal, particularly of Midnapur. The genesis and developing problems of sharecroppers in Midnapur and the integration of the peasant movements with the rising left political movements of the period was the theme of some studies made by Rasul, S K Sen and Gautam Chattopadhyay et.al. It would also include some articles and biographical notes by political

leaders like Deben Das, Rabi Mitra, Narayan Chaubey and Biswanath Mukherjee.

The third trend is to analyse the patriotic upsurge of the middle peasantry and the urban lower middle class youth movements combining sporadic outbreaks within a compact format of freedom struggle under the banner of Indian National Congress.

But these studies unwittingly disclosed the varied trends of developments originating from the clash of personalities both at the provincial and local levels and the clash of caste and class prejudices and unrests at the regional grassroots level of village units. Mention may be made of works by Ishan Chandra Mahapatra, Basanta Kumar Das, Gopinandan Goswami, S K Maity and others, from whose accounts a distinct change in the leadership formation leading to role conflict in the leadership and participation of distinct segments of the urban-rural population is discernible. Moreover, following their investigations, further data on the life and contribution of the leaders and participants could be collected to analyse the changes in their class character. This might enable scholars to visualise the dynamics of changes in the techniques and nature of the freedom and peasant struggles viewing the two overlapping trends as an integrated whole under the backdrop of the crisis in international relations.

The last trend is to use the modern technique of research investigation on the methodology for utilisation of scientific

tools of research and to analyse data from the official as well as literary, socio-anthropological and oral history sources to test the hypotheses selected for particular research questions. The studies already made by Erick Woolf, E J Hobsbawm, Theodore Shanin, Nicos Potanzas, Landsberger, Joel S Midgel et.al. would serve as model formats of analytical framework to study specific problems of peasant participation and leadership with revolutionary potential in the colonial context at the regional levels of India. With this, the studies by A R Desai, Amalendu De, Sukhbir Chaudhury, Satyabrata Roy Choudhury, F Hutchins, Hamza Alavi, D N Dhanagare, Partha Chatterjee, Binay Chaudhuri, S K Sen, Hites R Sanyal and Max Harcourt may be analysed to explain the nature, theories and hypothesis relating to the socio-economic content of the peasant labour movements and freedom struggle in the colonial context.

These studies would enable the present researcher to integrate the struggles for land and bread with that for liberty as meant by different segments of the society and would allow the author to explain why the communal flare-up rather than communist overtone was conspicuously absent in the movement. The ideas underlying these pioneering studies would demand an empirical approach from new avenues hitherto unexplored from the grassroots level.

Thus it may be presumed that a study is possible to restructure the history of freedom struggle by integrating it

with the peasant movements and terrorist unrests in urban localities during the critical years of economic depression and global war. An analysis of the Indian situation in the background of international events rapidly taking shape between the world economic depression of 1929 and the commencement of the Second World War in 1939, both on the strength of new data collected from new sources and analysed in the light of old sources will establish new and very relevant relationships of facts.

For collection of data and materials the present author has tapped various sources at the National Archives, New Delhi, Library of the Indian Council of World Affairs, Sapru House, Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi and many libraries in Patna and Calcutta. The Parliamentary papers, papers pertaining to different political parties, private papers of important political leaders, important Indian as well as foreign newspapers available in Calcutta, Delhi and Patna were of immense help. Moreover, an attempt has also been made to interview a few prominent freedom fighters to supplement the knowledge already derived from the official sources.

The thesis consists of six chapters. In the first chapter the genesis of the Indian National Movement leading to the emergence of Gandhi on the political scene has been traced. This was the period which witnessed a worldwide economic crisis and emergence of totalitarian states in Europe. The background of Civil Disobedience Movement when British colonial interests all the world over faced a crisis have been discussed in the second chapter

The Civil Disobedience Movement of '1930-32' greatly changed India's psychic frame as well as that of their overseas rulers. The significant impact of world economic crisis on British economy and Indian economy gave rise to disaffection among different segments of the Indian people against the British rule. In the third chapter the circumstances under which the Government of India Act 1935 was passed by the British Parliament has been discussed. An attempt has been made to trace the impact of the Act on the Indian freedom fighters. The leadership criticised the Act, specially the provisions concerning federal structure of the Government, communal electorate, and special powers of the Governors and Governor-General. It has also been surveyed how the political arena of India from 1935 to 1939 led to the formation of the ministries, rift between the governor and ministers, and the declaration of the Second World War, unilateral involvement of India in the War by Britain, and the consequent resignation of the Congress ministries, and its impact on the growth of Indian nationalism. In the fourth chapter circumstances leading to the formation of the Axis Powers and their involvement in the European continent has been discussed. Their sympathetic attitude towards Indian nationalist leaders against the British imperialism and help and assistance given to Subhas Chandra Bose and over-all influence on the course of Indian freedom struggle have also been examined. In the fifth chapter spread of international communism and development of trade union movements in India have been discussed. This period witnessed the phenomena of terrorism and

clash of personalities between Gandhi and Bose. In the sixth chapter the prelude to the Second World War and the British attitude towards the Indian National Movement have been discussed. The economic exhaustion of England and her urgency to keep the supply line clear between India and England led her to soften her attitude towards Gandhi but hardened her attitude towards Subhas. In this chapter there is also a discussion on the world public opinion, particularly the attitude of the United States and Russia towards Indian Independence. India was ultimately partitioned and after 1945 the Raj was obliged to transfer power to the Indians. In conclusion, the diverse cross-currents that ultimately ushered in Indian independence have been summed up. Since innumerable treatises on this subject have been written and will be written in future, the author firmly believes that the present study is not a final work on the subject. It is relatively easy to collect materials from National Archives and libraries situated in India. It is, however, very difficult for a scholar, who is also a whole-time teacher, to collect relevant materials from foreign archives, particularly from England, the USA, USSR and Japan, the countries which were directly involved in the course of Indian independence. The present scholar has, therefore, undertaken to analyse the currents and cross-currents of events in the arena of international politics, collecting his data mainly from the National Archives of India to explain their impact on the national freedom struggle.