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**INDIAN POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE
ON THE POSITION OF WOMEN**



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ABSTRACT

The Indian National Congress, the first all-India's political organization of the Indian people was founded in 1885 by liberal Indian intellectuals in co-operation with non-official British liberals like Hume and others. It was an organization to enable all the most earnest laborers in the cause of national progress to be personally known to each other. One notable feature of the congress in its initial stages was that most of the social Reformers also were its co-founders. The founder leaders appreciated the progressive work like the spread of modern education accomplished by Britain in India and believed that Britain, in accordance with her democratic traditions, will help India to become a free self-governing country. According to its initial scheme, the congress was devised by its leaders as a training ground for evolving and organizing a correct public opinion on Indian questions.

KEYWORDS

Women, Indian Politics, INC, Nation, Indian People

RESEARCH PAPER

At its second session the congress officially declared that it was a purely political body and hence was not concerned with social reform problems. Dadabhai Navroji clarified this Character of the congress thus, “A national congress must confine itself to the question in which the entire nation has direct participation and it must leave the adjustment of social reforms and other class questions to class congresses.”

The dissociation of the Indian National Congress led to the rise of the National social conference in 1887 which had for its adjective the reforming of the Indian society. Thus for some years, the social and political questions, affecting the nations were discussed at the same place and time by two groups of eminent Indians – nationalists, politicians, and social reformers. B.G. Tilak who subsequently became one of the leaders of the militant nationalist movement first came into prominence during the controversy over the age of consent Bill. Tilak represented the school which believed that political reform should precede social reform in a subject country and further, the demand for alteration in any social custom should emanate from the people themselves and that social reform should not be imposed upon them by the Government through legislation. Thus objectively Tilak became an opponent of that progressive Bill and sided with the orthodox section of Indian society. This led to bickering between the Indian National Congress and the National Congress held its session at Poona. The National Social conference was not allowed the use of the congress panel and hence was constrained to hold its session on different premises. The Indian National Congress due to its strict restricting to political problems did not confront and tackle the problem of the social position of Indian women.

The year 1905 was a landmark in the evolution of the congress. Disillusionment regarding the methods of struggle adopted by the congress led by the liberals brought about the decline of their influence among the people. The partition of Bengal electrified the people. The political strength of the left-wing within the Congress-led by Tilak, Pal and other militant nationalist leaders increased within and outside the congress. As a result of this development, the social basis of the nationalist movement was extended from the upper to the middle classes. The old methods of struggle such as prayer, petition, and appeal made to Britain as a means to secure self. The government was under the new leadership replaced by those of the swadeshi and Boycott campaign. Further, outside the official congress movement, other forms of struggle such as terrorism also developed. The new school of militant nationalism was led by Tilak.

Bigpinchandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai. They exhorted the Indian people to draw inspiration from the traditions of ancient Hinduism. They made a resurrected Hinduism. The ideology of the nationalist movement. B. C. Pal Subscribed to the Shakti cult and visualized India as goddess Kali. Lala Lajpat Rai was an active member of Arya samaj which idealized the ancient Vedic culture of the Hindus and crusaded against the western culture.

Thus in the social field, they affirmed the superiority of the Ancient Aryan civilization over that of the modern west. As Nehru describes; “Socially speaking the revival of Indian Nationalism in 1907 was definitely reactionary.” On the other hand in the political field, the nature of the program of the boycott of foreign goods and the use of swadeshi was such that it drew women also within the sphere of the political movement. The Indian women have only to abstain from the use of luxurious foreign cloth and wear Swadesh. It was also during this period that 500 women of Calcutta congratulated the mother of Khudirean Bose, the revolutionary youth who was hanged for killing a British official when she bravely appreciated and extolled the patriotic act of her son. Thus increasing sections of Indian women began to interest themselves and participate in the political movement during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Before Gandhi came to the forefront of the National movement and became the indisputable leader, two women with outstanding talent and personality, one a foreigner, the other as Indian, were having a deep impression on the mind of the Indian women and gave impetus to them to participate in the freedom struggle. They were Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu. Annie Besant with her militant demand of Home Rule for Indian people remarked in 1917 that the strength of the Home Rule movement was rendered tenfold greater, by the adhesion of it of a large number of women, who brought to it helping the uncalculating heroism, the endurance, the self-sacrifice of the feminine nature. Our league’s best recruits and recruiters are amongst the women of India, and the women of Madras boast that they marched in procession when the men were stopped and that their prayers in the temples set the interned captive free.

World War I brought about many significant developments in India. Though it had not so profound an effect on the life of the Indian people as the World War II, still it led to great changes in the social, economic, and political life of the people. Indian industries registered a significant expansion, an also due to the demand for recruitment for the army, thousands of unemployed got jobs. However, at the termination of the war, due to the extensive

demobilization of the soldiers, as also due to the industrial crisis, large scale unemployment occurred.

The Indian womanhood was also becoming conscious of its role in society. In 1916 the women of India were stirred with indignation at the internment of Mrs. Annie Besant, held many protest meetings and walked in procession to the temples to pray for her release. It was also during this period that a deputation of Indian women presented to the British parliament demand for the enfranchisement of women on the basis of equality with men.

During the post-war period, the Government intensified repression against the people as their political discontent deepened, and their demand for national freedom became more vocal the Government resorted to imprisonment, lathy charger, and shootings. A tragic event occurred at Jalianwallabaugh at Amritsar. The troops commanded by General Dyer fired without provocation at about 20,000 persons, men, women, and children were holding a peaceful meeting there. The firing resulted in the meeting there. The firing resulted in the ghastly, massacre of hundreds of men, women, and children. It sent a thrill of harrier throughout the children. It made the hesitant leaders of the nationalist movement decided upon the launching of a mass movement to win freedom.

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