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A Re-Reading on the Emergence of the Indian Nationalist Movement and Challenges for the Present Generations

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S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei [α] & Suantak Demkhosei Vaiphei [σ]

Abstract- Indian Nationalist Movement is known to be the greatest freedom movement against the colonial power in world History. However, the younger generations tend to forget their immense contributions to free India which they have today. India was never free since the Aryan invasion and was under the British colonial rule for around 200 years until her independence in 1947. Before the colonization, the Indians were divided based on their castes, creed, regions, religions, etc. Until the arrival of the British in the soil of India, national consciousness did not emerge among the Indians. They were fighting against each other to expand their territory and for their interest. However, with the advent of the B.E.I.C. and colonizing the Indian Territory, the B.E.I.C. became the tools for the Indian nationalism. Due to the social, political and economic condition under the rule of British, the people struggle against the British to regain their national identity. In one way, the British colonization was a curse for the Indians. However, on the other hand, it became a way of uniting the Indians for creating India as a Nation. Therefore, the contribution of the Indian masses was forgotten in today, while some others are being highlighted as the national heroes. So, the current study has been formed to highlight those unsung heroes and their immense contributions for free India.

Keywords: beic, british, imperialist, india/indians, nationalist/nationalism, and colonization.

Objective: The aim of this study is to re-read the rise of the Indian nationalist movement and to acknowledge their immense contributions to the younger generations. The free Indian should remember the sacrificial acts of the freedom fighters under the British ruled for free India.

Methodology: The current study is an analytical study with multiple reviews from the Post-Colonial India perspective.

I. Introduction

In fact, before the advent of British East Indian Company1In India, a nationalist consciousness was not evolved among the Indians. The nation as a whole was socially and politically not united, the north and the south were not going along in their love for the country. Division flourished among the people in caste, creed, races, regions, and religions which were the barriers in national unity. However, with the colonization of India by the B.E.I.C. and creates the middle class through the western education, this educated Indians started taking interest in public affairs as they realized the need for national unity to be free from the oppressive of the B.E.I.C. Perhaps, the Revolt of 1857 contributes a major role in awakening the masses in various part of the country though there were several movements even before the Revolt for free India. Their movements were limited to a small area or small groups of the Indian people with less effect (S. George Campbell 1897, 314). Moreover, even the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 was not an organized force. But the year 1857 represents the watershed from where new forces were generated which culminated in the rise of the organized national movement under the leadership of Indian National Congress (L.N. Agarwal 1969, 249). Thus, the colonization of B.E.I.C. helps in the growths of nationalism directly or indirectly among the Indian people. The study will acknowledge the immense contributions of all the nationalists, while some go only with the selected nationalist for free India.

II. The British Imperialism and the Rise of Nationalism in India

It was during the industrial revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, which is also known as the early imperialist, the Europeans begin exploring to other parts of the continents for trade and commercial purpose. They came to South Asia particularly to India in the early 1600s. At the beginning of their arrival in the soil of India, the B.E.I.C. were under the control of the Mughal Empire. And the British East India Company which was founded by a rich aristocrat and made the company shareholders. Although technically independent from the British Crown, the East India Company became the primary agent for British imperialism throughout Asia. The East India Company raised its private army and therefore by the year 1707, England and Scotland come together to form what it is known now as Great Britain. And the Battle of Plassey fought in 1757 between the B.E.I.C. and the native Bengal Raja, in which the French

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[1] From here onwards British East India Company will be referred as B.E.I.C

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East India Company was supporting the Bengalis. In this battle, the B.E.I.C. under the leader of Robert Clive won the battle and started controlling a larger part of India. Thus, the arriving of the B.E.I.C. colonization upon the Indian territories begins. Initially, the B.E.I.C. was interested in India for its immense potential trade and profit.They were occupied with the exportation, exchange, and sale of items like tea, opium,silk, and different assets.And the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century was known as the age of the imperialist. In short, the Industrial Revolution made British interest in India to become more profit oriented.

The British took control of India in 1763, after defeating the French in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). The British East India Company ruled over India with an iron hand, which is of a dictatorship. By 1850, the B.E.I.C. control almost the entire parts of India that give rise to the discontentment among the Indians. In 1857 the first Indian revolt against the British rule led by Indian soldiers serving in the British army called sepoys led to an uprising known as the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. After suppressing the rebellion, the British government made India a part of its empire in 1858 and started controlling the land and the people (The Age of Imperialism (1870–1914), 149).

The B.E.I.C introduces different kinds of revenue, economic, political policies and socio-religious reforms in India to set up their domination over Indians. They put an end to the old social order of the Indian, which was imperialist in its nature of reform. On the other hand, it was the British imperialism that gave birth to the idea of unification among the Indian which enables them to think as one nation. The unification led in identifying the main objective behind the B.E.I.C and how to be free from the British rule. According to Prof. Moon, "British imperialism in India gave her a political unity under a third party in spite of the many discordant elements in Indian Society" (N. Jayapalan 2001, 276.). Perhaps, the Revolt of 1857 contributes a major role in uniting the people for a nationalist movement in various part of the country though there were several organizations even before the Revolt, which were confined to a small area or small groups of the Indian people(S. George Campbell, 1897, 314.).

"The Nationalism at the time of Mutiny of 1857 was not an organized force. But the year 1857 represents the watershed from where new forces was generated, which culminated in the rise of the organized national movement under the leadership of the Indian National Congress" (L.N. Agarwal, 1969, 249). Thus, the idea of fighting back against the colonizer for free India was born among the Indians.

III. Influence of Western Education, Civilization, and Means of Communication

The British supremacy in India brought Indian into intimate contact with the Europeans countries. Some Indian who went there for higher education or jobs, experience the free governance and liberalism, that the Indian could learn from Europe about nationalism and liberalism. Perhaps, it creates a thought of free India among the educated class. Educated Indians like Surendra Nath Banerji and Lajpat Rai who tour around Europe were greatly inspired by the nationalist's movement(B.L. Grover & Alka Mehta2008, 295). "They studied, admire and emulate the contemporary nationalist movements of Rousseau, Paine, John Stuart Mill, and Garibaldi and Irish nationalist leaders, which later became their political heroes"(Bipin Chandra1971, 200). The influence of western nationalist movement plays a vital role in awakening the Indian in developing the idea of nationalism. Though the factor behind introducing of western education by the British was to create an educated Indian mass who would faithfully work and serve the British Empire. However, a gradual changeoccurs among the Educated Indians and thus, itbecome the pioneer in the socio-economic, political and religious reformations. Alongside the Reformation, the book prescribes in new schools and colleges tended to give the students a new political and economic outlook. Consequently, this helps the educated Indian in forming a common view, feelings, aspiration, and ideals for free India. Thus, this education helps in shaping the leaders among the Indian masses for the need of nationalist movement to free India from the British rule.

Lord Dalhousie made huge contributions towards the development of India by introducing railways, telegraph and postal system. The British imperialist also constructs roads for their interest and profit. The coming of good communication was effectively helpful in creating the feeling of oneness and nationalism in the whole sub-continent, which were under the oppression of the British. Edwin Arnold wrote, 'Railways may do for India what dynasties have never done-what the genius of Akbar the Magnificent could not affect by the government, nor the cruelty of Tipu Sultan by violence, they have made India a nation' (B.L. Grover & Alka Mehta,293). Indeed, the coming of development in India facilitated the growth and developed the feeling of nationalism more effective. Moreover, the development of the postal system and electric telegraph made a speedy transmission of a message which enables the people to communicate effectively. As a result, it makes it easy to spread more information among the Indian nationalists from far and near about the conduct of British colonies in various part

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of the country. It enables the Indian leaders to carry on their national propaganda in every look and corner of the country. Without the means of communication and transport, the revolt movement would have been unthinkable(RadheyShyamChaurasia2002, 331). This communication promotes mutual contact not only among the leaders but also among the Indian masses.

IV. The Contributions of the Scholars, the Social and Religious Reformers

On the process of revolution, many Indians has fallen so low that they have lost their confidence in their capacity for self-government, mainly due to the inner conflict between the Muslims and the Hindus. Moreover, many British officials constantly include in their writing that, Indians had never been able to rule themselves in the past, the Hindu and Muslim had always fought one another, the Indians were destined to be ruled by a foreigner, and the religions and social life of the Indian were degraded and uncivilized,which make them unfit for democracy or self-government. However, the Europeans scholars like, Max Mueller, Monier Williams, Roth, Sassoon, and Indian scholarslike R.D-Banerjee, R.G. Bhandarkar, Mahan Mahopadhyaya Hara Prasad Astir, Ball Gangadhar Tikal, R.L. Mitra and later Swami Vivekananda, etc. rediscovered India's past glory. Therefore,this encouraged the people of India who felt that they were the ancestors of grand monarchs of this country and ruled by foreigners, which need no longer be continued resulting in flaring up the fire of nationalism(N. Jayapalan, 269). Specifically, "the excavation conducted by archaeologists like Marshall and Cunningham created a new picture of India's past glory and greatness no less impressive than that of ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome"(B.L. Grover & Alka Mehta, 295). The discovery of the past glory inhales pride of being Indian among the people and flare up the mind of the educated Indian that inspires them with patriotism and nationalism.

Religion plays a vital part in India since the time immemorial. After the British rule, many Christian Missionaries started winning the hearts of the non-Christian to embraced Christianity and educated them. This resulted in the birth of nationalist feelings among the people as Christianity claims superiority over the other existing religions and destroy the culture of the India people. Therefore, to save Hinduism from the teaching of Christianity, the Indians started several religious movements to reform the evil practices, which prevails within Hinduism so that the growth of Christianity would stop. Some of the prominent socio-religious movements are; The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, and the Theosophical Society. This religious reformation movement was launched by Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, Slew Ahmad Khan, Annie Besant, etc. Thus, the socio-religious movement during the 18th and 19th century prepared the ground for national unity. As early as 1903 Mr. Besant made a political vowed that "Indian must be governed by Indian feeling, Indian traditions, Indian thoughts, and Indian ideas,"2 which really wake up the Indian for the free India movement. These reformers championed the causes of human equality, individual liberty, the abolition of social disparity and so on. "In the religious sphere, the reform movements combat religious superstition, attacked idolatry, polytheism, and hereditary priesthood. And in the social sphere, this movement attacked the caste system, the idea of untouchability, and other social and legal inequities"(B.L. Grover & Alka Mehta, 295).With the contributions of the Scholars and religious reformers created a reformation in the minds of Indians and awoke them from centuries of thraldom and made a significant contribution in promoting the feeling of nationalism.

V. Development of Indian Press and Literature

Though the press was introduced by the Europeans in India for their gain, it becomes an effective instrument through which the nationalist-minded Indian spread the message of patriotism and modern economic, social and political ideas that created consciousness among the Indian(Bipin Chandra,201). The Indian press both English and Vernacular language injected a strong motivation process of political awareness(B.L. Grover & Alka Mehta, 294).In spite of numerous restrictions imposed upon the press and publications by the British, the Indian journalism strides to publish their propaganda of nationalism to the maximum. In 1877, there were about 169 newspapers published in vernacular languages, and their circulation reached the neighbourhood of 100,000 Indians(B.L. Grover & Alka Mehta 2008, 295). To quotes it from William Digby, "in 1875 there were 374 vernacular and Anglo-vernacular newspapers in circulation, as against 147 English papers, out of which 102 were published in Bengal, 86 in Bombay , 65 in North-western province (Utter Pradesh), 58 in Madras and 63 in Punjab, Sind, the Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh) and Rajasthan combine".3 The growth of the readers of the newspaper increases the growth of people in the political spheres and for nationalism. Roper Lethbridge pointed out that; "if a single copy reaches a village or even a large collection of villages, its contents will soon become known to nearly every man residing in the neighborhood"(McCully T, B., 325). Thus, the press and

[2] Quoted by West Geoffrey, the life of Annie Besant, London, 1929, p. 221.
[3] William Digby, Calcutta Review Vol. LXV, 1879, p. 362.

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its publications successfully spread the information about the British Imperialist policy and help to spread the growth of nationalism among the Indians. It is to be noted that, the India press play a greater role in mobilizing public opinion, organizing political movements, fighting our public controversy and promoting Indian nationalism(B.L. Grover & Alka Mehta, 295). National literature too plays a prominent role in arousing national consciousness in the form of novels, essay, and patriotic poetry. "Ban Kim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali, Lakshmi NathBezbarua in Assamese; Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar in Marathi, Subramanya Bharati in Tamil; BharatenduHanshchandra in Hindi; and Altaf Husain Hali in Urdu were some of the prominent writers of the period,"(Bipin Chandra, 201)Who won the hearts of many for the freedom movement. Thus, the Indian press and literature become the mirror of Indian nationalism and a primary medium of educating the public as a whole.

VI. Economic Exploitations and Political Unification

Before the coming of the B.E.I.C, India was very rich in raw materials and in its barter financial system, which was sufficient to meet their own needs. However, with the arrivals of the British, all these were lost as the British think only to develop their own country i.e., England by looting India. During the 19th century (industrial revolution) England was in a high need for raw materials for production and a market all over the places for selling their goods. Perhaps, the invasion of India by the British India was exploited in two ways; provide raw materials to the factories in England, in which the raw materials come back as a finished product and sold in India which the people brought with a high price. Thus, India has the worst experience from the British rule which is known as economic exploitation. Meanwhile, DadabhaiNaoroji founded a theory known as 'Drain of Wealth' which he reported about the secret behind the British in the sphere of the India economy. And R.C. Dutt blamed the British policies for economic ills in his book "Economic History of India". This economic exploitation awakens the mass to revolt against the British rule. In this regard, A.O. Hume also "remarked that the extreme poverty of the Indian people was directly and distinctly traceable to a fundamental defect in the British rule".4

"Indian nationalists also developed the 'theory of increasing poverty in India' and attributed it to Britain's anti-India economic policies. They tagged poverty and foreign rule, which developed the psychology of hatred for foreign rule and products and the love for Swadeshi goods and Swadeshi rule" (B.L. Grover & Alka Mehta, 296).Thus, this stimulates the heart of the people and developed the spirit of nationalism.

On the other hand, in the pre-British era, India was divided into numerous feudal states, and they struggle to extend their boundaries among themselves. "The Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs, and the Muslims had broken up the country into categories of states, each having its own political and territorial existence" (M.M. Ahluwalia, 721). However, the introduction of the British administration, common laws, and Judicial Structure, ultimately help in the unification of the Indians. Perhaps, this also creates awareness among the Indians that this vast land belongs to them. Under the British colonization, most parts of India were put together into one political setup, which helps in developing the spirit of 'oneness' and nationhood among the Indians. Of course, the British gradually introduce a uniform and modern system of government throughout the country and thus unified it administratively.

VII. The Illbert Bill Controversyand the Atrocities of Lord Lytton

In 1883,Lord Ripon as a viceroy tried to introduce and pass the Illbert Bills which permitted the Indian judges to hear the Europeans cases. This Bill was presented by the Law member P.C. Illbert and "tried to authorize the Indian judges to hear cases against the British subject and officers" (RadheyShyamChaurasia, 333). These create a huge discontentment towards the European nation, and the Europeans start to protest for the withdrawal of Bill, in which behavior of the European was quite shameful which lead to unrest among the Indian. Thus, the British viceroy was forced to withdraw the Bill. Regarding this, the reaction attitude of the British colonizer made relies upon the educated Indian about the necessity of forming their political organization(RadheyShyamChaurasia, 333). Surendra Nath Banerjee has rightly remarked, "No self-respecting Indian could sit idle under the fierce light of that revelation. It was a call to high patriotic duty to those who understood its significance. Therefore naturally, the feeling of heartedness towards the British was born in each educated Indian group of people" (Radhey Shyam Chaurasia, 333). Perhaps, Illbert Bill, the law members of the Viceroy's council, sought to abolish racial inequality by bringing Englishmen under the jurisdiction of Indian magistrate of session judges, (Sailendra Nath Sen, 238)by removing the existing law that even Indian members of the Indian Civil Service were not authorized to hear the cases of the Europeans in the courts. However, the British pour out abuse on Indians, their culture and the ways of life. They declare that even the

[4] Misra, J.P. "A. O. Hume's Leadership of the Indian National Congress." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 32 (1970): 102. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44138512.

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most highly educated among the Indian were unfit to try a common European (Bipin Chandra, 202). Some of them even organized a conspiracy to kidnap the Viceroy and deport him to England. However, the government of India submitted themselves under the British and amended the Bill to meet their criticism that gives rise to the feeling of more conscious about their degradation towards foreign rule. Thus, the Indian organize the all-Indian campaign in favor of the Bill and meet their demands accepted by the government they need to be united and organize themselves on a national scale. Sundra Nath Banerjee claimed that it strengthens the forces that were speeding up the birth of the Indian National Congress. Reverend Henry Whitehead writes: "The response to the agitation of the Europeans against the Illbert Bill was the National Congress" (Sailendra Nath Sen, 238).

However, during the time of Lord Lytton, in the year 1876-78 a severe famine broke out and 'the worst affected were Madras, Bombay, Mysore, Hyderabad and some parts of Central India and Punjab' (B.L. Grover & Alka Mehta,211). According to RomeshDutt, he estimated that five million people perished in a single year.5Amid of all this suffering, he celebrated a ceremony at Delhi Durbar when Queen Victoria assumed the title Kaiser-e Hind (the Empress of India). He also imposed a heavy tax on the people of India and spent a large amount of money in the Afghan war, which resulted in the ill feeling of the masses towards the Britisher. He also reduces the minimum age from 21 to 19 years for employment in Civil Service and "the Vernacular Act of 1876 was passed imposing a restriction upon the press"(RadheyShyamChaurasia, 333). This Bill and the atrocities led to discontentment of the Indian people and lighten upvarious political organizations in the country to oppose the act/behavior of the government in the country and led to the feeling of nationalism among the Indians.

VIII. Challenges for the Present Generations

Though India gain her freedom from the British rule. Several challenges continue to be among the Indian people. This are as listed below:

It can be seen that, India has suffered a lot, but past is a past and we can't change it. Let's work hard to bring back our past glory and stand as united against all the social evils that is now started ruling our country like fundamentalism, communal hatred, injustice and corruption.

The present generations should always remember that, the freedom which they enjoy today is all because of the sacrifice done by the Indian Masses who struggle for freedom Indian form the British yoke and not to go along with a particular group of people either to a particular person.

The present generation should realize it was not a party movement which made to achieve the free India rathe it was a Mass movement where every look and corner of Indian people participate. So, each and every Indian Citizen must be given equalrespect.

The younger generation should not be afraid in focusing on their aims/goals, just as the Indian Nationalist did. As the Indian Nationalist did not have fears, and they were not led astray from their aims/goals. They live and died for one sole reason i.e. free India.

One lesson from the freedom movement leaders is that, there is strength in Unity. India the 2nd largest population, there is nothing too big if we want to fix it or achieve if everyone contributes, be it clean India or development.

To stand up for what is right. Not to be just a spectator and waiting for some person to stand up. Each and every individual has the power to do.

They younger generation must have commitment and sustain action in order to make a change as the Indian Nationalist did.

IX. Conclusion

India was a diverse land without unity until the arrival of the British East India Company. They did not have the sense of making unity or a nation and were confined to their community or geographical areas. They were governed by theirfeudal system and fight one another to expand their own territory. But with the advent of the B.E.I.C. and their colonization of India, a political unification came into being among the Indians as the British rules were mended to be followed to all the provinces that were under its territories. The suppressive and ill-treatment of the B.E.I.C. arose a radical feeling among the Indians and united them as one nation. The development of western education in India was an eye opener for the free Indian movement. It gives birth to the feelings for the need of the India mass to attain freedom to have back theirland. As a result, different scholar started writing about the richness of the India past glory which awakens the mind of the Indian masses in the freedom struggle.

Moreover, India was a main exporter for textile earlier in the 18th century, but by the middle of the 19th century, it had lost all of its export market and much of its domestic market(David Clingingsmith & Jeffery G. Williamson,Issued in June 2004).However, the colonization under the British made thelocal industries suffered a massive decline, and India underwent secular de-industrialization as a consequence. The British export the raw materials from India with a low price and the finished products in Britain were exported back again to

[5] RomeshDutt, The Economic History of India, Vol. III, 1960, P.319.

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India with a high price, which really affected the Indian economy and waked up people to rose against the British ruled. On the other hand, heavy import tax was put on Indian products to restrict their entry into the British market, when there was a free trade policy for the transactions of the raw materials or British goods in India. Thus, this resulted in ruining of the Indian indigenous industries as the demands of the British goods expanded, which consequently gave birth to the ill feeling of promoting a national feeling among the Indians.

After all, the racial discrimination of the British towards Indians was one of the driving forces to unite and fight against the British imperialism. They projected themselves as superior to Indian in every aspect of life and thought that the Indians were inferior at all cost. This feeling of superiority created the need for freedom among the Indians. Moreover, the Indian was never given a privilege for a higher job even though they are qualified, capable, and intelligence. Though being educated, the Indian people were openly insulted and sometimes even assaulted in public(Bipin Chandra, 202).Discriminated based on their color is also one of the main reasons that resulted in the awakening of the Indian masses for free India. "They were kept out of exclusive European clubs and were often not permitted to travel in the same compartment in a train with the European passengers. This made them conscious of national humiliation and led them to think of themselves as one people when facing Englishmen"(Bipin Chandra, 202). Unlike the other foreign conqueror, the British did not mix socially with the Indian though they were in a high official post in the government offices, due to the feeling of racial superiority and treat Indian with arrogance. Thus, Indian feels the urgent need of free India from the British ruled, as a result, each and every individual come together despite of their differences in caste, creed, religions, etc. and join hands together for the free India.

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