

B.A. (Programme)

Semester-IV

History

DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC CORE COURSE
History of India c.1700–1950

Study Material : Unit - III(c), V(c) and VI(a)



SCHOOL OF OPEN LEARNING
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

Department of History

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Under Graduate Course

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History of India c.1700-1950

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(c) De-Industrialisation

During the first half of the nineteenth century and leading up to 1880s India's economy witnessed a strange phenomenon. While the western countries were experiencing industrialisation, India suffered industrial decline. This process has been described as de-industrialisation. This was occasioned by British impact on Indian economy during the colonial period. India's traditional handicraft industry decayed beyond recovery. The period of decline of Indian handicrafts coincided with the Industrial Revolution in Britain and Britain's firm grip over the Indian economy. De-industrialisation became one of the major planks of the nationalist critique of colonial rule while the imperialist scholars negated any such charge stressing rather the benevolent aspect of colonial rule.

The primary reasons for this controversy are the lack of statistical data and the difference in approach of various scholars. In recent years, however, there has been a shift from abstract generalisations and statistical computations geared to arrive at a desired conclusion to specific micro regional studies to examine the process of de-industrialisation.

The nineteenth century was on the whole a period dominated by industrial capital when Britain's industrialists and trading interests expanded their operations on the doctrine of free trade. Their persistent propaganda and lobbying resulted in the Charter Act of 1813 which abolished Company's monopoly over India trade. India which so far had chiefly been an exporting country now started importing the goods. British textiles flooded Indian markets spelling a doom for the weaving industry. It was noted in 1834, "The misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India." Karl Marx, an astute contemporary observer noted, "It was the British intruder who broke up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning wheels. England began with depriving the Indian cotton from the European markets; it then introduced twist into Hindustan and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons".

Dr. D.R. Gadgil has mentioned three principal causes which operated in the first half of the nineteenth century to bring about a rapid decline in the artistic excellence and economic importance of Indian handicrafts. The first was the disappearance native Indian princely establishments that patronised fancy arts and handicrafts and often employed the best craftsmen on a regular salary. Secondly, the establishment of foreign rule brought a new professional elite with distinct European tastes and Indian elites too trying to ape their masters. Both treated Indian products with disdain. The third reason cited by Gadgil is the stiff opposition posed to Indian handicrafts by highly developed machine industry.

Another scholar B.D. Basu puts more emphasis on the use of political power by Britain to strangle Indian handicrafts. Among the processes and methods used by the British he mentions the free trade doctrine, the export of raw materials from India, the transit and

customs duties, the granting of special privileges to the British manufactures in India. All this resulted in the process of de-industrialisation.

There is a general agreement among the scholars that the decline of handicrafts was neither universal nor simultaneous. It varied in time and space. Since Rajasthan was opened up by the railways after 1911 the decline there was subsequent to it. Despite extremely adverse circumstances Indian handicrafts could not be completely wiped out. The rural population steeped in poverty continued to purchase cheaper khadi cloth and village made iron and wooden agricultural implements. The Swadeshi movement in the beginning of the twentieth century popularised indigenous products on patriotic grounds and this created some market for khadi in urban areas. In the Gandhian era village industries received encouragement and this kept the Indian industries alive.

Even after the rise of modern industry in India after the First World War the process of de-industrialisation continued. There was a decline in the proportion of industrial worker as compared to the agricultural labour. Between 1851 and 1911 the proportion of work force in manufacturing, mining and construction fell from 35% to 17%.

The Nationalist School held that the British rule resulted in a progressive decline and destruction of urban Indian handicrafts and village artisan handicrafts. Millions forced out of their traditional occupation fell back upon agriculture and consequently it resulted in the ruralisation of the country. They maintained that India possessed a substantial manufacturing set up since time immemorial which was sufficient both in quantity and quality to cater to domestic and foreign needs. M J Thomas has estimated that in 1790 the export of cloth amounted to around 50 million yards valued at a million pound sterling. But by 1850s the imports amounted to over 500 million yards while the export was only 30 million yards.

However the Nationalist critique was rather naive and romantic in essence. They relied heavily on the statistics of external trade which indicated a collapse of traditional Indian textile exports and a rapid increase in Lancashire imports. This by itself is no definite proof of a decline in domestic productivity. The decline of handicrafts was not a uniform and cataclysmic process as is assumed by the Nationalists. It was only Gadgil who presented a critique of British economic policies and delineated the stages and nature of decline of the handicrafts in different regions.

The current de-industrialisation debate was initiated by Daniel and Alice Thorner who argued that it was a worldwide phenomenon under the impact of the Industrial Revolution. If de-industrialisation happened as described by the Nationalists this should have been reflected in the census figures showing a decline in the industrial work force and a jump in agricultural labour. But in reality the aggregate general labour and agricultural labour rose from 60 million in 1881 to 75 million in 1911. The proportion of male labour in agriculture was 75% in 1911 and 76% in 1931 registering only a slight increase.

Thorner's conclusion of a slight decline in the share of manufacturing and trade from 18% to 15% is also substantiated by J. Krishnamurti who suggests that a fall in employment

need not imply a corresponding fall in output provided there was an application of improved technology in some handicrafts. Thorner therefore concludes that if there indeed was a major shift from industries to agriculture it was before 1880. It also led them to believe that there was not much decline in the manufacturing sector between 1881 and 1931. Marginal decline in the traditional sector was actually offset by the employment generation with the growth of modern industries. If there indeed was any de-industrialisation it must have been before 1880.

Another scholar who firmly rejects the possibility of de-industrialisation is Morris David Morris. He disapproves of the importance given to the textile industry but uses it as an example to further his argument. He challenged the imperialist exploitation thesis put forward by Indian Nationalist writers and publicists and instead argued that colonial rule “probably stimulated economic activity in India in a way which had never been possible before” and that “the handloom weavers were at least no fewer in number and no worse off economically at the end of the period than at the beginning” and also that there might have been some growth in absolute terms. Indigenous textile production, Morris argues, might have remained constant or might even have increased in spite of the big rise in imports from Lancashire because of a massive upswing in the Indian to cover both. However, he gives no data to bear out this upswing.

Morris’ reinterpretation largely follows the traditional imperialist argument which pointed out that India was growing more prosperous under colonial rule. Morris’ arguments to refute the whole theory of de-industrialisation are in fact more conjectural and dubious than the much abused Nationalists. He has been severely criticised by scholars like Prof. Bipan Chandra, Toru Matsui and Tapan Roy Choudhury. Toru Matsui contends that even if a sharp fall in the prices of yarn benefitted the handicrafts industry it must have struck a severe blow to the spinning industry.

The argument that the indigenous weavers benefitted from lower prices of imported yarns ignores both the ruin of Indian spinners as well as the problem faced by the fall in the prices of woven textiles because of the reduction in manufacturing costs occasioned by the technological improvements not in India but in Britain. Lancashire manufacturers benefitted from reduction in cost both in spinning and weaving. Indian weavers, on the other hand, gained from low price imported yarns but since the weaving costs remained high they could not compete with the cheap imported cloth. Toru Matsui, therefore, in his rejoinder to Morris, explains that Indian weavers’ condition could hardly have improved (*Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1968).

While there is ample evidence of a decline in the textile centres one has no proof of any new centre growing or of an increase in the number of the artisanal class in towns or in the countryside. This makes Morris’ contention of no decline in the artisanal class questionable. Tapan Roy Chaudhury adds to the criticism by saying that even the surviving traditional sector was marked by stagnation. Irfan Habib too throws the weight of his argument against M D Morris through his criticism of *Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol-II, published in *Modern Asian Studies*, 1985, where he refers to the work by Amalendu Guha who has

given an estimate of handloom production. According to him the availability of cotton yarn to the handloom industry declined from 419 million pounds in 1850-60 to 221 million pounds in 1900.

Amiya Bagchi recently attempted a close statistical comparison of Buchanan Hamilton's survey of early nineteenth century Bihar districts with the data given in 1901 Census. The data corroborate a decline in the number of people living on artisanal production from 18% to 8% and a substantial decline of cotton weavers and spinners. The sufferings caused by de-industrialisation caused severe unrest among the people giving rise to several rural and urban movements and sparked patriotic sentiments among the Moderates, the Extremists and also during the Gandhian era.

The survival of the handloom industry can be explained in terms of preference of poor masses for coarse cloth and of many labourers taking to weaving as a part time job. By one estimate the process of de-industrialisation continued in Bengal for a period of fifty years at the least.

In sum it can be safely concluded on the basis of several studies and the data at hand that de-industrialisation was a reality that India faced under colonial rule. The degree of its impact varied with region and from industry to industry. While arms and iron smelting was wiped out the handloom industry showed a remarkable capacity to survive. The process of de-industrialisation on the whole, however, brought untold misery and suffering to the artisan class who were thrown out of their traditional means of livelihood.

(c) Peasant Movements in Modern India

Some of the older conceptions of the alleged passivity of Indian peasants have recently been broken. Barrington Moore, Jr. says that peasant rebellions in India were relatively rare and completely ineffective unlike China. Barrington Moore attributes the alleged weakness of Indian peasant movements to the caste system and the hierarchical division of society as well as to the strength of bourgeois leadership and the pacifying influence of Gandhi on the peasantry.

Recent researches, however, suggest that this alleged passivity of the peasantry is a myth. Kathleen Gough says that, in fact, peasant revolts have been common both during and since British period and mentions seventy-seven peasant revolts, thus breaking the wrong perception of their being neutral and passive. She concedes that the peasant uprisings in India were of a lesser geographical expanse than in China. But the reasons for this were the unique political condition of the country. India was not a unified country like China but was politically fragmented. Moreover, the administrative machinery set up by the British after 1858 was much more organised and repressive than the Manchu administration in China. As a result local rebellions could not grow into a formidable all India movement. As regards the caste system scholars like E M S Namboodripad and Irfan Habib have argued that it was an enabling factor insofar as it provided a network for them to assemble quickly.

Despite the limitations the peasant movements tended to be fairly frequent though localised. On the basis of the seventy -seven revolts that she studied Kathleen Gough has divided peasant rebellion into five groups. She does not distinguish between tribal and peasant movements because the tribals too are one kind of peasantry. This is to an extent right.

The first type of rebellion which Gough calls the Restorative Rebellions resembles Kumar Suresh Singh's Primary Resistance of the tribal movements. Both kinds of movements were under traditional leadership. The goals of Restorative Rebellions were complete annihilation or expulsion of the British and reversion of the previous government and agrarian relations. Gough says that twenty-nine revolts involving peasants involving peasants as the main force were counted for this type of the movement. The Revolt of 1857 can be regarded as the biggest Restorative Rebellion because the leaders included the traditional Rajas and Nawabs with the emperor of Delhi as the figurehead.

The second group of Gough is Religious or Millenarian Rebellions which corresponds with Kumar Suresh Singh's Secondary Resistance of tribal movements. Gough talks of twenty such rebellions. Prominent among them were the Munda tribal movement under Birsa Munda in the 1890s, the Naikda tribal movement in Gujarat under the Hindu religious leader

Joria Bhagat in 1867-70 and the early movement of Moplah peasants in the 1830s through 1850s led by Mambram Tangal. In their expectation of a sudden and total change most of these movements were transformative rather than restorative.

Gough borrows her third type from Hobsbawm's Primitive Rebels which she terms as Social Banditry. This involved large scale robbery. Their social base could be limited or extensive. They were driven by the ideal of Robinhood. They robbed the rich and sympathised with the poor. The common masses sympathised with the bandits and extended support to them. The dacoits of Chabal fall under this category. They enjoyed the support and protection in their own locality. In the colonial period some tribes were branded as criminal tribes in official records. This was because some primitive tribes who were still in the food gathering stage resisted the encroachment of their domain by the colonial officials. When their resistance was suppressed they took to organised robbery.

David Arnold points out by using police statistics that there were variations in instances of dacoity and crime in Madras rural areas caused by instances of famines.. The number of rural crimes tended to be highest between February and June when there was shortage of food. More militants among the rural people tended to be social bandits. Arnold points out that sometimes such banditry acted as a harbinger of a major peasant uprising.

Terrorist vengeance is Gough's fourth group. Terrorists individually or in a small group killed landlords, revenue agents, money lenders or other authorities or wealthy persons in vengeance but also partly with a sense of group pride or natural justice. Most of the Moplah killings of British officials, landlords and revenue agents were carried out to avenge specific wrong, to mete out rural justice and to afford desperate paupers escape to salvation through martyrdom.

Gough's fifth and final group is 'Mass Insurrections' which was a very conscious movement of protest by a large number of people. She talks of fourteen such revolts in which peasants provided the leadership and were the sole or dominant force. She divides this group into two broader categories explaining that the peasant movement can be either transformative trying to bring about total change or reformative in attempting to end a particular evil. Though there is a lot of interpenetration between the two on the political level, theoretically these are two separate movements. A Reformative Movement is generally thought to be non-violent but actually it is not so. Terrorist vengeance was generally of a reformative nature. Transformative Movements, on the other hand, were not always violent contrary to general perception. Transformative Movements were millenarian in nature where the leaders convinced their followers that the world would change.

Peasant movements guided by revolutionary left ideology were generally transformative because they aimed at total effective change. Telangana peasant war in 1946-48 was aimed at total overthrow of oppressive powers. Gough says that these movements mostly affected the lower strata of rural society as the rich peasantry was not in favour of a complete upheaval in the system.

The history of peasant movements can be divided into four broad phases. Till 1857 the leadership was provided by local chiefs and dispossessed zamindars. It was, however, not a new feature as Irfan Habib says that during the Mughal period there were numerous instances of zamindars leading the local peasant resistance against heavy taxation.

After 1857 the resistance led by the zamindars seems to have died down because the British increasingly tried to placate the traditional zamindars and chiefs throughout the country. In Oudh the talukdars who had revolted most furiously during the Mutiny were pacified by the retention of talukdari and the abandonment of Dalhousie's policy of annexation. Thus the feudal elements of traditional Indian society who previously had led the movements were placated by the British.

The 1870s and 1880s were the periods of rapid commercialisation which had a terrible impact on the agrarian society. Two types of revolt developed. In the Ryotwari areas where the zamindars were non-existent movement developed against the moneylenders as they became more oppressive and the indebtedness of peasants gradually led to their loss of land. Peasants with some property led this kind of movement. In the permanently settled areas like Bengal, on the other hand, where zamindars had the prominence there developed movements against the zamindars led by the rich peasantry as evidenced in the Pabna movement in Bengal in 1873. These movements were not directed against the British who were rather seen as distant protectors.

From the last decade of the nineteenth century till the end of the First World War the countryside became quieter because of the growing pressure of British machinery. Two other factors were also at work. Some ameliorative measures were taken by the British to quieten the rural population. In Bengal an act of occupancy was passed in 1885. In Bombay a law was passed to restrain the moneylenders and traders from grabbing the land.

Still the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a terrible period for the peasants because of the famines that wreaked havoc on them and depleted their ranks. Those who survived the famines saw an upswing in their fortunes because the pressure on land was eased. The Extremist phase of national movement developed during this period but it did not have any peasant mass base. It was after the First World War that peasant issues got meshed with the wider national movement when Gandhi extended his support base among the peasants. From the 1930 onwards trend towards the left emerged in the peasant movement like the Kisan Sabha in Bihar. The 1930s also witnessed the growth of separatist tendencies among the peasants like in East Bengal where the predominantly Muslim peasantry was dissatisfied with the Hindu zamindars and this culminated in riots. The worldwide economic depression further aggravated the problem faced by the peasants and this manifested itself in the newer leftist and separatist movements.

Regional Studies: Maharashtra, Bengal and Malabar

Multiple peasant movements were witnessed in Maharashtra in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1875 there occurred a series of revolts which are known as the Deccan

riots. The British period saw the mortgaging of property on a large scale. In the prosperous period of the 1860s brought about by the high prices paid for Indian cotton during the American Civil War many Deccan peasants borrowed on mortgage far more extensively than they had ever done before. The absence of a local money lending social group in the Deccan made it imperative for the peasants to borrow from the immigrant Marwari and Gujrati communities. With the sharp contraction of prices after the return of normalcy a large number of peasants found that their land was slipping away into the hands of the money lending outsiders. The Deccan riots were obviously in reaction to this.

Unlike the Permanent Settlement the revenue demand in the Bombay Presidency was not fixed in perpetuity. A revision was mandated every thirty years. The 1870s was the period when it was slated to happen. This period saw a steep rise in revenue demand. This was the spark that caused peasant revolts in thirty-three villages in May and September 1875.

I J Catarich points out that the pattern followed in most of the riots was that peasants attacked the houses of outsider money lenders. Their main target was the bond that was the proof of their borrowing. The movement was not marked by much violence. It was a Reformative rather than a Transformative movement. A rumour preceded the riots that the Queen whose image appeared on the silver coin was sympathetic to their cause. The rumour was fuelled on the belief that the Highness was contemplating action against the oppressive money lenders and by rising in revolt the peasants were carrying forward the task of the government. In 1879 a peculiar movement grew with links with the national movement. Phadke, an educated lower middle class Chitpawan Brahmin, assembled a group of forty persons and started looting banks and the rich to wage a war against the British. Phadke's movement was a mix of many things. First, he was in a way a precursor of an armed middle class militant struggle against the British. Secondly, he gathered around himself the tribal people thus bridging the gulf between the illiterate rural masses and the educated middle class nationalists. Thirdly, in reality was a kind of social banditry. In 1896-97 there was a resurgence of their movement occasioned by frequent famines leading to a demand for the reduction in revenue assessment, a demand that the government was not inclined to accept. Tilak organised Sarvajanic Sabha among them to educate them on their legal rights. In the Famine Code there was a provision of reduction in revenue demand in the areas affected by famine. Tilak made them aware of this aspect. However, the involvement of Tilak and other nationalists in this rent reduction campaign did not continue for long. In the absence of a leadership from above the peasants themselves carried on their campaign. From 1880s Jyotiba Phule led a lower caste movement against Brahmanical dominance.

Bengal

Anti-moneylender movement which was fairly prevalent in Maharashtra was rare in Bengal except for the tribal areas of Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana where movements were witnessed against the dikus. In large parts of Bengal the moneylenders were not outsiders. Most of them were the jotedars, the rich peasantry of the villages who had accumulated money through trade. It was they who advanced loans to the poor fellow villagers. It was

difficult to revolt against them because that would have adversely affected the cultivation. Besides the jotedars had family ties with poor peasantry. The main target of the discontent among the peasantry in Bengal was the zamindars. In 1873 a movement was started in the Yusuf Shahi pargana in the Pabna district of Bengal by the occupancy ryots against the attempt by the landlords to do away with the occupancy titles granted to a large number of cultivators by the Rent Act X of 1859. The articles by Binoy Chaudhury and K K Sengupta suggest that the Pabna Movement was a limited kind of a movement. The demands were also of a modest nature- reduction in land revenue and a standard measurement of land cultivated by them. The demands showed peasants' pathetic dependence on British officials against their oppressors. The Pabna Movement was a kind of a limited Reformist Movement. Even though the landlords were Hindus and ryots were Muslims the movement did not take on a communal colour. However, in 1906-07 and 1908 a series of communal riots broke out, known as Mymensingh riots, which took the form of an attack on houses of zamindars. The riots were a reflection of agrarian discontent and the failure of nationalist leaders to take up their cause.

The Moplah Uprising in Malabar

The coastal area of Malabar in the colonial period was marked by Hindu landlords and Muslim ryots called Moplah. The social division was marked by Namboodri Brahmins Nayar Jenmis or landlords at the top while below them were Pulayas, Parayas and the agricultural labourer. The British picked up Namboodri and Nayars as landlords and declared Kanamdars and Verumpattamdars as their tenants. Since the landlords were Hindus and the tenants were Muslims the former experienced an upswing in their fortune under the British rule while the latter found their condition deteriorating. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Malabar witnessed the growth of a Muslim revivalist movement. The Muslim population was fast increasing. Cherumars, the untouchables, were converted to Islam. In Ernad and Vellunad taluka in south Mlabar twenty-two uprisings took place between 1836 and 1854. The outbreaks followed a similar pattern. Almost invariably the outbreaks involved a group of Moplah youths attacking the house and property of Brahmin Jenmis, of Nayar officials or Jenmis' servants. There were instances also of the burning and defilement of temples and the burning and looting of landlords' houses. Between 1855 and 1880 several more Moplah outbreaks took place. Moplabs were inspired by a belief that it was a religious war against the Hindus and the British.

Conard Wood points out that there sprang up among the lower ranks of the Moplabs a sect which bore the hallmarks of a millenarian movement. The arrival of a mysterious ship with arms and ammunitions and other necessary provisions was eagerly awaited in the belief that should they be able to recruit 40,000 men in the meanwhile they would be able to defeat both the Jenmis and the British. Dhanagre points out that between 1862 and 1880 there was a four- fold increase in the number of tenants who were driven out of land because of their failure to pay rent. This resulted in an increase in the cases of dacoity and social banditry.

There were also rumours of an end to the British rule as the German army was said to be coming to save the Moplah.

Gross neglect of the basic issue of tenurial security and the deteriorating landlord-tenant relations and also the political alienation of the poor peasantry were the principal factors behind the Moplah rebellion of 1921. The Congress and the Khilafat organisations attempted to win their support. The British arrested prominent Khilafat leaders. Armed Moplah uprising took place in Malabar in August-September, 1921. Their leader Ali Musaliar proclaimed at a meeting, "In our Muslim state there will be no expensive litigation. We do not want vakils. No one should have more than what he actually needs. We do not want this present system of police."

By the end of December 1921 the Moplah rebellion was completely suppressed. As per the official figures 2337 rebels were killed, 1652 were injured and 45,405 surrendered. This was the official figure which was an under reporting. Around 150 Moplah prisoners were transported to Madras in a wagon out of which around 70 died of suffocation.

(a) Indian National Congress

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 to agitate for a larger role of the Indians in the governance of their country. The vision of Congress was based on the belief that all Indians had shared common economic and political interests and that those interests were in conflict with that of the British. For the collective welfare of all Indians, therefore, a restructuring of the relations between the rulers and the subjects was required. Amongst the British officials in India a handful of them found the racially exclusivist and discriminatory practices of the Raj politically inadvisable and morally distasteful. They believed in making room for the legitimate aspirations of English speaking Indians to find an expression. One such sympathetic British officer A O Hume played a major role in the founding of the Indian National Congress as a legitimate forum for the articulation of their grievances and aspirations

The formation of Indian National Congress was the culmination of the process of political awakening that started in the 1860s and 1870s. In these years a group of western educated young intellectuals imbued with a feeling of nationalism entered politics. They founded new political organisations in place of the older ones which were narrow in terms of their social base and outlook. Surendra Nath Banerjee and Anand Mohan Bose founded the Indian Association in Calcutta. M. Veeraraghavachariar and Subramania Iyer started the Madras Mahajana Sabha, while K.T. Telang and Pheroze Shah Mehta set up the Bombay Presidency Association. Among the early organisations only the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha remained active. The formation of Indian National Congress was also in line with the earlier efforts in this direction to influence the government policy.

Participation in local politics had provided the early nationalists with a kind of training that would come in handy when they entered a larger political arena. It also gave them the experience of working with the colonial institutions and at the same time kindled in them the desire to mould them for the benefit of Indians.

The period was marked by the publication of a large number of newspapers with a nationalist orientation that were to play a major role in the emerging political climate. Newspapers like The Hindu, The Tribune, The Bengalee, Mahratta, The Kesari, Anand Bazar Patrika were being edited by young people with a nationalist fervour. The Indians who had gained the experience of leading agitations over the last ten years were imbued with a new confidence. Campaigns were being led since 1875 on the issue of cotton import duty in the interest of the textile industry. Indigenisation of the civil services was another demand around which a massive campaign was organised in the years 1877-88. Lord Lytton's Afghan adventure was vociferously opposed and the British Government was forced to bear the cost of the Second Afghan War. The Indian Press started a massive campaign against the government to thwart its attempt to control the press through Vernacular Press Act. The

Indians had also opposed the effort to disarm them through the Arms Act. The other important area of protest was against plantation economy which had reduced the labourers to serfdom.

The year 1883-84 was marked by the Ilbert Bill controversy sparked by the provisions of the Bill that would have stripped the British residing in rural areas of the immunity from being tried by a magistrate of Indian origin. Though the Bill was to have only very little real impact since in 1883 there were only two Indian origin civil servants who could have such an authority, the very concept of Indians having even a notional authority was enough to agitate the British who saw it as undermining their privilege. They vocally argued for its withdrawal. The agitation by the British revealed their deep seated racial bias and resistance to political reforms. The impact of their resistance on Lord Ripon who was forced to modify the Bill also underscored the importance for Indians the need to organise themselves to protest against such unreasonableness.

The formation of an all India body which could take up the issues concerning the rights and interests of Indians was thought of as need of the hour. The Indian Mirror of Calcutta vigorously campaigned for this. The early nationalists were more in favour of following a policy of persuasion in their approach towards the British. AO Hume, a former civil servant and a close associate of Lord Ripon came to assume the role of an adviser in the matter. The nationalists knew that because of his experience Hume could well advise them on how to influence the bureaucracy and the parliament. This realisation placed Hume in a leadership position. Indians accepted his leadership also because he was seen as an objective figure free from petty considerations. Moreover, any organisation established solely by Indians ran the risk of facing official suppression, as Gokhale opined. Bipan Chandra sums up the irony of it all by saying that while the Congress was seen by Hume and the other British as a 'safety valve', the Congress saw Hume as a 'lightening conductor'.

The ground for another popular agitation was provided by a demand among a section of Indians to be recruited in the auxiliary force known as 'volunteer corps'. It was a demand made by educated Indians. Initially the government thought only of recruiting only the European and Eurasian males in this corps. In 1885 the Indians too claimed that they be considered for this voluntary service as well. The demand was almost granted when an officer in Madras enlisted three Indians in the service who fulfilled the physical and educational requirements for the job. What ensued was a heavy resistance from the Europeans which led the government to abandon this policy and close the doors on the recruitment of Indians.

In a prelude to the setting up of all India organisation AO Hume travelled over the length and breadth of the country in a bid to bring diverse political groups on an integrated platform. He toured Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, North-West Provinces, Awadh and the Punjab. He broached organising an all India conference on an annual basis by a central organisation having control over the political activities throughout the country. The organisation had to be tasked with the responsibility of framing a charter of demands to be presented before the

British. A telegraphic agency was to be created simultaneously which would transmit India's point of view to the British press in an attempt to free it from an anti-India bias.

In a unique attempt at political socialisation Indians showed great interest in the general election in Britain in 1885. One of their favourites was William Digby who was a former editor of Madras Times and who was fighting the election as a member for India. Many Indian delegates went to Britain to acquaint the British electorate with the Indian issue. Much to the disappointment of the Indians who had gone there to canvass and campaign most of their candidates lost the election and their efforts came to a naught.

The first ever session of the Congress held in Bombay was attended by seventy-two delegates. It elected W.C. Bonerjee as the President. A remark made by W.C. Bonerjee in 1898 sparked a huge controversy. Bonerjee had said that Hume was acting at the behest of the Viceroy Lord Dufferin. The pleas made by Hume to the British to give suitable concessions to educated Indians to avoid imminent mass violence came to be viewed subsequently in the light of this remark. Some radical historians like R.P. Dutt has seized on this remark to provide a critique of the Congress. They argued that Congress was formed by a former civil servant acting at the instance of the then Viceroy to channelize popular discontent. This conspiracy theory was given a lie by the opening of the private papers of Lord Dufferin which unequivocally establishes that Hume's theory of an impending political crisis arising out of widespread discontent had no credence with the ruling dispensation. It also reveals that the Viceroy did not entertain Hume's request for an official participation in the Congress.

A brief survey of the events and the historical processes leading to the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 makes it clear that the Indians gradually became aware of the conflict of interest between British Imperialism and India's welfare. This realisation formed the basis on which an all India organisation, the Indian National Congress, came to be built to give vent to the legitimate aspirations of the subjugated multitudes. The role played by a good Samaritan in this noble venture is laudable and unquestionable.