

- The enthusiasm of the articulate representatives of the educated middle class – the newly acclaimed leaders of Indian Society – appears to have considerably diminished by the close of the 19th century.
- Personalities like Gladstone in Britain & Lord Ripon in India, who realised the importance of the educated Indians and sympathised with their aspirations, were no longer at the helm of affairs.
- 19th century British govt really hated such educated middle class leaders
- Such middle class leaders understood the futility of petitions & prayers to government by 1900
- Their very modest demands for jobs in the Indian Civil Service and some reforms in the Legislative Councils had practically been disregarded
- Situations worsened in the early years of the 20th century due to the presence of a Viceroy like Lord Curzon, who wanted to treat the Congress as an "unclean thing"
- He reject all its leaders' pleas & consider the Civil Service as one "specifically reserved for Europeans".
- Like all staunch imperialists, Curzon was an unqualified racist, proclaiming that "the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a Western concept & speaking of Indians in his benevolent moods in tones "one normally reserves for pet animals". (S. Gopal, British Policy in India, 1858-1905, Cambridge, 1965, p. 227).
- New middle class educated leaders were not so dispirited as to swallow every humiliation or to lie ignominiously low.
- They had grown in stature in the eyes of their own people, learnt from their social reformers & ideologue to have faith in themselves and acquired sufficient amount of self-respect to ask for civilized treatment and natural justice.
- A confrontation between Curzon & the educated middle class nationalists, was bound to take place.
- It eventually did in Bengal where the Indian intelligentsia was most assertive & where Curzon was at his offensive worst.
- Curzon was the first to start his attack in Bengal.
- As early as 1899 he reduced the number of elected members in the Calcutta Corporation.
- This measure was intended primarily to satisfy the European business interests in the city, who often complained of delays in the grant of licences and similar other facilities
- Curzon passed the Universities Act (1904) even when opposed by Gurudas Banerjee the sole Indian member of UGC, took away the the autonomous character of Calcutta university
- The act cut down the number of elected senate members (mostly Indians) & transferred the ultimate power of affiliating colleges & schools, and giving them grants-in-aid, to the Government officials.
- In July 1905 Curzon announced the partition of Bengal.
- The province of Bengal under a Lieutenant Governor was culturally diverse & economically important region
- Apart from Bengal proper, it originally comprised the whole of Bihar, Orissa and Assam.
- Earlier, too, the British authorities did occasionally think of reducing the size of the province for administrative convenience.
- In 1874 they actually separated Assam from Bengal by making it a Chief Commissioner's province, & added Bengali-speaking area of Sylhet to it.
- Assam was further extended in 1897 by the transfer for the time being of South Lushai hill tracts from Bengal.
- From the administrative point of view & from the angle of equal developmental opportunities for all the areas, some sort of territorial reorganisation of the province of Bengal was therefore needed.
- Curzon did not appear to be thinking unreasonably when he talked of 'readjustments' of Bengal early in 1904.
- If he had ever thought of streamlining the province by disassociating the linguistically divergent, Orissa & Bihar from it, as it was so aptly & repeatedly advocated by the nationalists themselves, Curzon's policy would probably have been hailed as a principled & far-sighted one
- Instead, he and his main advisors – Sir A. Fraser, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, & H.H. Risley, Secretary, Home Department, were determined to use the plea for territorial readjustment to throttle the voice of nationalism.
- The move was calculated to hurt chiefly those who spearheaded the national movement in the eastern part of India, namely, the Bengali-speaking educated middle class.
- To meet the growing nationalist challenge in eastern India Curzon and his advisors searched for an effective answers, and eventually found it in the division of the Bengali-speaking people.
- The splitting up operations, or the arrangement for giving effect to the maxim "divide and rule", had to be done in such a manner as to make the Bengalis suffer physical as well as mental division
- This Curzon wanted to achieve by creating a situation of mutual suspicion and jealousy between

the two major communities in Bengal - the Hindus and the Muslims

- Curzon and his advisors knew that their opponents in Bengal came largely from among the Hindus, who had benefited more than their Muslim brethren by taking socio-economic and educational advantage of the British rule
- Majority of the Muslims being agriculturists could not manage to take a similar advantage.
- By shrewdly suggesting that his Government wished to standby the Muslims in their race for advancement with the Hindus, and secure them from any threat of Hindu domination
- Curzon planned to take away from Bengal those territories where muslims were more numerous, & join these with Assam to form a new province with Dacca as its Capital
- The new province, Curzon hoped, "would invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussalman viceroys and kings
- Curzon wanted to concentrate the interest of muslims around Decca
- By partitioning Bengal, therefore, Curzon wanted to set up Dacca as a parallel political centre to the nationalistically oriented Calcutta.
- To make use, of the Muslims to counterbalance the Hindus they intended to create out of Bengal a Muslim-majority province (15 million Muslims would live with 12 million Hindus) and reduce the Bengali speaking people into a minority in what would remain as Bengal (where 19 million Bengali speaking persons should be outnumbered by 35 million speakers of Hindi, Oriya and other languages).
- The Curzonian scheme to partition Bengal took a concrete shape gradually from the time the Viceroy wrote his minute on Territorial Redistribution on 1 June, 1903 to the day the final scheme of division was despatched to the home authorities in London for sanction on 2 February, 1905.
- On 19 July, 1905 the Government of India announced its decision to form the new province of "Eastern Bengal and Assam", comprising the Chittagong, Dhaka & Rajshahi divisions, Hill Tippera (Tripura), Malda and Assam.
- The province came into existence on 16 October, 1905, by breaking up Bengal and its 41.5 million Bengali speaking people.

THE WRONG EVALUATION

- Curzon calculated the kind of resistance they may get after partition of Bengal. According to him people in Bengal were dissatisfied on following issues
 - babus in eastern Bengal were worried about their clerical jobs
 - Bengali Zamindars having estates in both eastern & western parts had to face over the increased

expenses for engaging two sets of agents and pleaders.

- The Calcutta High Court lawyers, would feel concerned over the loss of practice because of a separate High Court in the new province.
- Jute & rice trading interests near the port of Calcutta over the challenge that Chinagong might pose as an alternative outlet.
- Calcutta nationalists would feel disturbed on account of the loss of a considerable portion of their audience and following
- Curzon expected all worries to subside in course of time - all will lead only to protest meetings & processions that could easily be tolerated & ignored.
- Curzon failed to grasp the Bengali feeling for unity & pride in their attainments, at least among the literates - fostered by intense educational, intellectual & cultural activities during the whole of the 19th century.
- British capital Calcutta had already become the nerve-centre of Bengali consciousness.
- Calcutta city had an increasing number of high-level newspapers & periodicals as well as a band of writers who were producing developed modern literature.
- The Boer war had revealed in the so called impenetrable British amour.
- They also felt greatly elated & assured when much underrated Oriental Japan defeated in 1904-05 the over-rated Occidental Czarist Russia.
- Their rising self-confidence was matched by the growing abhorrence with which they looked down upon all acts of racial intimidation and discrimination.
- The educated middle class Indians in Bengal & other parts of the country, were critical of the "drain of wealth from India to Britain, & frequent recurrence of famines & plague
- Economic draining due to professional over-crowding & unremunerative fragmentation through inheritance of their landed properties.
- Sudden rise in the prices from 1905 - 1908 of all commodities that affected everybody

THE ANTI-PARTITION AGITATIONS

- There were sharp press campaigns against the partition scheme, numerous public meetings in opposition to it and the drafting of petitions to the Government for its annulment.
- Big conferences held in the Town Hall, Calcutta
- But it made no effect on the indifference of the authorities in India and Britain.
- The failure of these methods, led to a search for new techniques from the middle of 1905 & resulted in the discovery of the boycott of British goods as an effective weapon.
- The boycott suggestion first came from Krishna Kumar Mitra's Sanjivani on 3 July, 1905, and was

later accepted by the prominent public men at the Town Hall meeting of 7 August, 1905.

- The calls of Rabindranath Tagore for the observance of raksha-bandhan for symbolising brotherhood
- The call of Ramendra Sundar Tribedi for arandhan (the keeping of the hearth unlit at all the homes as a sign of mourning) on the day the partition was put into effect.
- The boycott of British products was followed by
 1. The advocacy of swadeshi
 2. Charkha became the symbol for the country's economic self-sufficiency
 3. The holding of swadeshi melas or fairs for selling handicrafts & other articles became a regular feature
 4. Starting of Indian enterprises - Bengal chemicals, Banga Lakshmi Cotton Mills, Mohini Mills and National Tannery.
- Various soap, match box and tobacco manufacturing establishments and oil mills & financial activities, like the swadeshi banks, insurance & steam navigation companies also took off the ground
- Picketing before the shops selling British goods
- Boycott of the officially controlled educational institutions
- The British threat to the student-pickers in the form of the withdrawal of grants, scholarships and affiliations of the institutions to which they belonged - Carlyle circular was issued in this respect
- Imposition of fines & rustication orders on them resulted in the decision by large number of students to leave these schools and colleges.
- Boycott of schools & colleges forced the leaders of the Swadeshi movement to think in terms of running a parallel system of education in Bengal.
- Soon appeals were made, donations collected & distinguished persons came forward to formulate programmes for national education.
- These efforts resulted in the establishment of the Bengal Technical Institute which was started on 25 July, 1906 & which later turned into the College of Engineering & Technology, Jadavpur.
- The Bengal National College & School was set up on 15 August, 1906 with Aurobindo Ghosh as its Principal and a number of national, primary and secondary schools in the districts.

SAMITIS

- For aiding the cause of national education, and for spreading the messages of boycott and swadeshi, a large number of national volunteer bodies or samitis sprang up in Calcutta and the districts
- Some of them are - Dawn Society, Anti-Circular Society (Against Carlyle Circular), the Swadesh Bandhav, the Brati, the Anushilan, the Suhrid and the Sadhena samitis
- These samitis preached the essentials of swadeshi & boycott, took up social work during famines &

epidemics, imparted physical & moral training, organised crafts & national schools & set up arbitration committees & village societies.

- They encouraged folk singers & artistes - notably persons like Mukunda Das, Bhushan Das and Mufizuddin Bayati to perform on the swadeshi themes in local dialects.
- These efforts served to, supplement at the rural level the spate of patriotic compositions by literary stalwarts like Rabindranath Tagore, Rajanikanta Sen, Dwijendralal Roy, Girindra Mohini Das, Sayed Abu Mohammed.
- The ideologies of samitis ranged from secularism to religious revivalism, from moderate politics to social reformism, and included within their range political extremism.

COMPETING IDEOLOGIES

MODERATE NATIONALISTS

- Several trends of political thinking were competing with one another for popular acceptance during the swadeshi days in Bengal
- The moderate nationalist opinion which was represented by persons like Surendranath Banerjee, Krishnakumar Mitra & Narendra Kumar Sen still had abiding faith in the British sense of justice & were not in favour of stretching the agitation too far
- Its advocates actually pinned their hopes on the Liberal Morley's appointment as Secretary of State for India in Britain.
- Moderates rapidly and conclusively lost their popularity since the prevailing militant mood in Bengal was more popular

SOCIAL REFORMIST CREED

- "Constructive swadeshi" : - Gathering national strength through a persistent movement of self-help & self-reliance or Atmashakti according to Rabindranath Tagore, by organising indigenous enterprises, nationalistic educational processes & setting up village upliftment societies to bridge the gulf between the rural & urban people.
- All those who did not see eye to eye with the moderate nationalists supported the cause of "constructive swadeshi" in the beginning. Satishchandra Mukherji, Aswini Kumar Dutta, Rabindranath Tagore, Prafulla Chandra Roy and Nilratan Sircar were its prime adherents.
- Even though the programme recommended by the social reformists was significant in some ways, it was too arduous and unexciting to have wide appeal
- It could not reckon the attention of Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, nor satisfy the impatient, adventurous youth of Bengal

POLITICAL EXTREMISM

- In such circumstances, the appearance of political extremism - the third trend - was natural.

- It found expression in periodicals like New India edited by Bipin Chandra Pal, Vande Mataram edited by Aurobindo Ghosh, Sandhya edited by Brahmabandhab Upadhyay and Yugantar edited by Bhupendranath Dutta.
- The political extremists demanded self-government for India, not under British Paramountcy (as the moderates wished), but by severing all British connections, & wiping off all British influences.
- The extremist political leaders gave a clarion call for the establishment of swaraj and attempted to find the ways and means for achieving it
- The techniques of boycott should be escalated from British goods and educational institutions to other spheres, such as the British administration, the British courts of law and the British services, shaking the foundation of British authority in India.
- Bipin Chandra Pal described such escalation as "passive resistance" or refusal "to render any voluntary or honorary service to the Government".
- Aurobindo Ghosh in April 1907 came out with the theory of "organised and relentless boycott of British goods, British system of education, judiciary & executive & the social boycott of the loyalists and civil disobedience of unjust laws.
- If British repressions surpassed the limits of Indian endurance, Aurobindo Ghosh was prepared to embark upon an anti-British armed struggle.
- How could British rule in India continue, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay asked, if the chowkidar, the constable, the deputy, the munsiff and the clerk, not to speak of the sepoy, resigned their respective functions.
- In comparison with the importance of the struggle for swaraj, the unification of Bengal seemed only a secondary issue
- Bengal was reunified in 1911

IDEA OF MASS MOVEMENT

- The educated middle class had by & large awakened with the progress of the Swadeshi movement

- Some members of the landed aristocracy & the representatives of commercial & mercantile interests were becoming sympathetic to the national cause.
- But the vast majority of the poorer classes, especially the working class & the peasantry, had not yet been brought in the thick of the struggle.
- Some of the swadeshi activists like Ashwini Kumar Banerji, Prabhat Kusum Roychoudhury, Apurba Kumar Ghosh & Premtosh Bose tried to organise workers in Bengal & direct their economic grievances into political channels.
- The lead in the direction came from 247 clerks of Burn Company in Howrah who struck work in September 1905 in protest against a derogatory new work regulation.
- This was followed by strikes in the tramways in Calcutta, in the jute mills and railway workshops.
- Coolies, carters and sweepers also took recourse to strikes in Calcutta to voice their economic demands.
- Such greater politicisation was noticed among the more militant printing press, jute mill and railway workers.
- A bitter strike in the Government owned presses resulted in the formation of the first real labour union, namely the Printers Union in October 1905.
- The employees of the Eastern Indian Railway saw the organisation of a Railwaymen's Union in July 1906.
- Bipin Chandra Pal, Shyamsundar Chakrabarty and Liakat Hussain tried to organise agitated railway workers in Asansol, Ranigunj and Jamalpur, which ended up in police firing at the Jamalpur Workshop 27 August, 1906.
- The jute mill workers, who agitated from 1905, were led by Aswini Kumar Banerji to form an Indian Millhands Union at Budge-Budge in August 1906
- All these unions later on suffered a setback in the face of the hostility of the Government.
- Not being ideologically committed to the cause of the workers, the enthusiasm of the nationalists in activating them steadily subsided after 1907.