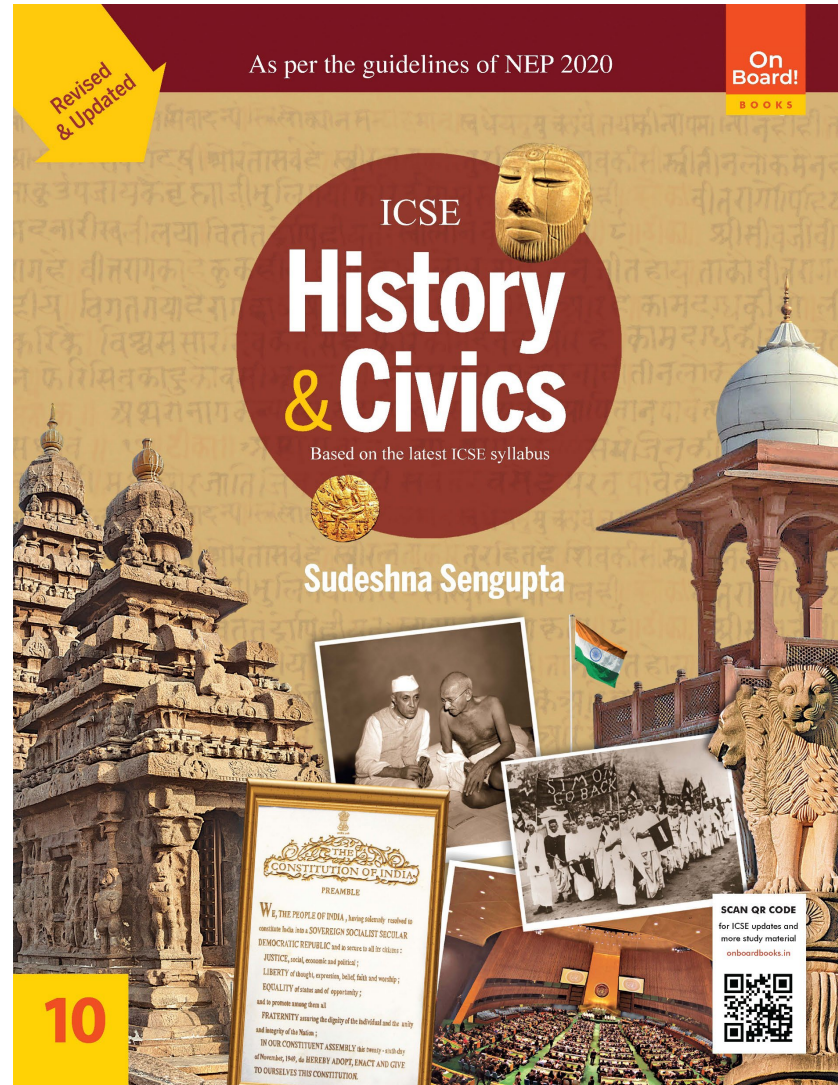


On Board!

B O O K S

ICSE History and Civics 10



Section B: History

Chapter 3 Objectives and Methods of the Early Nationalists

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PROMINENT EARLY NATIONALIST LEADERS

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917)

Surendranath Banerjea(1848–1925)

Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866–1915)

ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT

TOWARDS THE EARLY NATIONALISTS

Chapter 3 Objectives and Methods of the Early Nationalists

The Indian National Congress gradually evolved into a powerful political organization. The history of India's political struggle for Independence, under the guidance of the Indian National Congress, can be studied under three phases:

- The Early Nationalist Phase or the First Phase (1885–1905)
- The Assertive Nationalist Phase or the Second Phase (1905–1919)
- The Gandhian Era or the Mass Phase (1919–1947)

WHO WERE THE EARLY NATIONALISTS?

From 1885 to 1905, the Congress was led by the middle class intelligentsia comprising lawyers, doctors, scholars, engineers and other such professionals. The group of individuals who led the Congress was referred to as the Early Nationalists because:

- They had full faith in the goodness of the English rulers and their sense of justice.
- They relied on constitutional and peaceful methods to achieve their objectives.
- Their goal was not complete independence but reform.
- The Early Nationalists wanted the British to involve more Indians in the administrative process.

Objectives

The objectives of the Early Nationalists can be categorized as follows.

Constitutional reforms

Administrative reforms

Socio-economic reforms

Safeguarding civil liberties

Constitutional reforms

- Abolition of the India Council.
- Expansion of the Legislative Councils and Legislative Assemblies as well as adequate representation of Indians in the Executive Council.
- The need for Swarajya or self-government within the British Empire.

Administrative reforms

- Employment of more Indians in the higher services.
- Indianization of services by holding the ICS examination simultaneously in England and India
- Complete separation between the executive and the judiciary
- Increase in the powers of the local (municipal) bodies and reducing official control over them
- Repeal of the Arms Act and improving the police system, making it just and efficient.

Socio-economic reforms

- Reduction in land revenue and protection of peasants against the cruel demands of the Zamindars.
- Availability of cheap credit to peasants through agricultural banks.
- Reduction in army expenditure and use of the funds for the development of health and education.
- Industrial growth through trade protection by imposing heavy tax on imported goods.
- Government loans to be readily available for the development of iron, coal, paper and sugar industries.
- Total abolition of the salt tax and the duty on sugar.

Safeguarding civil liberties

- Removal of restrictions imposed by the British government on the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press.
- The right to assemble and form associations.
- Individual rights to be restored.

Methods of struggle

The method used by the Early Nationalists can be termed as mild and constitutional. They believed in working within the constitutional framework. As they wished to educate the Indian public and influence the British government positively, their methods of struggle included:

- Petitions, prayers and protests.
- Resolutions and memorandums.
- Meetings and speeches in cities, towns and the countryside.
- Distribution of leaflets and pamphlets.
- Criticism of policies in the press.
- Delegations of prominent leaders sent to the British Parliament.

The Early Nationalists firmly believed that political, administrative and economic reforms would be achieved through constitutional agitation.

Reforms introduced by the British, under pressure from the Early Nationalists

- The ICS examinations were to be held simultaneously in England and India.
- Many Indians were part of Viceroy's Legislative Council and the Provincial Legislature.
- For the first time, one seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council was reserved for an Indian member.

PROMINENT EARLY NATIONALIST LEADERS

The Early Nationalists laid the foundation of the national movement and contributed to the political education of the Indians. In this respect, we shall read about Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerjea and Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917)

Born in 1825 in a Parsi family in Bombay, Dadabhai Naoroji came to be regarded as a prominent statesman of the national movement. He distinguished himself as a Professor of Mathematics in Elphinstone College, Bombay before being elected to the Bombay Municipal Corporation and the Town Council. He founded the **London India Society** (1865) in collaboration with WC Bonnerjee. He founded the **East India Association** in 1866 in London to publicize the plight of the Indians under British rule. He was the first Asian to become a member of the British House of Commons (1892).

Congress Leader Dadabhai Naoroji was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress. He laid stress on swadeshi, swaraj, boycott and national education and accordingly the resolutions were passed.

An economist and thinker Dadabhai Naoroji realized that the primary cause for the economic downfall of India was the exploitation brought about by the policies of the British administration. The state of Indian handicrafts and textiles was in ruins and the economy was in dire straits. He believed that the British had 'drained' or taken away the wealth of India by sending raw materials e.g. cotton, iron ore and jute, from India to England, and selling the English factory goods in India. More money was collected from the Indians as tax and people also suffered from frequent famine and disease. Dadabhai Naoroji was the editor of Rast Goftar (Truth-teller), a Gujarati fortnightly and also the pioneer of the magazine Dharma Marg Darshak. Dadabhai Naoroji passed away in 1917. He left behind a life full of devotion and selfless sacrifice. He was proud to be an Indian and can be regarded as the 'guiding star in the firmament of Indian nationalism'

Surendranath Banerjea(1848–1925)

As a public figure Surendranath was elected to the Calcutta Corporation and remained its member for more than two decades. He was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council four times. He was also in charge of health and self-government, the first Indian to hold such a post.

As a nationalist leader Surendranath founded the **Indian National Association** to instil political consciousness and a sense of unity in the country. He convened the **Indian National Conference** (1883), which was the first organization with an all-India flavour. It merged with the Indian National Congress in 1886. Though Surendranath disapproved of violence, he encouraged the Indians to boycott foreign goods and to support the Swadeshi Movement.

As a political thinker he criticized the Vernacular Press Act, the Arms Act, the lowering of age for the ICS examinations and the scheme for separate electorate for the Hindus and the Muslims as stated in the Morley-Minto Reforms. He was also critical of Lord Curzon's decision to partition Bengal in 1905. He is referred to as 'the father of Indian nationalism.'

Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866–1915)

He was an Early Nationalist leader and had immense faith in the British sense of justice. He had proposed the status of a self-governing colony for India. As a nationalist, he criticized the government on issues like increasing expenditure on the army, levying production tax on cotton, etc. He also raised his voice against the partition of Bengal on his visit to England.

As a member of the Imperial Legislative Council Gokhale worked tirelessly to introduce a bill to make primary education compulsory. He also pleaded with the Council to reduce the duty on salt and to abolish excise duty on cotton goods.

As a social reformer Gokhale went to South Africa to help Gandhi fight against racial discrimination.

ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THE EARLY NATIONALISTS

In the initial stages, the British government looked upon the Congress with approval. Government officials attended and took part in the initial sessions of the Congress. But the attitude of the government turned hostile as the demands of the Congress increased. This changed outlook towards the Congress from someone who had sponsored the very movement was a sign of what was to follow. The 'Divide and Rule' policy germinated affecting future political unity. This policy of open hostility paved the way for a more forward approach by the Indian National Congress in the years to come.

To Remember

The Early Nationalists led the Congress from 1885 to 1905.

Some Early Nationalist leaders – Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, WC Bonnerjee, Surendranath Banerjea, Rashbehari Bose, Justice Ranade, G Subramannya Aiyar and others.

Objectives – Constitutional reforms: Abolition of India Council, expansion of Legislative Councils, demand for swarajya, Administrative reforms: Employment of more Indians, Indianization of services, separation of Executive from the Judiciary, Increase in the powers of Municipal bodies, Repeal of Arms Act; Socio-economic reforms: Reduction in land revenue, cheap credit for peasants, reducing expenditure on army, more funds for health and education, industrial growth, abolition of the salt tax and duty on sugar, Safeguarding civil liberties: Removal of restrictions on freedom of speech and press, right to assemble and form associations, Restoration of individual rights, abolition of preventive detention.

Methods of struggle – Loyal to the British, inherent sense of justice, mild and constitutional, Methods: Petitions, prayers, appeals, resolutions, meetings, distribution of pamphlets, criticism of policies, delegations to Parliament.

Prominent Early Nationalist leaders – Dadabhai Naoroji: The Grand Old Man of India, founded the East India Association, founder-member of the Indian National Congress, wrote '*Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*', popularized the 'drain theory', Surendranath Banerjea: First Indian to compete the ICS examination, dismissed from service, elected to the Calcutta Corporation, elected to the Bengal Legislative Council, founded the Indian Association, edited the newspaper *Bengalee*, called the father of Indian nationalism, Gopal Krishna Gokhale: Political guru of Gandhi, professor at Fergusson College, proposed a self-governing colony for India, went to South Africa to help Gandhi fight racial discrimination, set up the Servants of India Society, worked for the education and upliftment of the depressed classes.

Thank You