

# The Rise of Asian Countries during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century



In this chapter we will discuss the rise of India, Japan and China during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

India which was under the power of the British Empire rose up against that power and obtained freedom. Although Japan and China did not go under direct imperialism, they also had to face various influences from the imperialists. Yet they were able to get rid of them and rise up as independent states. These developments in Asian Countries are a fine example for Sri Lanka as well. Although we in Sri Lanka obtained freedom from the British in 1948 we have not been able to achieve national development. Since we could get examples from countries such as India, Japan and China on the ways and means of their success we will study them in this chapter.

## India

### Vasco de Gama

The Portuguese sailor Vasco de Gama reached the Indian port of Calicut in 1498. This event led to the opening of the doors of India to Western nations. First, they came as traders, but within a very short period of time, they began to interfere with the political affairs of Indian states. The Portuguese, the Dutch and the French extended their power in various parts of the Indian sub continent.



Figure 3.1 Vasco de Gama

During the period that followed the conquest of India by the British, a series of revolts against the administration of the East India Company arose from time to time. Although the British were able to put down the uprisings of 1806, 1844, 1849, 1850 and 1852, the revolt of 1857 proved to be the worst of all. Started by the Sepoy soldiers in the British army, it spread into areas such as Delhi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Roshalchand, Central Areas and Bundelchand.

The factors that led to the revolt of 1857 can be divided into various headings such as political religious social, military and some of the major causes are given below:

- \* The treacherous policy adopted by the British in the annexation of India. e.g. Annexation of Abud.
- \* Treating the Indian leaders with contempt. e.g. Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, Rani of Jhansi.
- \* Establishment of railways and telecommunication systems leading to the destruction of the inherent isolation of various regions of India and opening them to Western influence.
- \* Help given by the British to the Christian missionaries.
- \* Channelling of Indian resources to foreign countries.
- \* Negligence of the requirements of India.
- \* The Afghan war.
- \* The immediate reason was the soldiers being given bullets coated in an oily substance. There was a rumour that the oily substance that covered the bullets consisted of oil from both pigs and cows. Soldiers had to remove the covering of these rifle bullets by mouth. Yet, Hindu religion prohibited the consumption of cows while the Islam Religion prohibited the consumption of pork, even tasting their oil. Due to the rumour, the soldiers refused to use the bullets. As they were ordered to do so despite this, the soldiers revolted.



**Figure 3.2 Conflinct in Dellhi**



**Figure 3.3 Sepoy Soldieres in Revolt in 1857**

The revolt broke out on the 10th of May 1857. It was put down ruthlessly.

Among the factors that led to its failure after 15 months, the following few are of importance.

- \* Absence of a plan.
- \* Absence of an efficient leadership.
- \* Lack of support from the common people.
- \* Lack of support from local chiefs who had monetary and personnel resources.
- \* Lack of a common objective.
- \* Preponderance of economic and military strength of the British.

The most important result of the revolt of 1857 was the termination of the control of Indian territories by the British East India Company and placing them under the British Crown thus the Indian territories managed so far by the East India Company became a Crown Colony. This was established by the Indian Constitution Act of 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1858. Although referred to with satire by the British historians, the people of India consider the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 to be a significant watershed in the struggle for freedom. It was after this revolt that the desire for independence began to grow in the minds of the Indian people.

With the growth of national feelings, the Indians began to launch armed uprisings in various parts of India. Indigo struggle of 1871-72, Santal struggle in Bihar and the Kuka campaign in Punjab are among some of the more important struggles of national liberation. The Kuka movement was launched with the intention of boycotting railway, telecommunication and postal services.

After the failure of the revolt of 1857, the pioneers of the Indian national struggle realised that they did not possess financial and military resources to confront the British in an armed struggle. Accordingly, they saw the necessity for the establishment of organisations to convince the British about the aspirations of the Indians through dialogue and arguments. This realisation led to the rise of a systematically organised national liberation movement.

The policy followed by the British in India was to a great extent responsible for the creation of national consciousness among the Indian people.

- ✧ **Agriculture** : Imposition of heavy land taxes transformed indigenous agriculture into a worthless enterprise. These taxes oppressed the farmers to such an extent that it led to the abandonment of farming activities. It would result in starvation, while cultivation would lead to the need to utilise the entire harvest to meet the taxes. In this way, it broke down the self sufficient rural economic system.
- ✧ **Industry** : The British did not pay any attention to Indian industries. They encouraged the British capitalist class to engage in tea and other plantations which employed Indian labourers at ridiculously low wages and exploited them ruthlessly.
- ✧ **Famines** : The Indians died by hundred thousands due to the famines that appeared from time to time. The British government did not pay any attention to save them from this plight. The black marketeers sold food items at exorbitant prices and the people who could not buy them died of starvation. In one such instance, over 3.5 million died of starvation during a famine in Bengal.
- ✧ **Western System of Education** : The British spread the western system of education in order to meet their administrative, political and cultural needs. However, the spread of Western education produced unexpected results. The Indians acquired a comprehensive understanding of the national movements in Europe. The slogans of the French Revolution (Liberty, Fraternity and Equality) made a deep impression in the minds of the Indians. The ideas of liberal thinkers such as Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu aroused the Indian society.

The English beheaded their king Charles I, because he was a cruel despot. King James II was thrown out because he was considered unsuitable for kingship. The Indians thought that if the English had the right to behead and dethrone their kings, the Indians also had the same right.

The English education helped to a great extent to establish close contacts among the Indians who spoke many languages. In the matter of exchange of ideas, English became the language of co-ordination.

India was united through a centralized and integrated system of administration set up by the British. This integration was one factor that led the Indians to think as one nation. The arrogance of Britain, discrimination against the Indians and

the fact that the Indians were not considered as equals before the law were some of the other factors that made British rule obnoxious.

The British had established infrastructure facilities such as railways, roads and postal services for the transport of goods and passengers. The rapid spread of national feelings through this network was something never anticipated by the British.

The British had regarded the Indians as an uncultured set of people. This had led to a deterioration of self confidence among the Indians. Therefore, the discovery of the history of India from the time of the Harappa civilisation by reputed archaeologists such as Sir John Marshall, William Jones, Max Muller and Sir Mortimer Wheeler led to a resurgence of national feelings among the Indians.

The Montague Chelmsford report of 1919 had agreed to grant some form of self rule powers to the Indians. Simultaneously, political unrest was becoming visible in areas such as Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Without any provocation, the British opened fire on a rally held at a place called Jaliana Walla Bag, close to Amritsar in Punjab killing 379 persons and wounding over thousand. This created a sensation among the Indians.

### **Student Activities**

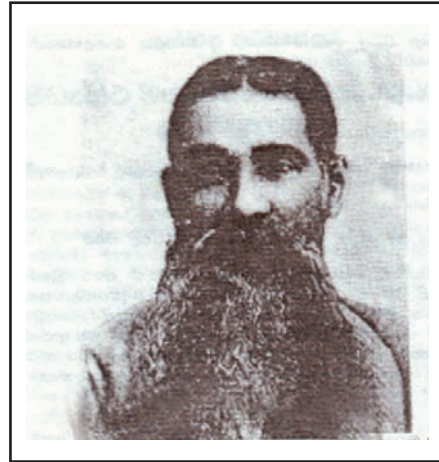
- \* Prepare a list of the languages used in India.
- \* Draw a map showing the states of India.

We believe that you would have got a fairly good idea about the historical background that led to the rise of Indian nationalism. Now, we are ready to make a study of the organisations and national leaders who fought for Indian national independence.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, various political organisations came into being with the objective of achieving independence. The Indian Organisation of Calcutta founded by Surendra Nath Banerjee in 1876 was the most important of these organisations. It is this organisation that expressed the popular displeasure about Britain for the first time openly. Banerjee travelled around the country and explained the objectives of this organisation. They had three main demands.

1. Re-organisation of the Civil Service Examination.
2. Amendment of the Arms and Ammunitions Act.
3. Provision of protection for cultivators from the British planters.

The high level of response received by the tour of Banerjee from the public showed the importance of setting up of an all Indian national congress. As a result of this, Alan Octavian Hume, a retired British civil servant, started the Indian National Union. Representatives from almost all parts of India attended this congress. At this meeting, Banerjee changed the name of the organisation into Indian National Congress. It consisted of the educated elite such as doctors, engineers, lawyers and professors. But it did not have any representatives of the common people.



**Figure 3.4 W.C. Benerjee**

The Indian National Congress had several basic objectives.

- \* Creation of national pride among the people living in various parts of India.
- \* Organisation of the public opinion of the country.
- \* Fostering of national feelings regardless of caste, religion or the area of residence.
- \* Submission of common national demands to the British.

The Indian National Congress held annual conferences throughout the country and they presented several demands to the government.

- \* Holding of the Civil Service Examination concurrently in Great Britain and in India.
- \* Provision of more facilities for education.
- \* Recruitment of a larger number of Indian nationals to higher posts.
- \* Reduction of military expenditure.

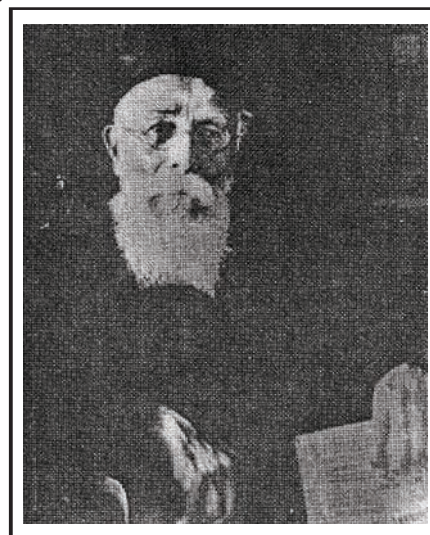
The inherent defect of the Indian National Congress was the presence of both extremist and moderate sections within its ranks. At the beginning, the moderates captured power in the Congress. They believed that their demands can be won through discussions, debates and petitions. These moderates believed the presence of Britishers in India as a blessing. They believed that the abolition of child marriages and Sati Pooja and caste based differences brought immense benefits to India. Very friendly relations existed between the Congress and the British and on certain occasions British members of Parliament participated in the meetings of the Congress. However, when certain members of the National Congress began to criticise Britain openly, the relations between Britain and the Congress became strained. After that, the British rulers followed a policy of treating the National Congress with contempt and started other anti- congress organisations.

The Indian National Congress did not represent the common people. This resulted in distancing its leaders from the people.

The extremists very often criticized the moderates. Whatever the criticisms levelled against them, the moderates were able to achieve a significant victory. They were not blind followers of the British. Their patience was not a weakness. They imparted a sense of democracy and civil rights into the early seeds of national feelings that began to grow in the subsequent period. Now we will try to recognise few leaders of the Indian National Congress.

### **Dadha Bhay Naoroji**

Known as the ‘Grand old man of India’, Naoroji was one of the earliest members of the Indian national movement. He lived for a long time in England in order to create awareness among the British rulers about the exploitation and injustices committed by the British in India. He was a member of the British liberal party, He was selected to the British House of Commons as a member of Parliament. There too, he carried on his struggle for the Indians.



**Figure 3.5 Dhada  
Bhay Naoroji**

## **Gopal Krishna Gokhale**

Born in 1856, in Maharashtra, he served as a teacher and became the principal of Fergusen College. As a member of the Legislative Council of the British governor, he brought an Act to make primary education compulsory.



Figure 3.6 Gopal Krishna Gokhale

## **Surendra Nath Banerjee**

Surendra Nath Banerjee is known as the father of the Indian National Movement. He was the editor of the paper 'Bengali' and established the Rippon College. He was elected twice as the President of the Indian National Congress.

Now we will try to recognise several radical leaders of the Indian National Congress.

### **Student Activity**

Collect information on other persons connected with the Indian National Congress and prepare a booklet containing the information.



When the moderates failed the more aggressive elements came into prominence. These radical leaders gained several victories such as:

- \* Laying a common people's foundation to the national struggle.
- \* Gathering the groups such as farmers and workers into the struggle for freedom.
- \* Agitation for full independence rather than Dominion Status.
- \* Boycotting of foreign goods.
- \* Trying to weaken the British economy through strikes.
- \* Creation of national feelings through newspapers such as 'Keshari' and 'Maratha'.

### **Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920)**

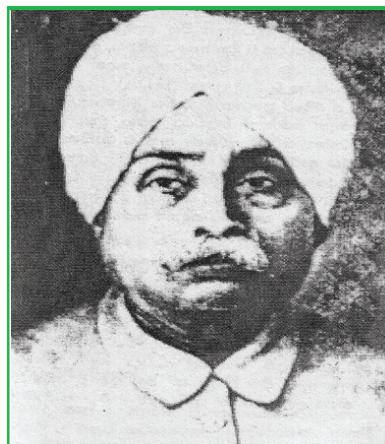
Born in Maharashtra and a lawyer by profession, Gangadhar Tilak believed that education is essential for bringing about a transformation in India. Started 'Keshari' and 'Maratha' newspapers. Also known by the honorific 'Loka Manya'.

### **Bipin Chandrapal (1858-1932)**

Born in Assam in 1858, Chandrapal joined the Indian National Congress in 1887. He emphasized that the Congress should fight for complete independence.

### **Lala Lajpat Ray**

Born in the Punjab in 1865, and a lawyer by profession, Ray believed that submitting petitions to the British government was useless and that the Indians should rise against the British rule.



**Figure 3.7**  
**Lala Lajpat Rai**

## Indian National Congress in the First Decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Due to the conflict of opinions between the moderates and the more radical leaders, the Indian National Congress split into two factions in 1907. The moderates asked for dominion status while the more radical group maintained that they should strive for full independence. The Indian National Congress broke into two on the basis of this conflict of opinions.

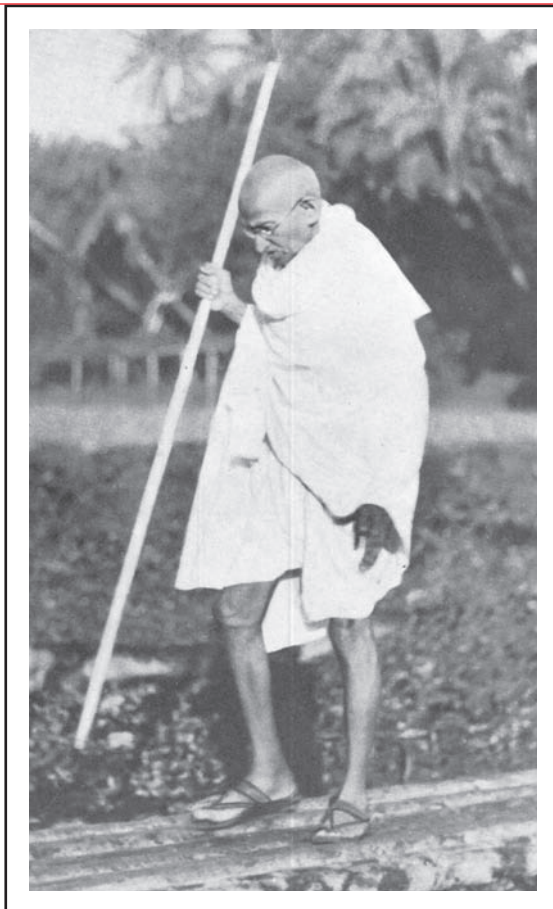
One technique adopted by the British in the administration of colonies was the policy of divide and rule (*divide et impera*). The British were well aware that their control would be very much easier if they foment any of the divisions such as caste differences, religious differences, ethnic differences or struggles based on languages. Lord Curson divided Bengal into two. He did it in order to promote Hindu Muslim conflicts. This happened in 1906. The explanation given by Lord Curson for his action was that Bengal had to be divided into two because of its vast size which made its administration difficult.

When the national movement progressed from strength to strength, the British got scared and attempted to divide the movement. They tried to win over the Muslim minority and managed to encourage them to establish the Muslim League in 1906. A leader of the first rank, Sir Sahid Chand declared that they should not join either the Muslims or the Hindus but act as loyal supporters of the British.

## The National Movement and Mahatma Gandhi

Mohandas Karmchand Gandhi was born in the state of Gujarat on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869. After receiving general education in India, Gandhi proceeded to England to qualify as a barrister. After receiving this qualification, he went to Nepal in order to practise his profession. He was astounded by the treatment accorded to the natives by the government of the Whites.

To protect the rights of the natives, he started a movement called 'Satyagraha'. After building an organisation for the protection of civil rights of the public, he came to India in 1915.



**Figure 3.8 Mahatma Gandhi**

In India, he conducted a ‘Satyagraha’ to get the agreements to serve as workers in British colonies cancelled. While the Satyagraha was on, the British agreed to cancel the agreements. The problem of Indigo planters in the Champa province of Bengal was also solved through a Satyagraha. In this manner, Mahatma Gandhi strived to secure the liberation of the poor. He carried the drawing room politics of the middle class into the huts of the poor.

Mahatma Gandhi’s next Civil Disobedience Movement started with the Dundeel Walk. This walk conducted from Samaramathi Ashram to the coast of Dundeel for the purpose of breaking the laws relating to salt tax, was capable of attracting the entire population of India. Throughout the country, such walks came to be organised and thousands of persons including Gandhi were taken into custody.

With the assistance of the Indian National Congress, Mahatma Gandhi started a non-co-operation movement (1920-1922). A campaign was launched to boycott courts, legislative councils, educational institutions and goods manufactured in Britain. The respectable elite persons were prevailed upon to give up positions and various honours that had been granted to them such as honorary titles. Because of this movement, almost the entire British administration became virtually inactive. The British, confronted with a difficult situation resorted to their usual repressive measures. The revolt of the Moplis in Malabar and the Akali movement in the Punjab made the situation still worse for the British. Gandhi was very much moved by the murder of several policemen in Uttar Pradesh by a group of Akali activities and cancelled the movement. Discouraged by this act, two disciples of Gandhi named Motilal Nehru and Das broke away from him and started the Swaraj party.

With the aim of ending the uprisings against the British rule Viceroy Erwin summoned Gandhi who was in custody and entered into an agreement with him. Accordingly, the political prisoners were released. Several Acts that had been the subject of public resentment were also repealed. In return for these, Gandhi suspended the civil disobedience movement. Gandhi was invited for the second round table conference, and he returned with the firm conviction that the British would never grant complete independence to India. The third round table conference also failed because of the proposal to allocate seats on the basis of caste. The 1935 constitution was drafted on the basis of these unsuccessful conferences.

Although the constitution of 1935 had taken steps to create a federal government, the Indian National Congress was not at all pleased with the manner in which it was prepared. What they wanted was a real constitution drafted by a constitutional council. At the election held in 1937 on the basis of the 1935 constitution, the Indian National Congress secured power in seven states (Uttar Pradesh, Bombay, Madras, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and North Western Frontier Provinces). The Muslim Congress was unable to secure a majority of seats in any are. However, this situation did not last long. In the next round, out of the 482 seats allocated for the Muslims in seven states, the Muslim Congress was able to win 110 seats.

Mohamed Ali Jinnah who had accepted the view that the Muslims of India should have a separate state, took immediate steps. He demanded a separate motherland for the Muslims. This should comprise the Punjab, North Western

Frontier Provinces, Kashmir, Sind and Balukistan. This concept of a motherland had been originally proposed by the famous poet Mohamed Iqbal.

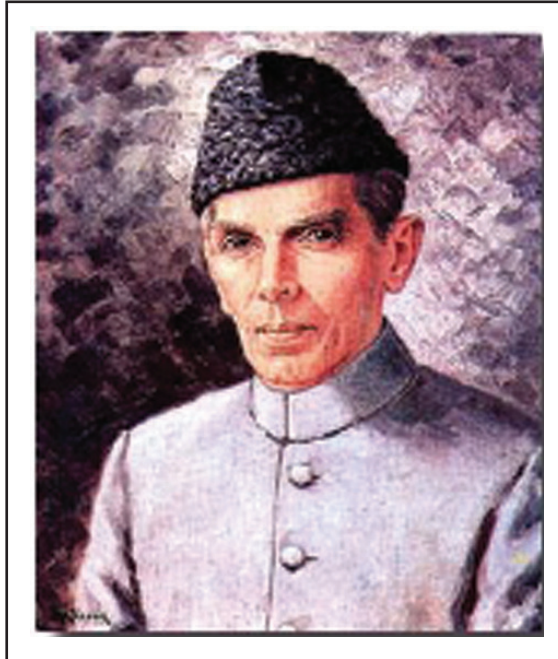
As a protest against the statement made by the British Viceroy of India at the outbreak of the Second World War to the effect that India was loyal to Britain, the members of the Indian National Congress from the Board of Ministers tendered their resignation.

In order to solve the Indian problem as soon as possible, Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India with several proposed constitutions. These constitutions which had the shape of promises that would be implemented after the Second World War were described by Gandhi as something similar to

post dated cheques. Cripps proposals were rejected both by the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. The League demanded a separate state named Pakistan. By this time, clouds of war were drifting in the Indian skies, and Britain had got a severe beat from Germany. Questions had been asked as to how Britain can protect India when it cannot defend itself. Already the Japanese submarines were hovering in the bay of Bengal.

In this background, Gandhi launched the 'Quit India' campaign. He had launched this on the argument that the presence of the British made India more vulnerable to Japanese attacks. To meet this threat, Britain followed her age old repressive measures. Thousands including Gandhi were taken prisoner. During this time, a famine in Bengal claimed 3,50,000 lives.

Although Gandhi requested Mohamed Ali Jinnah to accept the plan suggested by Sri Rajagopalachari for the Muslims, it was rejected. What Jinnah wanted was a Pakistan as has been proposed by him. Likewise, the Simla conference held to bring about some agreement between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League also ended total failure.



**Figure 3.9 Mohamed Ali Jinnah**