

Chapter 13

India's Struggle for Freedom

In the second half of the nineteenth century there was political awakening among the people. This was due to ruthless exploitation of India by the British which led to discontent among the Indians.

1. The peasants suffered due to heavy taxes.
2. The artisans were ruined by the foreign competition.
3. The factory workers were paid low wages.
4. The British made no effort to encourage agriculture and industry.
5. India was treated as a source of raw material and a market for finished goods.
6. The drain of wealth increased India's poverty.

The administrative policies of the British indirectly unified Indians.

1. The uniform system of governance, where laws were applied to all.
2. People from different regions worked together and a feeling of solidarity developed.
3. The railway and telegraph helped people to establish contact with one another.
4. The spread of modern education also helped in rise of nationalist feelings. As the exposure to western ideas made the people more conscious of their rights. The

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English language acted as a unifying factor because people from different parts of India speaking different languages could now communicate with one another through a common language.

5. The Indian press played an extremely important role in strengthening national consciousness. The newspapers of the period highlighted the anti-Indian policies of the British government and asked the people to unite and work for a common cause.
6. The policies of Viceroy Lord Lytton intensified discontent against the British rule. He removed import duties on British goods, which ruined the textile industry of India. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 imposed restrictions on vernacular newspapers. The Arms Act of 1878 forbade Indians from possessing arms.

After 1850's Indians began to form political associations to work for their own welfare. The associations so formed were limited in both membership and agenda. They sent petitions requesting the government to reduce taxes, end discriminatory practices, introduce administrative reforms and give Indians greater role in administration. Surendranath Banerjee brought people from all over India for an all India National Conference in 1883. Later an Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 with its first session in Bombay.