

World War I (1914-1918) had significant effects on British India, affecting its economy, politics, and society. Though India was geographically distant from the battlefields, its involvement in the war led to far-reaching consequences, setting the stage for future political and social changes.

Indian Contribution to the War Effort

India played a crucial role in supporting the British Empire during World War I. The contributions were substantial in both military manpower and economic resources.

1. Military Contribution:

- Over 1.3 million Indian soldiers served in various theatres of war, from Europe to the Middle East and Africa.
- Indian soldiers fought bravely in battles such as the Western Front in France, Gallipoli in Turkey, and Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq).
- Indian soldiers suffered heavy casualties, with estimates of over 70,000 losing their lives.

2. Economic Contribution:

India's economic contributions to the war effort were significant and had a long-lasting impact on the country's economy.

- **War Loans and Contributions:**
 - The British government extracted vast sums from India to fund the war effort. The Indian government contributed to the war through direct financial aid in the form of loans and voluntary contributions.
 - Between 1914 and 1918, India provided around £146 million (approximately ₹2 billion at the time) as war loans and contributions to the British war effort. This was in addition to the heavy taxation imposed on Indian citizens.
 - The Indian government was also forced to borrow extensively from the domestic market to meet war expenses, putting additional strain on the economy.

3. Economic Impact:

The economic impact of World War I on India was profound, leading to several critical consequences:

- **Inflation and Price Rise:**
 - The war led to sharp increases in the prices of essential goods, causing significant hardship for the Indian population. Inflation was driven by increased demand for war-related supplies, combined with disruptions to trade and transport.

- **Agriculture and Industry:**

- The Indian agricultural sector suffered due to the diversion of resources toward the war effort. Agricultural production declined, leading to food shortages in some areas.
- Indian industries also experienced changes, as the war created a demand for products such as textiles, jute, steel, and other raw materials. However, this wartime boom was short-lived, and the post-war period saw a slump in industrial output.

- **Taxation and Revenue:**

- The British government increased taxes on the Indian populace, including customs duties, income tax, and war-related levies. These measures strained the already impoverished population and created resentment against colonial rule.

World War I had a transformative impact on India, accelerating economic changes, increasing financial burdens, and sowing the seeds of political discontent. The contributions made by India to the war effort were substantial, but the economic consequences were severe, leading to widespread discontent and contributing to the growing demand for independence from British rule.

Rise in Nationalist Sentiments During and After World War I

World War I (1914-1918) significantly contributed to the rise in nationalist sentiments in India. The war, along with the economic burdens and sacrifices made by Indians, led to increased political consciousness and a growing demand for self-rule.

Factors Contributing to the Rise in Nationalist Sentiments:

1. **Disillusionment with British Promises:**

- During the war, the British government promised political reforms and greater self-governance in return for India's support in the war effort. However, after the war, the reforms introduced by the **Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919)** and the **Government of India Act (1919)** fell far short of Indian expectations, leading to widespread disillusionment. These reforms did not grant significant power to Indians and maintained British control over critical areas of administration.

2. **Economic Hardships:**

- The economic impact of the war, including inflation, taxation, and shortages of essential goods, caused widespread suffering among Indians. The economic hardship experienced during and after the war fueled anger against British rule. The war loans, increased taxes, and forced contributions to the war effort intensified this discontent, particularly among the middle class and rural populations.

3. **Return of Indian Soldiers:**



- Around 1.3 million Indian soldiers who fought in various theaters of war returned home with a new perspective on British rule. Many of these soldiers had witnessed the horrors of war and had been exposed to democratic ideals abroad, which made them question the legitimacy of colonial rule. Their experiences contributed to the growing demand for independence.
- 4. **Emergence of New Leadership:**
 - The post-war period saw the rise of new leaders in the Indian National Congress, most notably **Mahatma Gandhi**. Gandhi's return from South Africa in 1915 and his subsequent involvement in Indian politics marked a turning point. He advocated for **Satyagraha (nonviolent resistance)** and mass civil disobedience, which resonated with the Indian masses. His leadership and philosophy played a crucial role in mobilizing the Indian population against British rule.
- 5. **Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh Massacre:**
 - In 1919, the British government passed the **Rowlatt Act**, which allowed the colonial authorities to arrest and detain individuals without trial. This repressive legislation sparked widespread protests across India. The culmination of these protests was the **Jallianwala Bagh Massacre** in April 1919, where British troops, under the command of General Dyer, opened fire on a peaceful gathering in Amritsar, killing hundreds. This brutal event shocked the Indian population and united various sections of society against British rule.
- 6. **Growth of Revolutionary Movements:**
 - Alongside the mainstream nationalist movement, revolutionary activities gained momentum during this period. Groups like the **Ghadar Party** and the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)** were inspired by global events and aimed to overthrow British rule through armed struggle. The war period saw the rise of militant nationalism, with revolutionary leaders seeking to inspire a more radical approach to independence.
- 7. **Impact of Global Events:**
 - Global events such as the **Russian Revolution of 1917** and the success of other independence movements worldwide inspired Indian nationalists. The rise of socialist and anti-imperialist ideologies globally provided a new framework for Indian political thought. Additionally, the post-war decline of European powers and the growing sentiment for decolonization internationally added momentum to the Indian nationalist movement.
- 8. **Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922):**
 - The culmination of these factors led to the launch of the **Non-Cooperation Movement** by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. This movement marked the beginning of mass participation in the nationalist struggle. Gandhi called for boycotts of British goods, institutions, and titles, and urged Indians to withdraw from cooperating with the colonial government. The movement saw widespread participation from all sections of society, further intensifying the demand for independence.

The rise in nationalist sentiments during and after World War I was driven by a combination of economic hardships, disillusionment with British promises, and the emergence of new political leadership. The brutal repression by the British authorities, such as the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, further galvanized Indian society against colonial rule. These developments laid the foundation for the mass movements that would eventually lead to India's independence in 1947.

Home Rule Movement (1916-1918)

The Home Rule Movement was a significant phase in India's struggle for independence, marking a new approach to the demand for self-governance. It was initiated by **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** and **Annie Besant** in 1916, with the aim of achieving self-rule (Swaraj) for India within the British Empire, similar to the dominion status enjoyed by countries like Australia and Canada. The movement laid the groundwork for later mass movements and broadened the base of the Indian freedom struggle.

Leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant

1. Bal Gangadhar Tilak:

- **Background:** Known as the "Father of Indian Unrest," Tilak was one of the most prominent leaders of the Indian independence movement. A nationalist and a strong advocate of Swaraj, Tilak had been a part of the extremist faction within the Indian National Congress. His famous slogan, "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it," became a rallying cry for Indian nationalists.
- **Role in the Home Rule Movement:** After his return from imprisonment in Mandalay in 1914, Tilak saw an opportunity to revitalize the nationalist movement. Recognizing the growing discontent among Indians due to World War I, he launched the Home Rule League in April 1916. His league focused on mobilizing public opinion in the Bombay Presidency, Central Provinces, and parts of southern India. Tilak's charismatic leadership, organizational skills, and appeal to the masses helped him gather significant support. He used newspapers like *Kesari* and *Maratha* to promote the movement and reach a wide audience.
- **Strategy and Tactics:** Tilak's Home Rule League emphasized constitutional methods, such as petitions and public meetings, to demand self-rule. His approach was to educate and politically awaken the Indian masses to the cause of Swaraj. He traveled extensively, addressing gatherings and organizing political activities, while stressing the need for a constitutional struggle to achieve Home Rule. He focused on uniting Indians across religious and regional divides under the banner of Swaraj.

2. Annie Besant:

- **Background:** Annie Besant, a British-born theosophist, social reformer, and educator, had a deep commitment to the Indian cause. She had been active in the

Indian social and political scene since her arrival in India in 1893. Besant believed in India's spiritual and cultural revival and was a strong advocate for self-governance.

- **Role in the Home Rule Movement:** Besant launched her Home Rule League in September 1916, focusing primarily on the Madras Presidency, parts of northern India, and Calcutta. Unlike Tilak, who was a seasoned nationalist leader, Besant brought a fresh perspective as an outsider who was committed to India's freedom. She used her skills as a speaker and writer to garner support for the Home Rule cause. Besant's influence in the movement was also enhanced by her extensive network through the Theosophical Society, which helped mobilize educated Indians and women in particular.
- **Strategy and Tactics:** Besant emphasized education, the press, and political activism to achieve Home Rule. She published pamphlets, wrote extensively in her journals New India and Commonwealth, and organized public meetings. Besant's league was instrumental in spreading the idea of Home Rule in regions that had not been politically active before. She also appealed to British liberal opinion, advocating for India's cause in Britain and gaining international attention for the Indian freedom movement.

Key Features of the Home Rule Movement:

- **Broadening of the Nationalist Base:** The movement brought new sections of society into the fold of the national struggle. Women, students, and members of the educated middle class were particularly drawn to the movement. It expanded the base of the Indian National Congress and laid the foundation for future mass movements.
- **Decentralized Leadership:** The movement was notable for its decentralized leadership, with Tilak and Besant leading parallel efforts through their respective Home Rule Leagues. This helped cover a larger geographical area and brought different communities and regions together.
- **Pressure on the British Government:** The widespread support for the Home Rule Movement forced the British government to take notice. While it did not immediately grant India self-rule, it led to the passage of the **Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919)**, which introduced limited self-governing institutions in India. The movement demonstrated that constitutional methods, combined with mass mobilization, could pressure the colonial government.
- **Temporary Decline:** The movement saw a temporary decline when Annie Besant was arrested in 1917, leading to widespread protests and calls for her release. While she was eventually released, the momentum of the movement slowed down. Additionally, with the entry of Mahatma Gandhi into Indian politics and his call for the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920, the focus shifted from Home Rule to more direct resistance against British rule.

The Home Rule Movement, led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant, was a significant step in India's struggle for independence. It played a crucial role in uniting Indians across different regions and communities and set the stage for more intense mass movements in

the future. Although it did not achieve immediate success, it contributed to the rise of political consciousness and the demand for Swaraj, which would ultimately lead to India's independence in 1947.

Objectives and Methods of the Home Rule Movement

The Home Rule Movement, initiated by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant in 1916, sought to advance India's demand for self-governance (Swaraj) within the framework of the British Empire. It marked a shift from moderate petitions and appeals to a more assertive stance that aimed to mobilize Indians across the country.

Objectives of the Home Rule Movement:

- 1. Attaining Self-Governance (Swaraj):**
 - The primary objective of the Home Rule Movement was to achieve self-rule for India within the British Empire, similar to the dominion status granted to Australia, Canada, and South Africa. The movement did not immediately demand complete independence but aimed to secure greater autonomy for Indians in managing their own affairs.
- 2. Political Education and Mobilization:**
 - The movement sought to politically educate the Indian masses about their rights and the importance of self-governance. Leaders like Tilak and Besant believed that a politically awakened and mobilized populace would be better equipped to challenge colonial rule and demand reforms.
- 3. Unity among Indians:**
 - A key goal of the movement was to unite Indians across regional, religious, and social divides. The Home Rule Movement aimed to create a broad-based coalition of Indians committed to the cause of self-governance, including the involvement of women, students, and the educated middle class.
- 4. Pressuring the British Government for Constitutional Reforms:**
 - The movement sought to apply political pressure on the British government to introduce constitutional reforms that would lead to self-governance. The leaders of the movement intended to show that Indians were capable of managing their own affairs and deserved a greater role in the administration of their country.
- 5. Achieving Responsible Government in India:**
 - The movement demanded responsible government, which meant that Indian leaders, elected by Indians, should have control over the administration of the country rather than appointed British officials. This was a step towards creating a more democratic and representative government in India.

Methods of the Home Rule Movement:

- 1. Establishment of Home Rule Leagues:**



- Both Tilak and Besant established their own Home Rule Leagues in 1916 to spread the message of self-governance. These leagues were decentralized and worked in different regions of India to mobilize support. Tilak's league operated in the Bombay Presidency, Central Provinces, and parts of southern India, while Besant's league focused on Madras, Calcutta, and northern India.
- 2. **Public Meetings and Speeches:**
 - The movement relied on public meetings, rallies, and speeches to spread its message. Leaders like Tilak and Besant traveled extensively across the country, addressing gatherings and educating people about the need for self-rule. These public events helped generate enthusiasm and mobilize support among the masses.
- 3. **Use of the Press:**
 - The press played a crucial role in the Home Rule Movement. Leaders like Tilak and Besant used their newspapers and journals to advocate for self-governance and criticize British policies. Tilak's Kesari and Maratha in Marathi and English, and Besant's New India and Commonweal, became powerful tools to influence public opinion and rally support for the cause.
- 4. **Petitions and Memoranda:**
 - The movement employed constitutional methods, such as petitions and memoranda, to demand reforms from the British government. The leaders of the movement believed in exerting pressure on the colonial authorities through peaceful and legal means, showcasing the legitimacy of their demands.
- 5. **Boycott of British Goods and Institutions:**
 - Although not as widespread as in later movements, the Home Rule Movement encouraged the boycott of British goods and institutions as a form of protest against colonial rule. This method aimed to hit the British economically and assert India's economic independence.
- 6. **Involving a Broader Section of Society:**
 - The movement actively involved women, students, and members of the middle class, expanding the base of political activism beyond the traditional elite. By reaching out to different sections of society, the Home Rule Movement sought to create a national consensus in favor of self-governance.
- 7. **Constitutional Advocacy and Dialogue:**
 - Unlike the more radical revolutionary groups that sought immediate independence through armed struggle, the Home Rule Movement focused on constitutional advocacy. Leaders engaged in dialogue with British officials, appealing to liberal elements within the British government and seeking to build international support for India's cause.

The Home Rule Movement, led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant, aimed to achieve self-governance for India through constitutional and nonviolent means. By using public meetings, the press, petitions, and boycotts, the movement sought to politically educate the Indian masses and unite them in the demand for Swaraj. Although it did not directly achieve

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its objectives, the Home Rule Movement laid the foundation for future mass movements and significantly contributed to the Indian independence struggle.

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