

25th August

Q) Curzon was an unconscious catalyst who did not understand, let alone desire, what the new century was about to bring forth, but who helped it to be born? Comment (20 M).

Ans) The beginning of 20th century in India brought a new life to the independence struggle of Indians against British rule and transformed it into a phase of nationalist movement. The Governor General of India, Lord Curzon (1899-1905) played a crucial role in this transformation.

The Indian National Congress was already formed in 1885, though it confined itself to mainly urban and elite sections of population in the beginning. The efforts made by them to spread principles of nationalism such as the Drain of Wealth theory, opposing government's legislations against Indian interests, legislative debates etc were bearing fruit and the people just needed a spark to transform the struggle into a nationalist one.

write policies of Curzon as well. see in the attached answer

It was at this time that, Lord Curzon took the step of proposing the Partition of Bengal in 1903. The

reasons presented by him were the administrative inconvenience due to handling of a big province like Bengal. Though the efforts to curb Bengali nationalism, which was becoming leader of Indian nationalism was the true background of Curzon's actions. Moreover, he also wanted to curb Hindu-Muslim unity and radical nationalist influences which were spearheading Bengali nationalism.

Thus, Curzon decided to partition Bengal into 2 provinces viz. East Bengal and Assam into one province and West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa into second province. The plan was such that, it made the Bengalis, a minority in Bengal itself.

The news of partition resulted in widespread protests which erupted in Bengal. The day of the partition was celebrated as 'Black Day' and people thronged the streets tying rakhi to each other. Both Hindus and Muslims participated in the protests and leaders gave speeches to thousands of supporters.

It erupted into the first mass movement in the country, whose influence soon spread to other parts like in Bombay

under Tilak, in Punjab under Ajit Singh etc. Swadeshi movement was launched against British which brought down the imports of British goods into India.

Thus, the foundations of nationalism were already strengthened with the creation of pan-Indian political party, who got the first chance with the policy of Lord Curzon, to show forth their nationalist credentials.

2) "The emergence of the Congress in 1885 was the culmination of the process of political awakening that had its beginning in the 1870s". Comment (20 M).

Ans) The formation of Indian National Congress as a pan-Indian nationalist political party in 1885 was the result of a long standing political struggle going on in the 19th century. It was not the result of a sudden development, but had its root in several regional movements and former agitations which provided the bedrock for the Congress to stand against British.

The emergence of regional political institutions had already
with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and got pace in 1870s:

- Puna Sarvagranik Sabha was formed by M.G. Ranade and G.V. Joshi in 1870.
- Indian League was formed by Babul Shishir Kumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh.
- Indian Association - S.N. Banerjee and Anand Mohan Bose in 1876.
- Madras Mahajan Sabha: Anand Charlu and others in 1885.
- Bombay Presidency Association: by the formulate of Prithvishankar Mehta, Abbas Tyabji, K.T. Tailang in 1885.

Focus more on political activities in 1870s as asked in the question.

On top of these, the political agitations against British rule also kept pace, mainly due to repressive Lord Lytton's policies:

- Vernacular Press Act ¹⁸⁷⁸: ban on native press going against British India.
 - Arms Act 1878: Racist ban of Indians to hold arms.
 - Reduction in ^{entry} age of civil service from 21 to 19 years.
 - Ilbert Bill controversy: Plantation and Indian Emigration Act; Famine of 1876-78; costly Afghan adventure etc.
- These agitations and their ignorance by the

British government convinced the leaders that a pan-Indian political party had become a necessity now. They understood that their regional support base and the British cohesive steps could not stand at the same place.

Moreover, the regional political parties had already provided a base for nationalist organisation. S.N. Banerjee had organised All-India National Conference in 1883 and went on a tour of India to get support of other leaders. It necessitated A.O. Hume to organise a national conference in 1885 to give representation to Indian leaders, which led to formation of Indian National Congress.