

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."

The political events in the years 1892 to 1905 produced disillusionment among the politically conscious people. The Indian Council Act of 1892 was a complete disappointment for the nationalists. In 1898 a law was passed making it an offense to excite "feelings of disaffection" against the govt. Nahu brothers were deported without being tried. In such a scenario Curzon further intensified the situation by bringing out certain measures, such as -

i) Calcutta Corporation Act, 1899 - The number of Indian members were reduced from the Calcutta Corporation. This was done to reduce the role of nationalist leaders in local self-govt.

ii) Indian Universities Act, 1904 - It was seen as an attempt to bring Indian Universities under tighter control to check the growth of political awareness among students, as these were University students who were swelling the ranks of nationalists.

iii) Indian Official Secrets Act was passed in 1904 to check the freedom of press.

iv) Partition of Bengal - It was the final blow. On July 20, 1905 Curzon issued an order to divide Bengal on religious lines. The excuse given by the British govt was that Bengal was too big to be efficiently governed by a single provincial govt. But the real motive was to check the rising tide of nationalism in Bengal.

Nationalists vehemently opposed the partition of Bengal. They pointed out administrative efficiency could have been better secured by separating the Hindi-speaking Bihar & the Oriya speaking Orissa from the Bengali speaking part of the province. This dissatisfaction gave rise to Swadeshi movement.

Curzon, no doubt, took various positive measures as well, such as - the Punjab Land Alienation Act, Cooperative Credit Society Act, reduction of salt tax, establishment of Imperial Agriculture Department, setting up of Agriculture Research Institute at Pusa, Police reforms etc. But his various steps to curb the rising nationalism and finally the decision to partition Bengal ~~spurred~~ led to widespread discontent. Partition of Bengal gave rise to Swadeshi Movement, the first ever movement where people, apart from the peasantry & rural masses, came forward against the colonial govt. Thus, Curzon acted as an ~~unconscious~~ unconscious catalyst in India's freedom struggle.