

M.Phil Admission Test, 2010

HISTORY

Time: 2 hours

Full Marks: 100

The examinee is strictly required to answer all the questions in his/her own words.
Examinees using more than one language in answering the questions will be disqualified.
Candidates not attempting question number 1 will be disqualified.

Q.1. Read the following passage and answer all the questions that follow:

“Radical ideas and movements in India have traditionally originated in the coastal regions -- the Bengal, Madras and Bombay Presidencies of the British period....The south as a whole has remained less radical than Bengal and Maharashtra, though in the post-independence period it was at the forefront of two radical struggles, one for the reorganization of Indian provinces on linguistic lines, the other being the anti-Brahmin struggle of the lower castes for political and social power.

A comparative study of Maharashtrian and Bengali radicalism will reveal interesting contrasts. Maratha radicalism appears to have been oriented more towards religion and caste, than towards leftist ideologies, which dominated the Bengali educated mind....Two conspicuous events marked the evolution of Maharashtra after Independence. One, the creation of the present state on the basis of language and two, the displacement of the old Brahmin-dominated leadership by a new leadership in which the Maratha-Kunbis are the dominant caste cluster.

Nothing like this happened in Bengal. Indeed, since the middle of the twelfth century great economic and occupational changes transformed Bengali society, even while invasions changed lives and lifestyles. The Bengali has always been left of centre in Congress politics, from S.N. Banerjee, to C.R. Das to Subhas Chandra Bose. Bengal's most renowned Congress leaders have been relatively radical in comparison with their compatriots in the other parts of the country. Since the late 1930s, when hundreds of “revolutionaries” self-converted to Marxism, Bengal has had strong communist movements.

Radicalism in Bengal has witnessed many waves: the Bhakti cult of Chaitanyadeva, the sublime eclecticism of Ramakrishna, the Brahmo movement of Rammohun Roy and Keshab Sen. The largely non-Aryan origin of the Bengali and his exposure to Buddhism did not allow the caste stratification in Bengal to become as rigid as in the other parts of India. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the most radical figure that straddled Bengal was Vivekananda, while Vidyasagar's centrist radicalism attacked Hindu orthodoxy from within. Of course, the other attack on orthodoxy had been launched by the Young Bengal, inspired by Derozio. This movement was the first rebellion of youth in India.

The radicalism that flourished in the first decade of the twentieth century is the great movement against the partition of Bengal. The struggle was immediately adopted by the Indian National Congress for the self-government of the entire country. As nationalist radicalism took root and spread, it acquired several manifestations in Bengal -- the militant revolutionary movement, on the one hand, the Swarajya protest against Gandhi, on the other, and, of course, the radicalism of Subhash Chandra Bose. The communist movement was consolidated in the 1930s and 1940s. Gandhi's Civil-Disobedience Movement of the early 1920s aroused great enthusiasm