INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In the Battle of Plassey in 1757 the British laid the foundation for their empire and imperial domain over India. It was by no means an end to the sparkles of Indian urge for freedom nor did it extinguish the fire from the Indian minds for ever for a free India from the foreign yoke. There were many isolated but courageous and defiant outbursts, revolts and rebellions, conspiracies and movements in many parts of the country against the British imperialism, but they were brutally suppressed with iron hand and by the Machiavellian policy of “divide and rule”. Many movements at different times and places, motivated by national pride and fervour, dignity and valour even before the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, were engaged in the supreme heroic deeds of delivering the country from the foreign rule. The foreigners came to India primarily for trade and adventure but later conquered the land and the people for their Empire and mercilessly plundered it by force. The East India Company which ruled the country until 1858 did not have an easy or undisturbed period over the land and sea, but these patriotic struggles could not achieve their much desired objective of freeing their country from the bondage due to the lack of countrywide organisation or leadership until the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Nevertheless they provided both men and women of great heroic deeds, stoic sacrifices, patriotic spirits and noble idealism throughout. Subsequent to the birth of the Congress many such movements were associating shoulder to shoulder with the Congress to liberate the sacred motherland from the British clutches. Unlike the Congress movement, these were confined to certain areas or leaders, manifesting its urge for freedom. There were long-drawn struggles for justice, liberty, equality and fraternity in this great land.

The peasants, labourers and the Indian masses began to march in unison all over India. The English educated Indians began to mobilise the masses and invoke the sentiments of nationalism and patriotism in an unprecedented manner with great zeal. The pioneers in the social reform field were Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, and Kumaran Asan Movement which began to usher the spirit of reawakening all over India. These contributed towards the evolution of a united democratic temper and political ethos. Further augmenting the national will for self-assertion and determination there were several other movements in
the 19th century inspiring and invoking national spirit, pride and unity in the masses. Thus, the spirit and essence of the associated movements for the freedom of the country began to sprout in a remarkable manner many a time under the aegis of the Congress in every nook and corner of the country soon.

This dynamic trend and leadership witnessed two means to the end namely, violent and non-violent in the 20th century. The revolutionary movement's activities initially swelled to such an extent that the authorities both in India and England began to ask themselves “will our rule last”? Though the Congress wedded to non-violence disowned the methods adopted by the extremists, yet they hold a place of honour in India's history of freedom struggle.

Officially unattached with the Congress there were several notable movements like the Home Rule Movement (separately led by Annie Besant and Tilak), the Revolutionary Movement, the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement etc. all over the country. In a way all these were the tributaries of a powerful current, determined by a moving national spirit and sacrifice to emancipate the motherland at any cost. In contrast, there were branches of the Congress giving the general impression of nationalism urge in different ways, but never deviated from the common aim for liberation.

These movements vividly depict the splendour of the great spectrum of India's epic struggle for freedom with originality and vitality. They aligned with Indian National Congress in action and objectives. We see in these movements an evolution of ideas and ideologies, conflicts and contrasts, action and programme, in unison with the Indian National Congress for freedom of India. This is a unique phenomena in the history of freedom movement. Indeed they recapitulate the whole vitality and vision, bravery and sacrifice, dedication and determination, of various movements of the past to liberate India from foreign yoke.

These movements have left an indelible stamp in the hearts and minds of all. They are the milestones in the path to freedom. The great saga of freedom struggle is full of patriotism, sacrificial deeds and actions of many men and movements, inspiring national feelings, creating national integration, arousing patriotic spirits, making Indians proud of their national heritage. This is the legacy of the past to the present and the future. We intend to preserve and protect these and many other annals of associated movements for the generations yet to come. This will definitely sanctify those martyrs of yesterday who laid down their precious life for the noble cause of motherland. We hope that this will be a befitting tribute to the patriotic Associated Movements and the personalities that led them.

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