

Rise of Liberal Democracy in Britain: 1780-1918

Illustrated Lecture
for The History Society of Bharati College, DU

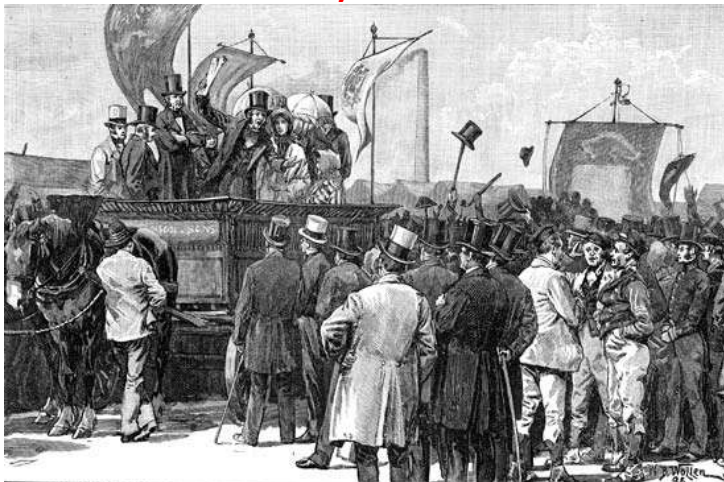
by

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Date: 17-03-16

**Chartists: Striving for Men's
Vote, 1840s**



**Suffragettes: Struggling for
Women's Vote, 1900s**



Major Features of Modern British History

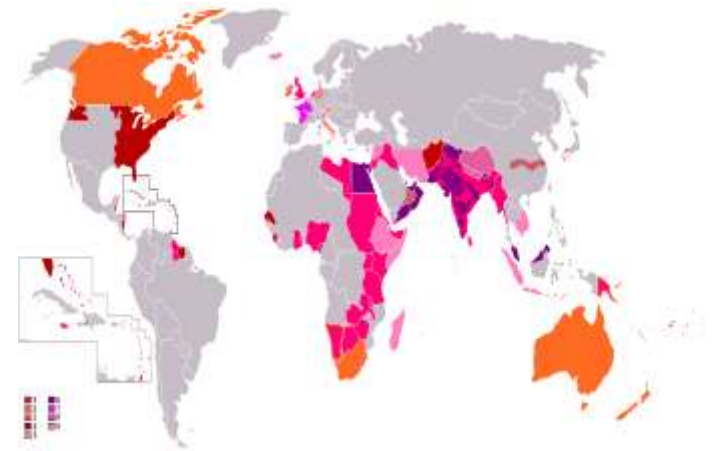
1. Initiation of the Industrial Revolution
2. Largest Empire on Earth; Early Decolonisation
3. Early Growth of Constitutional Government, Rights, Democracy and Welfare
4. Major Role in Resisting Fascism and Axis Powers in World Wars
5. Outstanding Contributions in Science, Literature, Social Thought, Sports etc.
6. Dark Side: Colonial exploitation; Ireland; Racism



**The Crystal Palace Exhibition of
First Industrial Products
(1851, London)**

Points to Cover

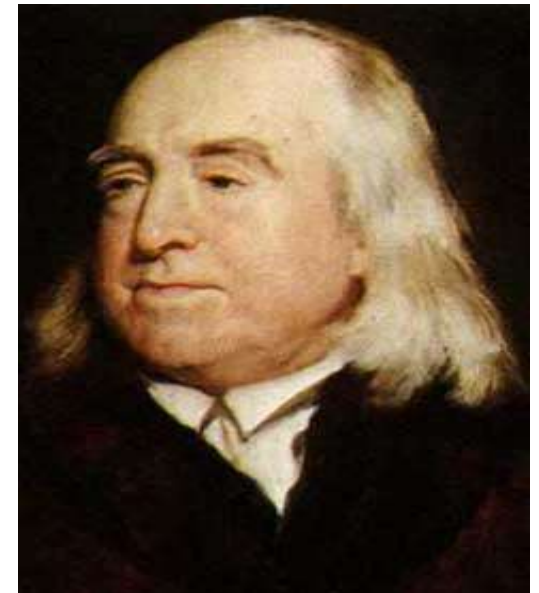
Achievements of Modern Britain
Hallmarks of Liberal Democracy
Peculiarities of Britain's Political Transition
An Analytical Approach to Political History
Peculiarities of 18th Century British State
Early Modern British Society
Problems in 18th Century British Polity
Uniqueness of Victorian Improvements
Steps in the Advancement of Democracy



**Britain's Spheres of Influence
In Late 19th century**

Additional Points

- Administrative and Market Reforms
- Towards Welfare
- Nature of modern politics and state
- Forces behind Political Change: Classes, Party and Ideology in 19th C
- Liberal Demands in Late 18th Century Britain
- Radical Demands of Early Working Class Leaders and Middle Class Reformers
- Working Class Organisations and Movements in Britain
- Women's Movements; Suffragettes
- Sharp Duality in State's Response till 1867
- Chartists' Demands and Achievements
- The Reform Act of 1832: Principal Provisions
- Impact of the 1832 Act on Politics
- Ideology of Welfare after 1867
- Factors Behind 'Reformism' Exhibited by British Workers
- Factors Promoting Peaceful Democratic Transition in Britain
- Lessons for Us



**Jeremy Bentham : Supporter
for Adult Franchise**

An Analytical Approach to Political History

1. Departure from Chronological Accounts of Politics and Politicians
2. Focus on Long Term Structural Changes
3. Thematic Survey of Incremental Reforms in 19th Century
4. Institutional History Followed by an Account of Social and Ideological Currents
5. Appreciation of both Exploitative and Exemplary Aspects of Britain's Political Culture



E.J. Hobsbawm

Preceding Feudal Monarchical System

1. Domination of Landed Aristocracy Extracting Surplus from Peasantry largely through coercion including torture.
2. Feudal and Ethnic Ties Important for Survival instead of Rule of Law.
3. Major Role of Religion and Church
4. Relatively Decentralised Authority
Monarchs began Suppressing
Feudal and Church Authority
5. A High Level of Violence



The Battle of Bosworth that Brought Henry VII to Power (A Recreation)

Nature of Modern Politics

1. Expansion of State's Role and of Mass Organisations; Violent Instability Sought to be Replaced by Ideological Control.
2. Dictators Continue to Emerge through Military Might; But Greater Legitimacy is Accorded to Power Won through People's Support.
3. This may Take the Form of Single Party Rule, Charismatic Leadership or Multi Party Electoral Contests.
4. Elections become the Principal Route to Political Power in Liberal States which may follow Presidential or Parliamentary Forms of Government
5. Ideology, Persuasion and Propaganda Play an Important Role in Such Contests.
6. More Destructive Weapons but also More Professional Diplomacy and International Peace Organisations
7. Political Violence is Formally Abjured by Liberals; But Rightists as well as many Leftists Accept Violence as Necessary (with Radically Different Aims, of course).



Majority in Parliament: The New⁷ Route to Political Power Devised by 18th cen. Britain

Hallmarks of Liberal Democracy

1. Restrictions on Monarchical, Feudal and Clerical Powers
2. Establishment of Constitutional Government (Rule of Law Equality before Law, Abolition of Torture)
3. Protection of 'Freedoms' or Individual Rights (including Private Property)
4. Separation of Powers; Checks and Balances between Organs of Government
5. Increased Power of Elected Legislature; Extension of Voting Rights
6. Protection of Private Wealth; Sharpening of Economic Inequalities
7. Laissez Faire Substituted with Growing State Intervention and Welfare in Later Liberal Thought and Legislation



Magna Carta Birth of Parliamentary Government

Peculiarities of 18th Century British State

1. Early Development of Nationalism and Sovereignty and Political Stability and Sturdy Defense
2. Centralisation of Administration and Suppression of Feudal, Clerical and Regional Authorities
3. Development of Parliamentary Checks on Monarchical Powers
4. A Powerful Judiciary Safeguarding Citizens' Rights Like Habeus Corpus and Protection from Torture
5. Local Government Run through Justices of Peace in the Rural Counties and through Mayors and Councils in Urban Boroughs with Relatively Little Police or Force
6. Rampant Corruption in Elections but also Emerging Criticism of the Same
7. Foreign Travellers Considerably Impressed by 'Liberty' Available to British Press and Upper Classes



**Elizabeth I Rousing Nationalist Fervour
against Spanish Invasion**

Outstanding Features of Early Modern British Society

1. Rapid Economic Growth in Agriculture, Trade and Modern Industry
2. Emerging Capitalist Relations in both Agriculture and Trade and Industry
3. A More Open and Compact Aristocracy and a Unique Gentry Class of Lesser Lords
4. Substantial Middle Class of Merchants and Manufacturers
5. The Poor also better off than Peasants and Workers in France, German Territory et
6. Elementary Social Security (beyond Charity)
7. A Gentleman Elite Investing in Learning and Infrastructure



The Trial of Charles I before the Long Parliament

Cultural Peculiarities

1. Literacy Approaching 50%
2. Newspapers, Journals and Serialised Novels Growing Rapidly
3. A Developed Culture of Libraries, Reading Clubs etc.
4. Growth of Evangelist Missions along with Greater Rights for Non Anglican Religious Sects
5. Maturing Civil Society of Public Opinion, Democratic Mobilisation and Associations
6. Spate of Remarkable Achievements in Science, Literature, Technological innovation and Modern Sports



Sir Edmund Burke (Champion of Conservatism and Probity in Politics)

Advancement of Parliamentary Government and Civil Rights till the 18th Century

1. Land Settlement of Normans 1066; continuing estates across centuries but paying taxes too.
2. 1215-- Magna Carta Signed to Acknowledge English Parliament's Check on Monarch's Authority
2. 1265-- First Elected House of Commons Called by King Edward
3. Habeus Corpus Writ (14th Century).
4. Evolution of Regular Parliamentary Say in Governance under the Tudors
5. Trial and Execution of King Charles I in the English Civil War
6. Passage of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1769.
7. 1688-89-- Glorious Revolution and the Passage of the Bill of Rights
8. 1770s-- Citizen's Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Newspapers' Right to Report on Parliamentary Proceedings Reiterated
9. 1780s--Restrictions on Crown's Influence and Evolution of Party Discipline and Cabinet Govt.



John Wilkes : Struggle for Liberty

Major Drawbacks of 18th Century British Polity

1. Excessive State Bias Towards the Landed Aristocracy and Violent Suppression of Working Class Protests
2. Catastrophic Impact on Colonised Economies including Large Scale Slavery
3. No Voting Rights for the Poor, Minorities and Women in Britain Itself;
4. Widespread Corruption, Discrimination and Economic Monopolies in the 'Mixed Constitution' of 18th Century
5. Antiquated Demarcation of Parliamentary Constituencies



Sir Robert Walpole (Whig Leader and Representative of New Wealth in 18th century Britain)

Growth of Parliamentary Democracy in 19th and 20th Centuries

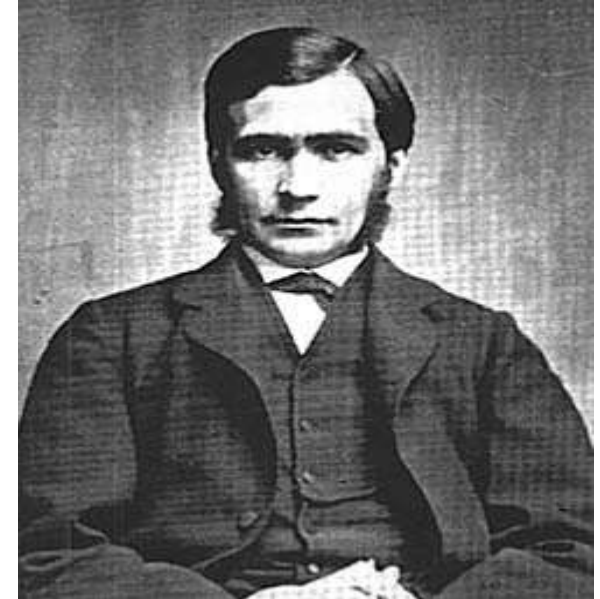
1. Extention of Franchise through Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, 1884, 1918, 1928.
2. Unlike france and Germany, franchise brings real power to voters as House of Commons controls government.
2. Redistribution of Constituencies through 1885 and 1948
3. Municipal Reform Act of 1835
4. 1872--Institution of Secret Ballot
5. 1911—Acceptance of the Supremacy of the House of Commons over Lords



William Pitt the Younger

Evolution of Welfare in Britain despite Laissez Faire

1. 1350—King Edward III's Ordinance for Poor Regulating Prices and Wages
2. 1601—Elizabethan Poor Law Formalizes Outdoor Relief through Parish Rates
3. 1798—Introduction of Income Tax
4. 1802—Health and Morals of Apprentices Act
5. 1807— Prohibition of Slave Trade
6. 1824---Anti Combination Act Repealed
7. 1828---Corporation and Text Act Repealed
8. 1829-- Catholic Emancipation Act
9. 1833--First Factory Act
10. 1833—Abolition of Slavery within British Empire



T.H. Green

Evolution of Welfare in Britain: Gradual Change in Age of Improvements

11. 1833—Education Grants Introduced
12. 1842—Income tax Reintroduced
13. 1842—Mines Act
14. 1844/47—New Factory Acts
15. 1848—Central Board of Health Constituted
16. 1870—Foster's Education Act
17. 1871—Trade Unions Recognized
18. 1876—Strikes Legalized
19. 1889—Dock Workers Win Minimum Wage
20. 1906—Trade Disputes Act Exempts Workers from Losses in Strikes
21. 1908—Old Age Pension and against Disability
23. 1945—Comprehensive Social Security and Welfare Benefits Guaranteed.



Architects of Modern Welfare
H.H. Asquith

Administrative Reforms of the 19th Century

1. 1801—Union of British and Irish Parliaments
2. 1820s—Fiscal Reforms
3. 1823—Reform of the Penal Code
4. 1829—Creation of Modern Policing in London
5. 1830s—Prison Reforms
6. 1833 and 1870—Education Reforms
7. 1835—Municipal Bodies Reform
8. 1840—Penny Post Introduced
9. 1868—Competitive Exams for

State Employees (only 50K in 1841 and 3 lakh in 1911 ag. 2 crore in India today).

10. 1914--Irish Home Rule Bill Presented



Bobby or London's Police

Market Reforms

1. 1773 Regulating Act Passed to Put Checks on the East India Company
2. 1786—Commercial Treaty with France
3. 1820s—Tariff Reduction
4. 1833 Trading Monopoly of East India Company Abolished
5. 1834—Poor Law Amended
6. 1844—Companies Act and Bank Charter Act
7. 1849—Repeal of Navigation Act
8. 1848—Repeal of Corn Laws
9. 1860—Cobden Chevalier treaty



A Satire on Free Trade Ideologies

The Uniqueness of Victorian Improvements

1. Liberal Democratic Transition without a Violent Revolution of the Bourgeoisie or the Working Class (since 17th Century).
2. This was Particularly Striking in the Age of Repeated Revolutionary Outbreaks on the Continent
3. Measured but Cumulative Reforms in Extention of Vote, Factory Laws, Free trade, Health and Education etc. Called 'The Age of Improvements' or the Victorian Era
4. Democratic Reforms in Britain were Gradual and Incremental but also Cumulative and Rarely Reversible.
5. No Dictatorial or Reactionary Reversal Either
6. An Important Factor in British Politics—Modern Conservatism Thwarted any Radical Change and Esured the Formal Survival of Institutions such as Monarchy, Lords and Anglican Church till Date.
7. The ruling classes realised the value of prospering workers and latter put faith in self help too.



Queen Victoria

Peculiarities of Britain's Political Transition

1. From Classical to Welfare Liberalism: State's Harsh Attitude Towards Workers, Minorities and Women Replaced Gradually by accommodative Welfare
2. In many Cases such as Abolition of Slavery, Introduction of Income Tax, Factory Laws etc. Britain Proved to be a Pioneer and Model for other Liberal States.
3. However, Liberal Reforms at Home were Seldom Translated into Colonial Relief (including Ireland) till the Era of World Wars.



A Quiet Britain in the Age of Revolution (1848)

New Social Forces in 19th Century British Politics

1. An Expanding and Well Organised Educated Middle Class
2. Growth of a Public Sphere Fuelled specially by Middle Class Radicals
3. Birth of a Massive Industrial Working Class
4. Rise of Trade Unions and other Labor Organisations
5. Irish Secessionism



**The Chartist Meeting at Kennington
Common**

Major Ideological Currents of 19th Century

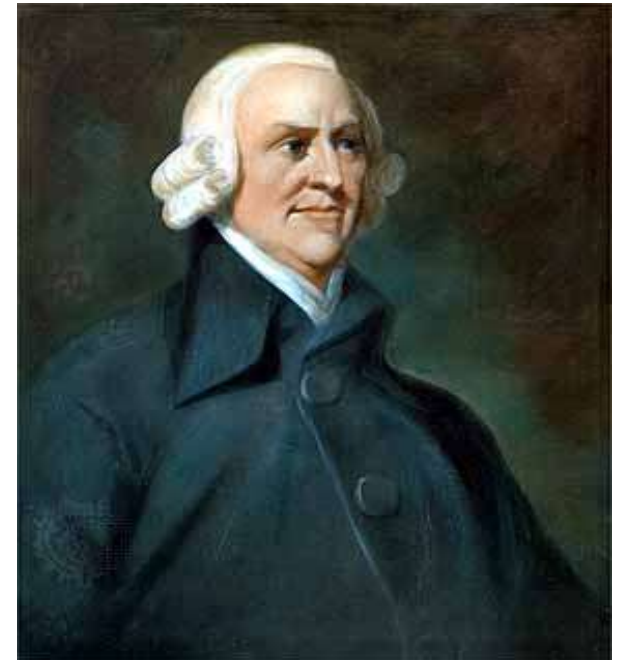
1. Modern Conservatism
2. Liberalism
3. Radical Reformism
4. Utilitarianism
5. Utopian Socialism
6. Reformist Labor Party
7. Feminism
8. Marginalised Communism



Benjamin Disraeli: Proponent
of Reformist Conservatism

Liberal Demands in Late 18th Century Britain

1. Checks on Monarchical Influence in Government
2. Guarantees for Free Press and Safeguards against Arbitrary Arrests
3. Elected House of Commons' Control on the Executive's Spending
4. Free Trade Measures including Tariffs Reduction and Abolition of Monopolies
5. Greater Representation for New Industrial Centers and Extension of Franchise to Non-Aristocratic Elites Also
6. Increased 'Disciplining' of the Poor Specially with Regard to Unemployment Relief, Irreligion, Alcoholism and Education



Adam Smith

Radical Demands Championed by Early Working Class Leaders and Middle Class Reformers

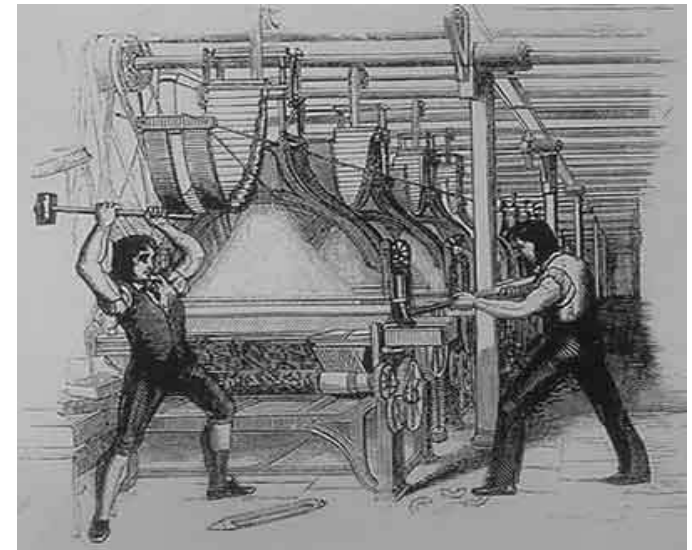
1. Abolition of Slavery and Liberation for the American Colonies
2. Universal Male Franchise
3. Utilitarian Reforms in Penal Codes, Poor Relief, Factory Laws, Health and Education etc.
4. Abolition of Monarchy as well as the House of Lords
5. Workers' Partnership in Management and Profits
6. Setting up of New Egalitarian Communities and Workers' Cooperatives
7. Voting Right for Women Championed by a Few Feminists before the Suffragette Movement



John Wesley:
Proponent of Methodism

Major Working Class Movements in Britain

1. Food Riots against High Prices and Profiteering
2. Luddism or Attacks on New Machinery by Jobless
3. Friendly Societies and Cooperatives for Self Help
4. Early (Unrecognized) Trade Unions and Strikes
5. Utopian Socialist Experiments
6. Revolutionary Societies and Organisations such as the International Working Men's Association
7. Chartist Movement
8. New Unionism by Unskilled Workers and their Own Leaders
9. Formation of the Labor Party
10. Marginalisation of Revolutionary Organisations



The Luddites (A Representation)

Specific Working Class Protests of the 19th Century

1. Radical Movements as that of the Spenceans and the Owenites for Redistribution of Land and Workers' Control over Factories
2. Reformist Movements as those of Tolpuddle Martyrs for Better Wages and the Right to Strike
3. The Grand National Congress of Trade Unions (GNCTU) Demanding Ten Hour Working Day and the Call for a General Strike
4. London Working Men's Association Demanding Universal Male Franchise
5. Chartist Petitions Carrying Millions of Signatures Demanding Comprehensive Democratic Reforms



**Thomas Spence : A Champion
of Equal Distribution of Land**

Chartists' Demands

1. Universal Manhood Suffrage
2. Secret Ballot
3. Annual Parliaments
4. Equal Electoral Districts
5. Abolition of Property Qualification for Members of Parliament
6. Regular Salaries to MPs



**Smith o' Brien : A
Chartist Leader**

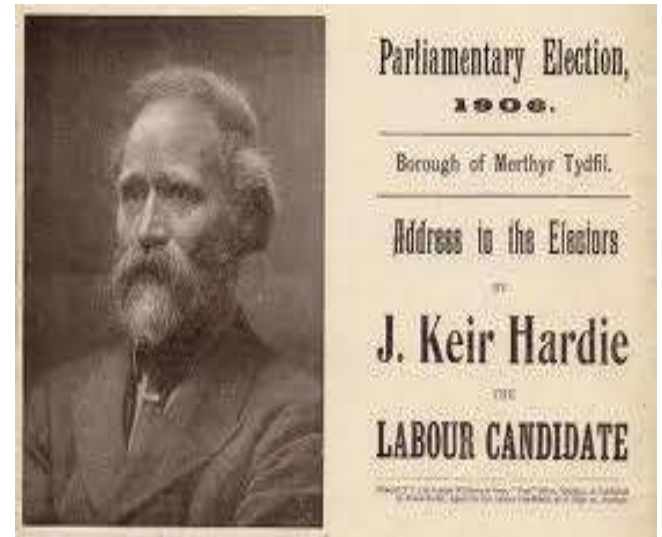
ACHIEVEMENTS

Though All Chartist Petitions were Turned Down by Britain's Parliament, the Movement was not without Important Consequences:-

1. It Provided a Major Fillip to Unionisation of Labor in Britain
2. It Expressed British Workers' Faith in Parliamentary Methods
3. Almost All Chartist Demands were Met by Early 20th Century

Factors Behind 'Reformism' Exhibited by British Workers

1. The Institution of Free Speech and Parliamentary Reforms Provided a Safety Valve to Workers' Discontent in Britain
2. Rapid Economic Growth Facilitated Higher Standard of Living for a Chunk of British Workers
3. The Economic Benefits of the Largest Empire and Trading Country Extended Partly to Workers Also.
4. The Role Played by Labor Aristocracy or Reformist Upper Strata of Skilled Workers
5. Transition from Harsh Laissez Faire to Increased State Intervention in Late 19th Century
6. Regular Appearance of Pro Poor Radicals among British Upper Classes in the Period
7. The Ideology of the Empire and Popular Nationalism also Kept Workers Loyal to British State
8. Failures of Utopian Socialism



Election Poster of Labour Candidate: Kier Hardie : Workers' Power through Parliament

Women and Men Feminists

1. Early Feminist Writers
2. Women's Entry in Modern Industry and Services as well as Higher Education on a Large Scale
3. The Suffragettes Movement for Women's Political Rights



John Stuart Mill



Mary Wollstonecraft

THE STORY OF SUFFRAGETTES

Duality in State's Response to Middle Class and Working Class Demands

1. Middle Class Demands Accepted through Measures such as Tariff Reforms, Extension of Franchise to Industrial Centres in 1832, Abolition of Corn Laws, Passage of the New and Stricter Poor Law etc.
2. On the Other Hand, Workers' Protests were Brutally Suppressed in the Early 19th Century as Evident in the Peterloo Massacre, Tolpuddle Martyrs' Case, the Blanketeers' March, Prosecution of Spenceans and the Rejection of all Chartist Petitions.
3. However, Some Radical Demands such as Universal Adult Franchise and disempowerment of the Monarchy as well as the House of Lords Materialised with Time along with the Evolution of a Welfare Machinery for All.



Sir Robert Peel : Builders of Political Consensus and Accomodation

The Reform Act of 1832: Principal Provisions

1. Abolition of 143 Rotten Boroughs Seats in England (None in Wales).
2. Creation of 135 New Seats for England and Wales (including 65 New County Seats and 65 New Urban Seats in England and Four in Wales)
3. Extention of Franchise in both Counties and Boroughs (but Only for Men)
4. A Total of Six Lakh Men or 3% of Britain's Population Came to be franchised by the Act. This was Almost Double the Number of Voters in Britain before 1832.
5. Similar Reform Acts were Soon Passed for Scotland and Ireland Too.
6. Total No. of Seats in U.K's. House of Commons Remained Roughly the Same.



Lord grey (1764-1845)

Impact of the 1832 Act on Politics & Parliament

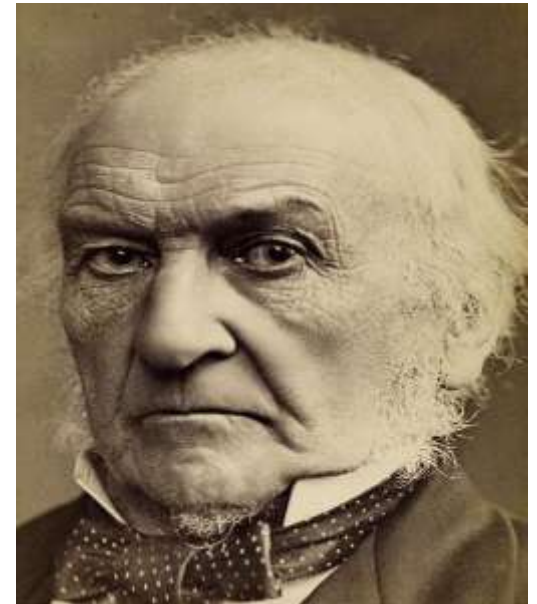
1. Inclusion of Rising Middle Classes in the Parliamentary Process
2. Enabling a Peaceful Resolution of the Bourgeois Challenge to Aristocratic Rule in Britain
3. Workers Aspiration for Vote Defeated
4. However, Increased Reformist Trend in the House of Commons after 1832 Accelerated Victorian Improvements in Spheres of Health, Education etc.
5. A Radical Recasting of Party Structures among Both Whigs and Tories (Now Called Liberals and Conservatives Respectively)
6. Greater Check on Electoral Malpractices and Evolution of Constitutional Conventions for Governing as well as Opposition Groups



William Morris : Poet and Reformer

Factors that Promoted A Peaceful Democratic Transition in Britain

1. Creation of the 'Mixed Constitution' Allowing Elected Representatives and Parliament Regular Say in Governance
2. The Importance of Rule of Law on the Notion of Citizen Rights Protected by Fairly Independent Courts in Britain
3. Colonial Spoils' Contribution to Higher Standards of Living for the British Working Class Also
4. Early Compromise Arrived at between Landed Aristocracy and Rising Bourgeoisie as Evident in the 1832 Reform Act and the Repeal of Corn Laws
5. Reformism in Place of Revolution Preferred by the British Working Class
6. The Tradition of Moderation, Pragmatism and Cumulative Reform in British Political Culture



Gladstone : A Champion of Political Conventions and Morality

Some Lessons

1. Democracy does not have to be Chaotic or Weak (as Charged by its Fascist Critics)
2. Respect for Laws, Rules, Conventions and Institutions among all Classes Crucial for Democratic Functioning
3. Role of Pro Poor Radicals among the Upper Classes and of Moderates among the Lower Classes Required
4. Timely and Continuous Reforms
Necessary along with Economic Prosperity
5. Acceptance of Parliament as the Forum
6. for Resolving All Disputes
6. Competition between Parties can Throw
Up More Radical Twists than Intended
by Rulers
7. Real Social Equity not Realised by Welfare Liberal Order too.



Florence Nightingale: A Life dedicated to Service of the Sick

References

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11. T.A. Jenkins, *The Liberal Ascendancy: 1830-1886*, 1994.
12. T.O. Lloyd, *Empire, Welfare State and Europe: English History: 1906-1992*, 1976.

Web References

Web Links:-

1. www.historywiz.com (for primary sources)
2. www.openuniversity.ac.uk
3. powerpointpalooza.net (for powerpoint lectures)
4. bbc.co.uk/history (for alternative lessons)

For Related Films and Audio Resources:-

1. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ln58d-K17XY (For: Tale of Two Cities Film based on Dicken's Novel)
2. www.youtube.com/watch?v= (For Videos on Disraeli and Gladstone)