

UNIT 24 – UPSC - The Home Rule

India's History : Modern India : The Home Rule League - 1916

The Home Rule



On April 23, 1916 Bal Gangadhar Tilak formed The Home Rule League in Bombay. Six months later Mrs. Annie Besant founded the league in Madras. The Home Rule League became popular and it broke fresh ground even in small towns that hitherto had little or no political consciousness. Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant, the two pivots of the movement, designed a new flag. It comprised five red and four green horizontal stripes arranged alternately, with seven stars denoting the Saptrishi configuration. On the left upper quadrant, towards the hoist it had the Union Jack, and on the upper right quadrant, towards the flag's fly there was a crescent and a star. It is believed to have been hoisted at the 1917 Congress session held in Calcutta for the first time.

Dr. Annie Besant ❖ ❖ New India ❖



Dr. Annie Besant is one of those foreigners who inspired the love of the country among Indians. She declared in 1918 in her paper "New India": "I love the Indian people as I love none other, and... My heart and my mind... have long been laid on the alter of the Motherland." Annie Besant, born of Irish parents in London on October 1, 1847, made India her home from November 1893. Dr. Besant, said Mahatma Gandhi, awakened India from her deep slumber. Before she came to India, Dr. Besant passed through several phases of life-housewife, propagator of atheism, trade unionist, feminist leader and Fabian Socialist. By 1889, "there was scarcely any modern reform (in England) for which she had not worked, written spoken and suffered. "Dr. Besant started the Home Rule League in India for obtaining the freedom of the country and reviving the country's glorious cultural heritage. She started a paper called "New India." She attended the 1914 session of the Indian National Congress and presided over it in

1917. She could not see eye to eye with Gandhiji in regard to the latter's satyagraha movement.

An orator and writer with poetic temperament, Dr. Besant was a veritable tornado of power and passion. By her eloquence, firmness of convictions and utter sincerity she attracted some of the best minds of the country for the national cause. She was largely responsible for the upbringing of the world-renowned philosopher K. Krishnamurti.

Dr. Besant died in 1933.

