

Magadh Mahila College

Patna University, Patna

HISTORY

B.A. – I

PAPER – IV

RISE OF MODERN WEST

Unit – 5

**Topic: - Describe the Contribution
of Cavour's in Unification
of Italy**

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THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY

Nationalism and Liberalism in Italy received a death blow at the hands of the architects of the Congress of Vienna (1815) and the hopes and aspirations of the Italian patriots who desired to achieve unity and independence from the foreign yoke were dashed to the ground. Under the pretext of the principle of legitimacy, which governed the territorial readjustments after the fall of Napoleon I (1815), the principle of nationality was brushed aside and the old rulers were restored to their respective thrones as far as possible.

In pursuance of this principle, Italy was divided into the following states : the Kingdom of Two Sicilies; Papal States; Tuscany; Lucca; Parma; Modena; Lombardy and Venetia; Piedmont and Savoy. The last two were parts of the Kingdom of Sardinia. Thus, instead of unifying Italy, as was ardently hoped for by the Italian patriots, it was reduced to a mere "geographical expression".

The system of government in all these states was reactionary and the influence of Austria was supreme. Lombardy and Venetia were parts of the Austrian Empire, and in Tuscany, Lucca, Parma and Modena, Hapsburg princes ruled. Metternich's writ ran all over the peninsula and through the "Concert of Europe" he succeeded in suppressing all liberal movements in Italy in 1820 and 1831. The Kingdom of Sardinia under the House of Savoy was the only kingdom independent of Austrian influence. Even the Pope looked up to Austria for help and support.

1. The Carbonari

The Carbonari or the society of charcoal burners had its origin in Naples and was a purely revolutionary body whose aim was to overthrow the government by insurrection and conspiracy. It was "a vast liberal organization much better adapted for spasmodic movements of destruction than for the construction of new institutions." It attracted a large number of young and old patriots and at one time Louis Napoleon (Emperor Napoleon III) was also its member.

2. Italian Philosophers and Poets

Italian poets and philosophers played a notable part in creating a mental revolution among the people. Before Italian unity could be achieved, all states had to be converted to the same line of thinking and the same political ideals. This task was very ably performed by men like Mazzini, Gioberti and De Sanctis, who wielded a tremendous influence on the minds of the intelligentsia of the country. They were responsible for a new movement, called the "Risorgimento" or literary and national revival, which glorified the achievements of the Old Roman Empire and inspired the present-day generation to achieve independence and unity and emulate the work of their great ancestors.

a) Influence of Mazzini (1805 – 72). Among these philosophers the influence of Joseph Mazzini was supreme. Born in Genoa in 1805, he was "the spiritual force of the Italian resurrection" and "the fanatic apostle of a new religion". He wielded a mighty pen and through his articles swayed the minds of millions of men and inspired his compatriots with a great missionary zeal. When young, like all Italian patriots, he also joined the Carbonari, not because he approved of its methods, but because it was the only revolutionary organization whose aim was to achieve Italian unity. When the wave of revolution swept the Italian peninsula in 1830, Mazzini also took a leading part in it, but was arrested and later exiled.

The "Young Italy" Society

The fire of patriotism kept burning within him and in 1831, he founded a new party called the "Young Italy" with the following objects :

- (i) To create an awakening among the people to free the country from the foreign yoke and to achieve unification.
- (ii) To instill in men a self-sacrificing sense of duty.
- (iii) To educate the masses and to tell them their ancient glory and the causes of their present misfortune.
- (iv) To establish a Republic.

The membership of the new society was limited to men under 40 years of age. They were expected to carry the torch of liberty from village to village and land to land.

Through the "Young Italy" party, Mazzini enrolled a membership of over 50,000 patriots and roused a feeling of unbounded patriotism, faith and hope.

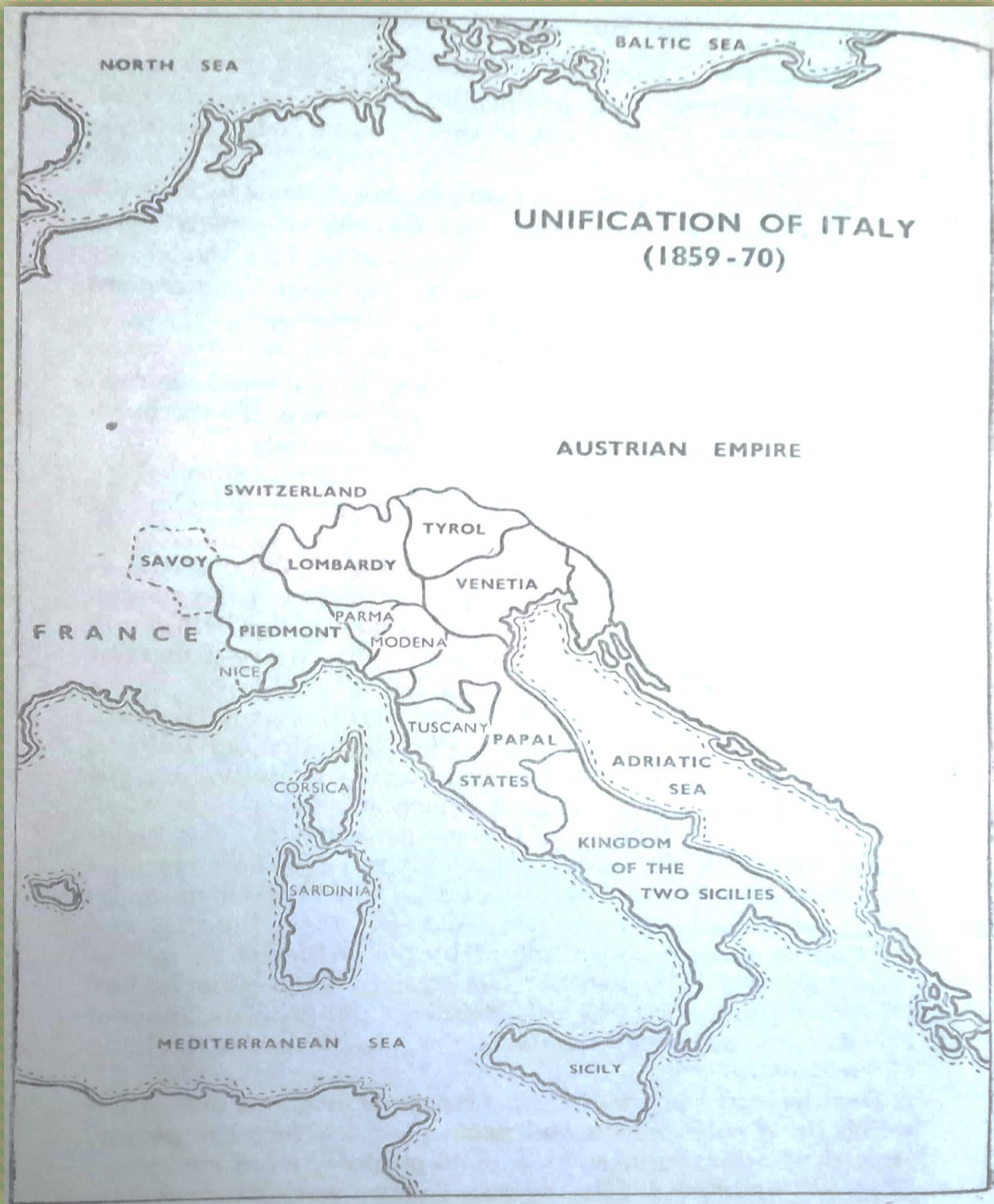
But he had his own weaknesses. He lacked the qualities of practical leadership and underrated the strength of the enemy, who was militarily well armed and very powerful. The "Young" had created only a moral force, not an army to fight the Austrians.

b) Influence of Gioberti (1801-52). Vincent Gioberti, a priest, wrote *The Moral and Civil Primacy of the Italians*. He firmly believed in independence but not in unity. He did not support the republican and democratic ideas of Mazzini, for according to him, the Italian genius was essentially monarchical and aristocratic. Being a clergyman he advocated the establishment of a federation under the Presidency of the Pope and denounced all secret societies. Pope Pius IX and the Church were deeply inspired by his writings.

c) "Liberal Royalists". Poets and philosophers like Daniele Manin and La Farina organized the "Italian National Society", and advocated the unification of Italy under the King of Piedmont.

The ideals in respect of Italian independence and unification which these philosophers and poets placed before the people, instead of achieving a singleness of purpose, were confusing. Three distinct and widely divergent views were expressed by them.

- (i) Mazzini and his supporters advocated the establishment of a Republic.
- (ii) Gioberti and the Church supported a confederation under the Presidency of the Pope.
- (iii) The monarchists believed in unification under Piedmont.



The Rise of Piedmont, Victor Emmanuel II and Cavour

Two persons played a significant role in making Piedmont the premier state in Italy so that it could take the lead in achieving independence and unification of the peninsula, One was King Victor Emmanuel II who succeeded his father Charles Albert in 1849 and the other was Count Camillo di Cavour.

Count Camillo Benso Cavour (1810-61). Cavour was born at Turin in August 1810. He was carved out for a military career by his parents. Though born in a noble family, from the very beginning he had a liberal outlook and was hostile to absolutism and clericalism. He resigned his commission in 1831 and devoted himself to the study of Political Science. He was deeply influenced by the French Revolution of 1830 which proved that "an historic monarchy was not incompatible with liberal principles". He opposed the republicanism of Mazzini and ardently supported the cause of Italian unity under the House of Savoy (the rulers of Piedmont).

In 1847, he turned to journalism and founded the *Il Risorgimento*. By writing powerful articles he considerably influenced the king and the people. He was deeply influenced by the English Parliamentary institutions and was a staunch supporter of political, economic and industrial reforms. He was a true statesman and played the most dominant role in the unification of Italy. He had few rivals in diplomacy in Europe and even Metternich remarked, "There is only one diplomatist in Europe, but unfortunately he is against us; it is M. di Cavour". Guizot, a French Politician, also testified to his diplomatic skill on the eve of the Italian War in 1859 in the following words : "There are two men upon whom the eyes of Europe are fixed, the Emperor Napoleon and M. di Cavour. The game is being played. I back M. di Cavour."

In 1849, he became a member of the Piedmontese Parliament and made a memorable speech, saying, "Piedmont, gathering to itself all the living forces of Italy, would be soon in a position to lead our mother-country to the high destinies to which she is called."

In 1850, he was appointed Agriculture, Industry and Commerce Minister in the cabinet of d'Ageglia. On 4 November 1852, he became the Prime Minister.

He firmly believed that Italian unity could only be achieved under the leadership of Piedmont and she should therefore become a strong and powerful state to play her rightful role in the cause of Italian freedom and unification. Therefore, he pursued the following lines of action.

Austro-Sardinian War (1859). Having assured himself of French support, Cavour now set about to provoke Austria into a war of aggression. By means of propaganda against Austria, passions were roused and there were loud demands for a war against Austria. Victor Emmanuel, in his speech on 7 January 1859 said that he "was not insensible to the cry of woe that reached him from so many parts of Italy". The king's speech roused great enthusiasm and gained him the support of all patriots except Mazzini who would not "countenance the sinister aid of the author of coup d'etat". Mazzini was referring to Napoleon III who had become Emperor as the result of a coup. "But the work of Mazzini was done. Italy no longer needed prophets, but warriors and statesmen."

To further antagonize Austria Piedmontese troops were mobilized along the border of Lombardy. Austria retaliated by amassing her troops too along the border. People on both sides of the border suffered from war hysteria and an armed conflict between the two countries seemed imminent. Cavour's machinations had been successful so far. But, at this moment, the Great Powers intervened. Urged by Russia. Napoleon proposed a European Congress to settle the Austro Sardinian dispute. England too supported the idea. Cavour was disappointed because the fruits of his labours were about to slip out of his hands. He was very averse to taking this dispute to an international Congress, but in view of the combined demands of all the Great Powers he had no alternative, but to yield. Luckily the Austrian Government dominated by the party in favour of war acted foolishly and hastily and demanded that Piedmont should not be represented at such a Congress and that she should disarm forthwith.

Cavour opposed the proposals and England also suggested that Piedmont should be represented at the Congress. But she advised him to disarm. Cavour agreed to do so but before his intentions were made public, the Austrian government sent an ultimatum to Piedmont to disarm immediately. Here was Cavour's opportunity. He refused to do and Austria declared war. Cavour had successfully exploited the political situation and Austria was proved to be an aggressor. He exultantly cried, "The die is cast, we have made history."

Cavour had done his part of the contract, now Napoleon had to do his. So when the Austrian troops invaded Piedmont (April 1859) Napoleon came to the rescue of Piedmont and in person commanded the French armies. The Austrian General Giulay was incompetent and the Austrians were defeated by the allied troops at Montebello, Palestro and Magenta. Milan was occupied and Lombardy was over-run. The Austrians were further defeated at Solferino and they retired into Venetia.

Italian successes caused widespread popular political upheavals in the Central Italian Duchies where the patriots revolted against their rulers and drove them out of Italy.

Plebiscites in Central Italy (1860). During the Austro-Sardinian War in rulers of Modena, Parma and Tuscany had been overthrown and so was the Pope's authority in Romagna. According to the terms of the Treaty of Zurich, the old rulers were to be restored, but the people of the Central Duchies were not prepared to have them back. Assemblies called by the Revolutionary leaders voted in favour of their union with Piedmont. Though she declined their offer for fear of Napoleon's opposition, she secretly encouraged them to hold out for annexation. Piedmontese leaders even organized their armies on the Piedmontese model.

Cavour who had returned to office in January 1860, fully realized that the annexation of the Central Duchies could only be done with the consent of Napoleon III and so he struck a bargain with him. He offered him Savoy and Nice if he agreed to allow plebiscites in them. England supported the right of the people for self-determination and Lloyd Palmerston, the British Prime Minister, emphatically said, "The people in the Duchies have as much right to change their sovereigns as the English people or the French."

As a result of the plebiscite there was almost a unanimous vote in favour of union with Piedmont; and Modena, Parma, Tuscany and Romagna were annexed to Piedmont. Cavour kept his part of the contract and after a formal plebiscite Savoy and Nice were ceded to France by the Treaty of Turin (1860). Garibaldi, a citizen of Nice, was indignant at the cession of Nice and attacked Cavour in Parliament and said, "You have made me a foreigner in the land of my birth."

By the annexation of Savoy and Nice, Napoleon lost "the gratitude of the Italians". It also discredited him in the eyes of the English people and relations between England and France became strained. England grew suspicious of the intentions of Napoleon.

The Conquest of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies (1863). Cavour's task was yet half finished. Venetia, Rome and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies were still to be annexed before, the unification of Italy could be completed. The annexation of the Central Duchies "was, in fact, but a stepping stone towards the ultimate union of all Italy under a single crown."

He could afford to ignore Venetia for the time being as it was not feasible to wage another war with Austria, though the Italian patriots there were seething with discontent. How were Rome and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to be annexed? So far Cavour had played the diplomatic game very successfully and most of his political moves had paid good dividends. He had found a foreign ally in the person of Napoleon; he had also succeeded in annexing Duchies without a war. But he felt cheated by the armistice of Villafranca and in frustration remarked, "They have stopped me from making Italy by diplomacy from the north; I will make it with the revolution from the south."

So in taking his next step of annexing Rome and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies he resorted to both war and diplomacy.

He took full advantage of the grave political discontent against the reactionary Pope and Francis II, the Bourbon king of the Two Sicilies. Rome was well armed, there was a French garrison in Rome to protect the Papal States since 1849, and there were Irish, French and Belgian adventurers in the Papal army. A war with the Pope, therefore, might involve the invader in a war with France. And Cavour was very particular about avoiding such a catastrophe. He did not want to lose whatever had been gained so far and a war with Austria for Venetia and with France over the Papal States might endanger the cause of Italian unity and was to be avoided at all costs.

Annexation of Rome (1870). The last and final stage in the unification of Italy was provided by the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. Bismarck had successfully manoeuvred a war against France and after the French defeat at Gravelotte, the French garrison from Rome was withdrawn. There upon King Victor Emmanuel triumphantly entered Rome which now became the Capital .of Italy and Pope Pius IX withdrew into the Vatican. The unification of Italy had been achieved, and Cavour's dream had ultimately come true.

Suggested Readings:-

1. Meenakshi Phukan : Rise of Modern West
2. G. Clark : Early Modern Europe
3. Raghubir Dayal : Modern European History
4. Jain and Mathur : World History (1500 – 1950)
5. G.M. Trevelyan : Social History of England
6. Parthsarathi Gupta (ed.) : आधुनिक पश्चिम का उदय
7. लाल बहादुर वर्मा : आधुनिक यूरोप का इतिहास
